

**General Country information:**

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, is located in southeast Asia and borders Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. It is divided in 16 provinces, one municipality and one special zone. Vientiane, the capital, is the largest city of Laos. In the 19th century, Lao was incorporated into the 'Protectorate' of French Indochina. Vientiane became the capital of a unified Lao state after the Kingdom of Champasak and the territory of Vientiane were also added to the protectorate.

Following a brief Japanese occupation during World War II, the country declared its independence in 1945, but the French under De Gaulle re-asserted their control and only in 1950 was Laos granted semi-autonomy as an "associated state" within the French Union.

In 1975, a long civil war officially ended when the communist Pathet Lao movement came to power, but the animosities between factions continued for several years.

The introduction in the late 1990s of economic reforms including rapid business licensing, led to an increase in the number of private enterprises. Subsistence agriculture provides 80% of total employment. The UN Human Development Index for Laos is 130 out of 177.

**Cholera Background History:**

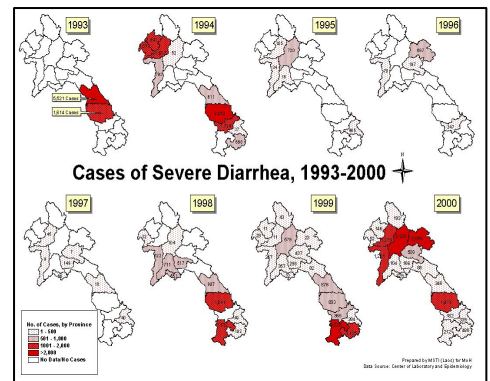
The seventh pandemic of cholera began in 1961 in Indonesia and spread through Asia to reach Laos in 1969, however the first cholera cases were reported back in 1953.

From 1993 until 1997 Lao reported cholera cases each year. Since 1999, Lao reported its cholera cases under the "severe diarrhoea" appellation.

The last big outbreaks were in 1999 with 10'120 cases and 453 deaths (Case fatality rate of 4.4%) and in 2000 with 12'440 cases and 520 deaths (CFR 4.2%). Since 2001, the incidence of cholera decreased dramatically as well as the CFR.

**WHO NOTIFIED CHOLERA CASES AND DEATHS**

1953	1969	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
31	448	5521	9660	1365	720	5547
18	21	255	606	174	33	NA
58.1	4.7	4.6	6.3	12.7	4.6	
1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2007	2008
334	10120	12440	2941	2042	169	196
NA	453	520	15	5	3	0
	4.5	4.2	0.5	0.2	1.8	0



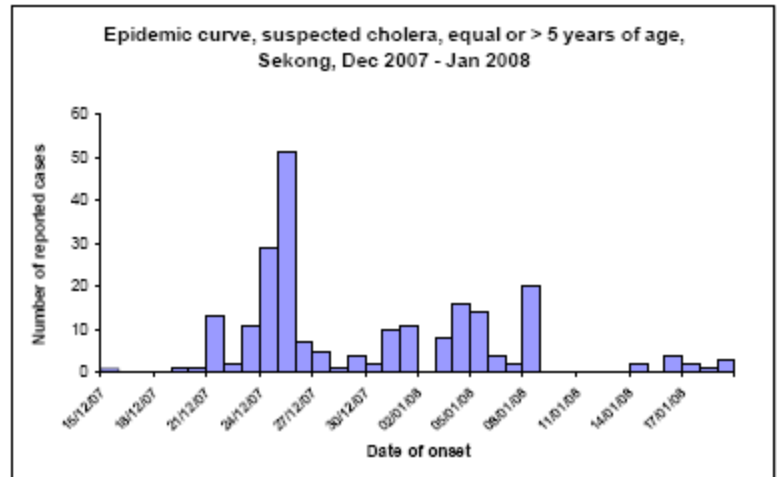
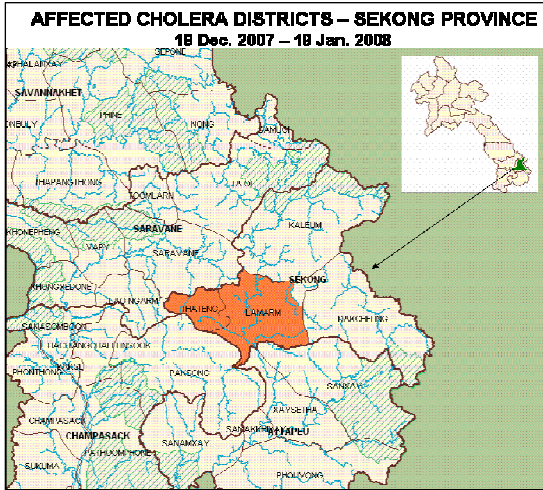
**Cholera situation and support actions from WHO in 2000/2003:**

