

Lao PDR Work Plan

FY 2021

Program Year 3

October 2020–September 2021



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ACT | EAST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The U.S. Agency for International Development Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) | East Program supports national NTD programs in reaching World Health Organization goals for NTD control and elimination through proven, cost-effective public health interventions. The Act to End NTDs | East (Act | East) Program also provides critical support to countries on their journey to self-reliance, helping them create sustainable programming for NTD control within robust and resilient health systems. The Act | East Program is being implemented by a consortium of partners, led by RTI International and including The Carter Center; Fred Hollows Foundation; IMA World Health; Light for the World; Results for Development (R4D); Save the Children; Sightsavers; and Women Influencing Health, Education, and Rule of Law (WI-HER).

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT ON ACT TO END NTDs | EAST (ACT | EAST) ACTIVITIES AND WORK PLANS

Act | East recognizes the impact that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had on all programs. On April 1, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued interim guidance to neglected tropical disease (NTD) programs recommending that almost all in-person activities be postponed until further notice. With the support of USAID, Act | East stopped all activities that matched the criteria outlined in WHO's interim guidance.

On July 27, 2020, WHO issued further interim guidance on assessing whether NTD activities could restart safely. Alongside this, Act | East, in collaboration with Act | West and USAID, developed activity restart guidance and resource documents to support each country in safely implementing activities while adapting to the COVID-19 challenge and adhering to global guidance.

The timeline to restart activities will be context-specific, varying by country, region, and activity, and is subject to changes in COVID-19 dynamics. Act | East and USAID will review restart packages, which detail plans and safety guidelines for specific activities in a particular context, on a case-by-case basis to determine the risks and benefits of restarting.

For the sake of brevity, all amendments to activity design to account for COVID-19 have not been listed in each country's work plans. Act | East is happy to discuss further the adaptations in any country or across the program.

Work plans for fiscal year 2021 assume a full year of activities and are written with the best information available at the time of submission. Nevertheless, the situation will change in some countries and will result in adjustments and addendums to work plans. Act | East will continue to communicate with USAID to discuss any requested changes.

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FY21 Learning Activities are marked with this icon throughout the narrative.

ACRONYMS LIST

Act East	Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases East
ALB	Albendazole
CDC	U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CMPE	Center for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CY	Calendar Year
DCDC	Directorate of Communicable Disease Control
DEC	Diethylcarbamazine
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HQ	Headquarters
HSS	Health Systems Strengthening
IR	Intermediate Result
LAO	Lao People’s Democratic Republic
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
MAC Foundation	Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
Mf	Microfilaremia
MMDP	Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention
MOH	Ministry of Health
NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
Q	Quarter
SCH	Schistosomiasis
STH	Soil-Transmitted Helminths
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TAS	Transmission Assessment Survey
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WPRO	Western Pacific Regional Office

LAO PDR

1. NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

Administrative Structure

Lao PDR (LAO), with a population of 7 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 (DCDC) 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 works closely with the Ministry of Education and Sport to implement school-based STH MDA.

NTD Program Partners

FHI360, with Margaret A. Cargill (MAC) Foundation funding, will support an annual NTD stakeholder meeting and programming for control of STH (sentinel and spot check surveys, refresher training for teachers, and supervision during MDA) and SCH (MDA, sentinel and sport checks surveys, and supervision) in FY21. FHI 360, with funding from the MAC Foundation, implemented TAS1 in Attapeu Province in 2017 with technical training and supervision from CDC Atlanta and ENVISION.

WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) supported TAS2 in Attapeu Province in 2019. WPRO also provides technical assistance to the central level and supports the donation of drugs for SCH and STH MDA.

Canada's **International Development Research Centre** provides support for SCH research, data review, and research on animal contribution to SCH transmission.

See Table 1 for a list of partners supporting NTD programs in Lao PDR.

2. IR1 PLANNED ACTIVITIES: LF

Program Context

Lao PDR has completed MDA in its one LF-endemic province, Attapeu, which passed TAS1 in October 2017 and TAS2 in November 2019. CMPE completed TAS1 in October 2017 in Attapeu Province. The survey included a total of 34 schools (target 34) and tested samples from 1,833 children (target 1,532); zero positive cases were found. TAS2 was completed in November 2019 with assistance from WHO, with zero positive cases among the 1,607 children tested. A final TAS3 is currently planned for November 2021 with funding from WPRO.

