

Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Viet Nam Country Work Plans

FY 2023

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ACT | EAST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) | East Program (Cooperative Agreement Number 7200AA18CA00040) is implemented by RTI International, with a consortium of partners including The Carter Center; Fred Hollows Foundation; Light for the World; Results for Development (R4D); Save the Children; Sightsavers; and Women Influencing Health, Education, and Rule of Law (WI-HER). Under this Cooperative Agreement, Act to End NTDs | East (Act | East) supports health ministries to reach World Health Organization NTD control and elimination goals through proven, cost-effective public health interventions. The Act | East Program provides critical support to governments to create sustainable platforms for NTD services within robust and resilient health systems.

In Viet Nam, Act | East program activities are implemented by The Fred Hollows Foundation.

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ACRONYMS LIST

Act East	Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases East
ALB	Albendazole
BGD	Bangladesh
CIPRB	Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh
CMPE	Center for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology
DEC	Diethylcarbamazine
DGHS	Disease Control Unit of the Directorate General of Health Services
DIP	Direct Inspection Protocol
EU	Evaluation Unit
FHF	The Fred Hollows Foundation
GDPM	General Department of Preventive Medicine
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
MAC	Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
MMDP	Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
NIMPE	National Institute for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology
NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
PVS	post-validation surveillance
RTI	RTI International
SCH	Schistosomiasis
STH	Soil-Transmitted Helminths
TAS	Transmission Assessment Survey
TF	Trachomatous Inflammation–Follicular
TIS	Trachoma Impact Survey
TSS	Trachoma Surveillance Survey
TT	Trachomatous Trichiasis
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNEH	Viet Nam National Eye Hospital
VNM	Viet Nam
WHO	World Health Organization
WPRO	WHO Western Pacific Regional Office

BANGLADESH

NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

Administrative Structure

Bangladesh (BGD) is divided into 8 divisions and 64 districts, with population of 165.1 million people based on 2022 census data. The districts are further divided into subdistricts (upazilas), clusters of villages (unions), and villages (mouzas). The National Filariasis Elimination Programme, Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis Control Programme, and Little Doctor Programme are based in the Disease Control Unit of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), and are responsible for the overall design and management of national efforts to respond to lymphatic filariasis (LF) and soil-transmitted helminths (STH) under the Communicable Diseases Control Operational Plan. The national program works with the DGHS research unit, drug control and logistics departments, and the national health database to coordinate neglected tropical disease (NTD) programming. DGHS is the largest implementing agency under the MOHFW, with more than 100,000 officers and staff members. The Ministry seeks technical assistance from the DGHS when new programs and interventions require improvement.

Program Context

Bangladesh is currently under post-MDA LF surveillance for its 19 endemic districts. The MOH plans to submit the LF elimination dossier to WHO for validation in October 2022.

Approximately 33.3 million people across 19 districts were considered at risk of LF caused by *Wuchereria bancrofti* and transmitted by *Culex quinquefasciatus* from baseline mapping. By 2016, all 19 districts had completed at least five rounds of MDA with albendazole (ALB) and diethylcarbamazine (DEC) and had passed TAS1; therefore, meeting the criteria for stopping MDA. By the end of 2018, 18 of these 19 districts had passed TAS3 (funded by WHO Bangladesh). The remaining endemic district, Rangpur, failed TAS1 in 2014, implemented two additional rounds of MDA, and then passed TAS1 in November 2016 and TAS2 in October 2018. The final survey for the district, TAS3, was funded by WHO and implemented by MOHFW in November 2021, after schools that had been closed due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic reopened. A small number of positive cases were found in both evaluation units (EUs) from the November 2021 survey. WHO recommended focal MDA in these areas, which the national programme plans to complete in FY22 (August/September), potentially with support from WHO.

All NTD activities in Bangladesh are implemented directly by the DGHS of MOHFW or conducted under direct guidance of the DGHS, MOHFW.

Direct Inspection Protocol

In FY21 and FY22, Act | East supported a DIP assessment through a fixed amount award with the Bangladeshi nongovernmental organization, CIPRB. The DIP surveyed health facilities providing lymphedema management and hydrocele surgeries, specifically community clinics and upazila health centers, to determine the quality of lymphedema services and hydrocele referrals. CIPRB and Act | East consultant, Mr. ASM Sultan Mahmood, worked together to finalize a report that included analysis of the data collected in facilities and recommendations to the National LF Elimination Programme on addressing challenges to providing continued care for lymphedema.

Dossier

In FY22 Act | East supported the final stages of dossier development work, including support for a regional dossier consultant, Dr. Ramaiah Kapa, to fill in data gaps in the draft dossier previously updated under ENVISION in 2019. A complete dossier draft was shared with the Government of Bangladesh for review and approval in late July 2022. The National LF Elimination Programme is primed to expedite review and approval by the Director General and the MOHFW Permanent Secretary for submission to the Southeast Asia Regional Office in FY23.

