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Strategies And Approaches To AIDS Communications
In Lao People's Democratic Republic

By

Kongsayask Anothay
STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES
TO AIDS COMMUNICATIONS
IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Paper presented in the Seminar
on Mass Media and AIDS in Southeast Asia
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Prepared by Dr. KONGSAVASAK ANOTHAY
Deputy-Director of the Center of Information and Education for Health,
Ministry of Health.

Over-viewed by Dr. Sithat INSIENGMAY,
Director of NIHE, Secretary of the NCCA.
<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquire Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>GPA</td>
<td>Global Program on AIDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education and Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTP</td>
<td>Medium-Term Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCA</td>
<td>National Committee for the Control of AIDS</td>
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<td>STD</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Diseases</td>
</tr>
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<td>CIEH</td>
<td>Center of Information and Education for Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAO PDR.</td>
<td>Lao People's Democratic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOs</td>
<td>Government Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organizations</td>
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I. BACKGROUND

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (LAO PDR.) is a landlocked developing country in the Southeast Asia region covering an area of 237 000 square kilometers with the population of about more than 4 Million people. Geographically the Lao PDR is surrounded by five neighboring countries e.g. China in the North, Vietnam in the East, Cambodia in the South, Thailand in the West and Myanmar in the North-West. 2/3 of the country, the North and the East are composed by the mountainous areas, and 1/3 in the West by the low land area. The big part of the Mekong River makes the border of the Lao PDR. with the North-East of Thailand. 80% of the population are farmers. The literacy rate is about 49%. The GDP is about 200 USS per capita per year. The Life Expectancy is about 50 years old and the Growth rate is about 2.97% per year.

The young people 0-14 years old cover about 43% of the population while there are only 3% of the old people of 65 years old and higher. The Birth rate is about 45.8% and the Mortality rate is about 16.1%. The Infant Mortality rate of the children under 1 year is about 117% and for 1-5 years is about 42%. The common disease are: Malaria, Diarrhea, Dysentery, Respiratory Infection, Meningitis, Measles, Tuberculosis, Leprosy, Dengue Fever, Gastro-Enteritis, Hepatitis and Shistosomiasis in the South part of the country. The people at risk are mostly the pregnant women from the year 15 to 45. There is about 1 death for 35 pregnant women.

The increasing number of AIDS/HIV cases in Thailand has been known in Lao PDR. as a dangerous signal for health problems which is coming up with the opening of the Lao Market-oriented Economy, the development of infrastructure and the improvement of international communication such as routes and the completion of the Mekong River Bridge between Thailand and Lao PDR. This could lead to the increasing of the incidence of STD and HIV/AIDS.

To prevent from the above problems, the National Committee for the Control of Aids (NCCA) has been setup since in the beginning of the year 90 under the presidency of the Minister of Health and with the financial and the technical support of the International Organization such as the World Health Organization.
II. HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION

In May 1991, no case of AIDS had been reported in Lao PDR., except one positive case found in a repatriated woman from refugee camps in Thailand.

At December 1992, total blood samples (8,447) were tested and it was found 20 seropositives of which 18 were confirmed by Western blot by WHO's Collaborating Center in Australia and in Thailand. Out of 20 seropositives. Only one death was reported in 1991.

Since the beginning of blood testing, the updated report at 31 March 1994 shows that there were accumulated 16,693 cases examined of which 42 confirmed HIV positive and 6 deaths.

SERA TESTED FOR HIV ANTIBODY UP TO DECEMBER 1993 IN LAO PDR.

SOURCE: NCCA
REPORTED DATE: 30/04/94

<table>
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<tr>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>No. TESTED</th>
<th>HIV (+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLOOD DONORS</td>
<td>9570</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATIENTS</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAO REFUGEES FROM THAILAND AND CHINA</td>
<td>3205</td>
<td>09</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAO RETURNEES FROM THAILAND</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR WORKERS</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>03</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENTS</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECRUITS</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>00</td>
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<tr>
<td>POLICE</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>00</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPLOYEES</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILITARY</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VILLAGERS (PHONGSALY PROVINCE)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREGNANT WOMEN</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRISONERS</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,183</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
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* CUMULATIVE NUMBER TESTED: 17,183
DEATH CASES: 05

III. Major Achievement in 1993

After completed the formulation of the general workplan of 1993, the implementation of four sectors of activities such as Program Management, Health Education, Surveillance and control and Laboratory Support were conducted. At the end of 1993, 33 activities were carried out:

1. Procurement of different types of video cassettes on AIDS
2. Preparation and distribution of information pamphlets to blood donors.
3. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Savannakhet province.
4. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Bokeo province
5. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Boko.
6. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Savannakhet
7. Training of trainers in sentinel province, LuangNamtha
8. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Phongsaly
9. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, LuangNamtha province
10. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Phongsaly province
11. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Vientiane province
12. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Vientiane
13. Pretesting of training materials. (In progress)
14. Training of resource persons. (In progress)
15. Training and orientation of teachers.
16. World AIDS Day activities.
17. Development and production of training materials for teachers
18. Printing of 300 copies of training materials and 10,000 copies of guidelines.
19. IEC activities in public festivals
20. Evaluation of school AIDS education. (In progress)
21. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Savannakhet
22. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Boko.
23. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Vientiane
24. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, Phongsaly
25. HIV testing for sentinel surveillance, LuangNamtha
26. Training of teachers from teacher's schools, Vientiane
27. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Savannakhet
28. Periodical supervision field trips. (In progress)
29. National Workshop for heads of all nursing schools to plan for the inclusion of AIDS in the curriculum. (In progress)

For school Teachers
30. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Khammouane
31. Training of trainers in sentinel province, LuangPrabang
32. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Champassack
33. Training of trainers in sentinel province, Vientiane

* Second round pending or lack of test kits.

IV. STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES ON AIDS COMMUNICATIONS

According to the Health Education activities, the strategies and approaches of AIDS Communication are as follows:

1. **Orientation workshop, study tour, training and planning**
   - National orientation on AIDS for politicians and leaders
   - Study tour to neighboring countries for political leaders, army, media, NCC, and local NGOs (provinces)
   - Establishment of IEC subcommittees and provincial AIDS committees
   - National workshop for Health Educators from central and sentinel provinces
- Fellowship to study health education experience for the Information Department and the Center of Information and Education for Health (CIEH)

- Collaborate with the CIEH in pretesting and distribution of health education materials

- Training of resource persons on AIDS/STD education

- Training of key informants to be trainers for leaders from target groups in provincial cities

- Training and orientation for representatives from village youth organizations in sentinel provinces

- Training and orientation for representatives from village women groups in sentinel provinces

- Orientation for prisoners in selected cities

- Orientation for policemen and recruits in selected cities

- Orientation for army officers and recruits in army camps

- AIDS information to antenatal attenders

- Planning workshop for central and provincial planners/teachers

2. Production and distribution of educational materials

- Providing of IEC equipment

- Printing and distribution of leaflets to general public in all provinces

- Preparation of slides set and cassette tapes in Lao language

- Printing of calendars with AIDS and STD information

- Procurement of copies of video cassettes dubbing in Lao language for distribution to CIEH and other appropriate agencies

- Production of flip charts and posters to be used in general public, universities, schools, mass organization and government offices.

- Development and production of AIDS and STD training manuals to be used by trainers at district level

- Production and distribution of "AIDS information for travelers" leaflets in border provinces, river ports, airports, bus stations.

3. Mass-media

- Radio programs or radio spots on AIDS broadcasting in national and provincial radio stations

- Television programs on AIDS broadcasting in national and provincial TV stations

- Question-answer column in a major newspaper to invite readers to write and ask about STD and AIDS

- Publication of articles in national newspapers and magazines

- Publication and distribution of a quarterly magazine "AIDS Newsletter"

4. Special campaigns

- Organize World AIDS Day in each sentinel city with various activities

- Organize and distribution of leaflets and show of video to public in annual cultural affairs

5. Outreach program-increase target groups: factory workers, hotel workers, school teachers

- Providing support to the Women Federation trainers to organize orientation for women in each district

- Fellowships to observe a well-established school AIDS education program abroad
- Development and production of training materials to be inserted in biology text of secondary schools for teachers' training school
- Printing of training manuals and teachers' guidelines to be given to trainers and to all secondary schools as well as teachers' training schools
- Orientation on condom use in all training in all provinces

V. PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS:

Although the development of the above strategies, the implement of all the planned activities has been carried out not very successful. This is due to the lack of fund, lack of NGOs and donors coordination, lack of multisectorial involvement, insufficient material support and delays in approval of projects and delays in financial procedures on government side.

REFERENCES


