

# Regional workshop lends bite to malaria control

Times Reporters

Health officials from Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) countries will undertake more effective malaria prevention and control efforts after completing a training workshop.

The 11-day workshop addresses the monitoring, evaluation and surveillance of malaria. Speaking at the opening ceremony yesterday, Deputy Minister of Health Dr Bounkouang Pichit said these activities are important for the successful control of the disease.

The widespread impact of malaria has been rolled back step-by-step in Mekong region countries in recent years, Dr Bounkouang said. However, much more needs to be done, particularly in view of the emergence in the region of evidence suggesting *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria resistance to artemisinin-based therapies.

"Without a good system of monitoring, evaluation and surveillance, we will never know the full extent of our progress on malaria control," Dr Bounkouang said.

"We also believe that if we have well-organised systems, we will be able to estimate, and find out the achievements, drawbacks, bottlenecks and difficulties in implementing malaria control activities."

Health officials should be able to better plan appropriate strategies to improve their



(From left, seated) Dr David M. Sintasath, Dr Bounkouang Pichit and Dr Bouasy Hongvanthong pose with GMS health officials at the workshop.

work step by step.

Acting Director of the Centre for Malaria, Parasitology and Entomology Dr Bouasy Hongvanthong said increasing monitoring and evaluation is vital for the management of disease control.

Nowhere is this training more timely than in GMS countries, which are embarking on pre-elimination and elimination of malaria and will need to develop, use, and evaluate tools to ensure that data is collected, used and reported in a timely manner for decision-making.

"The GMS countries – Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos – are at the forefront of malaria elimination efforts and will as such guide other countries around the world when they reach this phase.

These countries have

achieved much in the past decades in malaria control but now is not the time to stop," Dr Bouasy said.

Monitoring and evaluation are also important components of acquiring Global Fund grants.

"However, it is important to stress that monitoring and evaluation should not be donor-driven, and that countries should realise the importance of monitoring and evaluation for their overall programmes and strategies," he added.

Asia Technical Director of Malaria Consortium Dr David M. Sintasath, who is based in Bangkok, Thailand, said malaria epidemiology in this part of the world is rapidly changing, especially as countries continue to drive down malaria transmission by ensuring appropriate treatment.

"Good monitoring, evaluation and surveillance systems not only result in the effective control of malaria, but also make it possible to eradicate the disease in this region in the future," he said.

The monitoring and evaluation training curriculum was developed to address the need to strengthen capacity in the region in response to the Regional Malaria Indicator Framework.

The Training Workshop to Strengthen Malaria Monitoring and Evaluation for Greater Mekong Sub-region Countries was developed and organised by the Centre for Malaria Parasitology and Entomology and Malaria Consortium, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and World Health Organisation, with funding from USAID.

# Govt losing billions in land taxes

Times Reporters

State revenue from land taxes would double if everyone paid the taxes they owed, according to a land resource researcher.

According to the researcher, the incompletion of a project to register 1.6 million land plots across the country has provided loopholes for people to evade paying land taxes.

Deputy Director General of the Land Natural Resources Research Institute Dr Palikone Thalongsengchanh told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that about 140 billion kip was collected from land taxes in the 2010-11 fiscal year.

"If all 1.6 million land plots are registered and owners issued with land titles, it will make it easier for authorities to locate land owners and ensure they pay their taxes," he said.

Currently about 60 percent of the 1.6 million land plots are registered and titles have been issued to owners, but those who have failed to register their land have not paid taxes for several years.

Land officials agree that it is necessary to complete systems regarding land use and management to monitor the use of land in each classification.

If all land plots are registered or allocated, the government will know when people convert their land from one classification to another and be able to collect fees from land owners doing so.

Although state revenue from land taxes has increased hugely since responsibility for the collection of land taxes was transferred to the National Land Management Authority (NLMA) in the

2007-08 fiscal year, officials believe large amounts of land taxes continue to go unpaid.

In 2005-06, taxes collected from land rates and fees amounted to only 41.01 billion kip, but by 2008-09 the figure had increased to 131 billion kip.

The substantial increase was due to the fact that NLMA, which recently moved under the authority of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, introduced an electronic system to manage the collection of land taxes.

With the use of a computerised system and detailed mapping, villagers no longer mislead authorities over the true amount of land they own and must pay tax on all land in their possession.

Land officials have said the electronic system is now used to collect land taxes in 73 districts and there are plans to install it in all 143 districts nationwide by the end of the fiscal year.

State revenues from land taxes include registration fees, concession fees, land transfer fees and state service fees. State revenues from land taxes in the 2010-11 fiscal year are expected to total more than 200 billion kip.

Dr Palikone said state revenues from land taxes will increase by 25-30 percent every year once the land survey allocation project is completed.

The project is scheduled to end in 2015 and it is expected state revenues from land taxes will increase between 300 and 400 billion kip per year from then on, he added.