MOVING TOWARDS ACHIEVING SDG18 – REMOVING THE UXO OBSTACLE TO DEVELOPMENT IN LAO PDR

Background

During the Second Indochina War (1964-1975), more than two million tons of explosive ordnance were dropped on Lao PDR, 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 with 59 casualties in 2016. Their presence also negatively affects socio-economic development, by preventing safe access to agricultural land and increasing the costs, of all development projects due to the necessity of expensive and time-consuming clearance of UXO from the land. In September 2016, Lao PDR launched its own national Sustainable Development Goal, SDG18: Lives Safe from UXO, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Lao PDR and the UN Secretary General during the ASEAN Summit held in Vientiane.

The National Regulatory Authority for UXO and Mine Action in Lao PDR (NRA) was established in 2005, becoming operational in 2006, by the Government of Lao PDR with the task of coordinating and regulating the overall management of the UXO sector in Lao PDR, including national, commercial and humanitarian operators. The NRA leads the country’s policy formulation with regards to the UXO/Mine Action sector, accredits operators, coordinates operational activities, manages information and data on UXO, and manages quality of operations in the sector.

The Government of Lao PDR established the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO Lao) in 1996, with support from UNDP, UNICEF and other partners.

Project Summary:

- **Duration:** 2017 - 2021
- **Geographic coverage:** National level
- **Focus area:** SDG18 – Lives Safe from UXO
- **Implementing partners:** NRA, UXO Lao
- **Websites:** www.nra.gov.la, www.uxolao.org

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 serves provincial offices in the nine most heavily impacted provinces – Attapeu, Champasack, Huaphanh, Khammuane, Luang Prabang, Saravan, Savannakhet, Sekong and Xieng Khuang.

The NRA and UXO Lao is coordinated under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Minister is also the Chairman of the NRA Board.

A UXO Lao expert uses a speaker to warn the community that the mine clearance begins. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR/Somlith Khounpaseuth
This project will provide the programmatic and technical support necessary for the national institutions within the UXO sector (NRA and UXO Lao) to pursue the targets set out in the UXO Sector Five Year Work Plan 2016-2020, as well as the NRA’s strategy for accelerated survey activities. Hence, it provides a sector overview of what is required to support the NRA and UXO Lao for the coming five years. As requested, UNDP is committed to provide sector-level technical support focusing on UXO clearance prioritisation, coordination, information management, quality management, programme management, work planning, and financial management as well as programmatic oversight and management. This will build national capacity to oversee and steer the sector and strengthen the integration of gender-sensitive approaches.

**Main Objectives and Outcomes**

The key outcomes of this project includes support to achieving several Sustainable Development Goals, including enhanced support to livelihoods activities for affected populations; improved efficiency of clearance operations; significant progress in the effort to establish a national baseline of UXO contamination; improved transparency in results reporting, improved transparency in financial reporting; improved coordination of sector activities through enhanced management of information; updated National Standards and appropriate policy frameworks; progress against the obligations of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the articulation of a sustainability strategy for the sector; improved capacity for monitoring and evaluating the sector’s development outcomes; and improved policy for support to UXO survivors. These cross-cutting outcomes support SDG1: No Poverty, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and Lao PDR’s SDG 18: Lives Safe from UXO.

This project includes a proposed component on assessing and enhancing gender mainstreaming capacity in the UXO sector to be implemented by Lao Women’s Union in partnership with UN Women and UNDP.

This project has been designed based on the recommendations of the 2015 evaluation of UNDP’s mine action programmes globally, as well as the evaluation of the previous support programme by UNDP to the UXO sector in Lao PDR. The programme is aligned with the Government of Lao’s 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (8th NSEDP) as well as national gender equality strategies and relevant international conventions, and norms. It will contribute to progress towards achieving the national Sustainable Development Goal 18.

**Funding:**

- **Donors:**
  - **Australia:** USD 510,000 (2017-2019)
  - **EU:** EUR 2,200,000 (2017-2019)
  - **Ireland:** USD 2,170,000(2017-2020)
  - **KOICA:** USD 730,000 (2017)
  - **Luxembourg:** USD 650,000 (2017-2020)
  - **New Zealand:** USD 6,040,000 (2017-2020)

**Donors**

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**What is New from the Previous Project?**

- Using data and prioritisation to focus clearance to reduce poverty;
- Focus on clearance of high-priority and high-contamination areas; finding more bombs;
- Supporting the National Regulatory Authority to manage data and quality of increased survey work;
- Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation at the sector level, to measure gender and poverty outcomes;
- Developing a sector transition strategy, and working to increase GCS and government contribution;
- Potential new partnerships for gender.

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**Sustainable Development Goals**