



Greater Mekong Subregion

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GMS in the News



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a \$20 million loan to support the Lao

People's Democratic Republic's (Lao PDR) response to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on 25 May 2020.

The loan, as additional financing to the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Health Security Project, will assist the Ministry of Health in procuring personal protective equipment, laboratory equipment, testing kits, medical devices, and ambulances. It will also help the government provide supplies and training to frontline health workers on infection prevention and control, lab testing, and clinical care for COVID-19 patients. It will also cover the government's costs for contact tracing, risk communications, and other interventions.

"The additional financing will boost the resources and capacity of the Lao PDR's health system to address the impacts of the pandemic," said ADB Health Specialist Ye Xu. "The Lao PDR has been managing the outbreak relatively well, thanks to improved communicable disease surveillance and response capacity over the last decade. It still needs to maintain maximum preparedness and strengthen the health care service system to be able to respond to any resurgence of COVID-19."

As of 7 May, the Lao PDR had 19 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with evidence of limited local transmission. The country is highly vulnerable, as the outbreak in the region forces many migrant workers to return from heavily affected neighboring countries. The health system, with limited medical personnel, supplies, and equipment, could be overwhelmed by the rapid spread of the virus.

The new loan builds on ADB's assistance in early 2020, when the ongoing GMS Health Security Project was reprogrammed to provide the Lao PDR government with \$860,000 to purchase personal protective equipment, real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machines, infrared thermometers, autoclave/UPS, and education and communication materials, among others.

The project, which ADB originally approved in 2016 with a \$125 million loan, is helping to strengthen health security in the Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam, focusing on regional cooperation and subnational communicable disease control systems, particularly in border areas of the GMS. The other two members of the GMS, Thailand and the People's Republic of China, are also participating in the GMS Working Group on Health Cooperation, which is supported by ADB.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

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