

Post-Typhoon Ketsana Rapid Assessment

Southern LAOS



May 2010

Data collected in March 2010



Acknowledgements:

WFP's efforts in responding to Ketsana are product of its collaboration with its NGO partners and the Government of Laos. This collaboration was a major factor in the fielding of this assessment, and WFP would like to extend its gratitude to the Provincial Governments of Attapeu, Saravan and Sekong for their facilitation and support of this assessment. WFP's cooperating partners supported the assessment in a range of different functions, and thanks are due to the staff of CARE, Health Unlimited, Oxfam, Village Focus International, World Concern and World Vision, as well as the French Red Cross for their insights and material assistance throughout this process.

Executive Summary

In March 2010, the World Food Programme in Laos fielded a rapid assessment to three provinces of southern Laos with the following objectives:

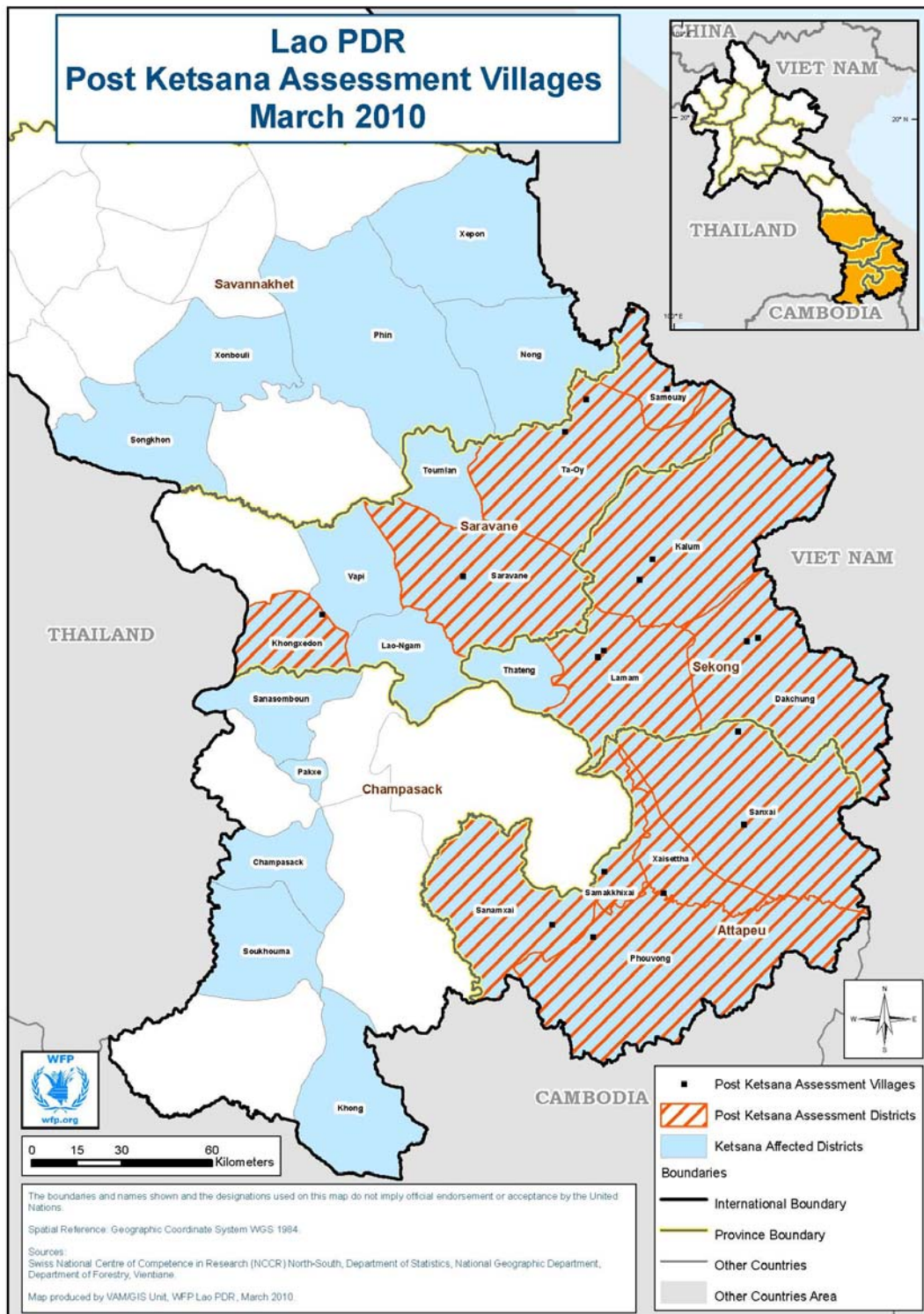
- To evaluate developments in the food security context of Ketsana-affected provinces in southern Laos that have occurred between November 2009-March 2010
- To review the current status of food assistance to affected populations and
- To provide a forecast on future needs for affected populations between March 2010 and the main harvest (October 2010).

Given time and logistical constraints, a largely qualitative methodology was applied, with four assessment teams deployed to Attapeu, Saravan and Sekong provinces for a period of ten days.

Continuing food insecurity in southern Laos is a function of incomplete recovery following the Typhoon, overlaid with the traditional lean season which includes the dry season in the early part of the year and the wet season from June-September. In view of the present food security context, the assessment mission found that there is a renewed need for food assistance in Ketsana affected areas of southern Laos until the main 2010 harvest in September-October. In this regard, WFP concurs with the recommendations made by key cooperating NGO partners in February 2010.

The assessment report emphasizes the continued need for close cooperation between all parties, including government, WFP and NGO partners as the lean season progresses to ensure that the situation is well understood and responded to appropriately. This is particularly pertinent as food insecurity is expected to continue as the lean season progresses. Finally, the report notes the importance

of the main 2010 rice harvest in October as a key milestone in the post-Ketsana recovery process.



1. Introduction

Since the severe weather events of Typhoon Ketsana in Laos on 28-29 September 2009, substantial humanitarian assistance has been provided to flood affected populations in the four most affected provinces across the south of Laos. Attapeu, Saravan, Savannakhet and Sekong provinces bore the brunt of the typhoon, experiencing major flooding and windstorms which resulted in significant losses and damages in every major sector¹.

As a result of these events, WFP, alongside seven NGO cooperating partners (CARE, Health Unlimited, Oxfam, RLIP, Village Focus International, World Concern and World Vision) provided food assistance to some 136,000 people across four provinces within days of the typhoon. A combined 7,890 metric tonnes of WFP provided food assistance (supplemented by additional commodities from NGOs) has been provided through March 2010.

At the time of initial programme design, a phased reduction of populations receiving food assistance was recommended, with reductions anticipated every three months, as less affected populations were able to regain their livelihoods and thus be less reliant on food assistance. However, reports from NGO partners in January 2010 indicated that contrary to WFP's planning projections, the numbers of households requiring food assistance were not declining, but in fact remained at approximately the Jan-March projected levels of 98,000.

It was also noted that there was a need to better anticipate the food security context through to the 2010 main harvest in early October. With these factors in mind, WFP agreed to field a rapid assessment mission to the south of Laos from 7-17 March 2010, with the following main objectives.

