

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

RETURNING MIGRANTS SURVEY

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)
DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM)



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From
the People of Japan

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BACKGROUND

Lao People's Democratic Republic confirmed its first case on 24 March 2020. Since that announcement, there have been 22 confirmed cases, with the last (19th) reported local case on the 11th of April. Since then, three more imported cases were confirmed in July and August, via charter flights entering Lao People's Democratic Republic. To date, there have been no confirmed cases among the recent influx of migrant worker returnees. Authorities confirmed that the imported cases were an isolated event. At the point of drafting this report, the international borders remain officially closed.

The Lao Government has called on those working abroad to return home through official international checkpoints to ensure they are properly scanned for COVID-19.¹ At the same time, the government committed to provide help to these returning migrants to find new employment.² The number of workers returning to Lao People's Democratic Republic from Thailand between 24 March and 30 May was estimated at 79,208.³ It is hoped that returning workers can find jobs with Lao businesses and receive appropriate training before taking up new employment.

This report is the first in a series to highlight the extent of the COVID-19 effects on returning migrants from Thailand in terms of their anticipated socio-economic vulnerabilities and challenges. Up to 80% of respondents were not concerned about their ability to find employment. It appears that the wave of returning migrants could contribute to the local economic landscape as more than 50% of them either have no plans to leave Lao People's Democratic Republic for work again or are not sure of their plans. More than 90% of them were willing to upskill for better opportunities.




Since April 2020, the Skill Development and Employment Department (SDED), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare accepted the support and assistance from the IOM to respond to COVID-19 specifically in the areas of 1) Coordination and Partnership, 2) Risk Communication and Community Engagement, and 3) Surveillance.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

As part of the COVID-19 Response collaboration between SDED and IOM, direct assistance and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials were distributed to migrants at quarantine centres (QC) to support their everyday needs and onward journey. At the same time, the field team also took the opportunity to interview migrants who had returned and were still staying in QC at time of interview. Convenience sampling was applied. A total of 40 returned migrants were interviewed across four (4) provinces: Vientiane Capital, Champasak, Salavan, and Luang Prabang to interview a total of 40 returned migrants, over four (4) days, that is on the 26 June, 8 July, 9 July, and 27 July.

40 TOTAL RESPONDENTS

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY PROVINCE

Champasak	Luang Prabang
 9 respondents	 11 respondents
Salavan	Vientiane Capital
 10 respondents	 10 respondents

Two (2) limitations to be noted while reading this report:

- Given the time and movement constraints imposed by the government for visits to QCs, the study employed convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness of migrants to be interviewed. As such, the findings of this study should be taken as anecdotal and not representative of all returning migrants.
- The location of the interview (inside QCs) and the social status of the enumerators (government and IOM officials) may have influenced the returning migrants' responses and may reflect a social desirability bias.

¹Thousands of Lao Laborers Working in Thailand Return Home - Laotian Times. (n.d.). Retrieved August 19, 2020, from <https://laotiantimes.com/2020/03/23/thousands-of-lao-laborers-working-in-thailand-return-home/>

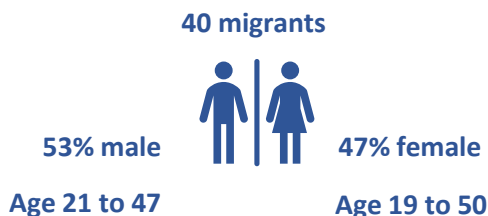
² Laos Govt to help workers who left jobs in Thailand. (n.d.). Retrieved August 19, 2020, from <https://www.nationthailand.com/ann/30387758>

³ Thailand National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control

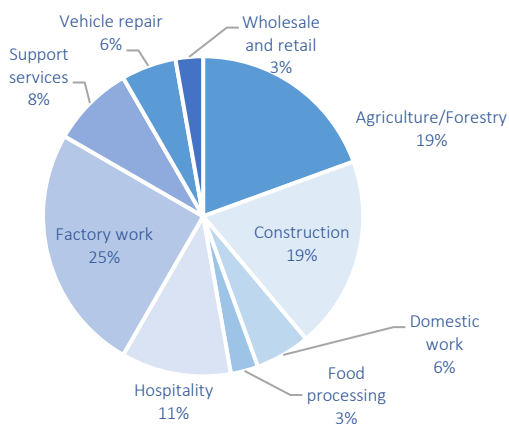


PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Data was collected using the combined experiences of 9 to 11 migrants per QC, in total interviewing:



About 63% of the migrants are married, and the rest are single, divorced or separated. Among all the migrants, 50% have children.



