



Roll Back Malaria

Mekong IEC Project News

Welcome to the RBM IEC Project News. It aims to update project implementation and provide RBM news to all country IEC teams, counterparts, malaria partners in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (namely China, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) and Asian Development Bank, the project funder.

We would like to start with a short introduction to the project. The project objectives are:

- To develop user-friendly Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and guidelines for poor and vulnerable population groups at high risk for malaria infection;
- To enhance capacities of the government in community-based activities in malaria prevention, control and treatment; and
- To make national malaria control programmes more responsive to the needs of the target communities, particularly poor and vulnerable populations by supporting a common regional plan

The duration of the project is 22 months starting from November 2002 to August 2004.

Since the first advisory committee meeting in Manila in October 2002, each WHO country office discussed further with their government counterpart the IEC project implementation. A technical working group meeting was organized in Chiangmai on the implementation of community-based malaria prevention and control with special attention on ethnic groups along the international borders, in January 2003. It was the first step to a preliminary identification of ethnic groups and partners to work with. There were participants from malaria control programmes and social scientists in this region. The ethnic groups that were identified are;

- Hmong along the borders of China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam
- Karen between Myanmar and Thailand
- Mon-Khmer ethnolinguistic group in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam
- Migrants and ethnic groups in the Central Highlands of Vietnam

Another outcome from the meeting was the revision of the project plan of action. The technical working group suggested Revising the project plan of action to suit the immediate project objectives, timeframe and budget. The project coordinator and WHO Regional Advisor for of the Western Pacific Region produced a draft revision of the plan in accordance with the suggestions.

Dr. Wan Azmin, the Health Specialist from the ADB's Mekong Regional Department in Malaria visited the project in March. Mr. Pricha Petlueng,



the project coordinator gave a project update and discussed the revised plan of action that was suggested by the technical working group in January. In general the revised plan of action was accepted with addition of a mid-term review in September.

Cambodia is a leading country member in project implementation. Dr Duong Socheat, the Director of National Center for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control (CNM) has appointed Dr. Boukheng Thavrin, the head of Health Education Unit to be a focal point for the project. The project has recruited Mr. Un Bonhoeun as National IEC Specialist to assist CNM in RBM IEC Project. The Cambodia project team received project orientation and has developed a detailed plan of action for situation analysis to suit the local situation.



Picture: Dr. Duong Socheat during the Project Orientation.

The WHO Representative in China has finalized the recruitment for the national IEC Specialist position. The national IEC specialist will assist the malaria control programme and lead the RBM IEC Project implementation. This position will be based in Simao City, Yunnan Province where malaria prevalence is high among ethnic communities.

Dr. Somsak Prachakwong, Director of the Vector-Borne Disease (VBD) Bureau was appointed by the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand to liaise with the project coordinator. The Project Coordinator visited the VBD Bureau and Chiangmai and Maehongson malaria officers and gave a project orientation. Mr. Prayuth Sudathip, project's focal point with the Project Coordinator visited Maehongson, where 80% of the population is at risk of malaria. The majority of at risk population are Karen and Thai Yai ethnic groups. The situation analysis would identify the ethnic groups to work with and the lessons learned among malaria control projects in that area.

One of the first project activities is conducting a situation analysis. The situation analysis will provide malaria information, identify ethnic groups to work with, lessons learned from different malaria partners with a focus on the IEC component. The country project team, which consists of national IEC specialist, government counterpart and appropriate agencies, are going to conduct the analysis. The situation analysis is expected to be completed by the end of May.

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak has been affecting many countries including GMS member countries. It also affects the RBM IEC project implementation. It has delayed some countries' recruitment of national IEC specialists. The officers in charge in a few countries have to assist the government counterparts to work on SARS. Therefore the IEC Project Coordinator has had to postpone his visits to the country members to introduce and conduct project orientation for county teams, and to assist countries to develop plans of action.