Main Objectives:

- To evaluate developments in the food security context of Ketsana-affected provinces in southern Laos that have occurred between November 2009-March 2010
- To review the current status of food assistance to affected populations and
- To provide a forecast on future needs for affected populations between March 2010 and the main harvest (October 2010).

¹ For a fuller review of the immediate impacts of Ketsana, please see the IASC joint assessment document. For a summary of the losses and damages resulting from Ketsana, please see the PDNA document. References are included in Annex III.

Having just completed a rapid assessment in the north of Laos in February 2010, the WFP Laos Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM) drew up a revised methodology which took into account the key issues for Ketsana affected populations. As with that exercise, given the prevailing time and resource constraints, a qualitative methodology was judged to be most applicable, with some quantitative data collection at the household level.

Experienced staff from northern sub-offices in Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang were deployed to the south for the purposes of this assessment. Supplemented by staff from sub-offices in the south and with invaluable support from NGO partners, WFP fielded total of four teams across 19 districts of Attapeu, Sekong and Saravan from 7-17 March 2010.

It should be noted that this assessment does not represent the definitive statement on food security in Ketsana affected areas of Laos, but is rather part of an ongoing dialogue to best identify and meet the recovery needs of affected populations in the south.

2. Background

In the interests of brevity, this report will omit a complete explanation of the impact of Typhoon Ketsana, as this has been extensively reported in the IASC Joint Assessment document and the World Bank supported Post Disaster Needs Assessment document. These reports taken as a whole provide a full illustration of the events, immediate aftermath and consequent impacts of the typhoon, and the reader is referred to those documents.

3. Methodology

General:

The rapid assessment consisted of a review of secondary data, key informant interviews and primary data collection in visited areas. Key sources of data included the two main assessment documents referred to above, as well as reports from the key cooperating partners and WFP's own sub-offices in the affected provinces. In terms of collaboration, WFP worked with local government and NGO partners in all locations visited. NGO partners performed a wide variety of tasks ranging from setting up meetings to providing office space and internet access, to actively participating in the assessment as team members. NGO field staff from all partner agencies were unfailingly accommodating through the assessment. WFP is most grateful for this support.

Discussions with key informants at the provincial level, including staff from the Department of Labour and Social Welfare, as well as Provincial Food Aid

Coordinators were held in a number of formal and informal contexts. In the course of these meetings, the objectives of the assessment were presented, and any additional pertinent information or guidance sought.

Selection of districts and villages to be visited during the fieldwork was largely purpose driven, with logistical and time constraints as a determining factor. Village selection was based on recommendations and guidance from NGO partners, although it was stressed that the assessment should not only concentrate on villages receiving assistance but also those that do not. Once in the villages, focus group discussions and key informant interviews were held, followed by household interviews. Household sampling was conducted on a random basis, with households selected from the initial group that gathered for the focus group discussion.

Team composition and training:

Given the recent experience of the March and November 2009 EFSA in the north of Laos, this rapid assessment was able to proceed with a relatively light training requirement. Key WFP personnel at the sub-office level had participated in those exercises were deployed to the south for the purposes of this assessment. Staff from the southern sub-offices had participated in the Joint Assessment exercise of October 2009, and thus were equally familiar with the general context and approach.

The major challenge for this assessment in terms of team composition stemmed from the fact that human resources constraints required that Vientiane-based WFP staff return to the country office after only six days in the field. Sub-office staff continued their assessment work until 17 March. The upshot of this was that during the first week of fieldwork, the National VAM officer based in Vientiane provided on the job training to the participating field staff, who acted as team members during the first week of field work. During the second week, these team members then became team leaders, working with participating NGO staff. A core component of this process was the compiling of the daily information summary, or field note. This document serves as a synthesis of all the key observations and impressions from the day's work, and was then fed back to the country office. Drafting and training of daily field notes logically took place at the end of each working day, with discussions concluding late at night.

For all locations, the assessment tools to be applied were disseminated and discussed with all participants. For the most part, this amounted to a refresher course, as the methodological approach was essentially a concise version of previous EFSA methodologies, and was readily available in Lao language.

Assessment tools:

Four key assessment tools were used in the course of the rapid assessment at the village level: key informant interviews, focus group discussions, household visits,

and village transect walks. Sample questionnaires are included in appendix. These questionnaires were revised versions of the February 2010 tools, adjusted to reflect the main objectives of this assessment.

Interviews with key informants (usually village *Nai Ban* and/or the village head of the Lao Women's Union) served to outline the basic demographic, economic and social context of each village, but also to determine the extent to which household level concerns were understood by village leaders themselves. Information from the key informant interviews were then cross referenced with information from focus group discussions in the field notes.

Focus group discussions with both men and women's groups explored the key sources of food, livelihoods, coping mechanisms and priorities for the future. Household level questionnaires served to provide randomly selected examples of the overall context of the village. Informed consent was obtained prior to commencing all interviews.

In total, some 19 key informant interviews, 19 focus groups, and 95 household interviews were conducted in 19 villages in 11 districts across three provinces were visited.

Province	Districts	Number of villages visited
Attapeu	Phouvong	7
	Sanamxay	
	Sanxay	
	Saysettha	
	Samakkhixay	
Saravan	Khongsedone	6
	Ta oi	
	Samouy	
Sekong	Lamarm	6
	Darkcheung	
	Kaleum	

Each team was equipped with GPS units, and all locations visited were plotted and mapped (see map on p.3).

Data Management

All data was entered into excel spreadsheets on laptops in the field, and then transferred to SPSS in Vientiane by the National VAM Officer and M&E assistant for further analysis and reporting.

Limitations:

- Time and human resource constraints represented one of the major challenges of this assessment. While staff were made available from other locations around Laos to support this assessment, the districts and villages to be visited were contingent on being accessible within the time available. This was raised as a concern by WFP sub-offices, which emphasized the need to visit more remote villages which are rarely included in assessment exercises.

It was recognized that travelling to more remote villages might require a minimum of three days (two for travel, one to conduct the assessment), time which could be spent visiting a larger number of more accessible villages. This is a perennial challenge in planning assessments. All efforts were made to try to visit a good selection of locations, but it is recognized that with more time and resources, the assessment exercise could have included more remote locations. Given that geographic isolation is a key factor for food insecurity in Laos, this is a significant limitation.

- Adding to this, at the time of the assessment Pakse airport in Champasak province (nominally the air hub for southern Laos) was closed, requiring that teams travel in and out of Savannakhet. This effectively added two days of solid driving to and from sub-offices and the districts they serve.
- Along the same lines, one of the major limitations of this assessment was the omission of Savannakhet province. This is a matter of some regret to the assessment team. The provincial capital of Savannakhet lies on the Mekong River in the west of the province, overlooking Thailand. However, the Ketsana affected districts of the province are along the Laos-Vietnam border in the east. Including these districts in the assessment would have had the indirect effect of limiting the team's ability to visit other provinces. Based on the assumption (drawn from the earlier assessment documents) that the impact of Ketsana was less severe in Savannakhet than in the provinces farther south, coupled with the fact that World Vision, a WFP cooperating partner with a good track record and multisectoral mandate was operational in the province, the decision was taken to rely on secondary data only for Savannakhet. To that end, follow-up discussions were held with key WVI personnel in Savannakhet and Vientiane as part of the assessment's information gathering phase.
- Ethnic considerations at the village level may also have been a limiting factor for this assessment. Although linguistically more homogenous than northern Laos, southern Laos is ethnically diverse. A village visited in Sekong reported more than five ethnicities among their households. However, ethnic diversity was not always reflected in focus group participation. Given the relatively brief time spent in each village (usually

between three to four hours), it was not always possible to explore this issue in fine detail.

