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Ethnic Group Planning Framework

Lao PDR: Avian and Human Influenza Control and Preparedness Emergency Project

1. Project Description

The objective of the Project is to contribute to the Lao PDR Government’s integrated plan, which aims to minimize the threat posed to humans and the poultry sector by avian and human influenza infection and other zoonoses, and to prepare for control and to respond to influenza pandemics and other infectious diseases in humans. The design of the Project follows the Government Strategy for avian influenza (AI). As such, the Project consists of the following components:

- Component 1 – Development of a disease-free avian management system (Strategy 1). This component supports prevention, control, and eradication of HPAI among the animal population.
- Component 2 – Disease surveillance and response in humans during AI outbreaks (S2). This component aims at improving disease surveillance and response in humans during AI outbreaks.
- Component 3 – Laboratory and curative care (S3). This component supports preparation of the health system to respond to AI outbreaks.
- Component 4 – Health education and community action (S4). This component supports the activities to plan and carry out a public awareness campaign.
- Component 5 – Strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks (S5). This component is focused primarily on a number of cross-cutting issues, including support to the National Avian and Human Influenza Coordination Office (NAHICO), which will be responsible for the overall coordination of this project.

The Project will not have any adverse impacts on ethnic groups. Project activities will instead positively affect ethnic groups in Lao PDR by providing information and an enhanced response system to deal with an outbreak of Avian Influenza and a pandemic should such occur in the Lao PDR.

To ensure that the information and education campaign reaches remote ethnic groups in manners that are easily understandable for the various ethnic groups in Lao PDR, this Ethnic Group Planning Framework has been prepared to describe Project activities and measures as they pertain to ethnic groups as required by the World Bank’s safeguards policy on Indigenous Peoples (OP 4.10).
2. Ethnic Groups in the Lao PDR

One of the main characteristics of the Lao PDR is its cultural diversity. The official terminology for describing this diverse population is ‘ethnic groups;’ there are 47 main ethnic groups (divided in more than 160 sub-groups) officially recognized by the Government of Lao PDR (GOL). The ethnic groups of Lao PDR can be categorized in terms of four ethno-linguistic groups:

- the Lao-Tai (also referred to as ‘Tai-Kadai’), which includes the ‘ethnic Lao’ group (about 30 percent of the total population of Lao PDR) and lowland Tai/Thay speaking groups (about 36 percent);
- Mon-Khmer ethnic groups (about 23.5 percent);
- Hmong-Mien, including the Miao-Yao (about 7.5 percent);
- Sino-Tibetan (also referred to as ‘Chine-Tibet’), which includes Chinese Ho and Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups (about 3 percent).

Based on the criteria for identifying social groups covered by the OP 4.10, the policy applies to the non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups (i.e. Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan ethnic groups).

3. Legal Framework

According to the 1991 Constitution, Lao PDR is defined as a multi-ethnic state, with “equality among all ethnic groups.” Article 8 of the Constitution reads:

The State pursues the policy of promoting unity and equality among all ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the rights to protect, preserve and promote the fine customs and cultures of their own tribes and of the nation. All acts of creating division and discrimination among ethnic groups are forbidden. The State implements every measure to gradually develop and upgrade the economic and social level of all ethnic groups.

The 1992 ethnic group policy, Resolution of the Party Central Organization Concerning Ethnic Group Affairs in the New Era, focuses on gradually improving the lives of ethnic groups, while promoting their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. It also specifies that dissemination of information in the remote areas is mandated through various methods, especially radio broadcasting in different ethnic group languages. The implementation of the policy is tasked to the Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC; known colloquially as Neo Hom).

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1 The Ethnic Group Development Plan for the World Bank-assisted Health Services Improvement Project provides a more detailed discussion of ethnic groups in the Lao PDR, particularly related to the health sector which is highly relevant in the context of the Project.

2 The criteria in OP/BP 4.10 are: self-identification and identification by others as a distinct indigenous cultural group; collective attachment to geographically distinct or ancestral territories and to the natural resources in those areas; customary cultural, economic, social and political institutions; and an indigenous language, often different from the official language of the country or region.
4. Framework for Ethnic Groups

Most non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups rank low in virtually all measures of development, such as poverty, literacy, and health. Ethnic groups vary in their attitudes towards social services, gender issues, and other cultural practices that shape their overall worldview. Many people, particular in more remote areas of the country, are unable to speak the Lao language, and thus unable to effectively make use of government services (e.g. schools and health clinics) as government staff seldom speak the local languages.

An optimistic view is that the very isolation of the remote communities will be the factor that protects them most in the case of outbreaks or pandemics. On the other hand, many of these communities may also be left to their own devices in the case of outbreaks and the least able to access government services. Three considerations need to be taken into account: i) ensuring that information is conveyed to remote communities in a timely and comprehensive manner; ii) providing information in languages, and in a form that ethnic communities can understand; and iii) possibly developing additional information and training packages that allow these communities to deal with either animal or human outbreaks on their own if needs be.

The Project’s main interaction with ethnic groups is through a public awareness campaign under Component 4 (health education and community action). This campaign needs to be tailored to the different stakeholders (e.g. commercial farmers and backyard farmers; different ethnic groups) and translated into key ethnic group languages. The campaign, and its education and information material, will be designed in detail during implementation with input from various stakeholders and training will be undertaken to enable district and village facilitators participate in the implementation of the campaign.

In addition to designing, and translating, an appropriate public campaign, the implementation of the campaign itself will be done with participation of district and village facilitators who will receive training and obtain an enhanced understanding of the Avian Influenza risks and measures, as well as the Project activities including the criteria and mechanism for compensation in case of outbreaks. Village facilitators, and some district facilitators, will speak the local languages and thus enhance the efficiency of the campaign.

Changing the behavior in managing small livestock may not be easy in remote communities. The campaign will not impose changes to poultry management at village level, but will provide information for villagers to enhance the bio-security in farms and markets on their own.

The financing of the tailored campaign is included in the general budget of the Project, including the translation into ethnic languages.
5. Institutional Arrangements

The National Avian and Human Influenza Coordination Office (NAHICO) will have the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Ethnic Group Planning Framework.

Component 4 will be implemented jointly by MOH, MOAF, MOIC and mass based organizations. UNICEF will be the leading donor agency. During design of the public awareness campaign input from various stakeholders will be sought. Concerning ethnic group issues, one of the key stakeholders include the Lao Front for National Construction (the Ethnic Affairs Department at national level). Other agencies that may be able to provide key input and advice will be consulted and possibly involved, including the Institute for Linguistic Research that can provide quality input into the media campaigns that use local languages, either written or spoken in dissemination of information, and the Institute for Cultural Research that may be able to provide qualitative input given their knowledge of the diverse ethnic communities in Lao PDR.

Monitoring and evaluating the implementation and efficiency of the information campaign is included in the overall monitoring program for the Project and the National Plan.