



# Mekong RBM IEC Project News

October 2004



The Centre for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology (CMPE), Lao PDR organized a one-day meeting at the Ministry of Health on 7 October 2004 to disseminate IEC project updates and IEC materials. Dr Samlane Phompida, Director of CMPE chaired and facilitated the meeting. Dr Douangchanh Keo-asa, gave a speech stressing the importance of malaria education for ethnic groups in Lao PDR. There were a total of 35 participants: district and provincial malaria team members involved in materials development, Salavanh and Xekong provincial malaria and health department officers, representatives from MCH, Centre for Information, Education for Health, Lao Women's Union, Lao Front Reconstruction, national radio station, ADB primary health care project, PSI, UNICEF and CMPE.

Dr Douangchanh Keo-Asa, Director of the Hygiene and Prevention Department, said the project put focus on working with ethnic groups and should expand this initiative to include other ethnic groups in the malaria control programme.

He also stressed that health education is one of the main components of disease prevention and control, so there should be integration between malaria education and other health education topics.

Picture: Dr Douangchanh Keo-Asa (middle-front role), Dr Samlane Phompida (front – second from left) with participants from provincial and district health and malaria station, Attapeu, Xekong, and Salavanh.



District and Provincial staff from Attapeu Province said that this was the first time they had been involved in materials development. Prior to this, no malaria materials have been developed for this province, where most of the population are from ethnic groups. The malaria educational materials developed this time are more suitable to the situation and needs of the people, especially the Brau-Lave and Taliang and other ethnic groups that can understand these two languages. They also said that these materials would be appropriate to use with Lao communities, as there are some similarities, but they would need some adaptation.

UNICEF shared past experience of the communication malaria control project that was run between 1994-1997 in 2 provinces. The project made positive impact in reducing malaria incidence and death by applying communication strategies to educate and encourage target groups to adopt appropriate behaviour and seek early treatment, and by

providing subsidized bednets, insecticide for bednet dipping and mosquito repellents.

The ADB primary health care project shared their project implementation and primary health care strategic plan till 2020. The project found that it is hard to reach ethnic target groups effectively because of location and socio-cultural differences.

During the meeting, Dr Phoupasong (*picture*), Head of the Malaria Station in Attapeu said that Attapeu has a big ethnic population. This was the first time that they had worked with ethnic groups to develop educational materials to suit their needs. The ethnic people will have a better understanding of malaria prevention and control. She also suggested that there should be training for health staff and village volunteers on how to communicate and use these IEC materials effectively.



Mr Prayuth from Bureau of Vector Borne Disease, Ministry of Health Thailand and Ms Nardlada from Office of Vector Borne Disease, Region 10 Chiangmai informed us that the Thai IEC team has finished developing IEC materials and guidelines. After the IEC materials pre-testing, sets of materials were distributed to 15 villages in Sob-Muey district, Maehongsorn province in August for field testing. An evaluation was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the materials. The preliminary findings show that overall knowledge of villagers and children on malaria transmission and prevention has increased. People are more aware of the importance of appropriate malaria treatment than they were before using the IEC materials.

The IEC materials that Prayuth led the Thai team to develop are:



A set of jig-saw puzzles that aim to increase children's knowledge of malaria symptoms and mosquito breeding places, and to encourage sleeping under bednets and seeking early treatment.

An information sheet that aims to provide information for newcomers and visitors, and to encourage them to seek diagnosis and treatment when they arrive in a village with malaria-like symptoms.



A poster to educate forest-goers on malaria transmission and to encourage them to seek treatment from village malaria volunteers or health staff when they have malaria symptoms.

A calendar to provide information on malaria transmission, symptoms, prevention and treatment for the general population in the villages.



A leaflet that provides basic malaria information, focusing on prevention.



The Bureau of Vector Borne Disease, MOH Thailand and the Centre for National Malaria Control, MOH Cambodia are organizing a Malaria Management Field Operation training course from 4 October – 12 December 2004. The training course is being organized in Bangkok and Siem Riep. There are 18 participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, PDR Korea, the Philippines Thailand and Vietnam. The first weeks of the MMFO course will provide training in project managerial skills, conducting situational analysis, critical thinking, problem solving skills, epidemiological basis of malaria control, qualitative and quantitative research methods, field practice on qualitative and quantitative data collection, evidence-based decision making and current concepts in malaria case management. By the end of the training course participants will have a better understanding of planning for malaria prevention and control. Ms Cecil Hugo, Executive Coordinator of ACTMalaria will keep us updated on the progress of the training course. You can also visit the ACTMalaria website <http://www.actmalaria.org> for more information.

**Recommended reading:**

*Entertainment – Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change* by Arvind Singhal and Everett M Rogers, Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, Publishers. This is a very useful book for health educators, communicators or anybody working to bring about change in people's behaviour. It provides in-depth information from different projects that use entertainment to educate and encourage behaviour change. It also provides lessons learned, successes and constraints, and what to consider when planning for effective behaviour/social change projects.

