



# Mother and Child Health

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Grass-roots level studies have demonstrated how severe the combined effects of early motherhood, poor hygiene practices, lack of awareness of basic nutrition and poor pre-natal, postnatal and early childhood care can be on a growing and developing nation. In addition, chronic lack of medicines, medical equipment and clinical skills dissuades women from seeking care for themselves or their children.

While Lao PDR has made significant strides in recent years to reduce infant mortality and the number of women dying from childbirth, the country is still among the poorest in the region.

Today, many women continue to be vulnerable to serious health issues such as nutritional deficiencies, and malaria. Women are especially in danger during child birth. Almost 89% of rural women deliver unattended by a health provider, usually due to the difficulty in accessing health services and the very poor quality of care that is available to those who do have access. In 2000, the maternal mortality ratio was 530 deaths per 100,000 live births. Maternal mortality in remote areas is often due to relatively minor complications which could be easily addressed if care was available

Children who survive birth are also exposed to considerable risk. Isolation, transport restrictions and logistical challenges, hamper the work of the district mobile teams in administering regular immunization services. The infant mortality rate under age five in Lao PDR is an alarming 98 out of 1000 live births. The rates are even higher in rural areas and remote provinces as compared to urban areas. Most of those children are dying from communicable diseases such as malaria, acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, dengue fever, measles, or meningitis.

*Millennium Development Goals Progress Report Lao PDR (2004)*



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## Lao PDR



### The Facts

Under 5 mortality rate*	98 per 1000 live births
Infant mortality rate*	70 per 1000 live births
Proportion of children breastfed < 6 months <sup>+</sup>	23%
Proportion of children moderately to severely underweight <sup>+</sup>	40%
Proportion of total population using improved water sources <sup>^</sup>	30%
Proportion of total population using adequate sanitation facilities <sup>^</sup>	30%
Maternal mortality rate <sup>+</sup>	405 per 10,000
Proportion of women with skilled attendants at birth <sup>+</sup>	20%

\* 2005 Census<sup>3</sup>, ^ UNICEF 2004<sup>4</sup>, + UNICEF 2005<sup>5</sup>

8 year old Nachourher is growing up strong, bringing undeniable smiles to her mother, Mrs. Var. World Vision started working in Phoukhoun District in 2005 through the child sponsorship program to help families like Mrs. Var's by providing basic health services and education. Today, they have a clinic in their village and her six children have all received immunizations bringing assurances about her children's health. Children in Phoukhoun District receive immunizations for tuberculosis, polio, chronic coughs, diphtheria, measles, and tetanus.

## World Vision Health Strategy 2008 - 2012

### GOAL

To empower communities to improve the health of children, and women of reproductive age through the adoption of effective health promoting behaviors, and access to primary health care and clean water.

### OUTCOMES

1. To reduce morbidity, mortality and malnutrition in children under 5 with special attention to children aged 0-24 months
2. To mobilize women of reproductive age and their partners to access family planning and Mother and Child Health services.
3. To mitigate the burden of communicable disease at the community level (water and sanitation, HIV/ AIDS and Avian Influenza)

A growing body of evidence now reveals that simple community based interventions and addressing underlying mal-nutrition can significantly impact child morbidity and mortality. Therefore, over the next five years World Vision will focus on community based primary health care and creating environments conducive to child health as opposed to individual and curative care. As well as this, the knowledge and practices of mothers and fathers are recognized as essential in promoting child health and well-being. Therefore, the participation of parents and communities will form an integral part of our strategy. We will also focus more on enquiry into local beliefs and practices regarding health in order to design culturally appropriate health interventions.

World Vision also seeks to strengthen our relationships with partners in order to maximize the impact of our work. We will work closely with government counterparts in order to improve primary health care, mother and child health services, and establish pathways of referral between communities and curative care. We will also actively seek collaboration and partnerships with other national and international organizations active in the field of maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS.



Mrs. Kham and her baby, Anoy, visit the clinic regularly for health check-ups.

### Mrs. Kham is all smiles

Her smile says it all. With three young healthy children, 27 year old Mrs. Kham revels in how her life has changed over just a few short years in the village of Phonthong in Pakkading District of Bolikhamxay Province in Lao PDR. Due to lack of basic health knowledge during pregnancy Mrs. Kham had endured several miscarriages before finally delivering a healthy baby.

Today, with the services and health education provided through the World Vision Australia funded Pakkading Mother and Child Health Project, Mrs. Kham is able to raise a healthy family with ever increasing certainty that her children are assured a promising future.

In 2005, World Vision began working in Phonthong Village alongside the Pakkading District Government to improve access to health care for women and children. Financial support and training were provided to district health workers and sub-district clinics were made more accessible through establishing drop-in hours for women, especially for those who are pregnant and with young children.

"I am very grateful and appreciate the programs that have come to our village. My family is healthy. My life has changed," Mrs. Kham said.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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