



Humanitarian Emergency Response



Lao PDR Situation Report

14th March 2022

COVID-19 Update

Following a period of over 1,000 daily COVID-19 cases during the last quarter of 2021, the number of cases have been gradually declining down into the low-mid hundreds in February 2022. The Lao Government has been increasing its efforts to expand the vaccination coverage as much as possible along with booster shots and vaccination for the children aged 6-17 years old. New relaxed measures were issued allowing delegations, technical team, business persons, groups of tourists to be quarantined in the designated hotels for 48 hours, while awaiting their RT-PCR result. Home isolation and self-monitoring and treatment is also in place. As of this reporting period, the population vaccination coverage is 59.56% (70.33% for one dose) and community transmission of Omicron BA1 Variant has just began in early March. Restaurants and entertainment places are re-opened country-wide, without regards of specific area restrictions.



COVID Response

In Khammouane Province, World Vision supported the construction of seven community water supply systems to increase the access to clean water and fight against COVID-19. With the financial support of the EDF Foundation, over 3,300 individuals of Xebangfai district have a new, sustainable access to clean water directly from their house.

The Samui Nutrition Action Project provided COVID-19 prevention and protection items including facemasks, alcohol, gloves, PPE suits and face shields, for a total amount of 28 million LAK (app. 2,500 USD) to the Samui District Health Office. This donation supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade targets the district frontline workers to help them organize community vaccination campaign safely.

Community Vaccination Campaign (COVID-19)

In Khammouane province, World Vision provided financial support in a total amount of 15,520,000 LAK (app.1,385 USD) to the Xebangfai District Health Office to promote vaccination campaign in 13 target villages. 1,756 community members attended the event, and 1,142 people including children were vaccinated. Similarly, the European Union-funded AHAN Project has organized a COVID-19 prevention and vaccination campaign and provided health information and education in Attapeu province during January and February 2022. The events recorded 2,576 participants including 838 women. The project has also supported community vaccination with 344 community members, including 198 women, who have received vaccination during this period.



World Vision's Operations



7 Provinces



WVI-L staff 161



Direct beneficiaries 178,869



Children 58,068

Overview of Covid-19 Cases - 14th March 2022

New cases: 359 (30 imported cases, 329 community transmission)

Total accumulative cases: 146,687

Total deaths: 641

Total active cases: 1,233

Total recoveries: 144,813

Number of people fully vaccinated: 4,373,467 (60%)

Vaccination points: All provincial and district hospitals, mobile vaccination clinics;

Number of people in QCs supported by WV-WFP partnership over last two months: 2,837 (1,451 women)

Total cases detected in QCs supported by WV-WFP partnership over the last two months: 131 (76 women)

Key Concerns



Without appropriate remote learning response during school closure and proper protocols to safely open the school during the ongoing pandemic, **vulnerable children in Lao PDR will be left behind and won't be able to complete quality education.** These children are already struggling to keep studying, facing various barriers that include remoteness and distance to schools, weaker access to education resources, demands on the child for household chores and other distractions, lack of support to improve the environment for learning, and risks of being co-opted into agricultural activities and child labour and/or early marriage.



Low number of Outreach services is one reason for low immunization coverage in low performing districts. Outreach services require support as they are key to many of our remote communities accessing these essential health services, including accessing COVID-19 vaccine.



There is a need for a greater **support and advocacy for the vaccination of school-age children** against COVID-19, being mindful of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations on the subject.

Food assistance in Quarantine Centres

The flow of returning migrant workers into the quarantine centers increased after the new year, with a peak of over 700 people occupying the centres in early February. Since January 2022, 2,837 returning migrant workers registered in two World Vision-World Food Programme Quarantine Centres in Savannakhet and Saravane provinces, including 1,451 women (incl. 77 pregnant women), and 294 children (149 girls).

During this period, the food assistance project implemented by World Vision has been providing 3 meals a day per person, reaching a total of 84,710 meals, for an amount of 1,129,580,000 LAK (app. 98,500 USD).



Then, we guide them to the area for the newcomers, and provide them bowls, spoons, plates and cups they can re-use for every meal until they leave, so we reduce wastes. The incoming people also receive a card with a QR code to monitor if they have received their meal. The health conditions are closely monitored, and any positive test or worsened health condition of one of the centres' occupant will mean a transfer to the hospital for treatment.

On a brighter note, the temporary 'guests' know they will enjoy a well cooked, nutritious meal with the people accompanying them: "every day we have a detailed schedule of the food distribution for the three meals, so that the migrants know when to come and pick their food. The menu for each meal will be different, it can include fried food, soup, grilled or stewed meat, vegetables, and always fruits with a milk carton. Both sticky or steamed rice are alternated depending on the menu" says the volunteer. A child-focused organisation, World Vision is paying a particular attention on the nutrition of the children momentarily passing by the facilities, and tailoring its support to the specific needs of the centres' occupants:

"we order special meals for children, and also for people who have allergies and can't eat some food, as soon as they notify us when they arrive". To achieve the perilous mission of filling the migrants' stomachs with tasty food, World Vision partners with local restaurants from Savannakhet and Saravane, also impacted during COVID-19 with a decline in turnover.

An estimated 35,300 individuals, including 5,000 children, have met Uttama or one of the volunteers supporting the Government of Lao PDR to welcome back Lao nationals safely. Uttama shares some personal remarks, facing the diversity of people he met: "workers have a wide range of different ideas and behaviours, sometimes they don't understand and get mad with the protocols, but we take time to explain them and show that the process is set to improve their conditions". He also shares his lessons learnt and the great takeaways of this experience of more than a year: "I am amazed by the commitment of the volunteers, doing their best to get the job done, whether during the peak of migrations or the calmer periods. Another impression is the generosity and solidarity between the migrants, taking care of each other, and deeply thankful for the food we provide from day 1 to the end of their stay at the Centre".

It's already the end of the day, as the sunset is gradually leaving the floor to the lamps and bulbs' artificial lights of the Centre. The dinner has just been served for some 300 people currently crowding the Nonsavath Centre. Tonight, it is chicken fried rice in their plate. While the children and adults are enjoying their meal, it is time for Uttama to dispose his clothes of the day and drive back home. He knows his task has been completed today, and he knows more is to be done tomorrow, with familiar faces replaced by new ones.

Testimonial: 24h in the shoes of a Quarantine Centre volunteer

"Every day, I start my service at 7:20am at the Quarantine Centre of Nonsavath, in Savannakhet province. I wash my hands, wear a new personal protective equipment suit, put my hands in latex gloves and don't forget my mask. This is a routine I have been practicing for over a year now."

Uttama is one of the eight volunteers currently deployed by World Vision in the two Quarantine Centres supported by the World Food Programme. The 24-year-old man tells us what his daily life looks like since he decided to serve the vulnerable children and families stranded in their temporary shelter. All people entering the facilities need to go through a thorough process, as Uttama describes: "when people arrive at the centre and come to register, they undertake a PCR test collected by nurses and doctors for laboratory examination.

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