Most common work found in Thailand was factory work (25%), Agriculture/Forestry (19%) and Construction (19%)



43%
Farming

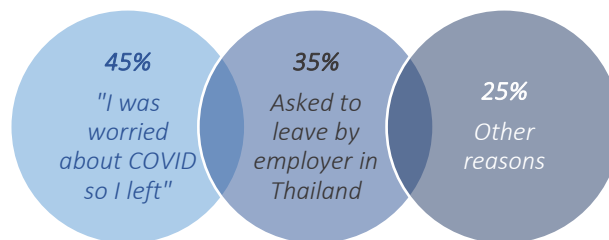


28%
Unpaid housework

Around 70% of migrants were either working on a farm or doing unpaid household work in Lao People's Democratic Republic before leaving for Thailand. The other 30% were self-employed as either a trader, employed in hospitality sector, student or unemployed.

MIGRATION JOURNEY

Most Common Reasons for Returning



All interviewed migrants returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic in the month of July with 83% of them travelling by international border checkpoints and the rest returning by traditional borders.

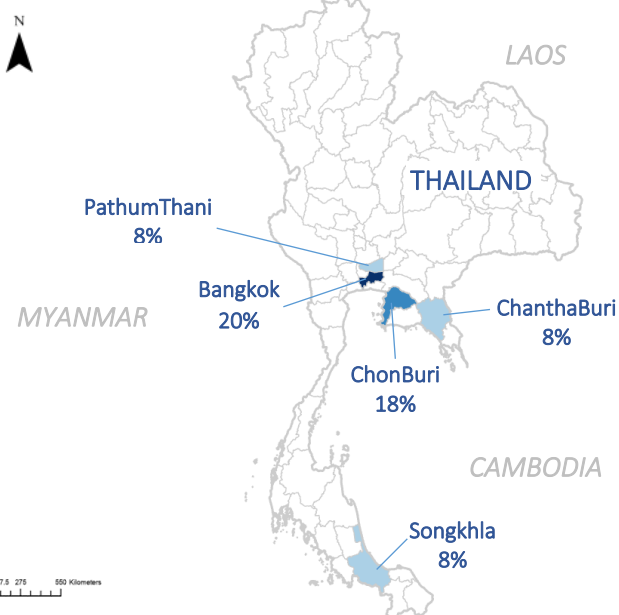


About 45% of them were regular migrants working in Thailand with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).



Most migrants found work in Thailand through Facebook groups, family and friends, with 35% of them reporting to have gone through recruitment agencies.