- Finally, although beyond the scope of this mission to comment on, it was noted that in some locations visited in Saravan and Sekong, food assistance is being provided as part of a larger package of assistance which includes, inter alia, construction materials, tools, seeds, hygiene kits and additional food items supplied by the NGOs directly (canned fish, salt and sugar). However, in other locations in Attapeu and Saravan, assistance provided is limited to WFP supplied rice. The role and impact of food assistance is therefore necessarily conditioned by the overall assistance package being provided, and further research is required in order to better understand the district level differences in the overall food security context which may result from this diversity of programmatic approach.

4. Main Findings

This section will address the findings of the assessment as they pertain to the main objective. It will also provide additional information which is also of importance in understanding the food security context in the locations visited. In view of the immense diversity of the Lao context, it is recognized from the outset that these analyses may not pertain outside of the study areas.

The approach taken in this assessment was qualitatively based, and did not deploy some of the more elaborate assessment tools such as Food Consumption Score, or Coping Strategies Index. Although some quantitative information was collected on coping strategies and household level consumption, this has been reported in basic percentages, with no weighting attached.

Also, it should be noted that a number of the observations related to the food security context would benefit from better technical grounding. The assessment team did not include specific agricultural, hydrological, or veterinary expertise. Information on river levels, animal disease and seed stocks are presented here as reported for general information purposes, and should not be seen as definitive statements on the part of WFP.

First Objective:

The first objective of the assessment was stated as:

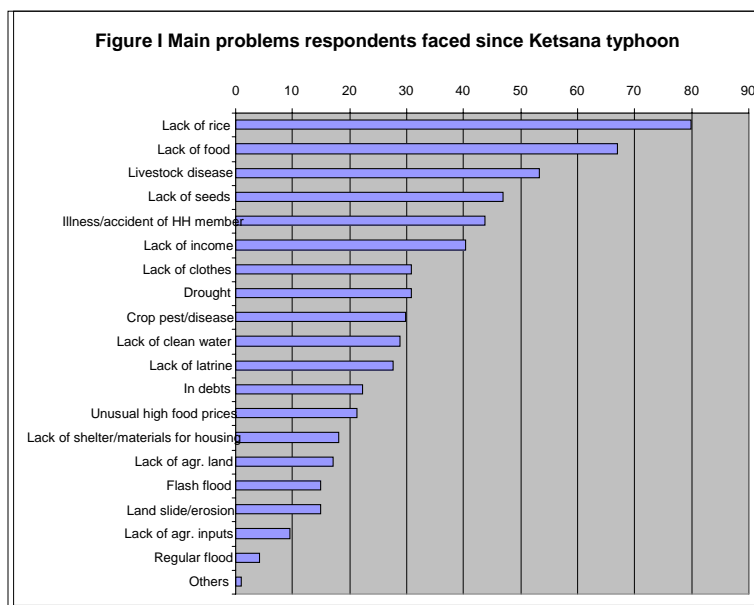
- To evaluate developments in the food security context of Ketsana-affected provinces in southern Laos that have occurred between November 2009-March 2010

Key Findings:

Food Security Context:

On the whole, the food security context (taken to include an overview of food availability, access and utilization) in the affected areas was consistent with baseline assumptions developed by the team at the outset of the assessment. More precisely, given the onset of the dry season, and the beginning of the lean season, food security concerns reflected the anticipated profile. This is not to suggest that there are no prevailing needs, but rather to indicate that needs identified were not unexpected.

The table below indicates the main problems faced by since Ketsana as reported by the 95 households interviewed in the course of field work.



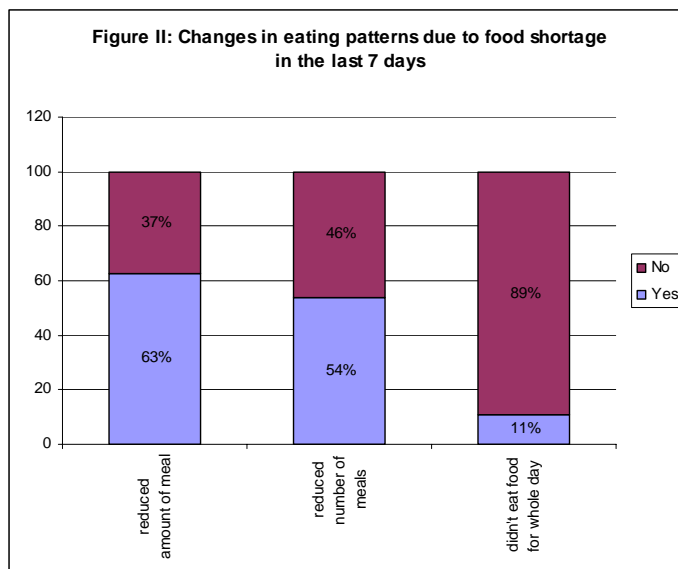
Damage from Ketsana:

Typhoon Ketsana was primarily characterized by rising waters and flooding, including the inundation of Attapeu provincial capital and the rapid and unprecedented rise of the Sekong River. However, it is worth recalling that substantial windstorms, rather than flooding, were a key cause of damage for upland areas. As the storm moved in from the east, high winds destroyed upland cultivated areas in Sekong and in some areas of Saravan. Those uplands represented a key agricultural livelihood, which has not yet been recovered. Travel distances to uplands have also been increased as result of villages resettled away from riverine areas (to be discussed further below.) This calls into question the future viability of those uplands, if indeed interest in continuing cultivation in these locations exists.

The key point to make in this regard is that the lasting impact of Ketsana is not uniformly distributed across all four provinces. In Attapeu, the loss of large animals in the flood and subsequent disease outbreaks has reduced the availability of draught animals and thus compromises paddy land cultivation. In Sekong, resettlement of whole communities away from exposed river banks means that villages are being rebuilt from the ground up. In Saravan, rising rivers flooded paddies and decimated rice crops where they stood. This diversity of impact may require provincially disaggregated approaches as the recovery phase continues.

Consumption Patterns and Coping Strategies:

The rapid assessment did not have the time or resources to conduct a coping strategies index. However, qualitative information gathered in the course the assessment confirmed the findings of assessment conducted in northern Laos in February 2010, in the sense that households visited in all locations had initiated lean season consumption patterns, and reported that they had done so earlier than they would in better circumstances.

