World No Tobacco Day, 31 May 2010

Country: LAOS
Activity: Media Workshop on Laos’ Tobacco Control Law and National No Tobacco Day
          (World No Tobacco Day) 31 May 2010
Date: 28 May 2010

Supported by: WHO Laos, ADRA Laos and SITT Laos

Background
Inter-Ministerial Tobacco Control Taskforce of Laos, together with Ministry of Health and Ministry of
Information and Culture, organized a workshop to celebrate World No Tobacco Day 31 May 2010 with
representatives from local media in Laos. The purpose of the workshop was to officially introduce
Tobacco Control Law to media and this year’s World No Tobacco theme ‘Gender and Tobacco with the
emphasis on marketing to women’ as media plays a very important role to reach the general public around
the country. Laos’ Tobacco Control Law has selected the same day (31 May) of each year to be National
No Tobacco Day.

Objectives
1. To disseminate and emphasize its important Articles of Tobacco Control Law to local media.
2. To strengthen media network and involve them in tobacco control in Laos.
3. To emphasize World No Tobacco Day’s theme of 2010.
4. To send out the key message on Tobacco Control Law and WNTD to the general public through
   media.
5. To arrange a press conference and brief interview with Standing Deputy Prime Minister, Mr.
   Somsavath Lengsavath on Tobacco Control Law and WNTD at Prime Minister’s Office.
6. To officially introduce Khobchai monthly newsletter as tobacco control newsletter.

Resources
1. Dr. Sithat Insisiengmay, Chairman of Inter-Ministerial Tobacco Control Taskforce, Deputy
   Director of Hygiene and Prevention Department, Ministry of Health
2. Dr. Bounlonh Ketsouvannasane, Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO Laos
3. Dr. Maniphanh Vongphosy, Executive Secretary of Tobacco Control Taskforce
4. Dr. Khatthanaphone Phandouangsy, Secretary of Tobacco Control Taskforce

Participants
45 representatives from the capital and 8 provinces of local media in Laos:
- TV channels:
  1. Lao National TV
  2. Lao Star TV channel
  3. Champasak TV channel
  4. Military TV channel
  5. Luangprabang TV channel
  6. Savannakhet TV channel
- Newspapers/journalists:
  1. Vientiane Mai
  2. Vientiane Times
  3. Pathedlao
  4. Pasason
  5. Military
  6. Vannasim magazine
  7. Medical and Health Education Center
- Radio news reporters:
  1. Lao National Radio Station
  2. Vientiane Capital Radio Station
  3. Military Radio Station
  4. Xayabouly Radio Station
5. Savannakhet Radio Station
6. Xiengkhouang Radio Station
7. Khammouan Radio Station
8. Vientiane Radio Station
9. Champasak Radio Station
10. Luangprabang Radio Station

Summary
The celebration of World No Tobacco Day was organized in a form of media workshop on 28 May 2010. The workshop was held from 8.30 to 12.00 at the meeting hall of Ministry of Health, Vientiane Capital. Topics presented during the workshop were:

1. Overview of Laos’ Tobacco Control Law and tobacco control work in Laos
2. Tobacco Industry Advertising Tactics
3. WHO Article 5.3 – Tobacco Industry Interference
4. Tobacco Advertising in Laos
5. Role of Media in Tobacco Control
6. Practical Exercise

Press Conference/Interview
A group of media representatives were selected to attend the press conference and interview arranged by Ministry of Health at Prime Minister’s Office. On this special opportunity Standing Deputy Prime Minister, Somsavat Lengsavad, gave a speech regarding World No Tobacco Day 2010’s theme. Furthermore, he personally congratulated Ministry of Health on the success of Tobacco Control Law and the success of implementing No Smoking SEA Games and smoke free implementation that are already in place. After his speech, he shared his personal story that he has quit smoking due to the enforcement of tobacco control law in other countries.

Practical Exercise
Meanwhile the rest of media representatives at the workshop carried on with a practical exercise – on how to write a press release and report the news to the general public. This exercise allowed journalists and reporters to use their creativity and skills on how to share this information as the role of media.

Khobchai Newsletter
Khobchai (meaning Thank You) newsletter was introduced and distributed to media representatives. The newsletter was published in local language to be distributed to policy makers, key partners, local government offices, media, health facilities and chosen targets. The newsletter contains information and news on tobacco control in Laos and some from the region.

