

**Project Advisory Team Meeting  
Regional Malaria CSO Platform, GMS  
29 – 30 October 2019**

**Participants:** Sun Maysac (Cambodia), Vieng Souriyo (Lao PDR), Dr. Phone Si Hein (Myanmar), Alistair Shaw (Thailand), and Nguyen Hoang Yen (Vietnam)  
Louis Da Gama, Dr. Htin Kyaw Thu, Shreehari Acharya, Dr. Sai Nay Min Shein, Rachel Sismar (Secretariat)

**Time:** 09.00 – 17.00

**Venue:** Esperado Lake View Hotel, Yangon, Myanmar

Meeting objectives:

1. To prepare presentation for the RAI RSC meeting
2. To discuss CSO platform governance structure and priorities for RAI3
3. To discuss TOR for evaluation of Regional Malaria CSO platform, GMS

Expected outcomes:

1. Current platform governance structure and hosting arrangement reviewed (what's working, what's not working, and how we can improve them)
2. Key platform's opportunities and barriers identified, together with the priorities for RAI3



Meeting started at 9.00 am.

## **I. Follow-Up from Previous Meeting**

*Mr. Shreehari Acharya*, Project Manager for Malaria CSO Platform, opened the Project Advisory Team (PAT) Meeting with a revisit of the previous PAT meeting activities. The discussion was focused on three platform position papers and the role of CSO engagement in the National Strategic Plan (NSP) development process. Followings are the key progresses made after the previous PAT meeting.

- CSO platform completed all activities advised by PAT, except one action item on finding consultant and resources to summarize advocacy papers. However, budget limitation does not allow us to implement so. In regard to the papers themselves, they are now available in drafts.
- NSP development process: No update on NSP development process from Cambodia. Malaria Elimination Action Framework (MEAF2 2021-2025) is being finalized with technical and financial support by WHO and CHAI. Thailand does not have plan to revise the NSP this year, or if happened, we do not expect a major change that will impact our work in the country. Myanmar CSOs engaged with clear role in the NSP development process. Vietnam and Lao DPR are in the process of developing the draft NSP.
- Data access: CSO platform participants pushed for access to Malaria-related data and CSO contribution to the National Programs. Shree updated that only Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam submitted the RAI3 priority papers.

### **Actions:**

1. Myanmar and other countries to share the draft or latest version of NSP to Shree for national dialogue preparation, with an indication of key revision points.
2. Lao DPR and Myanmar to submit the RAI3 priority focus areas. If not timely received, Shree to request from UNOPS for data/information on CSO contribution to the National Strategic Plan development to support the advocacy at the National Consultation Meetings. It is emphasized that these follow-ups have to be done with assistance from country focal points, and the data/information is strictly not for further sharing.

## **II. CSO Platform Performance Review**

*Dr. Htin Kyaw Thu*, RAI RSC CSO alternate representative, explained that during the past year implementation, CSO platform had experienced challenges and always put efforts to perform better as a Secretariat Office to country members. For RAI3 cycle (2021-2023), to become more effective the Secretariat plans to have conversation with each respective country, review the platform's TOR, and draft an outline for agreement and as a guidance for inclusion in the next cycle.

Before looking into the governance structure of the CSO Platform, PAT members were invited to share opinions on the benefits received from the previous 2-day meeting. The following were the responses captured from 5 countries.

- Overall, we are successful in term of achieving the set objectives.
- Discussion on country priorities, exchange in realistic issues and knowledge, as well as hearing feedbacks from other participants are very beneficial to country focal points. We foresee a stronger force for advocacy work in countries especially for this upcoming national dialogue.
- Assessment on country performance from the perspective of Principal Recipient (PR) and sharing such information from UNOPS are helpful for sub-recipients to understand the actual situation. Country priorities are significant. We may need to pull more details from countries for better understanding, and to ensure that the contents used in the upcoming National consultation Meetings and the Country Dialogues (Ministry level) are well prepared for smart negotiation.

**Actions:**

1. Send invitations to government officials and key stakeholders with advocacy statements and support from the Secretariat to influence their decisions.
2. Determine clear role and position of the CSO Platform e.g. acting as a regional office providing technical assistance to country focal points in term of advocacy and technical guidance, and determine strategic direction for the platform members in the area of malaria elimination (e.g. *Plasmodium Vivax*)
3. Support advocacy and capacity building at national level as countries may not have adequate financial and human resources to perform by themselves or support stakeholders at community or district level.