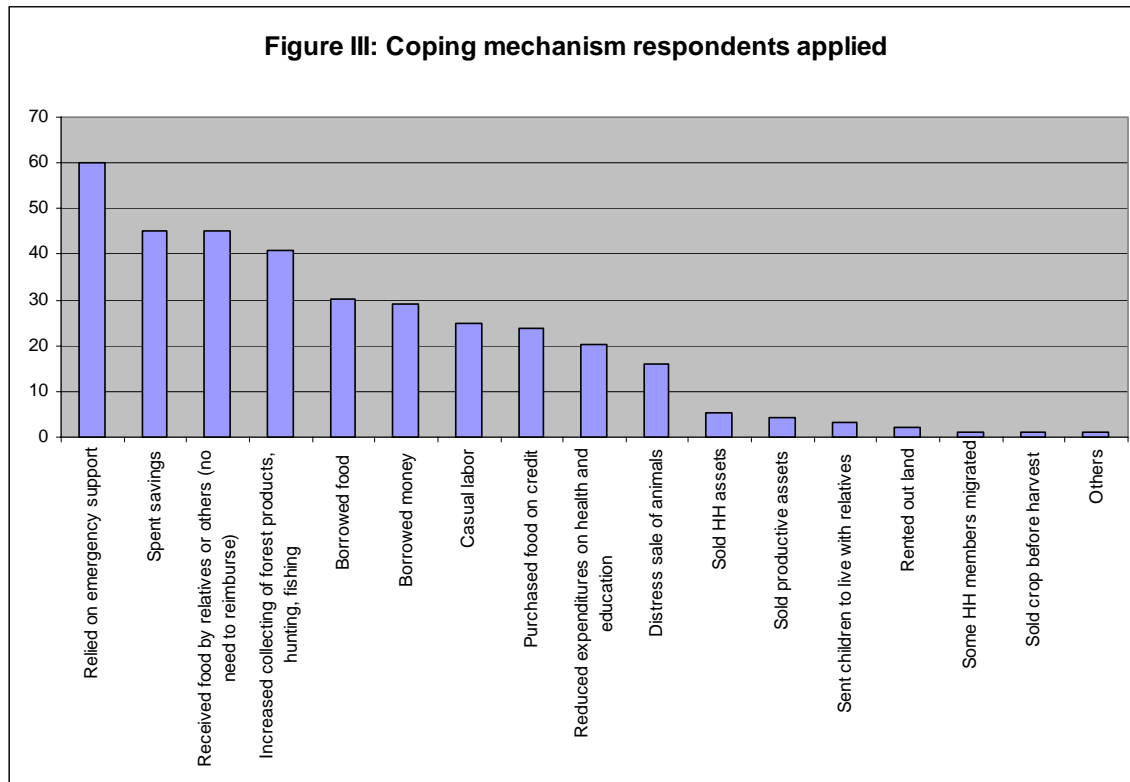


In the majority of villages visited, households reported that they were presently consuming only two meals a day. Meal composition consisted primarily of sticky rice, vegetable and chilli. Unlike in northern Laos, there was less reported consumption of less preferred foods, such as cassava or maize, though this had begun in Samoy district of Saravan and in various locations in Sekong. One mother in Khong Sedone district of Saravan reported switching

from sticky rice to white rice which costs more per kilo but can be served in smaller quantities per meal (although it does not provide the same satiety levels as sticky rice). Overall, it was reported that the overall meal composition and size has been affected as has overall frequency of meal consumption.

In terms of coping strategies, there were some indications that distress or extreme coping mechanisms had been initiated. In Samkhiay district, Attapeu, it was reported that girls as young as 12 and 13 were being sent to the coffee and tea plantations of the Bolaven plateau 120 kilometres away, or to the rubber plantations elsewhere in the province. In Saravan, it was reported that children

were being taken out of school, so as to reduce household expenditure on education and make more hands available for casual labour. In Samoy district of Saravan, collecting UXO remnants to sell for scrap is a key source of cash income, more necessary than before as cash is needed to buy rice on the open market.



In villages of Saravan and Sekong which are reliant on NGO-provided assistance, the concept of coping mechanisms may be somewhat moot, as these households are basically unable to cope without external assistance at least until they complete construction of shelter required for their inhabitants.

Livestock Morbidity & Mortality:

This was cited most frequently in Attapeu province, and was of less consequence in Saravan and Sekong, although there are linkages to agricultural practice which may explain this. In Attapeu, higher incidences of animal disease (specifically foot and mouth²) and subsequent mortality were noted, resulting in a reported drop in the available draught animals necessary for paddy preparation. Similar losses were also reported among poultry stocks, resulting from a disease called *Kai tai haa* in Lao.

² It is beyond the scope of this assessment to determine whether higher than usual levels of infection and mortality related to foot and mouth were recorded post Ketsana, or if indeed the disease reported is in fact foot and mouth. Whatever the case, animal mortality directly post-Ketsana could only serve to compound existing levels of household vulnerability.

Both villagers and the DLSW in Attapeu stressed the importance of restocking of large animals, especially buffaloes, in order to restart paddy rice planting. It was further stressed that lack of access to buffalo or tractors would limit the efficacy of planned MAF seed distributions. This was less of a concern in Saravan and Sekong, where upland cultivation is more commonly practiced, and is thus less dependent on draught animals for ploughing.

Resettlement:

In Sekong district, villages visited were in the process of establishing new settlements in elevated areas, away from exposed riverbanks. In Sekong, as a result of the rapid rise of the river, some settlements experienced damage levels of 80 to 90 percent. These communities have enthusiastically taken up the government policy of resettlement along major transit routes, and reported to the assessment team that they had welcomed a chance to move away from the flood prone riverbanks.

However, as a function of the losses and damages that occurred in the course of Ketsana, and the near total absence of any available infrastructure in the new locations, these villages are almost wholly dependent on assistance provided by NGOs. Constructing houses is the prevailing priority of these communities, as they need durable shelter in order to withstand the upcoming rainy season. The upshot of this for village level food security is that all available labour is being prioritized for shelter



Ban Songkone, Lamam district, Sekong province, 10
March 2010

construction, and there is little to no cultivation underway. In some cases, agricultural land has yet to be identified. As these new settlements are farther from the river, fishing as livelihood and food source is less of a mainstay than it was prior to Ketsana.

As a postscript on this point, it should be noted that while some villages are well advanced in the resettlement process, others are less far along. It seems likely that those villages which are taking longer to move may not complete the transition before the rainy season, which may postpone the overall process for some months to come.

Seed Stocks:

In all locations visited, access to seed for the 2010 main planting was an issue of major concern. Availability of seed varied from district to district, with some locations reporting no seed stocks at all (Lamam district, Sekong province) to others which reported that all households had at least some seeds in stock (Khong Sedone district, Saravan province). Those households that did have seeds consistently reiterated the concern that they did not know “if the seeds will work”. The basis for this concern seems to be derived from the fact that seed to be planted in 2010 comes from the 2009 harvest, which was waterlogged and/or submerged for days during Ketsana. As mentioned above, it was beyond the technical capacity of this assessment to comment on whether or not this represents a valid cause for concern.

Seeds do not appear to be available on the open market in any location visited, although this is evidently not unusual. In Attapeu province it was reported that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were planning to distribute seeds for paddy rice cultivation, and that this was both welcome and much anticipated. However, whether or not such seeds could be multiplied for use in future seasons was not clear. It was further noted that there can be important ecological and agricultural factors at the sub-district level which mean that what grows in one location may do less well in another. As such it remains uncertain what yields can be expected at the village level from MAF provided seeds.

