

# Meeting Report

## FOURTH ANNUAL COUNTRY SURVEILLANCE MEETING TO FACILITATE MALARIA ELIMINATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION



17 September 2021  
Virtual meeting

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

English only

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MEETING REPORT

FOURTH ANNUAL COUNTRY SURVEILLANCE MEETING  
TO FACILITATE MALARIA ELIMINATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

Convened by:

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

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#### NOTE

The views expressed in this report are those of the participants of the Fourth Annual Country Surveillance Meeting to Facilitate Malaria Elimination in the Greater Mekong Subregion and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the conveners.

This report has been prepared by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific for the Member States in the Region and for those who participated in the virtual Fourth Annual Country Surveillance Meeting to Facilitate Malaria Elimination in the Greater Mekong Subregion on 17 September 2021.

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Keywords:

Malaria – epidemiology, prevention and control / Mekong valley / Sentinel surveillance

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACD	active case detection
ACT	artemisinin-based combination therapies
AS-MQ	artesunate–mefloquine
China CDC	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CMPE	Center for Malaria, Parasitology, and Entomology (Lao People’s Democratic Republic)
CNM	National Center for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control (Cambodia)
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
DHIS	District Health Information System
DVBD	Division of Vector-Borne Disease (Thailand)
eCDS	electronic communicable disease system
ERAR	Emergency Response to Artemisinin Resistance
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
iDES	integrated drug efficacy surveillance
IPT	intermittent preventive treatment
IPTf	intermittent preventative treatment for forest goers
LLIHN	long-lasting insecticidal hammock net
LLIN	long-lasting insecticidal net
MEDB	Malaria Elimination Database
MIS	malaria information system
MME	Mekong Malaria Elimination
MMS	malaria management system
MMW	mobile malaria worker
MPAC	Malaria Policy Advisory Committee
NIMPE	National Institute of Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology (Viet Nam)
NMP	National Malaria Programme
PCD	passive case detection
PHEOC	Public Health Emergency Operations Center (Lao People's Democratic Republic)
PPE	personal protective equipment
RAI	Regional Artemisinin-resistance Initiative
RAI3E	Regional Artemisinin Initiative 3 Elimination
RDSP	Regional Data Sharing Platform
RDT	rapid diagnostic test
RSC	Regional Steering Committee
TDA	targeted drug administration
VMW	village malaria worker
WHO	World Health Organization
YIPD	Yunnan Institute of Parasitic Diseases

## SUMMARY

On 17 September 2021, representatives from the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Member States – Cambodia, China, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam – met with partners for the fourth annual surveillance meeting. The meeting was hosted virtually by the World Health Organization (WHO) Mekong Malaria Elimination (MME) programme. During the meeting, representatives exchanged information on malaria surveillance progress and challenges in their countries. Presentations centred around surveillance updates, focalized innovative approaches to accelerate elimination, the Malaria Elimination Database (MEDB), ways to improve data sharing mechanisms and surveillance assessments. The outcomes from these discussions led to recommendations that aim to further strengthen surveillance to accelerate malaria elimination in the GMS toward the shared goal of a malaria-free status in the region by 2030.

The key conclusions of the meeting included:

Surveillance in updates in the GMS countries:

- **Cambodia:** Cases continue to fall, and the country has continued to improve its Malaria Information System (MIS) to capture disaggregated surveillance data. It includes dashboards to detect outbreaks and to track the “last mile” activities as well as the status of stocks of drugs and commodities. Future priorities include integrating the radical cure data into the MIS.
- **China (Yunnan Province):** The country was declared malaria-free in 2021 and continues to employ the 1-3-7 surveillance approach to respond to imported cases. Current challenges are securing stocks of primaquine and managing malaria in border regions.
- **Lao People’s Democratic Republic:** Cases have risen in the past year, and teams responded to six outbreak alerts in 2021. Priorities include improving the quality of outbreak responses and frequency of reporting in high-burden areas. An SMS reporting system was piloted in some high-burden areas, and reporting increased from monthly to weekly intervals in these locations.
- **Thailand:** The country’s mHealth application for foci management has been rolled out countrywide, and integrated drug efficacy surveillance (iDES) is fully implemented. *Plasmodium falciparum* foci investigations are active, and cases continue to fall. A “Prevention of Re-introduction” plan was completed, and the national malaria programme is focused on employing it in provinces that have been declared malaria-free.
- **Viet Nam:** Surveillance guidelines were recently updated and are pending approval. Foci and cases continue to decline. Key challenges linked to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) restrictions have confounded surveillance, procurement and vector control.

