

MID-BCC – Communications for Change in Infectious Diseases in Greater Mekong Subregion

Participatory Action Research: Peoples' Health Perspectives and Practices in Two Villages of Bokeo Province

Lessons Learned Forum
Sept 5-6, Mercure Hotel, Vientiane

Background

- ❑ The Communications for Change in Infectious Diseases in Greater Mekong Subregion (MID-BCC) employs PAR as a methodology to bring in more community participation in identifying people's health issues.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION
RESEARCH (PAR)
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A NATIONAL
AVIAN INFLUENZA
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

A FIELD GUIDE

Background

- The Lao government is a signatory to the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Cooperation along with countries: Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand. This Mekong cross border cooperation aims to accelerate the health status and pandemic preparedness of these countries.
- The PAR in Bokeo is envisioned to generate information about the communities' most pressing health problems, health practices, health seeking behavior, and feasible solutions to address these problems by the community people themselves.
- Bokeo is part of the “Golden Triangle” area where Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand meet.
- Houay xai village borders Chang Rai province in Thailand; Ton Pheung borders the Tachilek district of Myanmar and Chang Rai of Thailand.

Coordination and collaboration

- The PAR Team presented the project to the Provincial Health Department (PHO). The PHO facilitated the coordination with the District Health Offices of Huoay xai and Tonpheung which correspondingly arranged the PAR team's arrival with the village leaders.



The PAR Team was composed of: 3 FHI360 Staff, 1 PHO staff, 1 DPHO (Huoay xai) staff, 1 DPHO (Tonpheung) staff, and 2 village leaders.

PAR Objectives

- ❑ To understand the daily life of the people living near the border of neighboring countries including livelihood, culture and traditional practices that affect their health
- ❑ To determine the communication behavior and practices of people on how they seek health care
- ❑ To look at communication behavior and prevention practices of people toward avian influenza and other infectious diseases

Participants

- 62 focus group participants including 22 members of the village councils; 20 female villagers; and 20 male respondents



Findings



- ❑ The two villages had access to public health services from nearest government hospitals
- ❑ They were frequently visited by health care workers especially in Houayxai where there is no health volunteer
- ❑ For emergency cases, people preferred to Thai hospitals despite the higher cost of services
- ❑ Both villages are aware of seasonal flu, which naturally occurs as the season changes

Findings

- ❑ The participants heard about bird flu but never experienced an outbreak
- ❑ Few families experienced dengue and malaria
- ❑ Villagers can identify symptoms of seasonal flu (not bird flu); dengue and malaria
- ❑ Cross –border networking with Thailand increased during special events like boat race festival and Buddhist New Year
- ❑ Women were the main care givers



Implications of Findings

- The people's health seeking behavior is low. Health issue is not a concern in the family. The most important problem the villagers are worried most is economic – their means of livelihood and how to augment their income.
- People underestimate the risk of bird flu. They will not take any action since they never experienced it.



Implications of Findings

- ❑ They believe that occurrence of seasonal flu is naturally occurring during the cold season. Such findings emphasize the need for provision of information about safer behavior and practices.
- ❑ The women (mothers) share a significant amount of their time to take care of the sick person in the family. Focus should be placed on developing home care messages and materials for mothers. However, messages on shared responsibility in taking care of the sick member of the family should be addressed to men (fathers) to reduce the burden on the part of the mothers.

Lessons learned

- From the PAR, we learned what our target audience cares about and what barriers they overcome
- The PAR provided us the opportunity to hear the needs of the community and what they think of their situations
- The PAR methodology can be applied in strategic decision making for other health issues of the provincial health department