



Brief Country Report on HRH Development Activities (2008)

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Ministry of Health

Current Human Resource for Health Development : Public Health Management Training
Programmes in Lao P.D.R.

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**Current Human Resource for Health Development : Public Health Management
Training Programmes in Lao P.D.R.**

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I. Introduction

Laos officially Lao people's Democratic republic (Lao PDR) is South East Asia's only landlocked nation. The total area is 236 800 square kilometers with a population of 5.6 million. Lao PDR consists of 17 provinces including one prefecture, 141 districts, 10 533 villages, 959 595 households. 15% percent of the population is living in urban and 85 % in rural areas (NSC, 2002)¹.

In the health sector of the Lao PDR, there are 11 037 health officers, Post-University:373 (3.38%) , Bachelor degrees and high level: 1818 (16.47%), Middle level: 3765 (34.11%), Low level: 4916 (44.54%) and unclassified: 165 persons (1.50%) (HRFHD, 2005).

The health facilities consist of 3 central hospitals (Mahosot, Mittaphap and Sethathirath), 8 specialized centres (ophthalmology, Tuberculosis, Dermatology, Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation, Mother and child Health, centre of Malaria, Parasitology and Entomology, Laboratory and Epidemiology and Traditional Medicine Research centre). There are 5 regional hospitals, 13 provincial hospitals, 116 district hospitals, and 739 dispensaries (health centers). The total number of hospital beds is 6271: 858 beds in central hospitals, 932 beds in regional hospitals, 940 beds in provincial hospitals, 2300 beds in district hospitals, 1241 beds in health centers. There are no private hospitals but there are, 308 private clinics, 2132 private pharmacies, and 6 pharmaceuticals factories³.

Based on the policy on HRH Development, the Ministry of Health mentioned that it should be parallel with the improvement of the qualification for 3 categories of personnel such as :

- Health Leader
- Health managers
- Health Technical

And based on the 6 action plans of the Ministry of Health such as the 4th action plan named HRH Management which envisaged improving the human resources quality through long and short term training courses (the latter including- Refresher training course, Seminar or Workshop) . The Schools of Public Health and National Institute of Public Health (NIOPH) [it was established in 1999 by the Prime Minister's degree no 020/ PMO] were entrusted with the development of personnel through training activities

especially for upgrading the knowledge and skills for different levels of health workers from the central down to the district level..

The School of Public Health [it was established in 1986 under the umbrella of the University of Medical Sciences until 1995], according to the Ministerial decree 012/MOH dated 7 Jan 1998, became an important department under the umbrella of the National Institute of Public Health, assigned to be responsible for the short training courses activities, and long term courses such as MPH program and Higher Vocational Diploma in Public Health..

II. Public Health Management Training Programmes

2.1 Short term training

In order to cope quantitatively with a shortage of public health and primary health care management in each period, in 1986 and 1988, under the responsibility of the School of Public Health of the Ministry of Health, the training activities related to public health management training programmes were started for a duration of 6 months with technical and financial support from UNICEF, where 77 participants nationwide attended of which 19 were females.

In 1995, 1996, 1999 3 month long public health management training programmes were conducted with the support of the MOH and ADB1. These were attended by 95 participants of whom five were females from all over the country. In order to push PHC activities at grass roots rural areas nationwide in 1996, 1997 and 1999 the training of trainers for teaching modules on PHC was also conducted supported by the MOH and ADB1, where 116 participants attended, of which 22 were females.

In 1990, 1998 and 2002 medical pedagogy was organized to promote the training activities in 8 northern provinces, supported by the MOH, ADB2 and WHO, where 105 participants attended of which 43 were females. In addition, in 1990 the leadership development module was organised for the heads of different departments of the MOH supported by WHO, where 21 participants attended, of which 3 were females. To strengthen future public health management training programs in 2000, NIOPH has also conducted an evaluation research on public health management training program implemented since 1995-2000.

