

Lower Mekong Initiative: Health Pillar



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Photo Credit: USAID / RDMA
Screening for diseases that could spread from animals to humans under the USAID-funded Emerging Pandemic Threats Program

The LMI Health Pillar addresses transboundary challenges to improve public health in the Lower Mekong sub-region

BACKGROUND

The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) is a multinational effort to foster integrated sub-regional cooperation and capacity building among Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Under the LMI Health Pillar, the United States is supporting the LMI partner countries to address transboundary challenges to improve public health and in turn narrow the development gap in the sub-region.

APPROACH

The LMI Health Pillar carries out projects and activities under:

1. Communicable and Emerging Infectious Diseases;
2. Prevention and control of counterfeit as well as substandard medications;
3. Regional collaboration to support implementation of the International Health Regulations; and
4. Identifying and sharing best practices in human health.

ACTIVITIES

Emerging Pandemic Threats

Nearly 75 percent of all new, emerging diseases affecting humans originate in animals. The Emerging Pandemic Threats (EPT) program emphasizes early identification of and response to dangerous pathogens in animals before they can become threats to human health. Leveraging the expertise of joint human, animal, and ecosystem health teams, EPT is:

- Strengthening disease outbreak detection;
- Fostering joint outbreak investigations and response; and
- Building capacity of academic and national human and veterinary



Children play an educational game that teaches them how to take precautions to avoid contracting malaria.

Prevention and control of counterfeit and substandard medications

The United States organizes study tours for drug regulators from LMI countries to visit Washington, D.C. to discuss best practices in addressing counterfeit and substandard medicines. Additionally, the United States provides capacity building for LMI countries to control and regulate counterfeit and substandard medicines.

Enhancing Responses to HIV/AIDS

Despite recent progress, only 30 percent of individuals in need of HIV treatment are receiving it across the Lower Mekong region. USAID in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is helping LMI countries identify, evaluate, and lead more effective and cost-efficient approaches to address HIV/AIDS. Prevention efforts focus on “hot spots” that are often also migration transit points for the sub-region.

Preventing and Controlling Malaria at Mekong’s Borders

The United States in partnership with the LMI nations are taking steps to control malaria by promoting evidence based and enhanced interventions, providing commodities, information sharing and surveillance of disease incidents. USAID provides technical assistance to develop the regional strategy to combat emerging multi-drug resistant malaria and to eliminate malaria from the Lower Mekong sub-region.

Technical Exchange on Gender & Health

USAID and the Health Policy Project are supporting a technical exchange between Cambodia and Laos to enhance gender integration in health policies and structures for improved health outcomes. The exchange raises the profile of gender in the health sector while highlighting the leadership role of national gender mechanisms. It also aims to strengthen relationships between Laotian and Cambodian counterparts, which will support future collaboration and knowledge exchange.

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