In addition to government or NGO provided seeds³, the assessment team noted that indigenous systems of seed exchange exist. For those households that reported not having enough seed, the most common recourse was to borrow seeds within kinship circles, with the immediate family as the first tier of borrowing, continuing on outward to cousins and more distant relatives. Rates of repayment and interest appeared to be contingent on the relationship between borrower and lender: more distant relatives would expect to be paid back more quickly, whereas immediate family may not expect any repayment at all (Ta Oi district, Saravan).

Given the generally low availability of seed stock, it is uncertain the extent to which these indigenous systems will support a full planting in 2010. Additional research into the modes and application of these systems requires a good deal more research.

As a corollary to this, tools were frequently cited as an issue of concern.

³ To the best understanding of the assessment team, seeds may be included as part of the recovery support provided by CARE, Oxfam and World Vision.

Irrigation:



Irrigated dry- season rice cultivation compared with unirrigated fields, Khong Sedone district. These fields are less than five kilometres apart.

As the assessment was conducted at the height of the dry season, it was immediately evident which areas had functional irrigation systems, as these stood out as green paddies against an otherwise dry and uncultivated landscape. For village with functional irrigation systems, such as in Samoy district of Saravan, the dry season harvest will come about in June, thereby shortening the lean season by a good three months for these villages.

However, dry season production is wholly contingent on irrigation systems. This was frequently cited as a key concern. It should be noted that this essentially represents a pre-Ketsana state of affairs, but that medium-term dry season rice cultivation is a durable livelihood which would have lasting positive impact on village level food security.

Despite its value as a livelihood, market prices for rice act as a disincentive for investment in dry season rice cultivation. Irrigation systems in areas visited consisted of irrigation channels many kilometres long, and would require substantial rehabilitation and investment in order to function. Nevertheless, access to irrigated lands was highlighted in a number of discussions as the key medium term livelihood strategy.

River Levels:



The Sedon river, seen from Ban Chalanse,
Khong Sedone, Saravan, 11 March 2010

In all provinces visited, river levels for both major rivers (such as the Sekong and Sedon in Sekong and Saravan provinces) and minor (albeit locally important) tributaries in Attapeu province were reported to be low to very low. In Khong Sedone district of Saravan, older residents of the villages visited stated that this was the lowest the Sedon river had been in living memory. Travel up the Sekong in Saravan province which would normally take 45 minutes now takes two and a half hours, as boats are unable to navigate the shallows. With more than two more months of dry season yet to come, the impact of low water levels on fishing, transport, dry season irrigated agriculture, livestock raising and human intake will continue to be a critical factor for southern Laos.

Second Objective:

The second objective of the assessment was to

- To review the current status of food assistance to affected populations.

Key Findings:

Current Status of Food Assistance:

In order to fully address this objective, it is necessary to revisit the initial Joint Assessment and flash appeal documents. As part of that process in October 2009, food assistance was recommended for 140,000 people across the Ketsana affected provinces for a period of three months. After this initial three month period, this was projected to reduce to 73,000 for the period January-June 2010. The underlying logic for this planning was that as villages recovered from the

typhoon, those villages and households which were less badly affected would be able to implement their own coping mechanisms and would thus be less reliant on external assistance. Food assistance was provided on a village-level targeting basis, such that all inhabitants of a selected village were eligible for assistance.

In January 2010, WFP NGO cooperating partners began to question this rationale based on what they were seeing first hand in the countryside. Revised NGO figures did not support the planned reduction in the overall caseload; rather, number of populations requiring food assistance remained stable or even slightly increased. It was these initial reports which led, in part, to the fielding of the present assessment.

In discussions with NGO partners, it emerged that while the initial figure of 140,000 included in the Flash Appeal was generally agreed to be viable, the phased reductions less plausible for the following reasons, listed roughly chronologically below.

1) Lean Season

Typhoon Ketsana coincided, or slightly preceded, the main harvest period for southern Laos. Although there were households that experienced near total crop destruction (as in Sekong) in many other locations a harvest was realized, albeit much less than necessary. Therefore, locally produced rice was available for a short period immediately post-harvest. This did not negate the need for food assistance, but it does underscore the fact that the point at which domestic production was fully consumed coincided with the first planned reduction in caseload. In other words, the planning figure proposed a reduction at precisely the period when food assistance was likely to be most necessary. NGOs and WFP sub-offices alerted WFP CO to this fact, and planning figures have been adjusted accordingly, with the current population supported numbering 98,000. Some gratification can be taken from this experience, as it indicates the importance of partnerships to WFP in targeting its assistance to where it was most needed.

2) Access:

As the wet conditions following Ketsana abated, NGOs were able to gain access to more remote villages that had been cut off as a result of flooding or damage to transport infrastructure. As greater access was attained, it became clear that isolated villages were in immediate need of assistance, and these were added to the existing lists of target villages. This balanced out any reductions which had occurred as less affected villages were removed from the list, and accounts for the slight uptick in province level figures.

3) Targeting:

In discussion with cooperating partners, the point was made that when the first recipient lists were being drawn up at the village level, many households were

away from the village, working the fields trying to salvage what harvest could be saved. What this meant was that those households were not included on the original lists, and their inclusion in subsequent lists was contingent on the review period between the first and second distributions, which varied from location to location.

As partners became more familiar with the situation, it was recognized that certain planning assumptions needed to be revised. Village Focus International noted that one of the initial criteria for eligibility was access to paddy land: those households with paddies were assumed not to require assistance. However, post-harvest it became clear that rice plants which appeared healthy had in fact failed to germinate as a result of the flooding, meaning that even households with access to paddies had critical food needs. Again, this led to an increase in overall numbers.

In the great majority of villages visited, food assistance was routinely cited as one of the key sources of food. Given the fact that existing own production has been consumed and the lean season is ongoing, this finding is within expectations. For households in newly resettled locations, food assistance (both rice and other commodities) is virtually the only source of food, as fields have gone untended while shelter construction takes place. Put another way, the assessment team saw nothing to indicate that the food security context had improved to the point that there should be significant cuts to the populations receiving food assistance.