Focalized innovative approaches:

- **Cambodia:** From January to July 2021, the country launched “last mile” activities in 66% of 65 active foci. Active fever screening and intermittent preventive treatment for forest goers (IPTf) are primarily complete, but there has been some refusal in the second round of targeted drug administration (TDA). COVID-19 restrictions have limited community engagement, so it is currently conducted through door-to-door visits.
- **Lao People’s Democratic Republic:** A pilot covering five villages began in July 2021. To date, the pilot has completed training, community engagement, census and two

rounds of TDA. While coverage of long-lasting insecticidal nets and hammock nets (LLINs/LLHINs) was high, a major challenge was the low tolerance of the side-effects of artesunate–mefloquine in the target population, which resulted in significant refusals and absenteeism in both TDA rounds.

- **Viet Nam:** The country’s priorities include reducing transmission in high-burden areas. Surveillance in the elimination phase is now based on the “2-7” strategy. Case reports and investigations are done within 48 hours of case confirmation. Foci investigation and responses (LLIN/LLHIN distribution, indoor residual spraying, information, education and communication and behaviour change communication activities) are completed in seven days. Viet Nam noted interest in rolling out IPTf to accelerate malaria elimination in remaining active foci.

**Malaria Elimination Database (MEDB):** The MEDB continues to collect and disseminate epidemiological data on malaria. As countries move closer to elimination, national malaria programmes (NMPs) are encouraged to improve the frequency and level of data shared to the MEDB. Current gaps include limited country data on case and foci investigations, data disaggregated by age/gender/sector, weekly data reports and access to partners. Thailand and Cambodia approved MME’s request for data sharing in principle, and Viet Nam noted they are willing to discuss further data sharing in the future. MME will work with NMPs to prioritize the inclusion of more detailed data in the MEDB prior to pursuing weekly reports.

**Surveillance assessment:** WHO and partners have developed a malaria surveillance assessment toolkit. The tools allow countries to identify key actionable gaps in malaria surveillance across any endemic setting. A digital tool is expected by the end of the year. WHO is currently looking for countries willing to pilot either rapid assessments of their malaria surveillance systems or assessments in elimination settings.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Meeting organization

The annual country surveillance meeting is crucial to review the status of surveillance systems in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), particularly for elimination capabilities, and to identify challenges and practical solutions to strengthen them. The World Health Organization (WHO) Mekong Malaria Elimination (MME) programme hosts the Malaria Elimination Database (MEDB) to strengthen surveillance activities in countries and to facilitate data sharing and collaboration among countries. Currently, all GMS countries – Cambodia, China (Yunnan Province), the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam – are sharing monthly malaria surveillance data with the MME programme. In addition, the GMS countries continue to manage their own national surveillance activities to track and investigate cases, adjust programming and identify foci.

WHO hosted the one-day virtual meeting bringing together representatives from malaria programmes, surveillance focal points from GMS countries, as well as technical experts and partners to review the current status and performance of national surveillance systems and to discuss the future priorities for the MEDB and areas of improvement for data sharing.

The main discussion points included the status and challenges in countries regarding surveillance systems, the use of surveillance data for programmatic actions, ways to improve the surveillance data in the MEDB to accelerate malaria elimination and surveillance assessment methods that can be used in the GMS.

### 1.2 Meeting objectives

The objectives of the meeting were:

- 1) to present the current status, performance and challenges of the surveillance systems in the GMS, as well as the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and identify risk mitigation measures and recommendations for practical solutions to strengthen these systems;
- 2) to present the “focalized innovative approaches” implemented in Cambodia and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to accelerate malaria elimination;
- 3) to discuss the performance of the MEDB and the priorities of activities for the coming year, as well as the ways to improve the use and sharing of surveillance data to accelerate malaria elimination; and
- 4) to introduce the assessment tool and discuss surveillance assessment methods that can be

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