**III. GMS CSO Platform Governance**

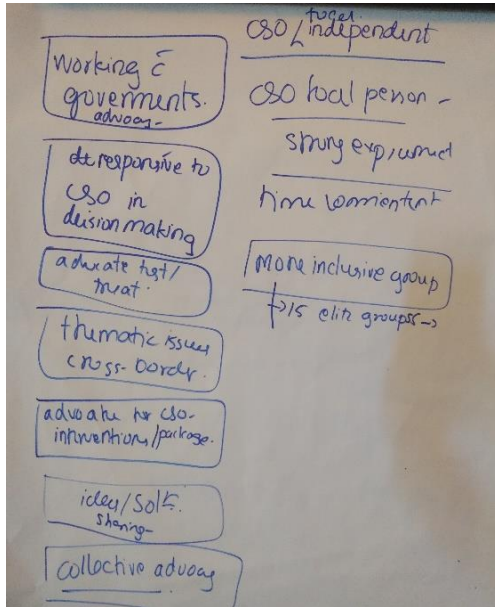
*Dr. Htin* presented the objective and the discussion process of the day with expectations to have (1) the current platform governance structure, (2) the hosting arrangement reviewed, (3) key opportunities and barriers identified, and (4) priorities for the CSO Platform agreed for the next 3-year grant cycle (i.e. 2020-2022). The brainstorming exercise will be based on the requests made from CSOs attending the 2-day CSO platform during 27-28 October 2019 (see p.7) and internal discussion among PAT members.

Underneath are the discussion questions and respective results.

**Question 1:** Defining our challenges: what are the key CSOs needs? What can we (the platform) do for them? What challenges surround them?

**Answer:**

- CSOs need the platform to assist in strengthening their voices (through advocacy) in negotiation process with the government, mobilize ideas from grassroot to higher level for positive response/acknowledgement by decision and policy makers. For example, CSO in Vietnam needs

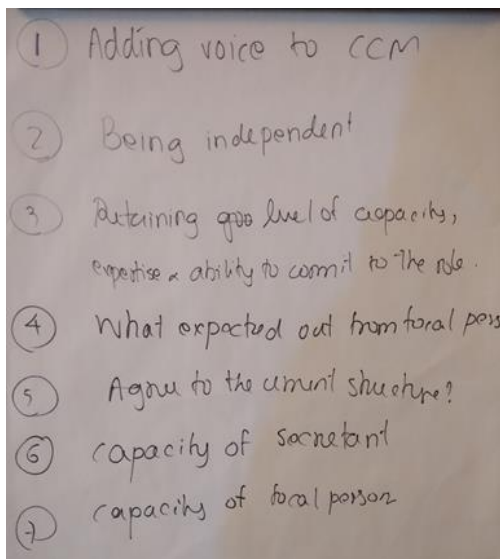


assistance in advocating test and treatment. In Cambodia, CSO needs assistance in planning, decision making and access to data. In Lao PDR, advocacy for comprehensive service package for high-risk populations, intervention and investment among CSOs, as well as their service delivery are necessary.

- As a regional platform, the Secretariat can support CSOs to assess the impact of intervention (e.g. on behavioral change), to decide on program direction (e.g. to follow or against the request from the government), to implement cross-border collaboration, and to lead in collective advocacy. The platform is to be more inclusive.

**Question 2:** Are we effective in the roles we have assumed? Is there something we could be doing differently to improve our relationships with implementing partners?

**Answer:**



- Locating in the same country with UNOPS and Thailand program, the platform received huge benefits in term of facilitation, collaboration, and progresses made in the country. However, limitation on voluntary time allocation and distance to other countries are still challenges. The platform needs to find the right structure and mechanism to resolve these problems. The Secretariat's operations are based on the current TOR. From the past 2-day meeting, countries imposed high expectations to the Secretariat to provide support in advocacy, technical advices, and improving relationship with the governments. It is suggested to create rapport and expand networks with technical partners to enhance our technical knowledge.