Lao PDR is endemic for LF caused by *Wuchereria bancrofti*, with approximately 140,000 people identified at risk at the time of baseline mapping. Following rapid assessment surveys and Mf mapping from 2002 through 2007, only Phouvong District in Attapeu Province in 2007 was found endemic. The first round of LF MDA with ALB and DEC was conducted in 2008. In 2009, antigenemia mapping identified four more endemic districts, all in Attapeu, and the MDA program was extended to cover all five districts in 2010. CMPE conducted pre-TAS1 in October and November 2016; results were below the WHO-recommended cutoff for treatment (<2% antigenemia). CMPE continued to implement MDA in the Attapeu Province through February 2017 with support from FHI360 and the MAC Foundation. USAID and

CDC Atlanta provided technical assistance for the MOH for initial TAS training, TAS on-the-job training, and TAS supervision under the ENVISION project in FY17.

Proposed FY21 Activities

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following activities in the approved FY20 Country Work Plan were not completed in FY20 and we propose to conduct them in FY21.



LAO FY21 Activity 1: LF Dossier Development Support (Travel)

STTA to the national program in Lao PDR was approved in the Act | East FY20 work plan, but the trip scheduled for May 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic. In FY21 Q3, Act | East Asia Regional Advisor James Johnson will collect, compile, and review LF data and discuss priority activities for LF elimination. Following this trip, Mr. Johnson will work with DCDC and CMPE to update the draft dossier. Act | East Senior LF Advisor Molly Brady will also review the updated document, and the draft dossier will be shared with WHO. The Act | East Southeast Asia FY21 budget will support Mr. Johnson’s seven-day trip to Vientiane related to this activity.

A learning activity analyzing the models and methods for providing dossier development support to countries will be undertaken in all countries in the Southeast Asia portfolio, including Lao PDR. This analysis will review and build on existing materials in this topic area, including the FY18 ENVISION training series and technical brief on trachoma and LF dossier development. Act | East HQ staff will outline and compare the technical assistance methods and their associated costs, with input solicited from country teams. Possible dissemination methods include a program-level meeting on dossier support, inclusion of the topic in an Act | East technical roundtable, and specific cross-country learning meetings set up between countries that have final or near-final dossiers and countries that are earlier in the dossier process. A new learning question, “What are effective strategies for supporting dossier development and submission?,” will be addressed through this analysis.

Host Government and Partner Supported Activities

All NTD activities in Lao PDR are implemented directly by DCDC and CMPE.

Dossier Status for LF

USAID provided technical and financial support for pre-dossier development in FY18 and FY19 under the ENVISION project. A March 2018 workshop initiated the process, and following the workshop, ENVISION-supported technical consultant Dr. Kapa Ramaiah produced a draft dossier. Continued technical assistance from provincial and district health staff has kept the draft dossier updated with current data. Act | East Senior LF Advisor Molly Brady has provided feedback on the draft dossier that will be discussed with the national program during **LAO FY21 Activity 1: LF Dossier Development Support**. DCDC, with support from WHO, has collected data on the number of lymphedema and hydrocele patients nationwide in FY18, FY19, and FY20. The country is on track to submit the LF elimination dossier by 2022.

3. IR2 SUSTAINABILITY AND HSS STRATEGY ACTIVITIES

Improving Core NTD Functions

Data Security and Management

LF data are stored by the MOH in its own data management system and shared with WHO as back-up. The data are up to date in the current data files associated with the draft LF dossier. Act | East maintains a copy of the data on an external hard drive and keeps internal data files on several laptops.

Drug Management

Lao PDR receives WHO-donated ALB and praziquantel for SCH and STH MDA. Lao PDR reached stop-MDA criteria for LF in 2017, and WHO validated elimination of trachoma in Laos in 2017, so drugs are no longer procured or received for these programs.

Achieving Sustainability: Mainstreaming and HSS

Act | East completed a health systems desk review in December 2019 (FY20). The desk review highlighted positive aspects of the health system, such as a commitment to strengthening data systems through a national health management information system (HMIS) and a long-term commitment to NTD programs. The commitment to NTD programs includes support for implementing a five-year strategy for SCH control. The desk review also highlighted gaps within the health system, such as a lack of knowledge of financing processes for NTD programs across all levels and an imbalance of human resources for health. Lao PDR's health workforce is concentrated in urban areas, and there are fewer health workers overall than are needed to support the population. Considering the small scope of USAID's investment in Lao PDR, Act | East will not pursue additional HSS activities in the country.

4. IR3 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

No IR3 activities are planned in Lao PDR in FY21.

APPENDIX 1. MAPS

