



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



PHOTO CREDIT

APPLIED NUTRITION RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING

Applied Nutrition Research Capacity Building (ANRCB) is a four-year project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through the LASER PULSE (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research, Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) program led by Purdue University. ANRCB is a key project of the Lao American Nutrition Initiative (LANI) to support the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Center of Nutrition.

Despite historically strong economic growth, Laos has one of the highest rates of child malnutrition in Southeast Asia; 33% of children under five are stunted (short for their age), 9% are wasted (low weight-for-height), and 21% are underweight. Addressing this problem requires reliable and actionable research for decision making. ANRCB's goal is to support Lao research leaders, government staff, and university personnel by strengthening their ability to conduct and utilize quality nutrition research to address malnutrition in Laos.

STRENGTHENING NUTRITION RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL

Through a series of hands-on, interactive training modules on a range of nutrition topics, ANRCB builds researcher and practitioner skills among MoH staff to collect, analyze, and interpret high-quality data, which are foundational skills to support sound decision-making. Nutrition and research experts from Purdue University and Indiana University – two leading U.S. universities in nutrition research – partner with the Lao Ministry of Health, as well as the Center of Nutrition,

University of Health Sciences, and Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute. ANRCB supports Laos' National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action by focusing its training and capacity building of current professionals and graduate students to increase the pipeline of trained nutrition professionals and researchers. ANRCB supports the Center of Nutrition to create a collaborative space for training and applied research, and supports University of Health Sciences and Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute to review and update nutrition curricula. The project also funds nutrition research grants for Lao students and faculty, with mentorship from Purdue and Indiana University faculty.

IMPROVING MULTI-SECTORAL COORDINATION

Since nutrition is multi-sectoral, crossing the boundaries of health, agriculture, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and education, ANRCB will engage across government ministries through the Nutrition Secretariat housed at the Center of Nutrition as well as through local researchers and practitioners, international and local civil society organizations, and the private sector.

KEY RESULTS

- USAID through ANRCB supported the CN to open training facilities designed and equipped with USAID's assistance. Researchers, students, and practitioners from Laos, the United States and others are now using the space to work together and find solutions to malnutrition. The training spaces will play an important role in supporting the CN as it strives to become the center of excellence in nutrition, and will benefit generations of researchers for many years to come, addressing malnutrition and improving the quality of lives of the children and people of Lao PDR.
- The project awarded six small research grants to Lao academics and practitioners, intended to enable them to develop advanced research skills through mentorship by US faculty. Those selected completed a series of self-study modules while developing and implementing an original research project under the guidance of their academic mentors.
- ANRBC is collaborating with the CN to develop a practical national resource for anthropometry. This multi-dimensional resource comprises taught course materials for teaching medical students and practitioners, an e-learning module for in-service refreshers and self-study, and a series of professionally produced training videos that guide learners through best practice for measurement of young children. This will ensure that Laos continues to build its own workforce to tackle malnutrition.