



Innovative Technique Provides Safe Drinking Water

The Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) and villagers introduce a groundwater well-drilling technique to provide safe drinking water in Attapeu, Lao PDR.

The communities living along the Mekong River and its tributaries are dependent on water for their daily subsistence. Water taken directly from the river is used for drinking. This represents a serious health threat. It also places a heavy burden on women and girls who are responsible for collecting the water.

The recent work of the MWBP, in collaboration with Health Unlimited, shows that lack of access to safe drinking water for river-based communities is a major factor in widespread health and sanitation related diseases. Following a process of participatory planning in four villages a groundwater well drilling machine with high technology to construct tube wells has been tested in Haad Oudomxay village in Sanamxay district. The wells have been placed so as to allow access to all members of the village, with one well placed in the village school. The villagers belonging to the Sou ethnic minority group have set up a village water supply and sanitation "WATSAN" committee and a trust fund to ensure the long-term sustainable management and maintenance of the tube wells. The approach will now be applied in other villages in Attapeu.

"The groundwater well is considered the new life of my villagers, particularly our children. We believe that it will not only help improve the health status but also reduce the burden of the women and children in my village as well. We will make effective use of and properly maintain it," said Mr. Yorpan, a village chief of Haad Oudomxay.

Ensuring safe groundwater use has been a challenge for government agencies and NGOs in Attapeu. The story of Haad Oudomxay has received great interest from government counterparts and NGOs who send their staff to be trained in the technique applied by the MWBP. This experience illustrates how management of wetlands can provide tangible livelihood benefits to some of the poorest people in the world.

For further information please contact:

Mr Souksavanh SISOUVONG
Wetlands Project Co-Manager, MWBP
Lao Provincial Project Office
Attapeu Province, Lao PDR
Email: souksavanh@mekongwetlands.org
Website: www.mekongwetlands.org
Health Unlimited: www.healthunlimited.org



Villagers receive training in using and maintaining the well



Villagers test water quality

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME



CAMBODIA



LAO PDR



THAILAND



VIETNAM



IUCN
The World Conservation Union

