

# COVID-19 Test and Treat in Lao

**QuickStart Treatment Consortium**  
*Policy Brief*  
**December 2024**

## Summary

Through a partnership with the COVID-19 QuickStart Treatment Consortium from July 2023 to September 2024, 1,700 treatment courses of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir were donated to Laos and 238 healthcare workers were trained on COVID-19 testing and treatment. During this time period, 341 people tested positive for COVID-19 and 52 were prescribed treatment.

This policy brief describes Laos' QuickStart COVID-19 test and treat program and summarizes key insights and recommendations.



## Background

As future health threats including mpox, H5N1, and others loom, it is critical to learn from experiences of COVID-19 program rollout across the health system.

COVID-19 has caused 9+ million deaths globally.<sup>1</sup> Effective vaccines and treatments have helped to prevent further deaths, but low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) have experienced equity gaps in access. Limited data is available in LMIC contexts on real-world COVID-19 test and treat program implementation and utilization of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir.

The COVID-19 Treatment QuickStart Consortium, a partnership between Duke University, AmeriCares, the Clinton Health Access Initiative, and the COVID Collaborative, worked with governments in eight LMIC including Lao to develop and roll out COVID-19 test and treat programs from 2022-2024.

## Lao's COVID-19 Case Numbers at a Glance<sup>1</sup>

**219,060** recorded cases nationally  
as of September 2024

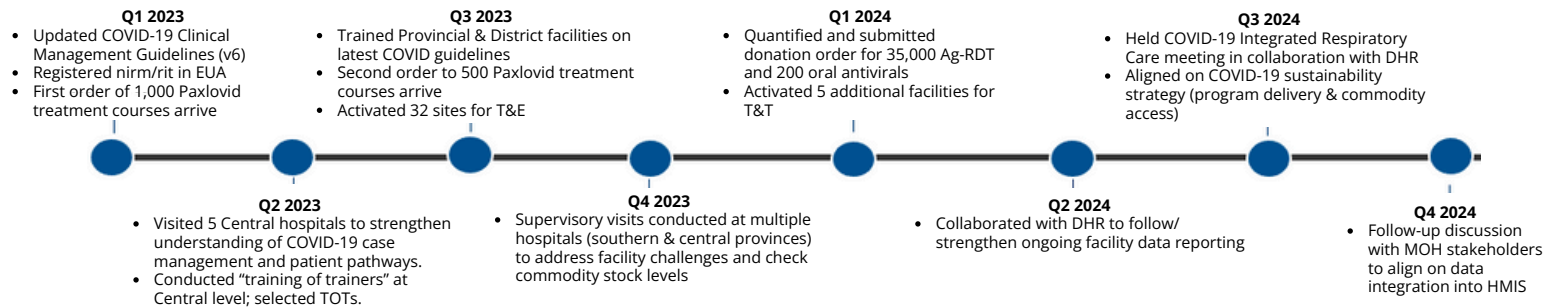
**671** recorded deaths nationally  
as of September 2024

## Approach

- Collaboration on guidelines development and implementation planning** including development of national policies, clinical guidelines, program rollout strategies, and national training programs
- Supply and distribution planning for decentralized testing** with point-of-care Antigen (POC-Ag) tests
- Donation of antiviral treatment (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir)** and in some countries, **self-tests** facilitated through rapid regulatory approvals and in-country importation
- Training of healthcare workers on COVID-19 diagnostics and clinical care** through training of trainers, cascade training, and ongoing site mentorship
- Strengthen national COVID-19 monitoring and evaluation systems** including introduction of new facility registers
- Program advocacy at the community level** to educate community members on availability of T&T at local facilities and eligibility criteria for treatment
- Operational research and post market surveillance** in a subset of five countries (Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zambia) to assess program feasibility, impact and challenges

<sup>1</sup> WHO COVID-19 dashboard 2024 [cited 2024 June 18]. Available from: <https://data.who.int/dashboards/covid19/deaths?n=o>.

## Lao Program- Test & Treat Timeline

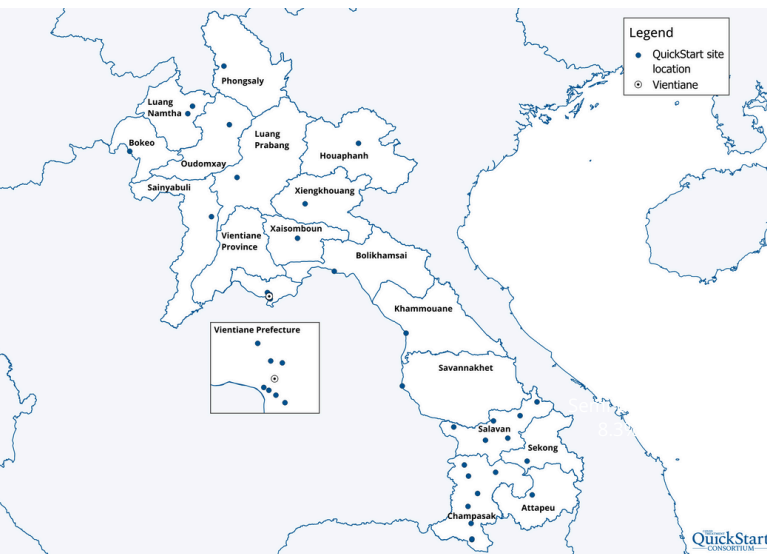


## Model of Care

- Entry points may vary by facility, but they are commonly OPD & ER
- Targeted testing is conducted for patients who display COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case
- 2 provincial (Champasak & Salavan) and 9 district hospitals conduct joint bi-directional respiratory infection screening (COVID-19, ILI/SARI-RSV, TB)

