



**Report of the 9th SRCMF Regional Meeting (Virtual)
29 April 2024**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South East Asia Regional Coordination Mechanism Forum (SRCMF) organized its 9th SRCMF regional meeting (virtual) on 29 April 2024. The meeting was chaired by Resource Person Dr Olavi Elo. From GF SEA Constituency Board's Board Member, Dr Rajendra P Joshi, and CFP Ms. Sandhya Gupta attended the meeting. Seven out of eleven-member country delegates participated in the meeting. Partners from Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA), PATH and resource persons attended the meeting. The participant list is attached in annexure 2.

Meeting objectives:

1. To obtain support from SEA Region Member States and WHO for World Bank hosted Pandemic Fund, Regional Proposal of SRCMF
2. To discuss program for enhancing cross-border collaboration and district health systems to achieve and maintain malaria elimination across the shared borders

Meeting outcome:

The meeting obtained an update on status of World Bank hosted Pandemic Fund regional proposal of SRCMF and requested member countries for inputs on the same. The draft proposal had been shared with participants in advance. Meeting also discussed program for enhancing cross-border collaboration and district health systems to achieve and maintain malaria elimination across the shared borders.

The delegates from member countries and partner organizations appreciated SRCMF organizing the meeting and commended the progress made so far in development in cross-border collaboration between the countries in SEA Region.

The meeting gave certain directives and recommendations for the secretariat, especially on establishing partnership with WHO on Pandemic Fund regional proposal of SRCMF, and suggested aligning the proposal with country, WHO and other regional/ multi country proposals, to avoid duplication.

The meeting advised the SRCMF to focus on common interest of member countries in enhancing cross-border collaboration for malaria elimination and share learnings from best practices and successful malaria elimination programs from member countries

The meeting ended with closing remarks from the Chairperson at 12:30 pm (IST) on 29 April 2024.

INAGURAL SESSION

The 9th Biannual SEA Regional Coordination Mechanism Forum (SRCMF) virtual meeting started with welcome address by **Dr Jigmi Singay**, Executive Secretary Cum Coordinator, SRCMF Secretariat. He welcomed all and thanked them for attending the meeting in spite of their busy schedules. He shared the meeting objectives for discussions and looked forward to good interaction in this meeting:

1. To obtain support from SEA Region Member States and WHO for World Bank hosted Pandemic Fund Regional Proposal of SRCMF
2. To discuss program for enhancing cross-border collaboration and district health systems to achieve and maintain malaria elimination across the shared borders

He apprised the meeting that SRCMF is looking for WHO as Implementing Entity (IE) for Pandemic Fund regional proposal of SRCMF and discussions are still ongoing with hon'ble Regional Director and program heads. SRCMF will get back to member countries after discussions are in final shape for further fine tuning of the regional proposal.

He further added that many member countries are approaching malaria elimination targets and working towards accelerated action at the sub-national level. He hoped that by 2030 all member countries achieve malaria elimination target. He informed that SRCMF is working on developing some projects for submission to various donors for disease elimination.

Following the welcome address, GF SEA Constituency Board Meeting **Dr Rajendra P Joshi** congratulated SEA member countries for impressive progress made in reducing burden of malaria, HIV and TB over the past decade. He added that, as countries progress, we need regional collaboration mechanism, as infectious diseases don't respect geographical borders. SRCMF, being an excellent regional platform, needs to be strengthened to get best out of it. He was happy to see high number of delegates participating in the meeting and looked forward to learning from successes of disease elimination programs.

BUSINESS SESSION

The business session commenced with the appointment of Dr Olavi Elo as Chair of the meeting

1. SESSION 1: PANDEMIC FUND REGIONAL PROPOSAL OF SRCM

Dr Olavi Elo informed all that due to time constraint in completing regional pandemic fund proposal this meeting had to be conducted virtually. SRCMF is working very closely with WHO for partnership agreement and on issue of WHO becoming Implementing Entity (IE) for Pandemic Fund proposal. SRCMF is waiting for WHO's final decision before going ahead with proposal submission. Therefore, the first agenda item of the meeting "WHO SEARO Regional Plan for PPR" was postponed awaiting final decision from WHO SEARO.

Dr Dipanjan gave a brief overview of the draft regional proposal and requested inputs from focal points of member countries for country contextuality.

