

DEBRIS MANAGEMENT FOR LIFESAVING IN UXO-CONTAMINATED FLOOD ZONES

Project Background

During 18-19 July 2018, tropical storm Son-Tinh flooded 13 of the 17 provinces of Lao PDR, causing a dam breach in Attapeu Province. Subsequently all provinces were flooded to various extents in August and September by heavy rains caused by tropical storms Bebinca and Bajirat. As a result, damaged infrastructure was in need of repair and since 25% of all villages in Lao PDR are contaminated by unexploded ordnance (UXO), risks resulting from flood-induced shifting of cluster munitions in contaminated areas needed to be managed.



Female beneficiaries repairing a flood-ravaged road in Khammouane Province.
Photo: UNDP Lao PDR/Ildiko Hamos-Sohlo

132,000 households were affected around the country, with the area of paddy fields harmed reaching nearly 100,000 ha. 630 km of roads and 47 bridges damaged. In particular households practicing subsistence farming were hit hard with basic food crop losses as well as cash crops. Lives and livelihoods were threatened and blocked roads prevented access to markets and critical social services. Wells needed to be cleaned so that communities could have access to drinkable water again.

Project Summary:

- **Duration:** October 2018 – April 2019
- **Geographic coverage:** Khammouane Province, Mahaxai, Hinboun, Nongbok and Yommalath Districts
- **Focus area:** Emergency response
- **Implementing partners:** Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR, UXO Lao

Among the most-impacted provinces was Khammouane, which is also one of the most heavily contaminated with UXO. To respond to the needs in the province, UNDP submitted a joint request to the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), together with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The UNDP project utilized a cash for work program to repair roads, clear irrigation canals and expand water storage reservoirs. Cash for work provided temporary employment opportunities to the most vulnerable families in the districts of Hinboun, Nongbok, Mahaxai and Yommalath. The intervention ensured opportunities for women and vulnerable social groups.

To prevent further loss of life from UXO, the affected population was made aware of the increased risks under flood response conditions. To support this, the project developed and furnished UXO training and awareness materials to the existing UXO Risk Education Teams and village volunteers for dissemination in schools and communities.

Main Objectives and Outcomes

Objective: To protect the lives and livelihoods of the flood-affected population in Khammouane Province and ensure their access to essential services.

Outcome 1: Restoration of access to markets and services through the repair of damaged infrastructure.

Outcome 2: Increased awareness of risks related to UXO among communities living in contaminated areas.

Outcome 3: Provision of job opportunities to the affected communities through cash for work programs.

Results and Achievements to Date

Working with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and its local offices and other partners at national, provincial and district levels, UNDP provided cash for work to 6,265 flood victims from 64 villages in four districts of the province over a six-month period from October 2018 to April 2019. The 45 projects were mostly renovation and repairs of community infrastructure including 32 road repairs, 1 bridge repair, 9 irrigation canals cleared, and 3 water storage facilities expanded. The Project employed 2,858 women, and 3,407 men who worked a total of 84,142 person days or 13.4 days per person, to earn an average income of LAK 671,000 (US\$ 79) with a daily individual wage of LAK 50,000. Equal opportunity and equal pay were offered to both men and women over 18 years of age.

The Project repaired 147 kilometres of flood damaged roads, cleared 18,100 metres of damaged rice irrigation canals, and restored 348 hectares of agricultural land to normal production. Also UXO awareness in the province was done in partnership with the National Regulatory Authority and the Lao Youth Union.

During the final weeks of the Project the government and UNDP decided to contract out the payment to workers to the Banque Pour Le Commerce Exterieur Lao Public (BCEL), due to the large number of projects being implemented and the need to ensure timely, efficient and accountable payments to the beneficiaries.

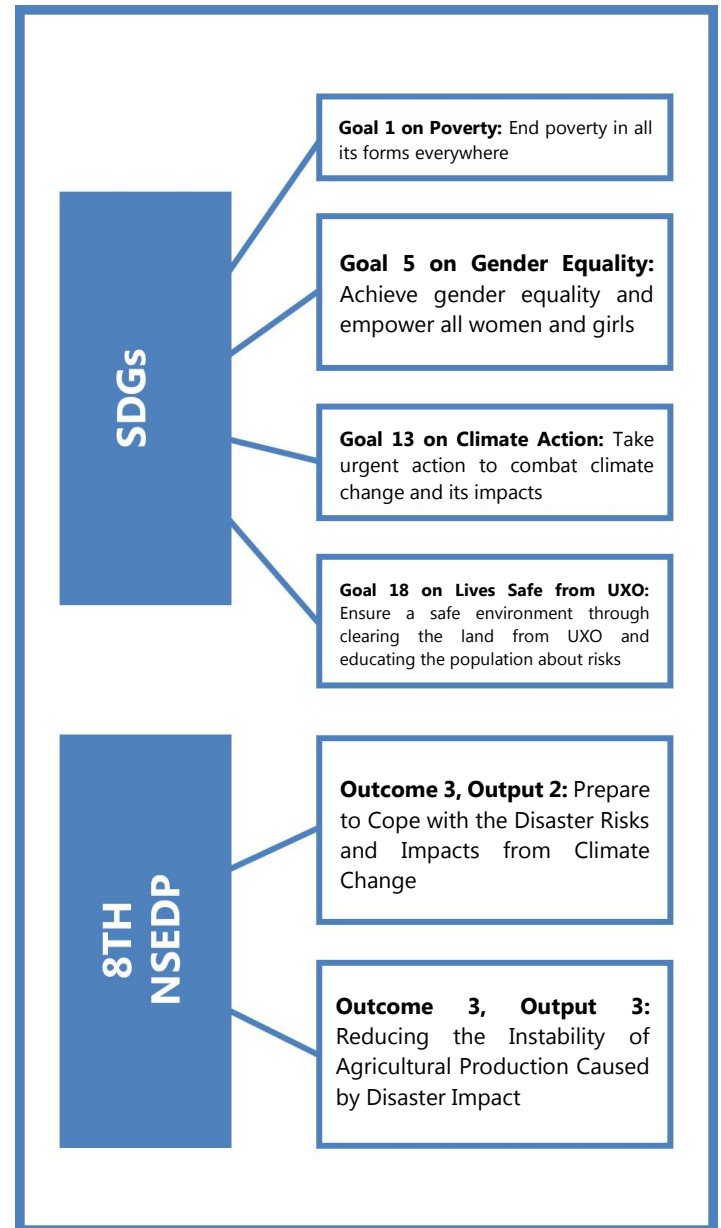
Government officials and beneficiaries expressed how the Project had helped them. Their views consistently reflected how the Project had supported community ownership over their own recovery process while providing income generating, life-saving decent work, equally for men and women.

Apart from restoring some much needed income to local farming families, re-building community assets, and improving relationships between government and communities, the Project has also assisted government departments to work together for better coordination, at local level and with the national level, and to make important preparedness, response and recovery decisions to build resilience to future disaster events.

Funding:

- **Total project budget (2018-2019):** USD 812,899
- **Donor:** CERF

Link to Sustainable Development and the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan



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