## QuickStart Program Rollout

**238** Providers trained through QuickStart  
**1,700** Treatment courses donated  
**37** QuickStart facilities offering test and treat



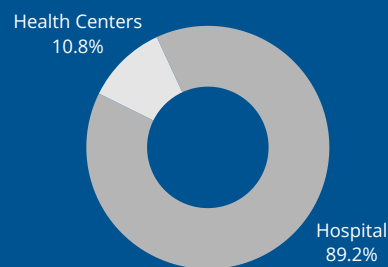
## QuickStart Program Results

Cascade of care July 2023 to September 2024:

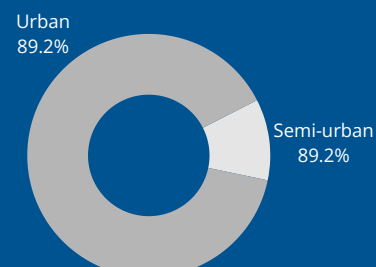
**27,757** COVID-19 tests conducted  
**341** Positive COVID-19 tests  
**65** Individuals eligible for treatment\*  
**52** Prescribed nirmatrelvir/ritonavir

\*Eligibility criteria for treatment in Lao PDR is determined based on patients presenting with mild or moderate disease, within 5 days of symptom onset, and at least one moderate or high-risk factor for disease progression (e.g., age >50, hypertension, obesity, HIV+, etc.).

### Facility Type



### Facility Location



## Program Outcomes and Recommendations

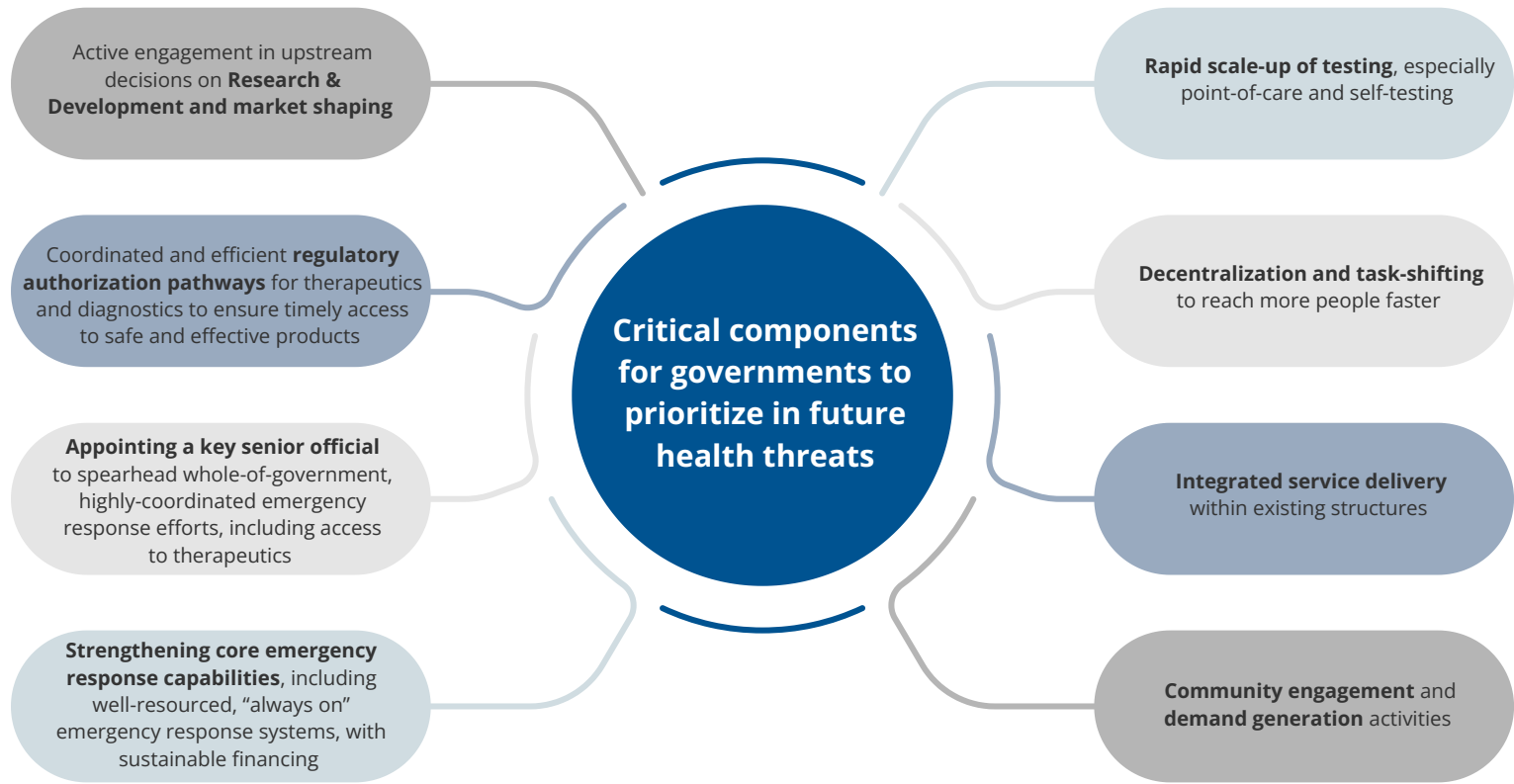
Learning from experiences rapidly rolling out COVID-19 test and treat programs will be critical to prepare for the next pandemic.

## Sustaining and Strengthening COVID-19 Programs

Core elements include:

- Strengthening surveillance systems
- Developing surge preparedness plans
- Developing mechanisms for increased medical counter measures as needed
- Identifying updated and integrated governance structures for continued program oversight

## Preparing for the Next Health Threat



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