- Referring to above answer, to be more effective, a CSO focal person is to be an independent person possessing understanding of local context and needs, not playing a key

role in malaria implementation program, but have strong malaria-related knowledge. S/he will work closely with CSOs in countries on data collection, producing lessons learned and best practices. His/her main tasks with the Secretariat will be mainly on coordination, data sharing, advocacy, and provision of technical inputs. Time allocation must be > 20% for the platform.

- On bi-annual basis, implementers report to CCM. These reports must be shared with the platform for advocacy purpose. It is also necessary to request national programs to share data and information from grassroot level. In term of relationships with partners, they have been strengthened in countries.



- To strengthen our governance structure, different strategy like having CSO focal person who can represent in high-level platform sit in CCM will empower their roles and enhance benefits to our work. Two options proposed: (1) our selected CSO representative to involve in the CCM (one per country); and (2) one CSO/CCM member per country to attend all CSO meetings.
- The platform should assume regional role conducting analysis on cost effectiveness, research, data collection, public engagement, creating linkage with media and other technical networks, and providing technical assistance to countries for further discussion with their governments. This expectation leads to increase in number of qualified personnels.
- In general, all countries agreed to the current governance structure till end of RAI2 and later have independent CSO focal person(s) who is not playing a key role in malaria implementation program, but have strong malaria-related knowledge on board. This person shall not be related to or influenced by the governments or UN agencies. In regard to their capacities, the platform usually provides capacity building to them on regular basis.

**Actions:**

1. Revise TOR for focal and steering committee members
2. Appoint one focal person and one alternate (total 2 people) rather than 3 people per country, except for PAT meeting where other CSO colleagues can participate.
3. Ensure to create committee/working group/ teams with gender balance in consideration.

**Question 3: Identify and understand opportunities, barriers, and unmet needs**

**Answer:**

- In term of governance, technical expertise can be sought from external partnership with research institutes e.g. Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network (APMEN) and Mahidol University. They work at country level and on collaborative research. CSO platform shall benefit from partnership with them particularly on engaging with their available trainers, designing technical curriculum, and providing training to CSO members.
- CSO platform also requires additional expertise to help in supporting country-level assignments. These additional experts can be placed in the CSO platform as observers, technical advisors, backups or alternates to CSO focal persons.
- During the past year, there was inactiveness in the role of Steering Committee and therefore proposed for a reshuffle. However, noting that any change in role and responsibilities discussed here will be integrated as content in TOR and MoU. It will give an effect to our request for GF funding. A reshuffle of the Steering Committee and a restructure of this Project Advisory Team may also cause a veto or disagreement from country CSO members. As a result, it is agreed here to maintain their role and responsibilities under the current TOR until end of December 2020 to accommodate RAI3 proposal writing process.
- In term of advocacy, Dr. Phone proposed to hold annual events where experts, government officials, and other relevant stakeholders can attend. It is suggested to collaborate with Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance Secretariat (ALPMA) to get a one-day space for CSO platform activities such as presenting integrated community malaria volunteer (ICMV) approach, discussing best practices, lessons learned, and sharing successful models.

**Actions:**

1. *Shree* to identify strategic / technical partners.

2. Ad hoc group (leveraging from existing resources) to be led by Dr. Phone and other to-be-identified members as a pilot project to support on research needs, development of technical papers, etc. Their responsibility shall not duplicate APMEN’s current role as APMEN already has technical coordinators and experts available for assistance.
3. A working group is also recommended to be established with clear expectation and scope of work. This group shall not have decision-making power.
4. Develop a TOR describing expectations, conduct partner mapping to match their qualifications and CSO platform needs, and share with PAT members for feedback.
5. *Shree* to communicate to Steering Committee members on this extension and request for their availability confirmation for the period of Jan-Dec 2020. A new TOR shall be drafted and presented for agreement in April 2020 where necessary.
6. *Shree* to prepare a revised TOR on the new CSO platform governance structure

#### IV. Review of CSO Platform Objectives

*Dr. Htin* presented the current CSO Platform Objectives for the PAT members to review (1) which objectives we achieved, (2) which are still relevant, and (3) any new objective should be introduced for the benefits of the next funding cycle.

Obj 1: To provide an enabling environment for civil society actors to deliver and advocate for the delivery of adequate services to affected communities currently beyond the reach of mainstream services.