Top 5 provinces of origin in Thailand that migrants returned from



LEGEND

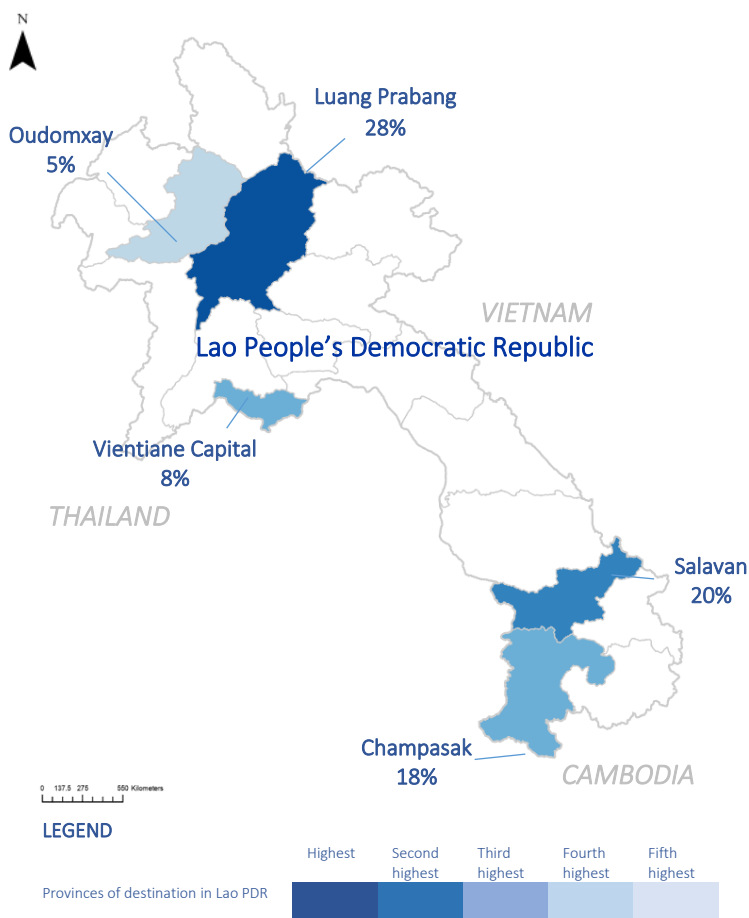
Provinces of origin in Thailand



The boundaries and names shown, and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM
Data Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) and IOM



Top 5 provinces of destination in Lao People's Democratic Republic that migrants returned to



The boundaries and names shown, and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM
Data Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) and IOM

In Thailand, the announcement of wide-ranging business closures by the Governor of Bangkok on 21 March 2020 and subsequent announcement of the State of Emergency by the Prime Minister on 26 March 2020 triggered mass movements of migrants from Bangkok and other provinces, in Thailand to migrant home provinces, as well as across borders to home countries in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (the) and Myanmar. The inter-provincial travel bans in Thailand slowed down the initial influx of returnees. With more restrictions being eased over the past months, Laotian migrants continue to return to the country mainly through land border-crossings. Despite international border closure, migrant workers are allowed entry into Lao People's Democratic Republic. Among those who returned...

83%
Received salary before return

58%
Paid overstay fine (range 200THB to 2,500 THB/6USD to 80USD)

25%
Incurred costs while waiting to cross border (range 100 to 5,000 THB/3USD to 161USD)



Returnees receiving direct assistance from IOM at Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge I, March 2020. ©IOM

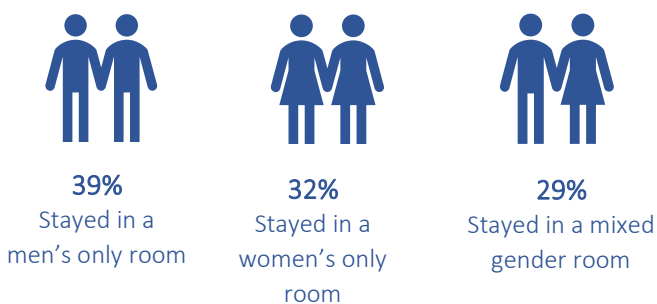


QUARANTINE CONDITIONS

Across Lao People's Democratic Republic, there are 44 active government quarantine facilities.⁴ Most migrants returning from Thailand are staying at the KM 4 centre in Savannakhet and KM 27 centre in Vientiane Capital to undergo 14-day mandatory quarantine, as the centres are located in cities with highest migration flow. There are in total three types of quarantine centres: provincial, district level, and community level. The provincial centres are often equipped with most resources and have better infrastructure

	Brought food and water to quarantine center	Did not bring food and water to quarantine center
Had enough food and water	6 respondents 	23 respondents 
Did not have enough food and water	3 respondents 	6 respondents 