Road Banner
Three road banners were put up at three prominent roads during the week of WNTD May 31, 2010. The banners carried a message on ‘Protecting Women from Tobacco Marketing’.
Streamers and posters display at media workshop.

Media received information on tobacco control law from chairman of Tobacco Control Taskforce. Media representatives presented their press release during practical exercise.

Standing Deputy Committee, Somsavat Lengsavad gave a speech on World No Tobacco Day and Laos’ Tobacco Control Law.

Road banner display. Message: Protect Women from Tobacco Marketing, World No Tobacco Day 31 May
DPM urges public to quit smoking

Somsak Pongkho

Standing Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavath has urged people to think more about the consequences of smoking, saying the habit is a leading cause of death and affects both family incomes and the national economy.

Mr Somsavat was speaking on Friday to mark Lao and International No Tobacco Day (May 31) to pass on information about the campaign throughout the country and ensure more people understand the consequences of smoking.

He said the enactment of the Lao law on tobacco control reflected the Party and government’s humanitarian policy and their concerns over the health of the Lao people.

“We know that smoking is a cause of death, so why do so many Lao people still choose not to give up?” he asked.

“Smoking only wastes our money. This money should be used to buy meat and vegetables for our health, but instead we use the money to buy things that destroy our health.”

Mr Somsavat described his life and how he struggled to quit smoking.

“I started smoking in 1963 and gave up the habit in 1993. I smoked a lot over those 30 years,” he said.

He added that when he was appointed as Minister of Health, he told his staff about his experience.

“Tobacco industry targets women to smoke by promoting cigarettes as the power of freedom and result in good body shape. The Lao law on tobacco control lawfully banned cigarettes from entering the country. It has launched a campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking. Six million people have died from smoking in the last 50 years. We will continue this campaign.”

Foreign Affairs, he stressed, a lot of meetings in other countries.

“It was very difficult as their meeting room was all had no smoking signs. And then inside the meeting rooms, there was inevitably another no smoking sign,” he said.

“Smoking wasted my health and made my life difficult. Some people were affected by the smell and would recall when I walked past.”

All of these difficulties forced him to quit smoking.

“I told my wife that I would quit smoking from today and the next time she asked me if I was serious, I told her I wasn’t smoking since 1993,” he said.

In fact, he planned to quit smoking before that time but could not do it due to a lack of confidence.

In 2010, a figure which could rise to 10 million people by 2020 if there were no strong measures to tackle the problem. Of the total death toll, 70 percent would be from developing nations, including Laos. In Laos, about 1.5 million people smoke and half of them will die due to smoking-related diseases.

There have been several acts to ban tobacco since the National Assembly approved the law on tobacco control in 2009, including banning smoking in schools and hospitals in many provinces. The theme for this Tobacco Day this year is “Cigarette and tobacco, with an emphasis on marketing.” The overall goal is to lower women from smoking.

1/3 is the rate of women die from smoking

The story was written based on the press release from WHO website and World No Tobacco Day’s theme. Tobacco industry targets women to smoke by promoting cigarettes as power of freedom and result in good body shape.
Government of Lao PDR cares and prioritizes public health
(The story was written based on his interview.)
On this annual celebration of National No Tobacco Day or World No Tobacco Day, government of Lao PDR seeks to express the care of public and encourage Lao people to quit smoking.

Women to be involved in decreasing smoking prevalence
This year WHO has selected a theme for WNTD as ‘Gender and Tobacco with the emphasis on tobacco marketing to women’. Lao PDR adopted the theme and promoted to protect public health, especially women, from tobacco marketing. Standing Deputy Prime Minister, Somsavat Lengasad, encouraged Lao people to implement and comply with tobacco control law to protect the health of women and children. In the end, he urged the local media to assist tobacco control by dissemination of this information and health education.
Media Workshop on Dissemination of Tobacco Control Law

To prepare the celebration of World No Tobacco Day on 31 May 2010, a media workshop was held by Tobacco Control Taskforce at Ministry of Health with the participants of staffs and media representatives from provinces and Vientiane Capital.

World Health Organization Warns Tobacco Industry is Targeting Women

Based on the translation of the press release from World Health Organization.