Third Objective:

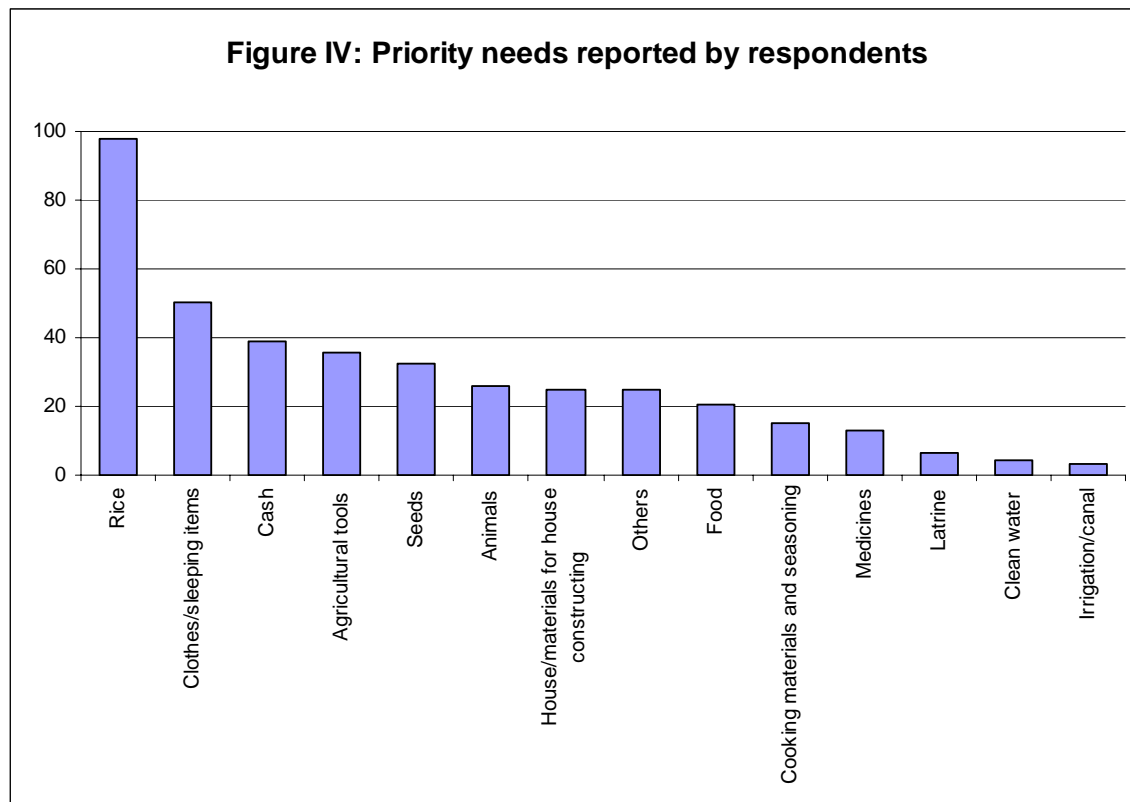
Finally, the third objective was

- To provide a forecast on future needs for affected populations between March 2010 and the main harvest (early October 2010).

Based on strong recommendations from the cooperating partners and from households interviewed in the field, and in recognition that the lean season is setting in, the current level of assistance should be continued up to the 2010 main harvest. While some reductions and adjustments to the overall numbers of assisted population may be appropriate, major reductions of the gross numbers of affected are not expected. This is primarily because the dry/lean season is followed by the wet/lean season, such that although crops are in the ground, they have yet to yield any harvest. Moreover, current priority areas of World Concern and CARE are cut off during the rainy season, further compromising recourse to markets or casual labour.

At this point, continuing assistance until the main harvest seems the most logical approach. Having said that, it should be made clear to government, NGO partners and recipient communities alike that this assistance is not open ended. Some locations such as Samoy district, Saravan will have some dry season harvest

of rice: the continuing need for food assistance in such locations needs to be reviewed as that harvest comes in.



At the time of the main 2010 harvest, a fuller review should take place to identify needs which persist after the harvest, and those areas which continue to require assistance. This should be harmonized with the livelihoods programming planned by NGO partners. Finally, such planning should also have the benefit of allowing for rapid response to any additional needs which may emerge in the course of 2010.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In view of the findings contained in this rapid assessment, notably those pertaining to the ongoing food security concerns in southern Laos, it is recommended that programmes be continued to assist food insecure households through to the next harvest. The main purpose of this assistance will be to solidify the gains made in the recovery process post- Ketsana, and to support households which have limited access to food prior to the 2010 harvest.

The modality of assistance to these populations are a matter for review the sub-office level, but it is worth noting that a number of challenges in transitioning from Food for Relief to Food for Work persist, which may mean that FFW may not be the best approach in the medium term. However, they may be important exceptions to this: World Vision has indicated that there may be FFW possibilities in Savannakhet. Where FFW is possible, emphasis should be on supporting recovery, whether through the development of community-held assets or diversification of existing sources of household income. Whatever approach is taken, either FFR or FFW, it is recommended that at the district level there be a single consistent approach applied for ease of implementation.

In order to support smallholder production of rice across the south, greater support in the seed and agricultural input sector will need to be considered. In an Oxfam survey of 114 households across Saravan and Sekong, 112 households reported seeds, tools and other agricultural support as key concerns. As mentioned above, this assessment is not able to make technically specific recommendations on this point, but would advocate for more detailed research into the agricultural needs at the village level in southern Laos, followed by locally appropriate support.

As the lean season continues, related food insecurity and levels of vulnerability are likely to rise. Regular monitoring, reporting and updating of information from the village and household level will be a critical information input. In this regard, UNICEF is in the process of developing a major nutrition survey of southern Laos, the findings of which will be of direct relevance to better understanding of the food security context. The key findings of that report should be incorporated into food assistance programming as applicable.

To this end, it will be necessary to maintain open and consistent lines of communication between WFP and NGO cooperating partners at both sub-office and country office level, between both management and technical level (programming, logistics, finance) staff. Further discussion will be required to ensure that food assistance is harmonized with the NGOs' livelihoods programming which will become increasingly prominent over the months to come.

Finally, the post Ketsana context in southern Laos does not represent an intractable crisis with no clear endpoint. Recovery is possible and although not

yet complete, is underway and will continue. Given the appropriate levels of external assistance, a return to pre-existing standards of living is both possible and attainable. However, challenges persist even as recovery gathers pace, as many of the districts and villages of southern Laos are food deficit even under normal conditions.

Even so, the role of food assistance as it pertains to immediate relief and recovery needs should be clearly defined. A clear exit strategy needs to be defined by WFP, in full consultation with the Government of Laos, cooperating partners, and the communities themselves. This should not be constructed as an indication that WFP has imminent plans to stop any assistance, but rather goes to underscore the need for solid advance planning, so that supported communities are given ample opportunity to plan their next steps. Following the harvest of 2010, further review will be required to determine the post-harvest role of food assistance.

Appendix I: Assessment Tools

Checklist for Focus group discussion

1. Village history

- a. How long has the village been in this location?
- b. If this village was moved from other places, indicate the reasons (why did they move)?
- c. When were the most recent arrivals? How many hhs? What were the reasons for their moving?
- d. How many ethnic groups are there in the village? List all the ethnic groups

2. Food security situation

i. Livelihoods activities

➤ *Agricultural works:*

- a. What are the main crops do people grow in this village?
- b. What type of crops do people sell to make income? How much villagers can make by selling their crops per month or year (on average)?
- c. Have villagers done any cultivation after Ketsana in order to compensate to what they have lost due to Ketsana? What do they grow? When do villagers expect to harvest? How the harvest will help them?
- d. Do villagers raise animal for eat or sale? If for sale, how much the average income villagers can earn from selling animals per month or year?

