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 Boukouang Phichit 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 Boukouang said. However, much more needs to be done, particularly in view of the emergence of the region on 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 Boukouang said.

"We also believe that if we have well-organised systems, we will be able to estimate, 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 work step by step."

Acting Director of the Centre for Malaria, Parasitology and Entomology Dr Bouasy Hongvannthong 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 each 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.

"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, 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 implementation 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 incomplete 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 by 50 percent since 2006, the expected state revenue from land taxes will increase between 300 and 400 billion kip per year from then on, added.