FY23 Activities

In FY23, Act | East will support Bangladesh to complete LF elimination, as well as publicize and celebrate Bangladesh's validation accomplishment. Act | East does not anticipate implementing additional activities to support NTD programs in Bangladesh in the future.

BGD FY23 Activity: National Programme Technical Support

In FY23, Act | East will continue to support a consultancy for technical and project management assistance to the national programme. Act | East will support Mr. ASM Sultan Mahmood's labor with authorization for minimal other direct costs, including the validation celebration and World NTD Day activities.

The scope of work for Mr. ASM Sultan Mahmood in FY23 is as follows:

- Oversee LF dossier finalization, including facilitating any final dossier edits and additional requests for data or coordination between Act | East, MOHFW, and WHO.
- Coordinate Act | East's financial contributions for a celebration of LF elimination validation, along with other partners, at an event that will publicize and celebrate Bangladesh's accomplishment. This activity will include contributing financially to an in-country event and coordinating with USAID/Bangladesh, USAID/Washington, and other partners who contributed to LF elimination to elevate the accomplishment in the press and other media platforms.
- Coordinate a World NTD Day event in collaboration with the Act | East Senior Communications Manager, MOHFW, and WHO regional and country offices. (This may coincide with the celebration of LF elimination.)
- Communicate with Act | East headquarters (HQ) regularly to provide updates on the status of activities and draft or review program deliverables.

LAO PDR

NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

Administrative Structure

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), with a population of 7.2 million, is divided administratively into 17 provinces and 1 prefecture, with 148 districts and 10,781 villages. In 2012, the Directorate of Communicable Disease Control within the Ministry of Health (MOH) was established to provide direct oversight of the Center for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology (CMPE), which is responsible for implementing the LF and schistosomiasis (SCH) programs, and the National Ophthalmology Center, which is responsible for implementing trachoma activities. The CMPE collaborates with the Ministry of Education and Sport to implement school-based STH MDA.

Program Context

Lao PDR is endemic for LF caused by *Wuchereria bancrofti*, with approximately 140,000 people identified at risk at the time of baseline mapping. Rapid assessment surveys and microfilaremia mapping from 2002 through 2007 found only one district (Phouvong) in one province (Attapeu) to be endemic. The first round of LF MDA was conducted with ALB and DEC in 2008. In 2009, antigenemia mapping identified four more endemic districts, all in Attapeu province, and the MDA program was extended to cover all five districts in 2010. CMPE conducted pre-TAS in 2016 but results were below the WHO-recommended cutoff for treatment (<2% antigenemia). CMPE continued to implement MDA in Attapeu through February 2017, with support from FHI 360 and the MAC Foundation, and passed TAS1 in October 2017 and TAS2 in November 2019, with support from WPRO. WPRO supported a DIP assessment in five health centers in Attapeu province alongside the TAS3 to determine facility readiness to provide care and support to clinical cases in the area.

All NTD activities in Lao PDR, including PVS that will begin 2 to 3 years after the final survey, are implemented directly by the CPME of the MOH.

Dossier

In FY21, Act | East supported a dossier consultant, Dr. Ramaiah Kapa, to finalize the LF dossier for elimination validation by WHO. Dr. Kapa finalized the narrative and data sections of the dossier, which were also reviewed by Act | East's Senior NTD Advisor for LF. WHO Laos facilitated the review and approval process by CPME and the MOH and ensured that WHO WPRO previewed the draft dossier. Development of the final dossier included designing a post-validation surveillance plan in collaboration with WHO and CMPE. The LF dossier was submitted for validation in the last week of July 2022.

FY23 Activities

In FY23, Act | East will coordinate with WPRO, USAID Washington, and USAID Laos on press releases and other external communications that publicize and celebrate Lao PDR's validation accomplishment. Act | East does not anticipate implementing additional activities to support NTD programs in Lao PDR in the future.

VIET NAM

NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

Administrative Structure

Viet Nam (VNM) has an estimated population of 98.5 million¹. The country is divided into 63 provinces, 595 districts, and 9,050 communes. Within the MOH, the General Department of Preventive Medicine (GDPM) is responsible for coordinating and managing the national NTD program. The National Institute for Malaria, Parasitology and Entomology (NIMPE) is responsible for the LF elimination program and STH control activities. The Viet Nam National Eye Hospital (VNEH)² is responsible for the provision of eye health care, including programming to eliminate trachoma. GDPM is accountable to the MOH on disease prevention and health education, while NIMPE and VNEH are accountable for clinical treatment agencies.

The VNEH is the highest technical support center for eye care in the country and is also the primary technical consultation agency for the MOH for eye care-related policies. The VNEH is responsible for establishing and managing the trachoma surveillance system to ensure ongoing management of new incidences of trachomatous trichiasis (TT) and trachomatous inflammation–follicular (TF), as well as ensuring long-term sustainability of trachoma elimination.

All NTD activities in Viet Nam are implemented directly by the government. Trachoma activities in this work plan will be implemented in partnership with the VNEH, which will also coordinate and lead the dossier development workshop. FHF staff will work closely with the VNEH to prepare for the workshop, including providing inputs to the draft dossier. The MOH and GDPM will lead the final drafting of the trachoma dossier. Provincial departments of health also will support these activities by contributing staff (provincial and national agencies/departments) to the dossier review process.

