

Exchange and Learning Workshop for Field Workers in HIV Prevention Projects for Men having Sex with Men in the Greater Mekong Sub-region in Vientiane, Lao PDR on September 5-7, 2006

Organized by the Center for HIV/AIDS and STIs (Ministry of Public Health, Lao PDR), The Burnet Institute and UNESCO Bangkok

Funded by UNAIDS and CDC/GAP

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I. Meeting-related information

Meeting Venue and Opening Session

The 'Exchange and Learning Workshop for Field Workers in HIV Prevention Projects for Men having Sex with Men in the Greater Mekong Sub-region in Vientiane, Lao PDR' will be held at Lao Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR, from 5-7 September, 2006. Participants will include field workers working in MSM projects in four countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region, namely: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The address of the meeting venue, Lao Plaza Hotel, is:

Lao Plaza Hotel
63 Samsenethai Road
PO Box 6708
Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Telephone: +(856 21) 218800 - 1
Facsimile: +(856 21) 218808 - 9
Email: lph@laoplazahotel.com
Website: <http://www.laoplazahotel.com>

Registration will begin at **8:30 am** on Tuesday, 5 September, 2006. The Opening Session will begin at 9:00 am.

Registration and identification badges

Participants are requested to register and obtain identification badges at the Registration Desk, located in front of the Conference Room, between 8:00 am and 9:00 am on 5 September, 2006. Participants who are not able to register on the opening day are requested to do so on subsequent days, to ensure that their names appear on the list of participants. You are requested to wear your identification badges at all time during three days at UNESCO.

Documents

The meeting will be conducted in English. Translation into Khmer, Thai-Laotian and Vietnamese will be available. Documents that participants wish to circulate during the workshop should be forwarded to the secretariat (at the address below) by 25 August, 2006 at the latest.

Secretariat

Questions regarding the meeting arrangements can be directed to:

Srisuman Sartsara (Kik)

National Consultant for HIV/AIDS Coordination and School Health Programme
HIV/AIDS Coordination and School Health Unit
UNESCO Bangkok
920 Sukhumvit Road,
Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Phone: (66-2) 391-0577 ext. 116
Fax: (66-2) 391-0866
E-mail: s.srisuman@unesco Bangkok.org

Participation expenses

International participants who attend for the entire three days of the workshop will receive an amount in US currency (US Dollar) to cover expenses incurred as a result of attending the meeting as below:

- Round trip air ticket from and to your place of residence (ticket will be issued by UNESCO and sent to you)
- Accommodation including breakfast for 4 nights; check in on 4 Sept and check out on 8 Sept. (at Mali Namphu Guesthouse). Everybody will stay in the same place, which is only 3 minutes walking to Lao Plaza, venue of the workshop
- Lunch and coffee break will be provided during the workshop
- Reduced Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) as a pocket money to cover dinners, transportation cost and airport tax will be provided at the rate of US\$ 30 per day for 4 days
- Transportation from and to Wattay airport in Vientiane will be arranged for all participants
- Farewell dinner will be provided on the last day of the workshop (7 September, 2006)

UNESCO will not pay for accommodation for participants from Lao PDR, but will pay for Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) to cover their transportation etc during the workshop at the rate of US\$ 10 per day for 3 days

UNESCO regrets that pre-departure costs such as passport application fees will not be reimbursed

Accommodation

UNESCO Bangkok will make a hotel reservation on your behalf at the **Mali Namphu Guesthouse**.

The cost of the hotel is at the special rate of USD 17 per night inclusive of breakfast, service charges and government tax. UNESCO will pay for the accommodation of all participants directly. Please be advised that any additional costs incurred (telephone calls, laundry or mini bar charges) will need to be paid by the participants themselves.

Should you need to extend your stay at the hotel, you can take advantage of the special rate of USD 17 per night; if you want to do this please notify the secretariat no later than 25 August, 2006. Contact: Srisuman Sartsara, HIV/AIDS Coordination and School Health Unit, UNESCO Bangkok (email: s.srisuman@unesco Bangkok.org : Fax: +66 2 391-0577).

Faxes can be transmitted through the hotel business centre.

The address of the Mali Namphu Guesthouse is:



Mali Namphu Guesthouse
114 Pangkham Road, P.O. Box 39, Vientiane, Lao PDR
Tel. (856) 21215093 Fax. (856) 21263298
Email : malinamp@laotel.com

Meals

Lunches and snacks will be provided for the three days of the meeting (5-7 September, 2006). On the last day of the workshop, 7 September UNESCO will provide a farewell dinner for all participants.

Arrival at the airport

UNESCO will arrange transportation from and to the airport. The journey will normally take approximately 30 minutes.

