

TOWARD MALARIA ELIMINATION IN LAO PDR

Inputs from community and civil society in Lao PDR to the Global Fund malaria concept note 2018-2020

On January 19, 2017, in Vientiane, representatives from communities most affected by malaria, civil society organisations working in the malaria response and malaria patients gathered in a consultation workshop to prepare inputs to the Global Fund RAI concept note 2018-2020. The workshop was organised by Lao Red Cross (LRC), Lao Positive Health Association (LaoPHA), Health Poverty Action (HPA) and with technical and financial support from French 5% Initiative, French Red Cross, GMS Malaria Civil Society Platform and APCASO.

Leadership from the National Center for Entomology, Parasitology and Malaria Control (CMPE), particularly Dr. Bousay, members of the RAI Regional Steering Committee, the Lao PDR CCM and UNOPS guided the meeting. Participants appreciated Lao PDR government's elimination commitment by 2030 and were impressed by the achievements of the National Malaria Program under the current RAI grant. Community and civil society look forward to continuing to work with the National Programme in implementing the elimination agenda and building on the successes achieved during RAI 1.

Inspired by the achievements to date, and guided by Global Fund principles of focusing on populations disproportionately affected, strengthening community systems, and removing barriers to access, in RAI 2, communities and civil society recommend the following activities in support of the National Malaria Programme:

- Engaging 'hard to reach' populations (including migrants and ethnic minority groups) through: developing and delivering innovative and culturally appropriate communication and education techniques and materials; disseminating prevention tools; utilizing new technologies; and, significantly, building sustainable community networks in these communities and populations;
- Community led case management (test, treat, track) ensuring compliance with treatment – critical to achieving the elimination agenda;
- Capacity building of communities in malaria endemic areas, including: civil society led capacity building in leadership, education techniques, communication/public speaking, monitoring, surveillance and evaluation training, among other skills; Valuing the important role of volunteers, incentivizing and professionalizing their work, and building sustainable community systems for health; instigating improved support structures for volunteers through mentoring and networking;
- Building partnerships between communities in malaria endemic areas and other stakeholders (including private sector).

Community and civil society participation should be designed using the Global Fund's Community System Strengthening (CSS) Framework.

Participants recommended that in the Lao PDR Global Fund malaria concept note 2018-2020 there will be a CSS component. This should be implemented by CSOs in coordination and collaboration with the National Malaria Programme and other national and local stakeholders. The CSS can be supported by civil society already working in Lao PDR, and can target the populations at high risk of malaria (including migrants and ethnic minorities).

The key contents of the Global Fund's CSS Framework have already been articulated in "Towards Greatest Impact and Effectiveness of RAI 2018-2020 - Malaria CSO Ideas", which was presented and strongly supported at the Regional Consultation Workshop in Bangkok, December 16, 2016.

Participants strongly believe that the participation of communities and civil society working with communities most affected by malaria will contribute significantly to sustainable efforts to control and eliminate malaria in Lao PDR.

Towards Greatest Impact and Effectiveness of RAI 2018-2020 - Malaria Civil Society Ideas

Background

- Following the Malaria Regional CS Platform consultation and the RAI RSC retreat in October 2016, a CS reflections and priority issues list was shared with members, and provided the framework for a discussion of, the CS Platform during a recent preparatory meeting held in Bangkok, 11-13 December 2016.
- CS Platform members from Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam were in attendance at the 11-13 December meeting organised by APCASO under the Global Fund-supported Malaria Technical Assistance Programme, held in collaboration with the regional Malaria CS Platform and the RAI RSC. CS partners were joined by members of the Global Fund Secretariat, UNOPS, the RSC Secretariat, and the RAI Phase funding request main writers for a series of constructive discussions at the meeting.
- CS Platform members are in full support of the RSC's 'Position paper for the development of the next regional malaria Funding Request' and align our proposed priorities with the overarching principles expressed in this paper.
- CS members discussed strategies to be implemented by CSO in close collaboration with the government and other stakeholders toward the ultimate goal of ending malaria in the GMS by making GF-funded malaria programmes reach the hardest to reach populations and achieve maximum impact.

Civil Society Priorities for the RAI Phase 2 Program

In line with and in addition to the strategic areas expressed in the RSC Position Paper, the CS Platform proposed two priority areas for inclusion in RAI 2 programming:

1. *Development and strengthening of community systems to respond to malaria.*

This is beyond strengthening of individual civil society organisations or village health workers - this is an approach that enables communities to serve their own needs. It involves mobilizing, empowering and funding community-based organizations and networks of the people most at risk of malaria, such as ethnic minorities, mobile and migrant populations, to increase their involvement in planning and implementing evidence-based interventions, thus maximizing grant impact.

- #### 2. *Removing barriers to accessing malaria-related services.*
- Recognising that the current policy environment presents several barriers for the hard-to-reach populations to access and utilize services, this intervention would both identify existing barriers, and proactively, advocate for policy coherence for effective malaria response within and across borders. This would serve to maintain national leadership, acknowledge differences in contexts but also ensure harmonisation and coordination in the national and regional policy monitoring and implementation.

The two priority areas are in line with Global Fund's operational objectives #1: focusing on the 'populations disproportionately affected' by the disease, #2: 'strengthen community response and system,' and #3: 'removing barriers to accessing services', and 'support meaningful engagement of key and vulnerable populations and networks in the GF-related processes.'

Both approaches are supported in the new GF Strategy are articulated in the GF Community Systems Strengthening Framework, elements of which include:

- Enabling environments and advocacy;
- Community networks, partnerships, coordination;
- Resources and capacity building;
- Community activities and service delivery;
- Organisational and leadership strengthening;
- Monitoring and evaluation and planning.

Civil society platform members commit to work with country and regional partners to implement these two strategies.

Civil Society and RAI 2 Process-Related Requests

In support of the vision of better coordination, harmonisation and planning across countries through a consolidated RAI Phase 2 grant, civil society:

- Welcome the role of the RSC in providing oversight and guidance to country CCMs; and
- Strongly support RSC representation in country dialogue processes, SR selection, grant writing and negotiation, to the fullest extent possible.

In support of RAI and Global Fund principles of inclusivity, transparency, ensuring meaningful civil society participation in funding request development, grant making and implementation, civil society:

- Welcome the RSC's decision in having three civil society representatives be part of the regional RAI Concept Note writing team;
- Look forward to collaborations with, and support from, the RSC and its Secretariat, and the CCMs towards CS preparatory meetings and processes in the lead up to the country dialogue processes;
- Request for civil society representation in country counterpart 'writing teams' for country components to the RAI funding request.