
Call for a Communication for Development Organisation

About the Nutrition Research Facility

The **Nutrition Research Facility (NRF)** is established under the Knowledge and Research for Nutrition EC project, aiming to respond to requests for evidence from decision makers, to support the design, the monitoring, the evaluation, and the learning in relation to policies and programmes for **better nutrition outcomes** in low- and middle-income countries.

The NRF operated between 2020-2026 by **Agrinatura** seeks to **stimulate the demand for scientific input** from decision makers (1), to **bring evidence through research** and analyses (2), to **provide expertise for the M&E** of policies and programmes (3) and to **share knowledge** with decision makers and build their capacity (4), thus creating a continuous dialogue between science and policy. Further information about the NRF can be found at the attached short description and the [NRF website](#).

Terms of Reference

Background

In Lao PDR and especially in the rural province of Xiengkhouang, the dietary diversity of many households is insufficient to meet their micronutrient needs (Food and nutrition security survey, 2015). Anaemia is a particular concern, with a prevalence of 40% among women aged 15–49 years and 44% among children aged 6–59 months (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2018). As well, more recent studies have highlighted deficiencies in zinc and thiamine in infants and young children in Lao PDR (Barennes, 2015, Barffour, 2015). In 2017, 33% and 46% of children under five were stunted and 9% and 5% were wasted (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2018) respectively at national level and in Xiengkhouang province. The Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD5) in children 6-23 months was 25.7% nationally and 39.9% in Xiengkhouang province in 2017, which are below the National Action Plan on Nutrition (NPAN) target of 50%. (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2018). Only 22.5% of women aged 15-49 years reached the Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD-W) in the Xiengkhuang province compared with 32% nationally (NIPN, 2020). Daily diets are mainly based on the consumption of rice eaten with leafy vegetables, vegetables and flesh foods (Food and nutrition security survey, 2015). Food production and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are important sources of food for households since 84% of rice and 64% of vegetables consumed came from own production and 62% of animal protein from NTFPs (7-day recall, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2013). However, the availability and access to these foods is threatened by decreasing access to land and forests, the shift in agricultural production towards export crops and the loss of biodiversity. In addition, Lao PDR is currently facing the cumulative effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, the conflict in Ukraine and the consequent Five F Crisis (Food, Fertilizer, Feed, Fuel, and Finance) as well as periodic natural disasters (e.g.,) due to the exacerbating impact of climate change. Basic commodity prices have been rising every month for the past year, with inflation reaching 40% on food products in January 2023 (Bank of Lao PDR). As a consequence, 14% of Laotian households were food insecure, particularly in rural areas (17% vs. 9% in urban areas) (WFP - Lao PDR Food Security Monitoring, 2022).

In this specific context, the diversification of agricultural production and local market opportunities, along with nutrition interventions, can improve the resilience of farmers vulnerable to food insecurity by increasing dietary diversity and yields, and by maintaining ecosystem services (Altieri and Nicholls, 2020; Jones, 2017; Sibhatu and Qaim, 2018). The above-mentioned NPAN also targets the diversification of production and non-timber forest products as an objective to ensure the availability of and access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, but the results are still mixed and hard to observe. Currently, Lao PDR agriculture is characterised by the large production of rice (the country is self-sufficient) and commercial crops (rubber, cassava, banana, coffee, sugarcane, tea) intended for export to neighbouring countries, with little crop-livestock diversity for consumption. Agroecological practices, such as organic farming or the implementation of the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), are implemented and developed more for commercial purposes than to contribute to improving the dietary diversity of the population and do not contribute either to strengthening food resilience in the face of current or future environmental or socio-economic crises. Indeed, agroecological approaches require, for example, the integration of a diversity of crops, agroforestry, intercropping, soil management and conservation of fruit-trees, livestock and forests measures which are associated with increased vitamin intake consumption, offering micronutrients and therefore contributing to dietary diversity. Less is understood around the access, availability and acceptance of Future Smart Foods (FSF), defined by Li and Siddique (2020) as a variety of neglected and underutilized species (NUS) which are cultivated or wild, nutrient dense, locally available, climate resilient, affordable, culturally appropriate, safe and complementary to the current diet to improve dietary diversity and meet micronutrient requirements in a sustainable manner. Contrary to what the term might suggest, these foods are traditional, already available and produced. In our study, we will refer to "Future Smart Foods" (FSF) i.e., food produced (or wild) or supplied according to agroecological principles.

