

*"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." —1 John 5:14*

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**Mike Fennema**  
Country Consultant  
mfennema@worldrenew.net

**Marrion Omanyo**  
Program Advisor  
momanyo@worldrenew.net

**World Renew Canada**  
3475 Mainway  
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1  
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8  
1-800-730-3490  
Fax: 905-336-8344

**World Renew US**  
1700 28th Street SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
1-800-552-7972  
Fax: 616-224-8060

worldrenew.net/laos  
@worldrenew\_laos

*God is not asking for  
our ability, but for  
our availability.*

## Tinpha's Sanitation

### A Story of Transformation

by Mr. Vongxay, health team leader

#### About Tinpha

Tinpha is a Khang ethnic village in the Boko area of Nonghet district, located about 100 km from Nonghet town. The village has 32 households and a population of 230 people, half of whom are female. The villagers are subsistence rice farmers who plant rice on the sides of the mountains surrounding their village. The women weave Lao skirts for sale and raise animals for food for their families. World Renew has worked in Tinpha village for several years.

#### Life in Tinpha

For generations, the villagers allowed the cattle, buffalo, pigs, and goats to run around and live in the village among the houses. The village was very dirty with animal and human waste scattered all over—on the paths and under the houses. The village leadership was weak and could not mobilize the villagers to clean the village. There were a lot of challenges: the village was not fenced; there were no animal pens and no toilets; the adults would relieve themselves in the forest close to water sources; the young children openly defecated in the village and were often sick with diarrhea, fever, and headache.



#### Building the toilets

In past years, project health staff spent time raising awareness about sanitation issues in Tinpha, but interest among the villagers was limited. This year, however, the village was ready. The organization staff and the Village Development Committee sat down to discuss about the sanitation situation in the village. They agreed and made a plan together with the villagers: the villagers would provide the materials that were easily available in the village—timber and roofing material, as well as labor; and the organization would provide materials that were not easily accessible—toilet bowls, cement, sand, and gravel. The villagers also agreed to contribute a monetary amount toward the cost of the purchased materials.



Once the villagers were ready, the organization sent building materials to the village. The materials reached the village on May 25. The organization staff were stunned at how fast the villagers responded. Toilet construction began early the next morning and ended on June 30. The villagers took just one month to build 36 toilets, something that other villages with fewer families have never done within that time frame. During follow-up, the health staff found out that the villagers had canceled all other activities and, led by the village VDC, worked together to build toilets for all the families in the village, including the poorest families, who would have struggled to build a latrine on their own. The villagers were excited and happy that they now had toilets that they could use instead of going to the forest.

#### After constructing the toilets

After toilet construction the villagers became encouraged to continue improving the village. Every family in the village started to clean the areas around their houses. The villagers then held a meeting with the village headman and made plans to create an area outside the village for the cattle, buffalo, and goats and to build pig pens as well, away from the village houses.



Now there is a great difference in comparison to the past. The village is very clean. There is a village fence; there are toilets for each family; there is clean and sufficient water; and fewer villagers are complaining of headache, fever, and diarrhea.

The village VDC of Tinpha village would now like the government to officially recognize Tinpha as a model health village for the Boko area by January 2017.

# Fennema Family Recent and Upcoming Events

- Matthew and Maria participated in a regional swim competition in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Nov. 26-27, and did very well, coming home with a number of medals to support Vientiane International, finishing in second place among 13 schools.
- Monica has been busy these past few weeks, filling out applications for universities, applying for scholarships, and especially preparing for mock exams to prepare her for the real thing in May 2017.
- On Nov. 29 we celebrated Moe Moe turning 51. We also received wonderful news at the end of October that the cyst removed from lymph nodes on her left side was not cancerous.
- Matthew shared the following story: "In October I joined with over 20 young people for a youth group retreat at the Lao Lake House about one hour from Vientiane. At the retreat we hung out with friends, played volleyball in the pool, swam across the lake, and ate lots of tasty food prepared by the parents. We also had to do our own dishes! But, most important, we had discussions facilitated by Mr. Jeff, who taught us about how we have to rely on and reflect on our 'God stories.' A 'God story' is a difficult time in our lives when we have witnessed God's faithfulness—like David when he faced Goliath and witnessed God's faithfulness in defeating Goliath. When we remember and share our own 'God story,' we can also inspire other people to think of their 'God stories' and be able to think back to those stories and stay strong when difficult times come."
- From December 4 through 9, all of the World Renew Lao staff met in Chiang Mai for a special time of team building and capacity building. We also organized field trips for staff to learn from relevant development experiences in Thailand.
- At the end of January 2017 there will be an evaluation at the midpoint of the Xieng Khouang project to review progress made over the first half of the five-year phase and to identify recommendations for improvements needed as the project moves forward.

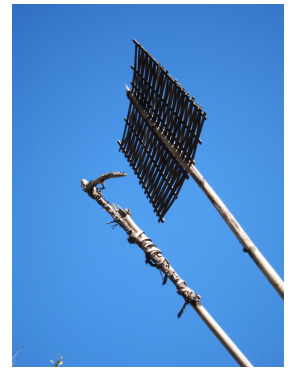


## What's that for?

Take a close look at this photo. What could this item be used for?

Don't hesitate or be shy, but send your best guess to Mike at [fivemfamily@gmail.com](mailto:fivemfamily@gmail.com).

The mystery will be revealed in the next newsletter!



## Mystery Revealed

Your guesses were:

- Preparation for grafting
- A cut for harvesting rubber

The correct answer is . . .

A cut made for harvesting benzoin from styrax trees (known locally as nyan) in northern Laos!

Between September and December every year, villagers climb the styrax trees, making numerous cuts every six inches or so, rotating around the trunk of each tree. If the villagers work hard, they can complete 30 or so trees in one day. Some villagers make cuts on as many as 400 trees each year. The best tree will produce 1 kg of benzoin resin, but that is very rare; 0.1 kg per tree is much more common. The resin, harvested about five months after the trees are cut, sells for about \$10 to \$15 per kg, depending on the quality. The average family harvests between 2 and 40 kg, depending on how many trees they have managed to prepare and how productive the trees have been. A family can have access to the trees, which grow in the steep upland fields prepared in the past and in old rice fields that are no longer used for growing rice. There is no land demarcation, but villagers seem to know the boundaries regarding which trees they can harvest the benzoin from each year by instinct and intimate knowledge of the forest. Benzoin is used in herbal medicines and in the manufacturing of fragrances and health-care products like soap, body lotion, bath oil, and washing detergent.