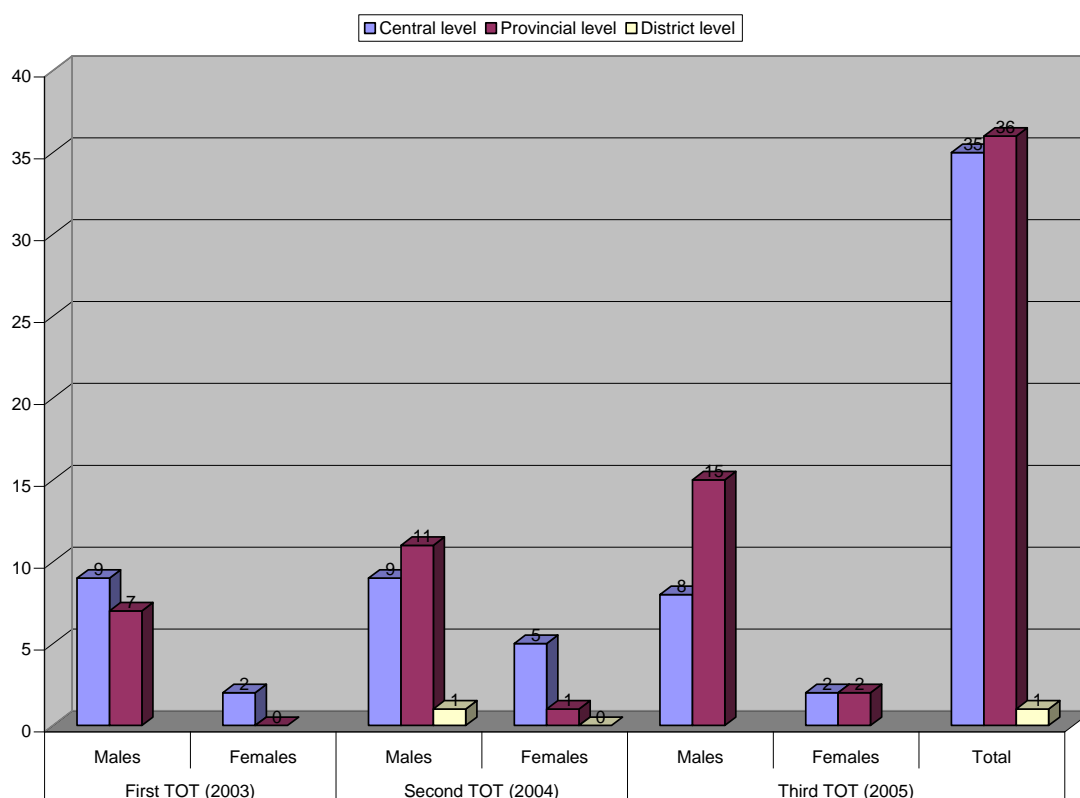
As in recent years, health policy initiatives have brought about considerable change to the nature, as well as the roles and responsibilities of health services managers. Managers have increasingly embraced a wider framework for understanding the health needs of local populations, groups and individuals and have addressed the issues involved in setting objectives and priorities, designing, implementing and monitoring contracts for services. Thus, managers have found a need for a more systematic

approach to decision-making within constraints and a more sophisticated awareness of the process of identifying costs and measures of outcome and quality.

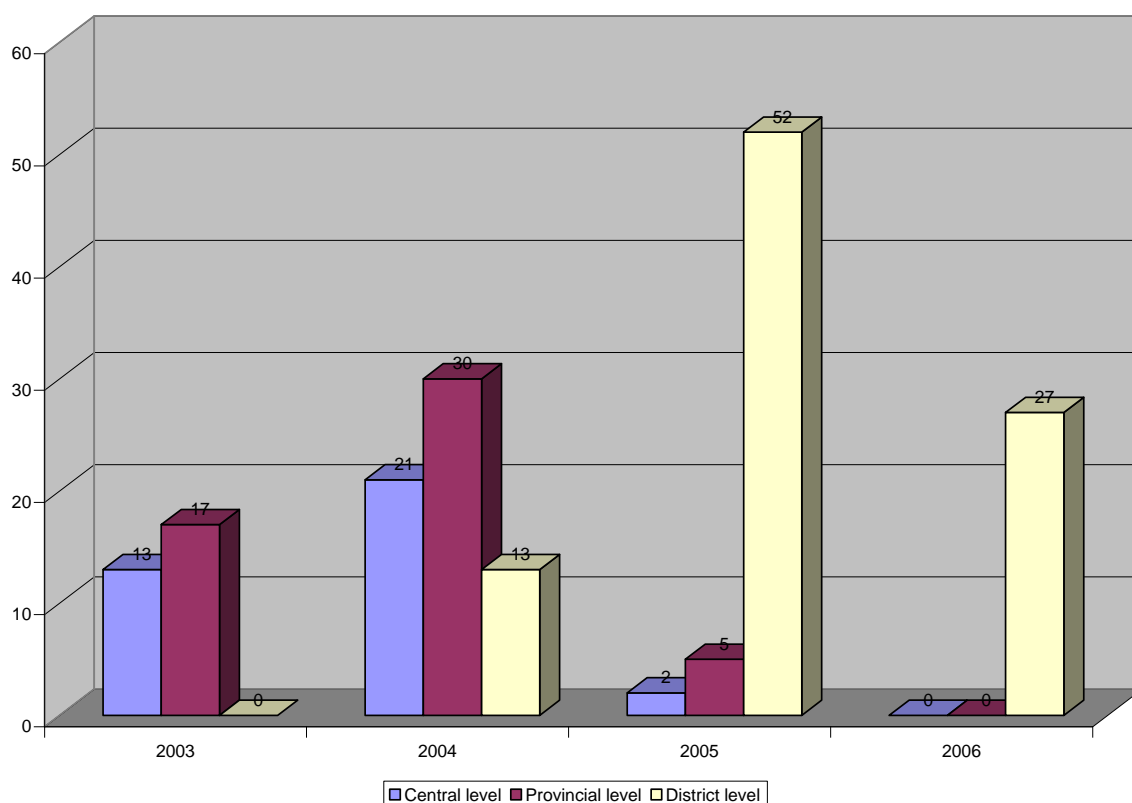
In the spirit of above mentioned aims and under the strong support from the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Public Health sees its role in public health management education as strongly linked to its role in the education and training of health managers within the country.

