

## **[Press Release] LAO PDR ADVANCES COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY**

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Vientiane, LAO PDR–The Lao People’s Democratic Republic has taken a momentous step forward to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease threats by developing a five-year plan aligned with the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR). From December 20-21, the Ministry of Health’s Department of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry’s Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF), **with assistance from the U.S Government through U.S. Agency for International Development(USAID)**, convened over 120 representatives from government stakeholders, WHO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and bilateral development partners in Vientiane to create a National Five-Year Roadmap to build capacity within Laos for strengthened prevention, detection and response to emerging infectious disease threats with pandemic potential.

The United States, a key development partner and leader in advancing the Global Health Security Agenda, is providing technical assistance to the Government of Laos in the formation and implementation of its National Five-Year Roadmap, alongside other donors.

In her opening remarks, Alexandria Huerta, USAID Laos Country Office Director and meeting co-chair said, “We congratulate Laos on its longstanding leadership in preparedness for emerging disease threats and we also thank you for your leadership in working across sectors to develop the GHSA Roadmap.” She added “We join you in your commitment to secure not only a safer, healthier, more prosperous Lao PDR, but also stronger and more resilient regional and global public health.”

Dr. BounlayPhommasack, DCDC Director-General and meeting co-chair said, “Greater health security is a national priority for Laos. Better partnership and collaboration to address high risk threats within and across borders will help improve our collective ability to achieve GHSA and IHR objectives.” Co-chair Dr. SithongPhiphakkavong, DLF Deputy Director-General, added, “Protecting human, animal and environmental health is an enormous challenge in today’s world. The GHSA Roadmap presents a vital framework for coordinating across sectors and borders in order to meet this challenge.”

Lao PDR currently faces high risk threats including cross-border infectious diseases, and emerging diseases that can pass from animals to humans, particularly during periods of development and environmental stress. The complex nature of these health threats requires infrastructure; equipment; skilled workforce; and coordination among government agencies, the private sector, and civil society in order to respond effectively.

The Lao PDR National Five-Year Roadmap sets key targets for 2021 across 19 different categories including countering antimicrobial resistance, strengthening surveillance, establishing emergency operations centers, expanding a skilled global health security workforce, and building a whole-of-government approach to

biosafety and biosecurity. The immediate next step before the plan can go into effect is to seek governmental endorsement for the roadmap by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, anticipated to take place in early 2017.

**Additional Information:**

<b>Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA)</b>	<a href="https://www.ghsagenda.org/">https://www.ghsagenda.org/</a> <a href="https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/12/fact-sheet-united-states-leadership-advance-global-health-security">https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/12/fact-sheet-united-states-leadership-advance-global-health-security</a>
<b>WHO International Health Regulations (IHR)</b>	<a href="http://www.who.int/topics/international_health_regulations/en/">http://www.who.int/topics/international_health_regulations/en/</a>
<b>U.S. Mission to Laos</b>	<a href="https://la.usembassy.gov/">https://la.usembassy.gov/</a>