

**National Health Research System
(NHRS) Mapping
in Laos**

**NIOPH - COHRED
2006**

Introduction

This document provides the responses to a mapping of the National Health Research System (NHRS) of Laos that took place for the Informal Consultation on National Health Research Systems Analysis in the Western Pacific Region, held in Penang, Malaysia from 9 to 11 May 2006.

This assessment intended to build a descriptive picture of the national health research systems in four key areas:

- A. Governance and management of the National Health Research System
- B. Institutions engaged in research for health
- C. Key stakeholders involved in research for health
- D. Available literature and data review

A. GOVERNANCE and MANAGEMENT of THE NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH SYSTEM (NHRS)

1. Health research governance structure in the country

In Laos, there are different structures involved in health research governance:

- The Council of Medical Sciences created in 1989 (MOH) according to the PM decree no. 450 to be an advisory body on Health Research and to develop human resources for research.
- The National Institute of Public Health (NIOPH, 1999) established to undertake the responsibility of the fifth main work plan of MOH: Health research and training management.
- The Five Year National Health Research Master Plan followed by priority setting according to each main work plan of the MOH.

2. Management of the NHRS (structure(s), position(s) or organisation(s) involved)

The management of Health Research is under the following intervening parties:

- National Council of Sciences
- Research institutions: cultural, economical, agricultural, educational, and sciences-technology-environment, National University of Laos
- Multi-sector collaboration and coordination for health programs
- Research training, monitoring and evaluation

3. Existence of an ‘office’ for research within the Ministry of Health

Within the Ministry of Health, there is an office for research lead by Prof. Dr. Bounngong Boupha, MD, PhD, acting as Director General of National Institute of Public Health and President of the Council of Medical Sciences.

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4. Existence of an ‘office’ or officials for health / health sector / health research within the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Science & Technology

Within the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Science & Technology, there is not an office nor officials in charge of health /health sector / health research in the country.

5. National Health Research Policy

The country's National Health Research Policy consists on the development of each Five Year National Health Research Master Plan.

The first Five Year National Health Research Master Plan was developed in 1992, the second in 1997 and the third in 2002.

6. National Health Priorities

Amongst the country's National Health Priorities, there is the study on the improvement of health and medical services in Lao PDR, Lao Master planning study, final report volume 3 Priority Programs (high, very high) November 2002.

7. National Health Research Priorities

The country's National Health Research Priorities are dealt with in the first, second and third Five Year National Health Research Master Plan.

8. Legislation dealing with health research

The legislation dealing with Health Research in Laos is described in both the following:

- Health Research Policy 1992.
- National Sciences and Technology Policy of the Lao PDR to the year 2020 approved by the Lao Government in 2003.

9. Stated values for the NHRS

The National Ethic Committee for Health Research (NECHR) was established in July 2002 in order to review all health research projects conducted in Lao PDR and its Office is at NIOPH.

Since then, 52 research projects have been reviewed, 49 research projects have been approved, and 3 research projects were rejected.

10. Stated aims of the NHRS

The National Health Research System in the context of Lao PDR aims to drive health equity and focus on country needs and priorities, examining current concern, experiences, and projects future planning for health research at national level.

11. Monitoring and evaluation of the NHRS

There is monitoring and evaluation of the National Health Research System in Laos.

LAO PDR follows the scientific tradition (evidence-based).

Thus, the development of each Five Year National Health Research Master Plan is followed by the research evaluation of each Five Year National Health Research Master Plan implementation.

The recent evaluation was the midterm review of the third Five Year implementation conducted in 2004, which provided information for the development of a long-term strategic plan for the NHRS strengthening in Lao PDR (the fourth Five Year National Health Research Master Plan).

12. Ethical review process or structures for health research

The ethical review process for health research is in charge of the Office of Secretariat of the NECHR at the Ethics and Health Research Department of the NIOPH.

It reviews all health research projects related to human subjects before submitting to NECHR for ethical consideration.

Moreover, this office translated the document *The Nuremberg Code: World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki Ethical Principle for medical research involving human subjects*, SOP of the WHO, distributed to concerned research institutions in the country.

It also developed the Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) for Lao PDR NECHR.

13. Existence of a mechanism(s) to increase the utilisation of research results by policy makers, managers, practitioners, public.