It is noted that, a major challenge will be providing public health management education which is responsive to the changing context of public health management as well. Therefore, at the end of the year 2002, a five year agreement of cooperation (2003-2007) signed between JICA and Ministry of Health on public health management training programmes for provincial and district health managers nationwide. This was done with technical support from the Mahidol University and International Development Center School of Medicine Tokai University. So far, NIOPH has completed 2 courses training of trainers on Health Management with 44 trainers from central and provincial levels, and 4 training courses for senior health managers on health management with 126 senior health managers from central (45), provincial (47), and district levels (31) .

Graph 1: Training of trainers on health management



Graph 2: Training of senior health managers on health management



In addition to this, in the year 2006 and 2007 four trainings of district health managers were conducted in Champassack province for the southern health managers, in Luangprabang province, in Xiengkhouang province for the northern health managers and once in Vientiane province for the central health managers with a total of 114 health managers.

2.2 Long term training

For postgraduate education/training in French language for trainers in public health education in Lao PDR an MoU was signed between the Ministry of Health Lao PDR and University's Public Health Institute of Northern - Est. France and the Committee for Cooperation with Laos. This was made possible with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France with the aims of delivering post-graduate-education focusing on public health both technically and practically to health personnel functioning within the health system at national and provincial levels. Therefore, the 1st masters degree batch in public health education course was started in 1997 and completed in the year 2000 with 15 graduates, and the second batch started in the year 2002 and successfully completed in March 2004 with 12 graduates [in total : 27 graduate] 12,13.

In addition, the School of Public Health was officially started to conduct the 1st Higher Vocational Diploma Batch from February 2008 to June 2009 with 17 students.

III. Strengths

1. Human resources development is one of the priority programmes of the nation, and one of the six main work plans of the Ministry of Health
2. Some education/training skills have been gained during the past years which have the potential for sustainability for public health management training programmes in the country.
3. Education/training curriculum both for short and long term courses developed according to the specificity and reality of public health needs of Lao PDR.
4. The number of health personnel who have been trained in public health management education both in short and long term has increased every year. (NHS 2000).¹⁴

IV. Weaknesses

1. Limited numbers and capacity of local mentors/educators/trainers.
2. Training curricula were not periodically reviewed and strengthened.
3. Most of the trainers who attended both short and long term training are over 35 years old, therefore it is very difficult for them to study effectively.
4. Some health personnel seem to get more opportunities to be trained in particular in public health management training, at the same time many health personnel, who are working in remote rural areas get less opportunities to be trained.
5. Internal investment in human resources for health development is still insufficient, therefore the health management training programmes have been organized in the past depending on the external support, which was not always aligned with the country needs.

V. Challenges

Develop Human resources for Health both in strength and capacity, particularly the educators for managing and imparting knowledge pertaining to public health activities to achieve equity in health, justice and sustainable development by the year 2020.