

Comment on the “importance of coordination for the development of a National Health Insurance System and the design of a National Social Protection Strategy in Lao PDR”

***by Ms Bouaphat Phonvisay, Deputy Director of National Health Insurance Bureau,
Ministry of Health, Vientiane, Lao PDR
Session 1***

Good afternoon everyone,

In terms of social protection in Lao PDR, we have some schemes in place and are now embarking on an assessment to pin the gaps and identify the steps forward. For this we will have technical support from ILO. We are in the process of conducting consultations and meetings for developing a national social protection strategy. This is to help stakeholders from different fields to come together. Though I am working more on social health protection, I believe it is very important to heed what the presenters said regarding coordination between different stakeholders as a crucial factor to strengthen social protection.

In Lao PDR, a technical working group has been installed to develop a law on social protection, including social health protection. In addition, a taskforce composed by representatives from the different line ministries (MoH, MoF, MoL and others) has been installed to discuss on this issue. These two mechanisms aim at ensuring coordination between the different stakeholders. In addition, there is a national health authority to improve access to all schemes and a national health committee with employee and employer representatives and the government.

Four schemes of social protection exist in Lao PDR, two for the formal sector and two for the informal sector. The main idea is to merge those schemes in order to strengthen the system, reduce overlaps and build technical and human capacities. This should improve coverage to groups of people who are currently left out. For this to happen, Lao PDR supports the step-by-step implementation of the Single Window Service with support from the ILO. This is expected to build a strong database, increase administrative and other efficiencies, and so on. The most important thing is to have the support and commitment of the government and then to strengthen staff capacities.

According to National Health Insurance Authority, we have a management committee involving all relevant ministries such as MOL, MOH, MOF, employees, trade unions and others. This will help improve coordination at the central, provincial and district levels. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate what the presenters said, that we need all relevant stakeholders to be involved and to provide their inputs, as this will improve efficiencies and strengthen social protection in the country.