

SUPPORT FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF THE LAO NATIONAL UXO PROGRAMME (UXO LAO)

Project ID: 00080607

Background

During the Second Indochina War (1964-1975), more than two million tons of explosive ordnance were dropped on Laos, making it, per capita, the most heavily-bombed country in the world. Today, much of the country is still contaminated with cluster sub-munitions and other Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). These kill and injure dozens of people a year, and their presence negatively affects socioeconomic development, preventing access to agricultural land and increasing the costs, through land clearance, of all development projects. In 2010, Lao PDR introduced a localized Millennium Development Goal, MDG9: to reduce the impact of UXO.



A UXO Lao clearance team in Xieng Khouan Province, one of the most heavily contaminated areas in Lao PDR. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR

Project Summary

- Status: Active
- Duration: 2013 - 2016
- Geographic Coverage: 9 provinces of Lao PDR
- Focus Area: Reducing the impact of UXO (MDG 9), crisis prevention and recovery
- Implementing Partner(s): UXO Lao
- Website: www.uxolao.org

The Government of Lao PDR established the *Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme* (UXO Lao) in 1996, with support from UNDP, UNICEF and other partners. UXO Lao is located within the Prime Minister's Office (Office of Rural Development and Poverty Eradication). The organisation undertakes surveys to identify UXO contamination; clearance of land; roving tasks to respond to UXO discovery by the public; and risk education activities in affected areas. UXO Lao's national office is located in Vientiane and coordinates and serves provincial offices in the nine most heavily impacted provinces – Attapeu, Champasack, Huaphanh, Khammuane, Luang Prabang, Saravan, Savannakhet, Sekong and Xieng Khuang.

Project Description

Through this project, UNDP supports UXO Lao to develop its institutional capacity in the areas of planning, implementation, quality and financial management in order to address the long-term humanitarian and development challenges posed by the presence of UXO. More specifically, the UNDP supports UXO Lao by providing technical advisors on UXO operations, programme and financial management as well as supporting various learning opportunities for the national UXO Lao staff at both the national and provincial levels.

Main Objectives and Outcomes

The main outcome of the project is to enable UXO Lao to reduce the negative impact of UXO in Lao PDR through removal of UXO, destruction of UXO, education about UXO risks, and effective management of information to enable coordination of the national UXO sector. This reduces the number of UXO accidents, which can result in death and injury, trauma and financial hardship for the victims and their families. The project's work also enables previously-contaminated land to be safely farmed, or to be used as sites for development.

UNDP's support, delivered through this project, aims to ensure that UXO Lao achieves a level of capacity adequate to undertake the following activities independently: 1) effectively and efficiently deliver clearance and risk education programmes; 2) implement national priorities for the UXO sector; 3) ensure all activities meet national standards; 4) coordinate with other operators (humanitarian and commercial) active in the country; 5) report transparently on the use of financial and technical resources; and 6) contribute to effective leadership of the sector by all stakeholders.

These capacities allow UXO Lao to effectively clear land with improved technology, train de-miners and offer community-based UXO risk education and surveys, particularly in the most UXO-affected provinces.

Results and Achievements to Date (1996 - 2015)

Since 1996, UNDP has supported UXO Lao through a number of project frameworks. This support has enabled the national clearance operator to manage and finance its operations across the country. Improved management capacities have enabled UXO Lao to bid for and report on funding for its activities from international donors. Evidently, UXO Lao's financial management has been made more efficient and more transparent.

In terms of UXO clearance, between its establishment in 1996 and the end of 2015, UXO Lao has cleared more than 30,000 hectares of land, destroyed more than 1,300,000 UXO, completed more than 26,000 roving tasks in response to calls for assistance from more than 3,800 villages. Achievements have also been made in educating communities of UXO risks with more than 11,000 risk education visits reaching more than three million people. All of these activities bring Lao PDR forward in its efforts to meet the commitments of the Convention on Cluster Munitions¹, in particular Article 4a relating to Clearance and Risk Education.

UNDP has also supported UXO Lao in mainstreaming gender in its activities including the establishment of three all-female UXO clearance teams. UNDP's technical support to UXO Lao, which now includes the deployment of a Chief Technical Advisor for the whole UXO sector in Lao PDR, has enabled the adoption of global best practices and more efficient methodologies. Specifically, new 'evidence-based' survey methodology was

adopted in 2014 to develop a more precise understanding of national UXO contamination and clearance planning. Based on this new survey approach, UXO Lao has also introduced a new *Concept of Operations* which prioritises the identification of Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHA) for clearance, resulting in more than double the number of UXO found per hectare.

To further a coordinated approach to the UXO sector, in 2010 UNDP established the *Trust Fund for Support to the Full Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Lao PDR*. This has helped to mobilise and manage international assistance from numerous sources effectively. The Trust Fund, which currently serves primarily as a mechanism for support to the National Regulatory Authority for UXO and Mine Action in Lao PDR (NRA), the UXO Sector's regulatory body, and UXO Lao, is operated under the framework of the national UXO strategy and UXO policies approved by the NRA Board. Its Steering Committee is chaired by the Government and co-chaired by UNDP, in close consultation with the UXO Sector Working Group. The Trust Fund complements other funding options available to donors, including bilateral support and direct funding to UXO operators.

Funding (2013-2016)

- Project Budget: USD 25,058,000
- Resource Contribution to date:
 - Australia: USD 6,349,841
 - Belgium: USD 133,489
 - Canada: USD 1,108,291
 - DFID: USD 39,447
 - EU: USD 1,170,039
 - Ireland: USD 1,342,857
 - REP Korea: USD 125,000
 - Luxembourg: USD 888,946
 - Norway: USD 886,132
 - New Zealand: USD 3,351,004
 - Switzerland: USD 4,058,000
 - UNDP: USD 418,357
- Unfunded budget: USD 5,191,000

For more information:

Souphalack Bounpadith, Planning and Reporting Officer, UNDP Lao PDR; Tel (+856 21) 267 746; Email souphalack.bounpadith@undp.org

¹ See www.clusterconvention.org