He outlined the objectives of the regional proposal as follows:

- a) Establishing a collaborative platform to foster South-South cooperation
- b) Improving laboratory networks in border areas to ensure rapid diagnosis and communication with health systems
- c) Expanding core International Health Regulations (IHR) capacities among key stakeholders

Regional proposal will help address gaps in cross-border PPR through proposed intervention to strengthen SEA health defenses and systems for planning, prevention and response to pandemic emergencies

He highlighted following 5 C's of project interventions to address PPR challenges, with overarching One Health approach recognizing interconnection between people, animals and shared environment, with goal of achieving optimal health outcomes for all.

- a) Core Capacity Building
- b) Collaboration and Coordination with Countries
- c) Commitment to share data, specimen and expertise
- d) Community engagement - CBOs, private sector needs to come in with all inclusive approach
- e) Communication - seamless and continuous

He shared the theory of change model to explain how project interventions will impact PPR in cross border context and address inequalities, barriers and differential access to services.

Dr Jigmi Singay reiterated that SRCMF will follow-up with WHO SEARO. He hoped for a concrete decision by WHO SEARO by end of next week.

Mr Manaj Biswas pointed out that SRCMF was established with big dream under GF SEA Constituency Board as a regional coordination mechanism for 11 member countries of the SEA region. SRCMF should tie up with WHO SEARO at the earliest possible time for pandemic fund application and organise a face-to-face meeting for closer interaction after conclusion of discussions with WHO.

Ms. Jintana Sriwongsa suggested aligning the regional proposal with national, multi-country and regional proposals, such as those prepared by ASEAN and others, for synergy and support to national initiatives, so that everyone is working towards the same goal and avoids duplication. Referring to objective 2 "Improving laboratory networks in border areas" she proposed "facilitating and enhancing lab networks in border areas" where SRCMF's role is critical. A lot needs to be done in a short span of time. As lot of effort has been put into this proposal, SRCMF may like to think of plan B to consider another IE from the 13 IEs besides of WHO.

Dr Olavi Elo reiterated that SRCMF's mandate is to support member countries in regional context on issues of cross-border disease control, and regional proposal can't be outside of countries' interests and plans. He requested member countries to share their inputs on the draft regional proposal, so that it could be aligned with country needs and priorities. Regional proposal will be finalised in consultations with countries after concluding discussions with WHO next week.

Dr Md Mushfiqur Rahman added that the PPR in cross-border area is very important and challenging. It would require planning on mechanism for implementing of activities jointly with WHO.

Dr.Phusit Prakongsai apprised the meeting about WHO's multi-country proposals with Thailand and some other countries in SEA Region. He also spoke about RAI fourth phase regional grant to accelerate the elimination of malaria in GMS for border areas and in at-risk populations. SRCMF may consider developing regional proposals in synergy with RAI4 initiative, together with some countries of GMS.

Dr Olavi Elo Olavi shared the information that SRCMF is in discussion with WHO regarding multi country proposal and with GMS so there are no duplications.

Dr J.P Narain clarified that the proposal from SRCMF focuses on enhancing cross-border PPR capacity at border districts. Each of 5 C's highlighted in Dr Dipanjan's presentation need strengthening in the border districts. We all know that for pandemic prevention and control, the border functions as PoE for pathogens, hence strengthening cross-border collaboration is crucial. Some of key points, already highlighted, are building health system capacity at border with focus on improving health and equity in order to build resilient health system for future public health emergencies. It's a win-win situation for both SRCMF and WHO, whose responsibility is to support member countries' implementation of different activities. This proposal will also sustain SRCMF and its activities into future. Therefore, all must take this proposal seriously and see how to work together to support countries.

Dr Jigmi Singay thanked all for sharing comprehensive points and assured that it will be considered in finalising the proposal.

2. SESSION 2: ENHANCING CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION AND DISTRICT HEALTH SYSTEMS

Dr Olavi Elo highlighted the importance of enhancing cross-border collaboration among neighbouring countries and in district health system strengthening for universal health coverage, and achieving and sustaining malaria elimination. In SEA Region Maldives and Sri Lanka have already eliminated malaria and Bhutan and Timor Leste are next in line.

He invited Dr Harsh Rajvanshi, Technical advisor from APLMA, to share experiences and views of APLMA on cross-border collaboration.

Dr Harsh Rajvanshi told the meeting that significant progress has been made in some countries and that some others are working towards it. He added that significant strides are made in Indonesia and Timor Leste, and suggested that other countries may consider and replicate the model. We can't leave any country behind as we can't call ourselves malaria free unless all countries achieve it. He informed all that APLMA, in collaboration with SRCMF, has conducted a cross-border landscape assessment in India-Bhutan and India-Nepal border areas. He hoped this assessment report serves as a principal document for future collaborative activities and planning.