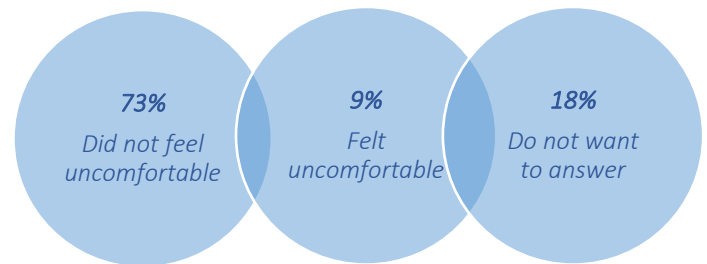
ROOM ARRANGEMENTS INSIDE QC



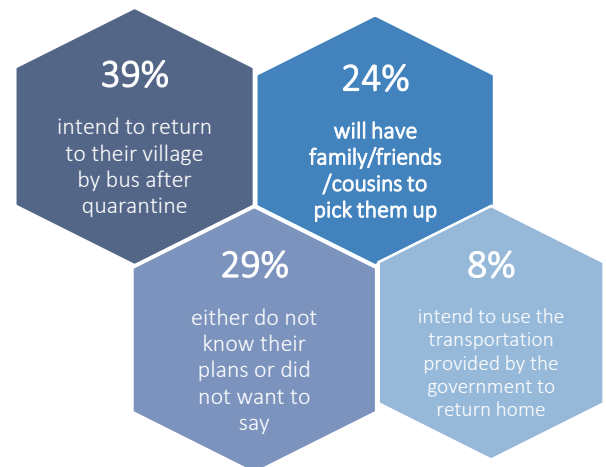
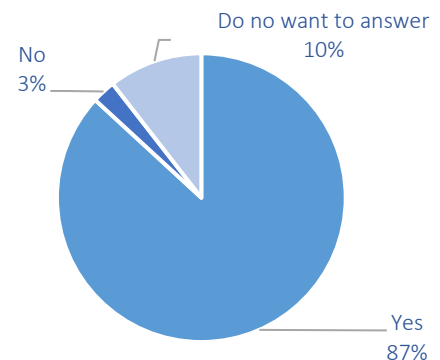
Migrants receiving IOM direct assistance packs in KM27 quarantine centre, June 2020. ©IOM

⁴ Official communication

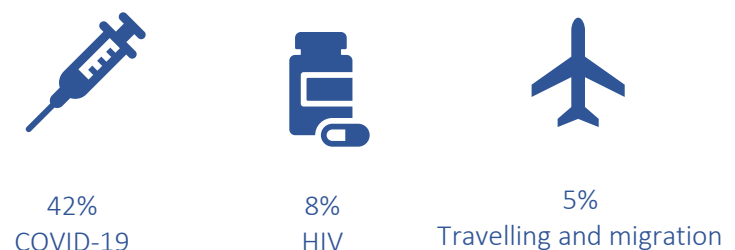
Among those who stayed in mixed gender rooms...



Access to water and sanitation facilities (toilet, bathroom)



Respondent's access to information by types





KNOWLEDGE OF COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

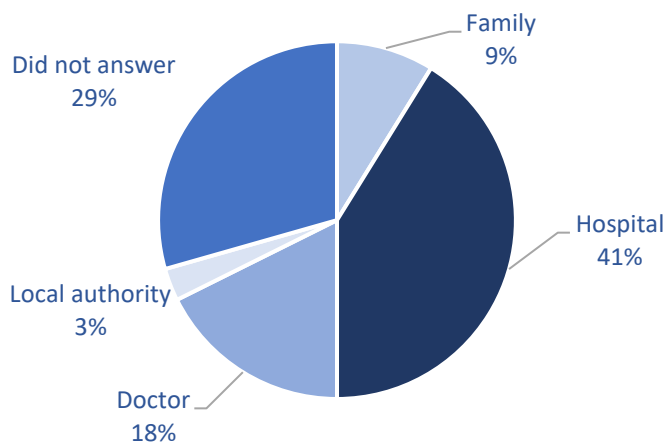
100% of returning migrants were aware of the compulsory 14-day quarantine before returning to Lao People's Democratic Republic



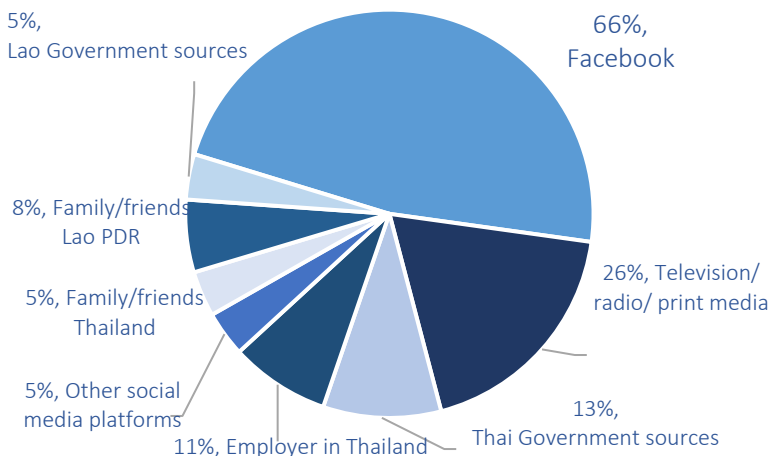
90%

Of those who returned were aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, difficulty breathing)

