

Lao PDR adopts the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes Decree to protect and promote breastfeeding.

International community including UNICEF, the European Union and Save The Children welcome the historic milestone achieved by the Government of Lao PDR that will raise healthier babies through breastfeeding.

Vientiane, 5th August 2020 –

The Government of Lao PDR reached a new milestone by adopting the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (BMS) Decree to protect and promote breastfeeding in the country. The decree, a national legislation, is in line with the global guidance and commitments, namely the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981.

The code protects and promotes breastfeeding through the provision of adequate information on appropriate infant feeding, as well as put strict regulation on marketing of breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats.

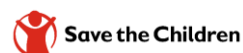
“We would like to congratulate the Government of the Lao PDR in developing and approving such important and strong legislation which will undoubtedly have great impact for the country,” said the EU Ambassador to the Lao PDR, Mr. Leo Faber. “The European Union is committed to continue to support the future monitoring and enforcement of this decree through our nutrition budget support to the Government of the Lao PDR and other support of all our nutrition partners” he further added.

Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants and young children as it is the only food which is safe, clean, environmentally friendly and it contains antibodies that help protect against many common childhood illnesses such as respiratory tract infections, gastrointestinal infections and ear infections.

Although the Government of Lao PDR strongly recommends babies to be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months and continued breastfeeding with other safe and nutritious food until child turns 2 years old, less than half of the children (45 per cent) are exclusively breastfed up to 6 months and continued breastfeeding till 2 years of age is only practiced for about 1 in 4 (27.2%) children.

“Breastfeeding is not only the cornerstone of a child’s healthy development; it is also the foundation of a country’s development. It is cost-effective and saves and improves the lives of children, families and societies by ending preventable child deaths. By improving maternal and child health, the society will reap its benefits through signification boost in educational attainment, and increased productivity,” said Ms. Beate Dastel, UNICEF Representative a.i

By 2018, 136 out of 194 countries had in place some form of legal measure related to the Code. While Lao PDR previously had a non-legally binding agreement in place, the new decree signed



by the Prime Minister is legally binding. It will take robust approach to control marketing, promotion, enforcement measures and monitoring of BMS.

The recent research of Alive & Thrive shows that Lao PDR loses 1,714 lives and USD 235 million dollars each year due to inadequate breastfeeding. For decades, aggressive and unethical promotion by the BMS industry across the globe has compromised breastfeeding, however the recently adopted decree is aiming to stop this practice in Lao PDR.

“The new decree on Breastmilk Substitutes makes it illegal for companies and individuals to promote infant formula, follow up milk, and so-called ‘toddler milks’ and associated products to Lao consumers and also prohibits donations of such products” said Ms. Kelley Khamphouxay, Save the Children Lao PDR “It shields Lao families from unscrupulous commercial marketing by the infant formula industry that seeks to convince families that formula products are superior to breastfeeding. Families deserve access to unbiased health information and practical support to succeed at breastfeeding; this decree helps ensure families can make the best choices for their child and give them the brightest possible future” she further stated.

The critical next step needed in the protection of breastfeeding is to ensure that all producers, distributors, retailers and health professionals are aware of the provisions of the decree and to monitor and enforce the legislation.

The European Union has been supporting breastfeeding promotion in the Lao PDR for many years through Development Partners such as UNICEF and Save The Children. At the end of 2019 the Code, locally called the Decree on “Food Products and Feeding Equipment for Infants and Toddlers”, was concluded with the support of European Union nutrition budget support operation. This important achievement by the Government of the Lao PDR in protecting the health, development and prosperity of children, communities and the wider society is widely applauded by the international community in the Lao PDR.

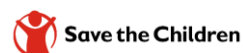
About the EU

The European Union is a partnership of 27 European countries and a friend of the Lao Government and people. We work on reducing poverty; ensuring sustainable development; promoting democracy, peace and security in the world. For more information about EU, please contact;

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About Alive & Thrive

Alive & Thrive is a global nutrition initiative to save lives, prevent illness, and ensure healthy growth of mothers and children. Alive & Thrive leverages its robust network and knowledge base to strengthen systems and build capacity on maternal, adolescent, infant and young child nutrition across Africa and Asia.

For more information about Alive & Thrive, please visit: www.aliveandthrive.org

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About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future and has been working to fulfill the rights of disadvantaged children in Laos for over 25 years. With our team of over 200 in Laos and 25,000 globally, we champion the rights and interests of children worldwide, putting the most vulnerable children first.

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