Departure from Vientiane

Airport departure tax is payable at the airport tax counters next to the passport control entrance. The cost is currently 10 USD for international flights. Please have US dollar with you for this since they will take **cash only**, and no other currency is accepted.

II. Other Information

Health and Insurance

Participants are advised to take out full insurance cover for medical treatment and accidents, including evacuation to their home country. It is also advisable to also have insurance cover for unexpected losses and expenses (e.g. cancelled flight, lost passport, stolen cash, credit cards, passport or luggage). Vaccinations may be necessary. Discuss your vaccination requirements with your doctor. Please note that some vaccinations must be administered several weeks before departure.

Visitors to Lao PDR are advised to wear mosquito repellent, including during daylight when the dengue-carrying mosquito is most active. Long sleeves and long trousers are also recommended. Mosquito repellents are available locally. All major cities and towns are malaria-free, but if you plan to travel to rural areas, it may be advisable to seek advice from your doctor regarding prevention of malaria.

It is not advisable to drink tap water anywhere in Lao PDR. Most hotels and restaurants provide bottled water. It is generally safe to take ice in established hotels, but we suggest you avoid ice in drinks in small restaurants and from roadside vendors.

If you wear contact lenses or glasses, bring spares with you, as well as your prescription. Please ensure you have an adequate supply of any medications you require and bring the prescription and package (showing the generic name of the medication) as it will make getting replacements simpler.

Doctors do not usually make house calls. If you wish to consult a doctor during your stay in Vientiane the usual way is to visit a hospital or clinic, and unless you require an ambulance, the quickest way to do so is to take a taxi. Most major hospitals and clinics usually have doctors who speak English.

Laos in Brief



Geography

In the heart of the Indochina peninsula, the Lao PDR is a landlocked country of about 236,800 square kilometers. Its longest borders are with Thailand to the west and Vietnam to the east; it is also bordered by China to the north, Cambodia to the south and Myanmar to the northwest.

The Lao PDR is heavily forested and mountainous. There is an abundance of rivers including a 1,900-kilometre section of Mekong River. The terrain is a mostly rugged mountain with its highest point at 2,820 meters, which gives the country hydroelectric potential. Forest and woodland cover 47% of the land area. The Lao PDR also has natural resources, including coal, hardwood timber, hydropower, gypsum, tin, gold and gemstones. These resources all play a significant part in the economy.

Population

The Lao PDR has a population of approximately 5.5 million. Around 80% are employed in agriculture and live in rural areas. There are 3 main ethnic categories: Lao Loum (Low Land Lao), Lao Thueng (Lower Mountain Dwellers), and Lao Soong (High Land Lao). The great majority of Lao are Buddhist.

Climate

The climate is tropical monsoon and has three distinct seasons. The cool season lasts from October to February, when the average temperature drop to about 16 degrees Celsius. The hot season is from the end of February to April when the temperature in the south can reach 40 degrees. The rest of the year is the rainy monsoon season. Generally, tourists are recommended to visit Laos during the months of November to March because these are cool months and rainfall is lower than other periods.

Language

The official language used in Laos is Lao language. However, the usage of the language can differ from north and south. English, French and Russian are spoken in business or by some senior government officials. Many shopkeepers can understand basic English and French.

Electricity & Water

Laos uses 220 volt (50Hz) electricity for use with either two-pronged round or flat plugs. It is not recommended to drink directly from taps since it is not very clean. However, purified water is available throughout the country.

Currency

Lao National currency is Kip. Kip is available in denominations of 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10000 and 20000. Coins are not used. There are exchange booths available throughout town. Major credit cards are also accepted in large shops. You can also withdraw cash by using your credit cards, but it has to be done at the bank, since there is no automatic teller machine in Laos just yet.

Communication Facilities

Public phones are available in Vientiane and other major cities. You can also go to Lao telecom office to call and fax oversea. Phone cards are widely available in most convenient stores. There are a number of internet cafes in Vientiane and major cities. So you can be sure that you can always keep in touch with your family and friends.

Immigration Laws and Visa Requirements

It is possible to obtain a tourist/visit visa on arrival at a designated international border checkpoint (currently Vientiane airport, Friendship Bridge, Luang Prabang and Savannakhet). It is valid for 15 days and allows visitors to travel freely all over the Lao PDR. The cost is US\$30.

The business visa can be obtained in the Lao PDR only if there is a guarantee from a company established in the country. The FIMC, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the State Employment Enterprise are responsible for issuing business visas.

Air Travel

Vientiane International Airport is connected with a number of cities in Southeast Asia. Although some routes have been curtailed since the regional economic crisis, there are currently regular flights to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, and Kunming. The most frequent flights are to Hanoi and Bangkok. There is a departure tax of US\$10.