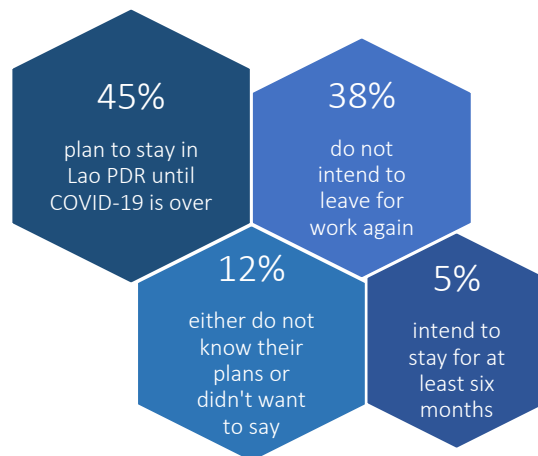
Among the returning migrants, 72% of them knew where to seek help if they felt sick while 29% were unsure or didn't want to answer. Among those who knew where to seek help, most of them chose to seek help at a hospital.



Sources of information on COVID-19



FUTURE PLANS



Expected challenges...



35% do not expect any challenges



28% expect difficulties in finding income generating work



18% didn't want to talk about challenges

58% of returning migrants are interested to upskill.

Most sought after skill sets are...



Sewing/Tailoring



Driving



Construction

Among them, more than 91% were willing to study, take tests and receive certificate of skills.



ANNEX QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview coding	ລະຫັດຂໍ້ມູນສໍາລັບການສໍາພາດ
Date of interview	ວັນທີ່ສໍາພາດ
Time of interview	ເວລາສໍາພາດ
Location of interview (Quarantine center)	ສະຖານທີ່ສໍາພາດ (ບ້ານ, ເມືອງ, ແຂວງ)
Enumerator Name and Position	ຊື່ ແລະ ຕໍາແໜ່ງ ຜູ້ເກັບຂໍ້ມູນ
Section A: Demographic Questions	ພາກຂໍ້ (ກ): ຄໍາຖາມກ່ຽວກັບບະຊາກອນທົ່ວໄປ
Gender	ເພດ
Age	ອາຍຸ
Ethnic group	ຊົນເຜົ່າ
What province are you from?	ທີ່ຢູ່ບັດຈຸບັນຂອງທ່ານຢູ່ໃສ?
District name	ຊື່ເມືອງ
Village name	ຊື່ບ້ານ
Is this your home province?	ທີ່ຢູ່ນັ້ນແມ່ນບ້ານເກີດເມືອງນອນຂອງທ່ານບໍ່?
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
Marital status?	ສະຖານະພາບ
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
Do you have children?	ທ່ານມີລູກບໍ່?
If yes, where are your children? (location)	ຖ້າທ່ານຕອບວ່າມີ, ລູກຂອງທ່ານຢູ່ໃສ? (ສາມາດເລືອກໄດ້ຫຼາຍຄໍາຕອບ)
If elsewhere, please specify where (different province or different country)	ຖ້າຢູ່ບ່ອນອື່ນ, ກະດູນາລະບຸວ່າຢູ່ໃສ (ປະເທດໃດ)
Section B: Migration Journey	ພາກຂໍ້ (ຂ): ຂໍ້ມູນກ່ຽວກັບການເດີນທາງຂອງແຮງງານເຄື່ອນຍ້າຍ