Dossier

Viet Nam finalized and submitted its LF dossier to WHO for validation in August 2018 and declared LF elimination as a public health problem in January 2019. The trachoma dossier will be submitted for validation in March 2023.

FY23 Activities

In FY23, Act | East will support Viet Nam to complete trachoma elimination, as well as publicize and celebrate this accomplishment.

VNM FY23 Activity: TSS in Meo Vac and Dong Van

Act | East will support TSS in 2 EUs–Meo Vac and Dong Van districts–in Ha Giang province in December 2022. The survey teams will comprise trained and certified graders and recorders, with support from health staff in Ha Giang. These teams will be led and supervised by technical experts from VNEH with remote technical assistance from Act | East and the Tropical Data system team. Act | East will support travel (transportation, per diem and accommodation) and communication costs (phone cards, stationary, photocopies) for survey teams which include 1 grader and 1 recorder per team, and supervisors. Act | East will support a 1-day in-person refresher training for all members of the survey team (12 people) prior to the survey, in addition to the survey itself.

¹ General Statistics Office of Vietnam. (2021). Available at <https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/data-and-statistics/2022/01/infographic-population-labour-and-employment-in-2021/>

² VNEH has been previously known to USAID as the Viet Nam National Institute of Ophthalmology, or VNIO, and as the National Trachoma Institute prior to that. The name was changed to the Viet Nam National Eye Hospital in 2019.

VNM FY23 Activity: Technical Review Board Consultation on Trachoma Dossier

In FY22 Act | East planned to support two national workshops to support MOH review of the final trachoma dossier before submission. In May 2022, the first dossier review workshop was convened to discuss gaps in the current draft and develop a plan and timeline to fill gaps, complete the dossier, and outline the complicated MOH approval process. The process outlined in **Table 1** was recommended based on GDPM’s successful experience supporting the NIMPE to seek approval for Viet Nam’s LF elimination dossier in 2018.

Table 1: MOH approval process for trachoma dossier submission

Step	Actions	Proposed timeline
1	VNEH will send an official letter to the MOH regarding the review of the trachoma elimination dossier.	August 2022
2	MOH will assign the relevant department to coordinate with VNEH.	September 2022
3	The assigned MOH department and VNEH will develop an action plan.	October 2022
4	The MOH will establish a Technical Review Board to review the trachoma dossier and support the dossier completion. The Technical Review Board will share recommendations with the MOH during the Technical Review Board consultant workshop. Based on this, the MOH will approve the dossier.	February 2023
5	The MOH will submit the trachoma dossier to WHO.	March 2023
6	After receiving validation from WHO, the MOH will organize a celebration to declare trachoma elimination.	August/September 2023

Based on this process, VNEH requested that the second workshop, which was originally planned as an MOH review workshop, be replaced with a 1-day consultation workshop that allows the Technical Review Board to recommend to the MOH that the dossier be approved for submission. The Technical Review Board will consist of approximately 30 multisectoral experts who will review the updated draft dossier (which will include results of surveys completed in Q1 of FY23) ahead of the consultation. The outcome of the consultation will be an official letter to the MOH to request approval of the trachoma elimination dossier. This consultation will bring together members of the Technical Review Board, VNEH, WHO Viet Nam, USAID Viet Nam, FHF Viet Nam and MOH representatives (approximately 40 people total).

VNM FY23 Activity: Declaration Event on Trachoma Elimination

Act | East will support a declaration event to celebrate Viet Nam’s achievement of eliminating trachoma immediately after receiving WHO’s validation of the trachoma elimination dossier, currently anticipated in August or September 2023. The event will acknowledge VNEH and international partners, including USAID and WHO, for their valuable contribution of financial and technical resources to eliminate trachoma during the last 10 years.

MOH staff, members of the Technical Review Board, VNEH, other international organizations (WHO, USAID, RTI, and FHF) and representatives from 25 provinces will be invited to join the declaration event (approximately 90 people total). FHF will work with the Act | East communications team to engage national media online and via television and newspapers.

VNM FY23 Activity: TT-only surveys

As part of the dossier development process, Act | East re-analyzed TT prevalence data for 4 provinces (Bac Giang, Hai Duong, Nam Dinh, and Thai Binh) where impact surveys in 2009 and 2011 among people aged 40 years and over showed that TT prevalence was still a public health problem. The re-analysis showed that TT was still considered a public health problem (prevalence >.2%), even after adjusting for age and sex for the total population. At the recommendation of WHO, Act | East will support VNEH to implement TT-only surveys in four provinces: Bac Giang, Hai Duong, Nam Dinh, and Thai Binh. TT-only surveys will select a sample of 30 clusters with 40 households per cluster in each province. Only people aged 15 years and older will be examined during the TT-only survey. The survey protocol recommends only one person act as both grader and recorder.