

## Lao PDR and partners commence nationwide measles and rubella vaccination campaign



Photo credit: WHO/Somlith Khounpaseuth

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), in collaboration with its partners, today (Friday, May 17, 2024) launched a crucial nationwide measles and rubella (MR) vaccination campaign.

This initiative, unveiled at Vientiane Center in the capital, targets children aged under five and focuses on immunizing over half a million vulnerable children against these vaccine-preventable diseases.

The campaign is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Health of Lao PDR, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Government of Australia, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).

It is a strategic response to the global increase in measles and rubella cases, which can be attributed to low vaccination rates among children.

Health Minister H.E. Dr Bounfeng Phoummalaysith emphasized this campaign's critical timing and necessity. "This campaign marks a decisive moment in our unwavering commitment to safeguard the health of our children. Vaccinations play a crucial role in combating the serious threats posed by measles and rubella," stated Dr Phoummalaysith.

The MR vaccines available free of charge at all health centres under the Ministry of Health.

### **Need to reach the most vulnerable groups with the vaccines.**

Nadia Lasri, Senior Country Manager and Coordinator of Gavi support in Lao PDR, also emphasized the need to reach the most vulnerable groups with the vaccines.

"Gavi's support for this nationwide measles-rubella vaccination campaign builds on our ongoing efforts to strengthen Lao PDR's routine immunization programme. With global cases rising, we must double down on our efforts to reach every child, especially those unvaccinated, and ensure no community is left behind."

In February 2024, **Lao PDR received over 650,000 doses** of the MR vaccine to help protect against and prevent the spread of the two illnesses as part of Gavi's support to the country's routine immunization efforts.

During the event, representatives of partner organizations in the campaign also highlighted the broader implications of vaccination and urged parents to bring their children for the vaccines.

“This vaccination campaign is critical to protecting children across Lao PDR from measles and rubella. Australia is proud to have supported the Ministry of Health to roll out this life-saving work, in partnership with Gavi, WHO and UNICEF,” said Dan Heldon, Chargé d’affaires at the Australian Embassy in Lao PDR.

“In confronting the resurgence of these diseases, our actions today will determine the future health of our children,” said Dr Pia Rebello Britto, UNICEF Representative to Lao PDR. “During this critical window of opportunity, I urge all parents to bring your children to the nearest health centre or hospital to receive this life-saving vaccine, which is provided free of charge.”

Dr Yu Lee Park, Officer in Charge, WHO Lao PDR, also praised the collaborative efforts under this campaign, including the work of frontline health workers: “I commend the leadership of the Ministry of Health and tireless efforts of the health workers who are the key link in providing vaccines throughout the country, from urban centres to the most remote areas.”

All vaccines in Lao PDR have been approved by WHO and the Ministry of Health and are proven safe and effective in protecting children from severe illnesses and life-threatening diseases.

#### **Notes to editors**

##### **About Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate more than half the world’s children against some of the world’s deadliest diseases.

- [reliefweb.int](http://reliefweb.int), Vientiane, May 17, 2024