

WHA76 Intervention for Lao Delegation on Monday, 23 May 2023

General discussion Saving lives, driving health for all (Draft 20230510)

It is my great honor to celebrate WHO's 75th birthday and the milestones we have achieved together to drive health for all.

Some of success stories from Lao PDR include:

- We controlled the COVID-19 pandemic successfully by applying a whole-of-society approach with strong government leadership, multi-sectoral collaboration, commitments of our health care workers, and empowered communities. These elements have proven to be key to address any public health emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic was an opportunity to increase public awareness and interest in health.
- Maternal mortality dropped from 579 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000, to 126 in 2020 – a reduction of 80% over twenty years. This is one of the fastest falling rates in the world according to a WHO report earlier this year, along with declines of Lao PDR's infant mortality rate and children-under-5 years mortality.
- Lao PDR has also made great gains in controlling communicable diseases, including malaria which has almost been eliminated, and lymphatic filariasis for which elimination is currently being certified.

However, in our journey towards universal health coverage, we face many challenges. Besides the fact that Laos PDR is still prone to emerging infectious diseases and public health emergencies, current disruptions to the global financial system and slow national reforms, high inflation, and donor transition have impacted sustainable health financing.

The intensified and sustained support of WHO during this challenging time is much appreciated as our hard-won gains are at risk.

With the planned Health Sector Reform, we are exploring how to better train and utilize human resources, making major efforts to upgrade and manage healthcare facilities more efficiently. We are also identifying options – such as pro-health taxes- to generate the government revenues for the health sector.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with WHO and partners to accelerate progress towards achieving universal health coverage and health-related Sustainable Development Goals in the future. As the ASEAN Health Ministers' Chair, we will also collaborate closely with the ASEAN member countries to contribute to our common goals at regional and global levels.

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