Before leaving Lao PDR: what was your employment status?	ກ່ອນທີ່ທ່ານຈະເດີນທາງເຂົ້າປະເທດໄທ ທ່ານເຄີຍປະກອບອາຊີບຫຍັງແດ່?
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
If employed, what was your main occupation before leaving Lao PDR?	ຖ້າປະກອບອາຊີບ, ທ່ານເຮັດກ່ຽວກັບຂະແໜງການຫຍັງ ກ່ອນອອກຈາກສປປ ລາວ?
Why did you return to Lao PDR?	ເປັນຫຍັງຈຶ່ງເດີນທາງກັບມາ ສປປ ລາວ?
When did you return from overseas?	ທ່ານກັບມາແຕ່ຕ່າງປະເທດ ຕັ້ງແຕ່ເມື່ອໃດ?
Which border checkpoint did you enter to Lao PDR through?	ທ່ານໃຊ້ຈຸດຜ່ານດ່ານແບບໃດ ກັບເຂົ້າມາໃນລາວ?
Where have you returned from?	ທ່ານກັບມາຈາກປະເທດໃດ?
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
Where in Thailand did you stay?	ທ່ານໄດ້ອາໄສຢູ່ໃສ ໃນປະເທດໄທ?
Where in Malaysia did you stay?	ທ່ານໄດ້ອາໄສຢູ່ໃສ ໃນປະເທດມາເລເຊຍ?
Were you employed in destination country?	ທ່ານປະກອບອາຊີບ ໃນປະເທດທີ່ທ່ານໄປຢູ່ບໍ່?
If employed, what was your main occupation?	ຖ້າປະກອບອາຊີບ, ທ່ານເຮັດວຽກກ່ຽວກັບຫຍັງ ຢູ່ ປະເທດໄທ?
What was your form of documentation for entering Thailand?	ທ່ານນໍາໃຊ້ເອກະສານປະເພດໃດໃນການເດີນທາງເຂົ້າ ປະເທດໄທ?
What document did you have to work in Thailand?	ທ່ານນໍາໃຊ້ເອກະສານປະເພດໃດໃນເວລາເຮັດວຽກຢູ່ ປະເທດໄທ?
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
Did you enter Thailand using a job recruitment agency?	ທ່ານໄປເຮັດວຽກ ຢູ່ໄທ ໂດຍຜ່ານບໍລິສັດຈັດຫາງານແມ່ນບໍ່?
Can you name the agency?	ຊື່ບໍລິສັດຈັດຫາງານ
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
What channels did you use to find work in Thailand?	ທ່ານໄດ້ໃຊ້ວິທີໃດແດ່ ໃນການຊອກວຽກໃນ ໄທ?
Please specify	ກະດູນາລະບຸ
Did you receive your final salary before leaving Thailand?	ກ່ອນຈະອອກຈາກປະເທດໄທ ທ່ານໄດ້ຮັບເງິນເດືອນເດືອນສຸດທ້າຍບໍ່?
Did you have to pay any overstay fines or costs when leaving Thailand?	ກ່ອນທີ່ຈະເດີນທາງອອກຈາກປະເທດໄທ ທ່ານໄດ້ຈ່າຍຄ່າບັບໄໝ ຫຼື ຄ່າລ່ວງເວລາບໍ່?
Amount paid in Thai Baht	ລະບຸມູນຄ່າບັບໄໝ ຫຼື ຄ່າລ່ວງເວລາເປັນເງິນບາດໄທເທົ່າໃດ?



