

## Scaling up the use of SARS-CoV-2 Antigen RDT in communities in Lao PDR

### Authors:

Xangsayarath P<sup>1</sup>, Khamphongphane B<sup>1</sup>, Soonthornsata B<sup>2</sup>, Rioja MR<sup>3</sup>, Young G<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology, Ministry of Health, Lao PDR,

<sup>2</sup>Clinton Health Access Initiative, Vientiane, Lao PDR, <sup>3</sup>Clinton Health Access Initiative, Boston, USA

**Background/Approach:** Population living in remote areas of Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) has limited access to health facilities, and recent pandemic of COVID-19 has made clear the imperative of rapid and accurate diagnostic tests for early detection of confirmed cases. However, particularly in resource-constrained settings within the country where access to laboratory based nucleic acid amplification tests are limited or with prolonged turnaround times, the use of COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Diagnostic Tests (AgRDTs) has substantial practical advantages when point-of-care testing needed as per the policy issued by Ministry of Health.

**Analysis/Argument:** To support the rollout of appropriate use of AgRDTs, ensuring access to COVID-19 diagnostic testing in communities, AgRDTs were distributed and training of trainers were conducted. Supervision visits were carried out between September and October 2022 to ensure that accurate results are obtained, using a testing site supervision checklist to determine if key steps were being performed and scores were calculated in percentage and if necessary, a hands-on re-training was provided.

**Outcome/Results:** AgRDTs were expanded to 587 sites in nine provinces and subnational trainings were also completed with a total of 188 healthcare workers at provincial and district levels were trained as trainers. This ensures taking ownership of the the implementation. Overall, thirty testing sites were visited by trained supervisors including ten community hospitals and twenty health centers in rural and remote areas. We observed three sites scored greater than 90% and eleven sites scored greater than 80%, suggesting adequate performance with corrective actions provided except the remaining eleven sites that required re-training. There were no score for five sites due to delay in site activation, however, refresher trainings were provided.

**Conclusions/Applications:** Based on the findings and with periodic supervision visits performed, the practices will progressively be scaled up to expand the use of AgRDTs ensuring quality of testing throughout the country.

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