➤ *Non-agricultural works:*

- e. What do people normally do in order to get cash to buy food and other things for their hhs?
- f. Are villagers still engaged in these activities after the Ketsana?
- g. What level of reliance on these activities do people engage now compared to before (increase, same or less than before)? Why?
- h. Are there any new activities that people in this village will/can engage after Ketsana?

ii. Rice sufficiency

➤ *Current situation (after Ketsana):*

- a. Does the village have rice to eat now? What proportion of total hhs that have rice to eat now?
- b. Does the village have to buy rice to eat now? What proportion of total hhs that have to buy rice now?
- c. What proportion of hhs that have sufficient rice for the whole year this year? Where are those rice from (their own cultivation, food assistance,...)
- d. How many months will the present rice stocks last?

- e. Is there any hh that have rice surplus for sale? How many hhs? Where do they sell to?

➤ Situation in normal years (before Ketsana)

- f. Is the village rice sufficiency for the whole year in normal years?
- g. If no, when is their rice normally last?
- h. Are there any hhs that have rice surplus for sale? How much (total amount of rice) do they sell?

iii. Food consumption and sources

- a. How many meals do people eat now?
- b. What are their main foods?
- c. Where do people get food from?
- d. What types of food do they collect? When it is available?
- e. What type of food do they need to buy? Where can they buy food?

iv. Market prices

- a. Do villagers normally buy rice to eat? When is the common month that villagers will start buying rice in normal years?
- b. How much is rice per kilo cost now?
- c. What was the rice price last year same time (March 2009)?
- d. When is the highest rice price in a year? How much per kilo?
- e. Where can villager buy rice from now?

3. Problems in the village

- a. What are the problems related to food security that villagers are facing?
- b. Are there any other problems villagers having as a result of Ketsana? What are they?
- c. Does this village have human outbreaks in the last 12 months? What are they? How is the situation now? Is this outbreak as a result from the Ketsana?
- d. Does this village have experienced animal outbreaks in the last 12 months? What are they? How is the situation recently? Is this outbreak as a result from the Ketsana?
- e. Are there any major problems that villagers would like to report here?
- f. Can the village recover from the Ketsana impacts now (can they get back to the same situation before Ketsana happened)?
- g. Is there any conflict in the community due to Ketsana? What is it? Has the conflict increased now compared to the beginning of Ketsana?

4. Coping strategies that people apply NOW

- a. When villagers are running out of their rice stock, what do they do in order to keep them alive?
- b. Do they mix rice with other staple food due to lack of rice? What are they mixing with rice?
- c. Do they eat other staple food instead of rice? What are they?

- d. Can they borrow food or cash from relatives or neighbors when it is needed? Do they have to pay for interests? How much is the interest?
- e. If they can't borrow food or cash, what is the reason?
- f. Do people reduce number of meals per day now due to lack of rice?
- g. Do people reduce amount of food they eat in each meal now due to lack of food? Who in the hhs do this (men, women, children,...)?
- h. Do villagers have to distress sale of their animals?
- i. Do villagers withdraw their children from school to help working in the farm or taking care of siblings?
- j. Do villagers apply any unusual activities that create negative impacts to food security and livelihood now?

5. Facilities in the village

- a. Does this village have access to clean water?
- b. Does this village have access to latrine?
- c. Does this village have school? How many rooms and grades?
- d. Does this village have access to health care services? Does the village have health volunteer and medical kits?

6. Assistance received

- a. Has the village received WFP assistance due to Ketsana? What have they received? When? Is the assistance useful and sufficient? If not, why?
- b. Does the village receive non-WFP assistance due to Ketsana? What have they received? When? Is the assistance useful and sufficient? If not, why?

7. Assistance needed

- a. What type of assistance do villagers need for now and in the next 3 month? Why?
- b. What type of assistance do villagers in the next 6 month? Why?
- c. What/how can this assistance help them? Explain

End the interview

Checklist for Women Focus Group Discussion

(in case you have to organize the meeting with women separately from the men)

1. Daily activities

- a. What do women do in their daily works (counted since they get up in the morning until do go to bed at night)? List all activities

2. Food consumption

- a. How many meals do women eat now?

- b. What are their main foods?
- c. Where do they get food from?
- d. If women eat less or have to skip meals, how about their children and husbands, do they eat normal or same as women?

3. Problems

- a. What are problems related to food security villagers facing?
- b. Are there any other problems villagers having as a result of Ketsana? What are they?

4. Assistance needed:

- a. What type of assistance do women need for now and in the next 3 month? Why?
- b. What type of assistance do women need in the next 6 month? Why?
- c. What/how can this assistance help them? explain

Checklist – Village Key informant interview (KI)

8. Village history

- e. How long has the village been in this location?
- f. If this village was moved from other places, indicate the reasons (why did they move)?
- g. When were the most recent arrivals? How many hhs? What were the reasons for their moving?
- h. How many ethnic groups are there in the village? List all the ethnic groups
- i. No. of HHs, total population, female population

9. Food security situation

ii. Livelihoods activities

➤ Agricultural works:

- a. What are the main crops do people grow in this village?
- b. What type of crops do people sell to make income? How much villagers can make by selling their crops per month or year (on average)?
- c. Have villagers done any cultivation after Ketsana in order to compensate to what they have lost due to Ketsana? What do they grow? When do villagers expect to harvest? How the harvest will help them?
- d. Do villagers raise animal for eat or sale? If for sale, how much the average income villagers can earn from selling animals per month or year?

➤ Non-agricultural works:

- e. What do people normally do in order to get cash to buy food and other things for their hhs?
- f. Are villagers still engaged in these activities after the Ketsana?
- g. What level of reliance on these activities do people engage now compared to before (increase, same or less than before)? Why?
- h. Are there any new activities that people in this village will/can engage after Ketsana?

iii. Rice sufficiency

➤ Current situation (after Ketsana):

- a. Have villagers have rice to eat now? What proportion of total hhs that have rice to eat now?
- b. Have any hhs in the village have to buy rice to eat now? What proportion of total hhs that have to buy rice now?
- c. What proportion of hhs that have sufficient rice for the whole year this year? Where are those rice from (their own cultivation, food assistance,...)
- d. How many months will their present rice stocks last?
- e. Is there any hh that have rice surplus for sale? How many hhs? Where do they sell to?

➤ Situation in normal years (before Ketsana)

- f. Is the village rice sufficiency for the whole year in normal years?
- g. If no, when is their rice normally last?
- h. Are there any hhs that have rice surplus for sale? How much (total amount of rice) do they sell?

iii. Market prices

- f. Do villagers normally buy rice to eat? When is the common month that villagers will start buying rice in normal years?

- g. How much is rice per kilo cost now?
- h. What was the rice price last year same time (March 2009)?
- i. When is the highest rice price in a year? How much per kilo?
- j. Where can villager buy rice from now?

10. Problems in the village

- a. What are the problems related to food security that villagers are facing?
- b. Are there any other problems villagers having as a result of Ketsana? What are they?
- c. Does this village have human outbreaks in the last 12 months? What are they? How is the situation now? Is this outbreak as a result from the Ketsana?
- d. Does this village have experienced animal outbreaks in the last 12 months? What are they? How is the situation recently? Is this outbreak as a result from the Ketsana?
- e. Are there any major problems that villagers would like to report here?
- f. Can the village recover from the Ketsana impacts now (can they get back to the same situation before Ketsana happened)?
- g. Is there any conflict in the community due to Ketsana? What is it? Has the conflict increased now compared to the beginning phase of Ketsana?