Did you need to pay for any accommodation in Thailand when waiting to cross the border?	ທ່ານຕ້ອງໄດ້ຈ່າຍຄ່າທີ່ຢູ່ ໃນໄທບໍ່ ໃນຊ່ວງວ່າຖ້າຂ້າມມາລາວ?
Amount paid in Thai Baht	ລະບຸມູນຄ່າທີ່ຈ່າຍຄ່າທີ່ຢູ່ ເປັນເງິນ ໄທ ບາດ
Section C: Experience in Quarantine	ພາກຂໍ້ (ຄ): ປະສົບການໃນສູນກັກກັນ
Did you bring food and water with you to the quarantine center?	ທ່ານໄດ້ຖືຂອງກິນ ແລະ ເຄື່ອງດື່ມໄປ ສູນກັກກັນນຳບໍ່?
Have you had enough food and water while staying here?	ທ່ານມີອາຫານ ແລະ ເຄື່ອງດື່ມ ພຽງພໍບໍ່ ໃນຊ່ວງທີ່ຢູ່ສູນກັກກັນ?
Have you been staying in a room with women and men?	ທ່ານອາໄສຢູ່ໃນຫ້ອງທີ່ມີ ທັງຜູ້ຍິງ ແລະ ຜູ້ຊາຍບໍ່?
Has this made you feel uncomfortable or unsafe?	ການຢູ່ບິນກັນລະຫວ່າງຍິງຊາຍ ເຮັດໃຫ້ທ່ານຮູ້ສຶກບໍ່ສະບາຍໃຈ ຫລື ຮູ້ສຶກບໍ່ປອດໄພບໍ່?
Have you been able to access water and sanitation facilities (toilet, bathroom) when you have needed to?	ທ່ານສາມາດເຂົ້າເຖິງ ສິ່ງອຳນວຍສະດວກ ດ້ານ ນ້ຳສະອາດ ແລະ ສຸຂາພິບານ (ຫ້ອງນ້ຳ, ຫ້ອງອາບນ້ຳ) ໃນຕອນທີ່ທ່ານຕ້ອງການບໍ່?
What was the reason for this?	ຍ້ອນສາເຫດຫຍັງທ່ານຈຶ່ງບໍ່ສາມາດເຂົ້າເຖິງໄດ້?
Have you received any information while you've stayed here?	ທ່ານໄດ້ຮັບຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານໃດຫນຶ່ງ ໃນຊ່ວງທີ່ຢູ່ສູນກັກກັນບໍ່?
What is this information (COVID-19, Job related, social security etc)	ຂໍ້ມູນກ່ຽວກັບຫຍັງ (COVID-19, ວຽກທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ, ປະກັນສັງຄົມ ອື່ນໆ)
Section D: Future Plans	ພາກຂໍ້ (ງ): ແຜນໃນອະນາຄົດ
Upon finishing the quarantine stay, will you return to your village?	ຫວັງຈາກທີ່ທ່ານອາໄສຢູ່ສູນກັກກັນຕາມກຳນົດແລ້ວ, ທ່ານຈະກັບໄປບ້ານຂອງທ່ານເລືອບໍ່?
Where will you go instead? Please specify	ທ່ານຈະໄປໃສ່ແທນ? ກະລຸນາລະບຸ
Where will you go instead? Why	ທ່ານຈະໄປໃສ່ແທນ? ສາເຫດຫຍັງ
How long do you plan to stay in Lao PDR?	ທ່ານວາງແຜນຈະອາໄສຢູ່ ສປປ ລາວ ດົນປານໃດ?
What kind of challenges do you expect to face upon return to your community?	ທ່ານຄາດວ່າຈະເຈີສິ່ງທ້າທາຍຫຍັງແດ່ ຫຼັງຈາກກັບຄືນມາ?
Please specify	ກະລຸນາລະບຸ
Would you like to receive more vocational training?	ທ່ານຕ້ອງການຝຶກສົມມິແຮງງານວິຊາຊີບເພີ່ມບໍ່?
About	ກ່ຽວກັບ
Do you want to undertake the test/exam to obtain the certificate of skill?	ທ່ານຕ້ອງການທົດສອບ/ສອບເສັງເພື່ອເອົາໃບຢັ້ງຢືນສົມມິແຮງງານບໍ່?
Section E: Awareness on COVID-19	ພາກຂໍ້ (ຈ): ຄວາມຮູ້ກ່ຽວກັບພະຍາດອັກເສບປອດຮຸນແຮງ ຫຼື ໄຄວິດ-19
Did you know about the compulsory 14-day quarantine before returning to Lao PDR?	ຫຼັງຈາກທີ່ກັບມາ ສປປ ລາວ ທ່ານໄດ້ກັບບໍລິເວນຂອງຕົວເອງເປັນເວລາ 14 ມື້ ບໍ່?
How do you plan to go back home after the compulsory 14-day quarantine at the quarantine center?	ຫຼັງຈາກທີ່ທ່ານກັບບໍລິເວນຕົວເອງເປັນເວລາ 14 ມື້ທີ່ສູນກັກກັນ ທ່ານວາງແຜນຈະກັບບ້ານແນວໃດ?
Are you aware of the symptoms of COVID-19? (fever, cough, difficulties breathing)	ທ່ານຮູ້ຈັກພະຍາດອັກເສບປອດຮຸນແຮງ ຫຼື COVID-19 ບໍ່? ເຊັ່ນ: ມີອາການ (ໄຂ້, ໄອ, ຫາຍໃຈຍາກ)
Do you know whom to contact when you get sick?	ເວລາມີອາການເປັນໄຂ້ຫຼືບໍ່ສະບາຍທ່ານຮູ້ບໍ່ວ່າຄວນຕິດຕໍ່ຫາໃຜ?
Please specify	ກະລຸນາລະບຸ
What main sources of information on COVID-19 have you accessed?	ແຫຼ່ງຂໍ້ມູນຫຼັກທີ່ທ່ານເຂົ້າເບິ່ງເພື່ອຕິດຕາມພະຍາດອັກເສບປອດຮຸນແຮງ ຫຼື COVID-19 ແມ່ນຮູ້ຈາກແຫຼ່ງໃດ?
Please specify	ກະລຸນາລະບຸ
Comments	ຄຳຄິດເຫັນ



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