Obj 2: To ensure a strong 'last-mile' response in national and regional elimination programs, thus safeguarding the Global Fund return on investment, and progressing elimination in the hard to reach areas and populations

Obj 3: To improve the coordination of CSO actors at all levels, NGO, Ethnic Health Organizations and National Programs and link them with the networks in the GMS region.

Obj 4: To improve the technical capacity of CSO actors, where they sit outside the capacity building systems of national governments (peer support and formal training).

Obj 5: To ensure a strong program focus on strengthened community systems through engagement with malaria volunteers (VMW/VHW/MMW/MMV/CHV).

Obj 6: To bring the unique insight of CSO organizations to malaria elimination efforts, and in doing so, provide a voice to affected communities

Obj 7: Envision the forward-looking role of CSOs within the Health security agenda.

#### Results from discussion:

- Objective 1-3-4-5 and 6 are still relevant to the activities agreed at the CSO platform. Objective 2 and 7 are suggested for removal as they are no longer relevant.
- Coordination, advocacy for change and technical capacity building are our key roles for the next 3-year cycle.
- The objectives should be limited to 3 main focuses and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound).
- To achieve these objectives, it is necessary to

bear in mind that there are differences in the levels of technical knowledge among country members and difficulty in advocating CSO for inclusion in national decision making and policy making level. To support advocacy, countries may need to start collecting evidence-based data, develop lessons learned and best practices. And also, the Secretariat must look into the opportunity to establish a data platform and develop a community engagement strategy focusing on community-based level.

- PAT members agreed to the following goal and objectives for the CSO Platform for the next round. They will also be used as guidance in the proposal development.

**Proposed Goal:** Contribute to malaria elimination effort in the Greater Mekong Subregion

**Proposed Objectives:**

- Obj 1: Facilitate meaningful coordination and partnership between civil society organizations and other key malaria actors including donors, governments, and other relevant stakeholders (ethnic health and data sharing)

Obj 2: Advocate for enabling policy, strategies and plans that include community-based services and respect the rights of all community in the GMS (communicate successes, values added and contribution of communities and civil society organizations in malaria elimination efforts, enabling environment, domestic resource mobilization, accountability of spending, more funding for CSO)

Obj 3: Strengthen capacity among civil society actors by leveraging the strengths of implementing and other technical partners (community engagement tools and guidance, as well as community advocate)

- For Obj 1 and 3, there are existing mechanisms within the CSO Platform and its network to support this implementation. How to implement them and how to access technical data from the government are our main concerns.
- In regard to activities for inclusion under each objective, *Dr. Sai* presented the outcomes derived from the 2-day CSO Platform discussion as appear below in the picture.

**What CSO  
platform  
should do -  
Request from  
2-day  
participation**

**(1) ADVOCACY**

- Develop evidence-based regional advocacy statements and policy papers
- Advocate for CSO participation in governance, decision making process, and data sharing at country level
- Provide clear advocacy strategy and communication corresponding to the regional advocacy statements
- Advocate CSO role on CCM

**(2) COORDINATION**

- Strengthen national CSO structure and provide a platform for data sharing among GMS CSO partners
- Partner with others outside RAI CSO circle (involve other countries outside of GMS, possible linkage with other initiative for partnership e.g. APMEN and other disease CSOs)
- Facilitate and support representation of community members in appropriate national and regional fora

**(3) CAPACITY BUILDING**

- Produce training materials and tools for national CSOs on topics requested and provide mentorship based local context
- Facilitate the development of integrated manual for malaria volunteer workers
- Support country CSO Reps with training, guidance, mentoring

**(4) PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

- Support National CSO consultations in a better planned and more efficient manner
- Support cross-country field visits and advocacy objective

**(5) GOVERNANCE**

- Hold CSO Reps accountable for their roles and responsibilities
- Steering Committee members should not be malaria program implementer
- Consider increasing budget to support full-time/part-time country focal persons

- From the wish list, PAT members agreed for the CSO Platform implement the following **Proposed Activities:** (1) training, (2) country-level consultation/meeting, (3) regional-level consultation/meeting, (4) secretariat support (HR, admin) for CSOs to conduct program activities and participation in events, (5) hiring technical consultants, (6) field learning exchange visits, (7) media engagement (honorarium for media persons), production of IC materials and website maintenance, (8) support CCM's trips to countries or join our meetings at least, (9) data storage or share point for data and information sharing, (10) cross border activities, and (11) collaborative research or pilot projects.

