PRESS RELEASE
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COVID-19: Plan International donates 100,000 protective masks to Laos

The organisation used its global logistics and supply chain to rush desperately needed protective equipment to one of the poorest countries in East Asia

(VIENTIANE): Global child rights and humanitarian organisation Plan International has donated 100,000 pieces of face masks to Lao People’s Democratic Republic to help combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The organisation used its global logistics and supply chain resources to rush the aid cargo to Vientiane as one of East Asia’s poorest nations faces acute shortage of protective equipment.

The masks were handed over to the Ministry of Health today.

With a population of 7 million, Lao PDR stands at 140 out of 189 countries and territories in the Human Development Index. The country’s health system is still developing and faces an extreme challenge in dealing with the worst public health crisis in a generation.

“The frontline health staff in Lao PDR are risking their lives in dealing with the pandemic and are in desperate need of protective gear. The medical standard masks donated to the government will help keep thousands of health workers safe,” said Soumya Guha, Plan International’s Country Director in Lao PDR.

The significant donation to Lao PDR despite the worldwide shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was made possible by Plan International’s logistics and supply chain. The organisation used its sophisticated procurement network for the rapid transfer of critical aid using both air and road channels.

Cecile Terraz, Plan International’s Director of Supply Chain, said: “COVID-19 is nothing like the humanitarian sector has experienced in both scale and impact. We are currently navigating complex challenges such as scarcity of protective equipment, lockdown restrictions and logistical hurdles in moving aid amidst closed borders. With advance planning and procurement of key supplies, we are in a position to deliver lifesaving aid to thousands in desperate need.”

Plan International is significantly scaling up its aid-delivery as part of its global COVID-19 response and is shipping 1.3 metric tonnes of PPE to 12 countries over the next two weeks using commercial airlines.

The organisation’s response, covering more than 50 countries, including Laos, is focused on protecting vulnerable children and their communities from the impacts of COVID-19.
In Lao PDR, Plan International has so far supported 5 district hospitals and 40 Health centres in Oudomxai and Saravane provinces with disinfectant materials and by installing hand washing stations. It has also supported training of 294 frontline health staff, including 152 women, in COVID-19 prevention.

The organisation, in partnership with the Centre of Education and Health in the country, will help disseminate public health messages on COVID-19 prevention using multiple media platforms in different ethnic languages.

“Our support will prioritise girls and boys especially in remote communities, as they are most at risk of missing out on key information. We are also working with the Ministry of Education and Sports to get schools cleaned and ready for children to return,” said Mr Guha.

Donate to Plan International’s €100 million appeal for COVID-19 and find out more about our response here.

To request an interview or for more information, please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

Plan International Laos is the representative office of Plan International and has been working in Lao People’s Democratic Republic since 2007. Plan International focuses on children’s rights and equality for girls. In Lao PDR, we support programmes in public health and nutrition, education (pre-primary and primary), and access to sexual and reproductive health rights for adolescents and young people. Plan International Laos is working with the Government of Lao PDR in three provinces of Bokeo, Oudomxay, and Saravane.

About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children’s rights and equality for girls.

We believe in the power and potential of every child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it’s girls who are most affected. Working together with children, young people, our supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children.

We support children’s rights from birth until they reach adulthood. And we enable children to prepare for – and respond to – crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years and are now active in more than 75 countries.

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