Several reports describe the role agroecology can play for food security and nutrition (HLPE, 2019; Bezner Kerr, 2021; van Zutphen, 2022) through improving dietary diversity. However, the interactions between agroecological interventions and nutrition are not so clear. There are numerous pathways through which agroecology can influence nutrition, and vice versa (van Zutphen, 2022), and this study will unpack some of these pathways, providing much needed evidence on entry-points to improve nutrition. However, for changes to be made in nutrition status e.g., stunting prevalence, it has been suggested that agroecological interventions need to be accompanied by improvements in sanitation, nutritional education, women's empowerment and family planning (Luna-González, 2018). Whilst this is beyond the scope of this study, especially in terms of time, the information provided will deepen the understanding as to how these types of interventions can be implemented to improve diets, including the barriers that may prevent the success of such interventions.

Scope

The overall objective of the project Nutrition Sensitive Agro-ecology (NSAE) in Lao PDR is to contribute to the food and nutritional security of the population of Lao PDR. Through research-intervention activities, the project aims to improve the availability of and access to diversified, nutritious and agroecological foods with and for the population in two model villages in Xiengkhouang province, as well as raising awareness of nutritional challenges. Also, the project aims to contribute to the evidence around consumer preferences and the impact of consumer knowledge and demand (consumer 'pull') on agricultural diversity and supply. The lessons learned and evidence generated in the model villages (as living labs) will feed into and support public policy and action plans on nutrition and food systems in the country.

The project includes three tasks:

- Task 1 - Inception – design of the mixed-methods evaluative research study protocol and selection of the model villages in Xiengkhouang province.
- Task 2 – Identification of Future Smart Foods able to improve the dietary diversity in each model village and baseline survey.
- Task 3 – Identification, design and test of tools to overcome the obstacles of production, supply and consumption of more Future Smart Food in the model village.

All the tasks will be conducted and implemented collectively by a team of international experts and the research organisations subcontracted, in close conjunction with the local authorities.

The third task includes a specific activity focusing on communication for development aiming at scaling-out the outcomes of the project through a dissemination in other villages of the province and to the local authorities.

Under the NRF, Cirad is looking for a Communication for development organisation with expertise in video making in rural areas of Lao PDR, to disseminate the project outcomes across the Province and to local authorities, as per the Terms of Reference detailed in the table below.

Expertise	Communication for Development
NRF Activities	NRF Applied Research project NSAE "NUTRITION SENSITIVE AGROECOLOGY IN LAO PDR"
Period of assignment	April 2025 – November 2025
Place of activities	All the activities performed under the study are to be based in Lao PDR.

Objectives of the assignment	<p>The selected organisation will be assigned to support the implementation of the project activities, in particular the communication for development (C4D) activities that will require the collaboration of two model village local communities in Xiengkhouang province.</p> <p>The selected organization will be responsible for all the C4D activities in close collaboration with project core team (experts), their subcontractor's partners (NUoL and Nafri) and the village's representatives.</p> <p>The C4D methodology will be based on participatory approaches, involving closely the actors targeted by the Nutrition sensitive agroecology interventions implemented by the project.</p> <p>The selected organisation will report directly to the Project coordinator – Stéphane Guéneau (Cirad, NRF WP1 Leader) on the progress of the work. It will work closely with the RS leader Alissia Lourme Ruiz (Cirad), in particular on the application of the C4D methodology.</p>
A c t i v i t i e s t o b e performed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a communication for development plan to support the dissemination of the project's outcomes in Xiengkhouang province and to local authorities. 2. Lead the production of 8 to 10 "communication for development" short videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft the storytelling of each video; - Select and coach the main "actors" able to participate and communicate about the outcomes of the project; - Choose the appropriate format for dissemination (social networks...); - video making, including all technical aspects of production and post-production (editing, sound, subtitles....)
Required qualification, experience and skills	<p>The organisation must demonstrate technical and professional capacity relevant to the scope of the assignment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Documented experience in communication for development in Lao PDR. II. Documented experience in video making in rural areas in Lao PDR. III. Documented experience in working with rural communities through participatory approaches in Lao PDR. IV. Knowledge of agriculture and nutrition issues in Lao PDR. V. A team of staff with a combination of the following essential skills and qualifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team leader, specialist in communication for development • Cameraman, sound engineer and video editor; • Fluency in Lao language; • Proficiency in either English and/or French languages; • Knowledge of participative communication approach in rural areas.
Expected outputs	<p>Together with the project team, the C4D organisation will contribute to deliver the following deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A short communication for development plan, including the video-making methodology, the video support, the storytelling, the targeted audience and dissemination plan and schedule. - 8 to 10 short videos (1-3 minutes) - A longer video (5-7 minutes) synthesizing all the videos on all the project's interventions.

Budget	The budget for this assignment should not exceed 10 000 euros, including all the equipment required for video making and editing and the travel expenditures in Xiengkhouang
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