



IOM distributing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials to returning migrants.

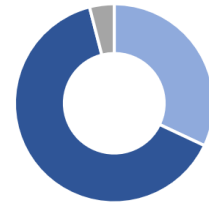
## KEY FACTS

**Population: 7.1 million**

Urban Population: 33%

Population Density: 27 people/ km<sup>2</sup>

Age Structure:



■ Age 0-14 ■ Age 15-64 ■ Age 65+

✈ International Airports: 4

➡ Points of Entry (PoEs): 107

*\* all border checkpoints remain closed*

### Migration Status

No. of Foreigners in country: 48,275

No. of Laotians abroad: 483,021

### Remittances

International remittances as a receiving country: USD 285 million

International remittances as a sending country: USD 124 million

### COVID-19 Situation in Lao PDR:

19 confirmed, 19 recovered, 0 death.

Quarantine & Isolation Facilities: 89

People in Quarantine facilities: 2,985



## SITUATION OVERVIEW

With more than 5 million confirmed cases, and about 65,000 deaths around the globe; the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEICC) on 30 January 2020, and characterized it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

Lao People's Democratic Republic confirmed its first case on 24 March 2020. Since then, 19 cases were tested positive, with most recent case confirmed on 12 April. The Lao Government was able to contain the outbreak with support from development partners. On 9 June 2020, the final patient had recovered and was discharged; the country had since become officially free of COVID-19.

The Royal Thai Government extended the State of Emergency until the end of July. With sustained business closures in the popular country of destination, Laotian migrant workers continue to return due to reduced income and employment opportunities. Vientiane Capital, Savannakhet, and Champasack are the three major entry points for returning migrants. Health screening and referral mechanism are in place at all points of entry in Lao People's Democratic Republic to minimize the risks of a second outbreak. To date, there have been no confirmed cases among the influx of returnees.

Migrant and mobile populations bear a high risk of infection as well as broader social and economic impacts of COVID-19 due to several factors, such as lack or inadequate access to proper information on prevention; limitations in or exclusions from accessing diagnostic and treatment services; cramped and crowded living and working conditions; stigma and discrimination.

## A RETURNING MIGRANT STORY



IOM interviewing a migrant in quarantine.

La (alias), 33 years old, returned from Thailand one week ago. She was working in Nonthaburi, a city near Bangkok, as a domestic helper prior to her return. She liked the job but wanted to come home to spend more time with her family.

The journey back was not too difficult, she took public transport and waited in Nongkhai for a week before successfully crossing the border. She spent 5,000 THB on accommodation and daily expenses for seven days while she waited to return.

Her plan is to run a small retail business after completing the mandatory quarantine. It was something she had been doing before leaving for Thailand. She hopes to stay in Lao People Democratic Republic in the near future.

# PROPOSED RESPONSE AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AS OF JUNE, 2020

The proposed actions are divided across 4 pillars:

## Pillar 1 — COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- Officially launched the project *Enhancing COVID-19 Pandemic Preparedness to Migrants and Mobility Affected Communities in Lao People's Democratic Republic* with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) on 18 June 2020.
- Liaised and coordinated with relevant stakeholders to develop recommendations for the inclusion of migrants into national preparedness plans.
- Ongoing monitoring and sharing on the situation of migrant workers returning from neighbouring countries.
- Handed over 10 direct assistance packs to a private recruitment agency upon their urgent request to support returning migrant workers.



Project Launch Ceremony at Vientiane Capital.

## Pillar 2 — RISK COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Conducted a half-day visit to Quarantine Centre KM 27 in Vientiane Capital on 26 June 2020. IOM prepared and distributed 260 direct assistance packs to returning migrant workers and handed over two loudspeakers to the centre for broadcasting safe migration and HIV/AIDS prevention messages.
- Developed an infosheet on employment information for migrant workers in Lao People's Democratic Republic. 1,200 copies were shared with Quarantine Centre KM 27 in Vientiane Capital.
- Handed over 500 copies of "*Infosheet for Migrant Workers in Lao People's Democratic Republic*" to Quarantine Centre KM 27, and 500 with a private recruitment agency responsible for sending migrant workers abroad.
- The NO stigma radio script continues to be broadcast through UNDP's community radio and Lao National Radio, reaching approximately 300,000 people across five provinces including Oudomxay, Sekong, Salavan, Xayabouly, and Xieng Khouang.

## Pillar 3 — SURVEILLANCE

- IOM supported the Skills Development and Employment Department (SDED), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) with developing its rapid assessment of returned migrant workers which is being conducted by SDED across all 18 provinces of Lao People's Democratic Republic. Migrants can register their information here - <http://www.lmi.gov.la/COVID19/iframe.php>

## Pillar 4 — POINTS OF ENTRY (POE)

- IOM contributed to the global Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)/ Points of Entry (PoE) mapping exercise through providing weekly updates on mobility restrictions – accessible here - [migration.iom.int](https://migration.iom.int)
- IOM participated in a border visit with a recruitment agency on 15 June to provide direct assistance to Lao migrants. 500 copies of Information Education Communication (IEC) materials were printed and distributed at the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge, along with 120 bottled water.

IOM Lao PDR

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