Dr Olavi Elo thanked Dr Harsh for his presentation. He then congratulated Dr Jigmi Singay on being assigned the role of member of RBM Board for Asia Pacific region and called upon the member countries to support him in this endeavour.

Dr Jigmi Singay thanked Dr Sarthak Das, CEO of APLMA for taking initiative of his nomination and getting him on Board. He thanked all who supported his nomination and looked forward to member countries' support and guidance in his new role.

Dr J.P Narain added that cross-border initiative in region is not new. He recalled his days in WHO SEARO during 1990's and up to early 2000, when lot of initiatives were undertaken on cross-border collaboration in kala-azar, HIV, TB and malaria in Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and with India as common partner. Unfortunately, due to variety of reasons it didn't translate to impact at border level. Countries like Bhutan and Nepal are not able to eliminate malaria because of situation at border districts. SRCMF can play a critical role in accelerating cross-border disease elimination, therefore member countries' support to SRCMF is crucial. There is tremendous opportunity to eliminate malaria in countries and in the region before 2030. Documentation of success stories and best practices and its wider dissemination is important to encourage others to do the same. Timor Leste and Indonesia have good examples. GMS has also demonstrated major reduction in malaria cases through cross border collaboration. India has also made remarkable progress during the recent years in reducing the malaria incidence, and global reduction of malaria is driven by progress achieved in India. He underlined the need to identify action and follow-up timeline in context of regional proposal of SRCMF and in enhancing cross-border collaboration and district health systems as an outcome of meeting.

Dr Anupong Sujariyakul supported documentation and circulation of success stories in cross-border collaboration as good examples in SEA Region. In particular SRCMF should identify common interest of member countries in PPR in border areas to have a good regional proposal, including cross-border collaboration and improving district health systems for acceleration of malaria elimination.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

The Meeting deliberated on each agenda item and made the following recommendations:

Member countries:

- a) Give comments and commitment on draft regional proposal, so that SRCMF can go forward in further development of the proposal while in discussion with WHO SEARO

SRCMF:

- a) Share results of concluding meeting with WHO SEARO as IE, or SRCMF as implementing partner to WHO's forthcoming regional/multi-country proposal.
- b) Identify common interest of member countries for strengthening core capacities and to generate impact in PPR to disease outbreaks in cross-border areas.
- c) Align SRCMF's regional proposal with country, multi country and other regional proposals to promote compatibility and prevent duplication
- d) Consider documentation of success stories and best practices in cross-border malaria collaboration initiatives as good examples in SEA Region

- e) Identify activities of common concern and interest of member countries for enhancing cross border collaboration for accelerating malaria elimination and district health system strengthening.

Dr Olavi thanked all the participants for very valuable comments and invited Dr Jigmi Singay to deliver closing remarks.

CLOSING

Dr Jigmi Singay reiterated that SRCMF will follow-up with WHO intensively and have further consultations with member countries to finalise the proposal. He thanked all the participants for their very valuable comments on interventions and for guidance to secretariat. He thanked Chair for chairing the meeting efficiently and steering the whole meeting very well.

The Chair formally closed the meeting at 12:30 pm IST.

AGENDA

Time (IST)		Responsible person(s)
Opening Session		
10:00-10:10	Welcome and opening remarks	Dr Jigmi Singay
	Meeting objectives	
	Self-introduction of participants	
Session 1	World Bank hosted Pandemic Fund Regional Proposal of SRCM	Chair: Dr Olavi
	1. World Bank hosted Pandemic Fund Regional Proposal of SRCMF - Comments and Discussion	Dr Dipanjan Sujit Roy and Dr Olavi Elo
	2. Support from SEA Region Member States for World Bank hosted Pandemic Fund, Regional Proposal of SRCMF - Comments and Discussion	Representatives from Member States- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste
	3. Recommendations and next steps	Dr Dipanjan Sujit Roy and Dr Olavi Elo
01:00-01:30	Lunch break	
Session 2	Enhancing cross-border collaboration and district health systems	Chair: Dr Olavi
01:30-02:00	1. Enhancing cross-border collaboration and district health systems to achieve and maintain malaria elimination across the shared borders. - Comments and Discussion	Harsh Rajvanshi, APLMA and Dr Dipanjan Roy
	2. Discussion on gaps and needs	Comments by Member States
	3. Nest steps	Dr Olavi
Closing Session		
02:00-02:20	Comments by Member States and Partners	Member States, Partners
02:20-02:30	Formal Remarks and closing of the meeting	Dr Jigmi Singay
02:30	End of the meeting	

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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