Following the large outbreak of 1999/2000, the struggle against cholera became one of the priorities of the Ministry of Health. In August 2000, a National Technical Advisory Group was created whose main objective was the reduction of incidence by 50% and the reduction of Case Fatality Rate from 5% to 2%. In 2001, the new plan of action was tried out in three selected provinces (Savannakhet, Luang Prabang and Huaphane) and extended in 2002, to three other provinces (Khamouane, Champassak and Attapeu).

In 2002, the initial objectives were reached, access to ORS in remote areas was possible and the surveillance system significantly improved.

**Cholera situation in 2007/2008:**

In December 2007, cholera cases started to be reported in the Sekong province with the index case being reported on 19 December. As of 19 January a total of 362 cases were registered including 3 deaths in 32 villages located in 2 districts of the province: Thateng and Lamarn. 24% of all cases were under 5 years old. Out of 16 samples taken from patients, 12 were positive for *V. Cholerae* 01 Ogawa as well as samples taken from Sedon and Huay On rivers.



**WHO support actions in 2007/2008**

- Active surveillance in the affected districts
- Clinical Management and infection control
- Health education
- Safe water supply

**Demographic and Socio-Economic Data:**

<b>Geography</b>	Total surface	236'800km <sup>2</sup>
	Capital	Vientiane
	Provinces	16 provinces , one municipality, one special zone
	Official Language	Lao
<b>Environment</b>	Climate	Tropical monsoon
	Rainy season	May to November, dry season December to April
	Floods and droughts	In August 2008, worst flooding in decades have killed four people in Vientiane
	Deforestation	Deforestation
<b>Demographics</b>	Natural resources	Timber, hydropower, gypsum, tin, gold, gemstones
	Population	6 521 998 (2007)
	Religions	67% Buddhist, 1.5% Christian, 31.5% Others
	Ethnic groups	55% Lao, 11 % Khmou, 8% Hmong, 26% others
<b>Economy</b>	Migrants	6'000 Hmong living in Ban Huay Nam Khao camp in Thailand (July 2008)
	Industry	Copper, tin, gold, and gypsum mining; timber, electric power, agricultural processing, construction, garments, tourism, cement
<b>Health Indicators</b>	Farming	Sweet potatoes, vegetables, corn, coffee, sugarcane, tobacco, cotton, tea, peanuts, rice; water buffalo, pigs, cattle, poultry
	Per capita total expenditure on health (US\$)	18 (2005)
	Life expectancy birth (yrs)	Male: 59                      Female: 61
	Child mortality (per 1000)	75
<b>Communicable Diseases</b>	Number of physicians	2000 (2004) 1MD/3761 hab.
	Food or waterborne diseases: diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever	
<b>Risk Factors for Cholera</b>	Vector borne diseases: dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis, and malaria	
	2 cases of H5N1 avian influenza have been identified in 2007, both of them being fatal	
	HIV prevalence (2005): 0.1%	
<b>Risk Factors for Cholera</b>	Population with access to improved water source (2006) rural: 53% urban: 86%	
	Population with access to proper sanitation facilities (2006) rural: 38% urban: 87%	
	Chronic Malnutrition (2002-2004) 19%	

Sources for Document: WHO, UNHCR, UNDP



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