11. Coping strategies that people apply **NOW**

- a. Have you seen/heard of any hhs that have to eat 2 meals/day instead of 3 meals/day due to lack of rice now? How many hhs are doing this?
- b. Have you seen/heard of any hhs that have to eat less or skip meals due to lack of rice to eat now? How many hhs are doing this?
- c. Have you seen/heard of any hhs that women have to eat less or skip her meals in order to let her husbands and children to eat now? How many hhs are doing this?
- d. Do villagers mix rice with other staple food due to lack of rice? What are they mixing with rice?
- e. Do they eat other staple food instead of rice? What are they?
- f. Can they borrow food or cash from relatives or neighbors when it is needed? Do they have to pay for interests? How much is the interest?
- g. If they can't borrow food or cash, what is the reason?
- h. Do villagers have to distress sale of their animals?
- i. Do villagers withdraw their children from school to help working in the farm or taking care of siblings?
- j. Do villagers apply any unusual activities that create negative impacts to food security and livelihood now? What are those activities?

12. Facilities in the village

- a. Does this village have access to clean water?
- b. Does this village have access to latrine?
- c. Does this village have school? How many rooms and grades?
- d. Does this village have access to health care services? Does the village have health volunteer and medical kits?

13. Assistance received

- a. Has the village received WFP assistance due to Ketsana? What have they received? When? Is the assistance useful and sufficient? If not, why?
- b. Does the village receive non-WFP assistance due to Ketsana? What have they received? When? Is the assistance useful and sufficient? If not, why?

14. Assistance needed

- a. What type of assistance do villagers need for now and in the next 3 month? Why?

- b. What type of assistance do villagers in the next 6 month? Why?
- c. What/how can this assistance help them? Explain

Household questionnaire

Instructions:

⇒ Recommended to interview 5 households (random selections)

A-ASSESSMENT INFORMATION <i>(to be filled in before you start the HH interview)</i>				
1. Dates of Assessment: ____/03/2010				
2. Name of team leader:				
3. Name of interviewer:				
4. Place of the assessment:				
Province		District		Village
GPS coordinates:				
5. Household number: : 1 2 3 4 5 <i>(circle number of HH you interview)</i>				

B-HOUSEHOLD BACKGROUND INFORMATION		
1. What ethnic group do you belong to?	_____ ethnic group	Belongs to <i>(fill in afterwards)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Lao-Tai <input type="checkbox"/> Mon-Khmer (austro-asiatic) <input type="checkbox"/> Sino-tibetan <input type="checkbox"/> Hmong-Mien
2. What are your household's main livelihood activities (Tick all that apply)?		
Farmer - Crops Farmer - Crops, gathering and hunting Farmer - Crops and livestock	Unskilled worker Skilled worker Salaried	Trader, shopkeeper Others _____ <i>(specify)</i>

C-DAMAGE CAUSED BY KETSANA		
1. Is your household affected by the Ketsana? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK		
2. What are the main problems your household has been facing since Ketsana? <i>(Tick all that apply)</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Illness/accident of HH member <input type="checkbox"/> Death of HH member <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of rice <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of food <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of income <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of clothes <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of shelter/materials for housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of clean water <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of latrine <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of seeds <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of agricultural land <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of agr. inputs <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual high food prices <input type="checkbox"/> Drought	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular flood <input type="checkbox"/> Flash Flood <input type="checkbox"/> Land slide/erosion <input type="checkbox"/> Crop pest/ disease <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock disease <input type="checkbox"/> In debts <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <i>(specify)</i>
o How did your household overcome the problems caused by the shock(s)? <i>Tick all that apply</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Spent savings <input type="checkbox"/> Sold household assets (cooking utensils, jewelry etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Sold productive assets (land, agricultural tools, seeds or other inputs, machinery) <input type="checkbox"/> Distress sale or consumption of animals <input type="checkbox"/> Rented out land <input type="checkbox"/> Purchased food on credit <input type="checkbox"/> Borrowed food <input type="checkbox"/> Borrowed money	<input type="checkbox"/> Received food by relatives or others (no need to reimburse) <input type="checkbox"/> Some HH members migrated <input type="checkbox"/> Sent children to live with relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Sold crop before harvest <input type="checkbox"/> Casual labor <input type="checkbox"/> Increased Collecting of Forest products, Hunting, Fishing <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced expenditures on health and education <input type="checkbox"/> Relied on emergency support (specify who?) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify: _____	
4. Has your HH recovered from the shock (is everything gone back to normal now)?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK		

D- FOOD SECURITY SITUATION		
1. Does your household have rice sufficiency for the whole year in normal years (before Ketsana)?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
2. If no, how long is your rice normally last?		_ _ months
3. Does your household have food to eat now (after Ketsana)?	Rice	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
	Other food	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
4. How long will the current rice stock last your HH?		_ _ months
5. For the months in which you do not have food will you be able to purchase/ collect/borrow the food?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
6. In the last 7 days Did you or any household member eat a smaller meal (less amount of food) than usual because of food shortage?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
7. In the last 7 days Did you or any other household member eat fewer number of meals (skip meal) than usual, because of food shortage?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
8. In the last 7 days Were you or any household member not able to eat the kinds of foods you choose to eat as staple/main food (e.g. rice) because of shortage of food?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
9. In the last 7 days Did you or any household member was compelled to eat foods that you normally choose not to eat due to shortage of food?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
10. In the last 7 days Did you or any household member go a whole day (24 hours) without eating anything because there was shortage of food?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK

E - RESPONSE		
1. Did you receive any aid/relief given due to Ketsana?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
2. If yes, what type of aid/relief did you receive? <i>Tick all that apply</i>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Food aid → go to Q. E3 <input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Seeds <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes	<input type="checkbox"/> Shelter/housing materials <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking water <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare/medicals <input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify).....
3. How did the food aid help your household? Explain		
4. Were the assistances received sufficient?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> DNK
5. From your HH point of view, what are your priority needs in the next 3 months in terms of assistance? Please rank it in order based on the importance to your HH (1 = most important,....., 5 = least important)		
Assistance required		Ranking based on the importance
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		
e.		

Appendix II: Mission Members:

Province/Team	Name	Organization
WFP Country Office Vientiane	Jannie Armstrong	WFP
	Somphavanh Nakhavong	WFP
	Thanongsith Theppongseun	WFP
Attapeu	Mr. Outhai	WFP
	Mr. Anousone	WFP
	Mr. Bounthavy	WFP
	Ms. Caitlin Makin	WFP
	Dr. Khamphou	Health Unlimited
Saravan	Ms. Amphone	WFP
	Mr. Khamsing	WFP
	Mr. Khuankeo	OXFAM
	Mr. Phouvong	OXFAM
	Mr. Bounsy	OXFAM
Sekong	Mr. Kheuab	WFP
	Mr. Bouakhai	WFP
	Ms. Phonesamai	CARE
	Mr. Somboun	World Concern
	Mr. Salieng	District officer of Kaluem
	Mr. Somvone	OXFAM

Appendix III: References:

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