

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Population (in millions) (2011)	6.3
Country classification (2012)	Lower-middle-income
Gross national income per capita (PPP int \$) (2011)	\$2580
Total health expenditure as % of GDP (2010)	44.47%
Per capita total health expenditure (PPP int \$) (2010)	\$97.15
Per capita government health expenditure (PPP int \$) (2010)	\$32.34
Life expectancy at birth (in years) (2009)	63
Human Development Index (2011)	0.524
Median age (in years) (2010)	21
Total fertility rate per woman (2010)	2.7

The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic reports as follows.

National coordination

There is a written national strategy or plan that focuses primarily on the prevention and control of viral hepatitis, and also integrates other diseases. It includes components for raising awareness, surveillance, vaccination, prevention in general and prevention of transmission in health-care settings.

There is no designated governmental unit/department responsible solely for coordinating and/or carrying out viral hepatitis-related activities. Information was not provided on how many people work full-time on hepatitis-related activities in all government agencies/bodies.

The government has a viral hepatitis prevention and control programme that includes activities targeting the following specific populations: health-care workers (including health-care waste handlers), newborns and children.

Awareness-raising and partnerships

The government did not hold events for World Hepatitis Day 2012, but has funded other viral hepatitis public awareness campaigns since January 2011 (Annex A).

The government does not collaborate with in-country civil society groups to develop and implement its viral hepatitis prevention and control programme.

Evidence-based policy and data for action

There is routine surveillance for viral hepatitis. There is a national surveillance system for the following types of acute hepatitis: B, C and E. Information was not provided on whether there is a national surveillance system for any type of chronic hepatitis.

There are standard case definitions for hepatitis. Deaths, including from hepatitis, are reported to a central registry. The percentage of hepatitis cases reported as "undifferentiated" or "unclassified" hepatitis is not known.

Liver cancer cases and cases with HIV/hepatitis coinfection are not registered nationally.

It is not known whether the government publishes hepatitis disease reports.

Hepatitis outbreaks are required to be reported to the government and are further investigated. There is inadequate laboratory capacity nationally to support hepatitis B outbreak investigations and other surveillance activities. Information was not provided on whether there is adequate laboratory capacity nationally to support investigation of other types of viral hepatitis outbreaks and other surveillance activities.

There is a national public health research agenda for viral hepatitis. Viral hepatitis serosurveys are conducted regularly; the target populations are children aged 5–9 years and women aged 15–45 years. The last serosurvey was carried out in 2012.

Prevention of transmission

There is no national policy on hepatitis A vaccination.

The government has established the goal of eliminating hepatitis B by 2017.

Nationally, 20% of newborn infants in a given recent year received the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth and 79% of one-year-olds (ages 12–23 months) in a given recent year received three doses of hepatitis B vaccine.

There is a national policy that specifically targets mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B (Annex B).

There is no specific national strategy and/or policy/guidelines for preventing hepatitis B and hepatitis C infection in health-care settings. Health-care workers are vaccinated against hepatitis B prior to starting work that might put them at risk of exposure to blood.

There is a national policy on injection safety in health-care settings, which recommends single-use and auto-disable syringes for therapeutic injections. Single-use or auto-disable syringes, needles and

cannulas are always available in all health-care facilities.

Official government estimates of the number and percentage of unnecessary injections administered annually in health-care settings are not known.

There is a national infection control policy for blood banks. All donated blood units (including family donations) and blood products nationwide are screened for hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

It is not known whether there is a national policy relating to the prevention of viral hepatitis among people who inject drugs.

It is not known whether the government has guidelines that address how hepatitis A and hepatitis E can be prevented through food and water safety.

Screening, care and treatment

Health professionals obtain the skills and competencies required to effectively care for people with viral hepatitis through schools for health professionals (pre-service education) and on-the-job training.

There are national clinical guidelines for the management of viral hepatitis, but it is not known whether they include recommendations for cases with HIV coinfection.

It is not known whether the government has national policies relating to screening and referral to care for hepatitis B. Information was not provided on whether the government has national policies relating to screening and referral to care for hepatitis C.

People testing for hepatitis B register by name. Information was not provided on whether their names are kept confidential within the system. Hepatitis B tests are not free of charge. Information was not provided on whether people testing for hepatitis C register by name, or whether hepatitis C tests are free of charge for all individuals. Information was not provided on whether hepatitis B or hepatitis C tests are compulsory for members of any specific group.

Publicly funded treatment is not available for hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

The following drug for treating hepatitis B is on the national essential medicines list or subsidized by the government: interferon alpha. No drug for treating hepatitis C is on the national essential medicines list or subsidized by the government.

The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes assistance from WHO in one or more areas of viral hepatitis prevention and control (Annex C).