



An SMS message is used to report malaria cases

PROJECT BRIEF

Private sector SMS referral system pilot

Piloting a short message service (SMS) technology in the private sector to improve referrals and integrate private patient data into the National Malaria Information System (MIS) in Cambodia.

Project outline

Malaria services in Cambodia are provided for free through the public health sector. However, the majority of malaria patients in Cambodia – estimates indicate up to 70 percent – seek treatment through the private sector. One of the challenges this poses is integration of private sector patient data into national surveillance systems. While several mechanisms are currently in place to gather case data from selected private providers, tracking referrals from the private to the public sector continues to present complexities to overall surveillance in Cambodia.

Cambodia's *Strategic Plan to Strengthen Malaria Control and Elimination in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, 2010–2014* highlights the need to incorporate mobile health technologies to improve surveillance systems and strategies to capture private sector data, and recommends integration of that data into public health information systems.

The Public Private Mix (PPM) – initiated by the Cambodian National Centre for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control (CNM) and partners – identifies innovative ways to optimise referral mechanisms and recording systems, serving as a key step in Cambodia's continued progress towards malaria elimination. PPM uses public sector staff to select and train registered private providers in accordance with National Malaria Treatment Guidelines. Specific procedures and policies vary depending on the malaria zone where the private providers are based. According to the World Health Organisation's

Country

Cambodia

Donor

Department for International Development/UKaid

Length of project

April 2013–March 2014

Partners

National Center for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control (CNM), Ministry of Health, Cambodia

University Research Co., LLC (URC)

Innovative Support To Emergency Diseases and Disaster (InSTEDD)

Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI)

Collaborators

Provincial Health Department of Pailin Province and Battambang Operational District

Health Centres in Pailin Province and Battambang Operational District



A private health provider and Malaria Consortium field staff review SMS logs

Malaria Containment/Elimination Zoning Overview, malaria zones are defined on the basis of research data and antimalarial drug efficacy data from sentinel sites. Zone 1 includes areas where there has been evidence of artemisinin tolerant *P.falciparum*; zone 2 covers areas considered at risk.

In line with the strategic plan, PPM, and to support Cambodia’s move towards malaria elimination, this pilot aims to test a short message service (SMS) based referral system with private sector healthcare providers. The pilot includes 57 private providers and six health centres in Pailin Province (zone 1), and 16 private providers and three health centres in Battambang Operational District (zone 2).

Malaria Consortium has demonstrated its monitoring and evaluation and surveillance expertise in Cambodia, helping to strengthen the National Malaria Information System (MIS) and, with partners, has previously piloted an SMS alert system for village malaria workers. Following

successful implementation of that SMS system in the public sector, it is now important that referral mechanisms in the private sector are strengthened as well.

This pilot project will assess for the first time the potential added value of a referral SMS approach to fully integrate malaria case reports in the MIS and enable a comprehensive picture of malaria burden in Cambodia that accounts for both public and private sector data and avoids duplication of cases registered in the public sector.

Project objectives

The project aims to strengthen malaria control and elimination in the Great Mekong Sub-Region. The objectives of this project are:

- » to design and test an innovative SMS alert system with registered private providers in Pailin Province (zone 1) and Battambang Operational District (zone 2)
- » to identify bottlenecks and challenges that could affect the effectiveness of a full scale up of this referral system through follow up interviews with private providers, patients and health centre staff



A private clinic sign: “Health check-up and treatment”

This project supports efforts to deliver:

- ✓ Malaria control and elimination
- ✓ Health systems strengthening
- ✓ Operational research

Malaria Consortium

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