

# MEKONG MALARIA III

## TOWARDS MALARIA ELIMINATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

**Abstract.** The third Mekong Malaria monograph follows on from the second monograph published in 2003. This comprehensive document spanning a 10 year period (2000-2010) compiles data, project implementation reports, other official and unofficial grey literature and peer-reviewed publications essentially generated by experts, program managers and field workers who have been engaged in malaria control operations in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. The last decade has demonstrated progress far beyond expectations in malaria control in the region: as compared to 2002, malaria deaths have decreased in 2010 by more than 75% and confirmed malaria cases by 25% in all Mekong countries except Myanmar. Malaria case detection rate has increased over the years as a result of scale-up of microscopy services and progressive roll-out of falciparum specific and then PAN specific rapid diagnostic tests for malaria (now widely available at community level especially in remote locations). As a direct result of substantial extra funding in the region, largely through GFATM but also through other funding partners like BMGF and PMI, strategic options for controlling the disease have not only been consolidated and updated but also widely promoted throughout the region. This has hugely increased access to and use of relevant tools for malaria prevention and control by the most at risk, remote and mobile populations. As expected, the success has been outstanding in reducing *P. falciparum* incidence, to the extent that vivax malaria now predominates in many areas. Better control of *P. vivax* is one of the next major challenges faced by countries as they move towards malaria elimination goals. Digital maps of the region comparing API by district in 2002 and 2010 provide clear information on progress towards malaria elimination and clearly identify locations where the malaria burden remains a particular concern. The monograph also provides an overview of the dynamic socio-economic context of the Mekong region leading for example to public health and environmental challenges such as the increasing importance of secondary vectors which are adjusting to new conditions or new primary health care challenges associated with internal and international migrants reaching basic health and malaria related services. The region remains the hotspot of antimalarial drug resistance and containing or eliminating resistant strains presents a major challenge to National Malaria Control Programs. Also discussed is the importance of maintaining and implementing a strategic research agenda articulated to programmatic perspectives and technical issues, backed-up by national and international institutions. Fine tuning existing tools and identifying new control options remain the cornerstone of success. Based on the last 10 years of heightened control efforts, strategies and policies are discussed in view of their success but also in view of their technical and programmatic limitations. Last but not least, political support at the highest level, and supranational mechanisms to combat substandard medicines and properly measure progress made are both considered essential in the continuing effort to control and eliminate malaria in the region. This monograph is then a critical milestone against which to measure past and future effort in the Mekong region.