In Laos, increasing the utilisation of research results by policy makers, managers, practitioners and the public is taken care as follows:

- NIOPH published all research projects conducted by the NIOPH through dissemination workshops, annual national symposium (Paediatric symposium, Friendship hospital symposium), annual international symposium (Lao-Vietnam-Cambodia symposium);
- NIOPH produces its quarterly health sciences bulletin;
- Publication of research results through different channels of internal media;
- NIOPH created its website.

14. Existence of mechanism(s) to keep health policy makers informed of research advancement

The Department of Health Information System Development of NIOPH, is the structure responsible for studying and reviewing research studies conducted internationally to recommend to senior policy makers/ managers to apply the results in the context of Lao PDR.

15. Dissemination system for research findings

There is a system for the dissemination of research findings in Laos.

16. Involvement of media organisations in the dissemination of research for health

The following media organisations are involved in the dissemination of research for health:

- Vientiane Time
- Siengpasasol
- New Vientiane
- National radio
- National television

17. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of new health policies or interventions

The country monitors and evaluates the impact of new health policies or interventions.

18. System for collecting, analysing, and reporting of routine health information

In Laos, there is a system for collecting, analysing and reporting routine health information and it is located within the NHRS.

19. Regulation of the introduction of new health technologies, including drugs

Laos regulates the introduction of new health technologies, including drugs. This is a responsibility of the NHRS.

B. Institutions engaged in ‘research for health’

Institution	Commission	Conduct
(a) Government departments and agencies		
National Council of Sciences	YES	YES
Sciences, technology, & environmental agencies	YES	YES
National institute of Public Health	YES	YES
Institute for tropical medicine & international health	YES	YES
Educational research institute	YES	YES
Economical research institute	YES	YES
Agricultural research institute	YES	YES
Cultural research institute	YES	YES
National University of Laos	YES	YES
Sciences, technology, environment institute	YES	YES
Provincial health offices (17)	YES	YES

(b) Health care system		
Mahosot hospital	YES	YES
Friendship hospital	YES	YES
Sethathirath hospital	YES	YES
Savannakhet provincial hospital	YES	YES
Louangprabang provincial hospital	YES	YES
Champassack provincial hospital	YES	YES
Vientiane provincial hospital	YES	YES
Pharmaceutical factories	YES	YES
(c) Higher education and (national) research institutes / laboratories		
College of health technology	YES	YES
Nursing schools	YES	YES
Secondary school of Medicine	YES	YES
(d) <u>Private non-profit</u> organisations involved in research for health		
(e) Business enterprise or industry (<u>Private for-profit</u>)		
(f) International research and development sponsors or partners involved in research for health		
World Health Organization	YES	YES
UNICEF	YES	YES
JICA	YES	YES
SIDA	YES	YES
FAO	YES	YES
Concern World Wide	YES	YES
UNFPA	YES	YES
UNDP	YES	YES
EU	YES	YES
(g) Other institutions / commissions / structures / councils / networks / with impact on the activities of NHRS		
Additional mechanisms that impact on the activities of the NHRS:		
ENHR through CMS		
Lao Medical Association		
Lao Heart Association		

C. Key stakeholders involved in ‘research for health’ in the country

The following stakeholders are involved in ‘research for health’ in Laos:

- Leaders of National Sciences Council

- Sciences Technology Environment Agencies
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Finance
- Committee for Planning and investment
- National & international agencies in Lao PDR through wide sector approach coordination and collaboration

D. Available literature and data review on ‘research for health’ in the country

In Laos, the following documents on ‘research for health’ are available:

- Gender and reproductive health 1995
- Health transition and health sector reform in Lao PDR, 1997
- Analysis of Management of manpower in Lao PDR, 1998
- National Health Survey 2000
- Reproductive health survey 1995, 2000, 2005
- Child health & nutrition research survey 2003
- Lao Health Survey (as part of the World Health Survey 2003)
- Health Research System Analysis
- Knowledge Transfer and Exchange Practices in Lao PDR
- Surveillance systems through national committee for control of CD (EPI, Birth Flu, SARS, etc.)
- GIS
- The study of the improvement of health and medical services in Lao PDR-sector review
- Capacity of health sector of all levels (central, provincial, district, & village) to deliver of health care services programs in Lao PDR
- Others