



Vientiane, 25 Feb 2016 - Over the past two years, the WWF-Laos team worked with 30 villages in the southern Siphandone Landscape to establish fish conservation zones, fish catch monitoring schemes and village river patrols. The HSBC Water Programme, BMZ and OXFAM-sponsored project also provided animal husbandry training and agricultural support to communities to help diversify livelihoods and reduce pressure on fisheries.

Another undertaking of the project was the establishment of “Green School” programs, through which students in participating schools learn about the importance of conserving the Mekong. This is done, amongst other activities, through reading story books on fish conservation, taking part of activities to care for school

gardens, and engaging in interactive role-playing.

The First Green School

“One school, the Loppadi Khonenoy primary school in Khong district has already passed all tests to become the first model Green School in its district,” said Mr. Sy Phunthavong, Deputy Director, Department of Education, Sports and Services, Champasak Province.

To qualify for Green School status, a participating village has to already have been involved in the project, with a functioning fish conservation zone, fish catch monitoring and river patrols.

Over the course of the project, WWF-Laos project team then provides training for school teachers on environmental issues and provides them with

classroom materials such as posters and storybooks. The project team also provides support to schools to set up activities.

Following training, teachers lead special Green School-



The Loppadi Khonenoy primary school in Khong district, has a Green Team made up of the most enthusiastic students from all classes. Green Teams receive extra training on presenting on conservation issues. They also perform skits and songs on conservation topics, including priority fish species and waste management, with phrases such as “garbage is everyone’s responsibility. Do not to leave the village dirty.”

specific activities, which include reading story books, quizzing students on fish species using provided posters, and tending to the school garden. They also incorporated conservation messages into their everyday lessons.

Another activity Green Team students engage in is mock village committee meetings - to decide to establish a Fish Conservation Zone in their village - in a similar fashion to how real village committees debate and vote on establishing FCZs. In another mock scenario, Green Team students put on a skit where river patrols confront individuals engaged in illegal fishing within Fish Conservation Zones and explain to them that their actions have devastating consequences on the reproductive cycle of the fish, thus directly threatening village livelihoods.

Green Leaders in the Making

Poungern Phommasone, 10 years old, is one of the most enthusiastic members of the Green Team at her school. In between leading songs and playing a village leader in role-playing skits, Poungern is eager to talk about what she's learned in her Green School classes.

"I tell my friends and family about what we should and shouldn't do to protect the environment," She says, adding that, "It's very important that we know about conservation and pass this information on to the next generation." She says she has "learned how to keep the environment clean, how to do traditional fishing, and what types of fishing practices are illegal and why those techniques are harmful to nature."

Poungern wants to spread these messages even further when she grows up: "I want to be a tour guide and show foreigners

my home," She says.

So far, 3 of the 5 schools passed all requirements to get Green School Certification by the Department of the Environment. The requirements include improved student understanding of environmental issues and measurable behavior change indicators (including better waste management at the school).

WWF-Laos is now developing guidelines for the Lao government to use in replicating the Green Schools concept across the Siphadone region. ■

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*-Poungern Phommasone,
age 10, Green Team Leader*