**Action:**

- The Secretariat to prepare a draft TOR including Goal, Objectives, and Activity Priorities for review at the CSO Consultation Meetings in April 2020.

## V. Review of CSO Platform Hosting Arrangement

*Shree* shared with the PAT members on challenges faced and actions undertaken. Key challenges are listed in the picture below. To improve its operations process, he invited the PAT members to voice their opinion on what the ideal hosting arrangement and its process should look like, whether we continue with the current hosting or change is required, and key areas for improvement.

- **Complex decision making process** : CSO Rep and PAT in decision making and limited decision making capability of the Secretariat
- **Responsiveness in working with the platform secretariat**: low/non-responsive to consultations made by the Secretariat (e.g. for reports, agenda of the meeting)
- **Logistical challenges**: planning and payment for activities in countries where ARC does not have presence

### Results from discussion:

- ARC representative expressed willingness to continue supporting the CSO Platform as host organization. PAT members agreed to this proposal, with official bidding arrangement opened for interested organizations to join the competitive process unless ARC can provide official response on how to tackle current issues the CSO Platform is experiencing. Note that this approach is to avoid lengthy bidding process, maintain institutional knowledge, and facilitate smooth continuation of the platform operations.
- Expectation from the hosting organization has changed from the provision of administrative and human resources support to the provision of coordination, advocacy, technical assistance, and capacity building.

### Actions:

1. Establishment of a self-governed and autonomous entity for the platform is necessary to facilitate transparent decision making for activity implementation. It is recognized now that the internal rules and procedures of the host organization can become benefit or barrier. However, it should not be a barrier to implement the activities decided by PAT members. All PAT members agreed that there is a clear benefit of hosting organization to be in Thailand.
2. Dr. Htin, acting as a Chairperson at the PAT meeting, to send an email regarding the PAT meeting's decisions and requirements of the host organization to Rachel, the ARC representative.
3. PAT members recommended ARC to provide a formal response on what ARC can offer such as improved decision-making process, supportive financial management procedures, technical assistance to country members, capacity building, advocacy and communication tasks. If unsatisfied, CSO Platform shall open for official competitive bidding (new TOR).
4. ARC proposal to be circulated among the member of PAT and Steering Committee for review and agreement on non-bidding as well as on ARC continuation as the platform host.

## VI. Platform Evaluation

*Alistair* explained the outline for developing Platform Evaluation TOR and discussed the evaluation questions among PAT members.



**Recommendations:**

- Respondents to this evaluation should include stakeholders working in relation to and/or those who have knowledge about this CSO Platform, donors, platform partners from regional, national, and community level on our achievement of vision, mission, knowledge, and objectives.
- Evaluator must be an external and independent party for transparency and non-bias purposes.
- Evaluation questions should reflect relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of a project, as well as the project objectives set forth. These criteria provide the foundation for developing the main questions that each evaluation needs to answer. Other aspects a project upholds such as human rights and gender equality may be included as appropriate.
- Specific areas related to CSO Platform that require emphasis are the evaluation on sub-recipient performance, our facilitation from regional to national and community level, impact generated at community and national level, governance structure (impartiality and transparency), activities based on the objectives, values added from CSO platform meeting, cost effectiveness, recommendations on ways forward e.g. in term of disease integration.
- Methodology suggested are desk review, in-depth interview, and field survey. The focus is to get feedback on 9 priority questions.
- External/independent evaluators should possess good understanding in GF process, technical knowledge, and our implementation context at regional, national, and community level. Members of the selection panel will mainly comprise of Alistair and interested PAT members. A scoring matrix to be developed for shortlisting and final selection.

**Actions:**

1. Shree to discuss with UNOPS on its support towards external/independent evaluators' participation at the National CSO Consultations Meetings
2. The Secretariat to finalize the TOR for external/independent evaluators before December 2019, with expectation to receive the first draft report around the end of Feb 2020, and to appoint a contact person for the evaluators (not PAT members or Ex-PAT members).
3. Alistair to share final TOR on Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov night time; feedbacks from countries on Mon 4<sup>th</sup> Nov night time; expect application deadline within 1 week; *Shree* to share the call for applications among networks and ads agencies. Note that the consultant shall not be the implementer.

End.