

UXO Sector Progress Report 2019 (as of 30th of October 2019)

Name of Sector Working Group: Unexploded Ordnance

SWG Chair and Co-Chairs:

- Minister of Labour and Social Welfare (Chair)
- UNDP Resident Representative (co-Chair) and Ambassador of the United States of America to Lao PDR (co-Chair)

SWG Secretariat Focal Points:

- Government Officials: Chomyaeng Phengthongsawat, Director General of the NRA
- Development Partners: B. Murali, UNDP; Erin Webster-Main, US Embassy

Technical Supporting Staff:

- Government Officials: Bounpheng Sisawath, Deputy Director of the NRA
- Development Partners: Justin Shone, UXO Unit Head, UNDP; Olivier Bauduin, UXO Programme Advisor, US Embassy

Overview of Sector Performance in 2019

Sector outputs and activities	Progress	Challenges and opportunities
A. Sectoral thematic (substantive) areas		
1. Actions/activities relating to the RTIM key recommendations as per Annex 1 (for most relevant recommendations only)		
Key recommendations from 2018 RTM for UXO Sector under Outcome 2 – Social Development of the 8 th NSEDP, point 1.2 “Great effort to address UXO issues as detailed below: <i>“Similarly, progress was acknowledged in reducing UXO casualties and the clearance of</i>	Enhanced understanding of sector needs by the identification of the Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs) that can be prioritized for future clearance. A UXO/Mine Risk Education (MRE) workshop was organised by the National Regulatory Authority in the UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) in Thalat district on the 14 th and 15 th of August to review and update existing MRE materials. MRE posters have been updated and printed for distribution.	The resources allocated to clearance are disproportionate to the needs. The development of the next National Strategic Plan for the UXO Sector in the Lao PDR (Safe Path Forward III) is a great opportunity. The results of the ongoing survey enable better articulation of the clearance needs and assist in the drafting of a strategic prioritization plan.

Sector outputs and activities	Progress	Challenges and opportunities
<i>contaminated land – yet the challenge ahead still remains vast”</i>	Although the contribution of MRE activities is difficult to measure, there were 7 reported UXO casualties in 2019 (as of 25 September 2019), compared to 19 casualties in 2018 (during the same period).	The sector has seen a decrease in funding given to UXO/MRE activities. The UXO sector is in the process of developing a UXO Risk Education strategy. Once finalised, funding proposals will be developed. The need for clearance is greater than the current available resources, which is a challenge.
2. Other substantive actions/activities relating to overall sectoral strategies, if applicable, to support the implementation of the 8th NSEDP and preparation for the 9th NSEDP		
2a. Mine Risk Education	5,000 MRE posters were printed and distributed to all UXO humanitarian operators in 2019, including the 9 provincial UXO Lao offices and the 5 provincial radio stations (Vientiane Capital, Khammouane, Sekong, Saravan and Champasack). In coordination with the UXO humanitarian operators, the NRA conducted UXO awareness activities at public schools and in UXO-contaminated communities. A total of 1,146 visits in 406 villages were completed, benefiting 169,731 people, 85,339 of which were men and 84,392 of which were women.	Some provinces no longer conduct full MRE activities (due to lack of funding), e.g. Luang Prabang. There are opportunities for further integration of MRE into secondary school curriculums, as well as opportunities for working with community radio stations to broadcast MRE material.
2b. Victim Assistance (VA)	The NRA, with the support from donor countries, provided support to 67 UXO victims and survivors in 2019, including medical care (17 people 4 women and 13 men), provision of prosthetic and orthotic support (18 people from Jan-June 2019) and education scholarships (32 Persons With Disabilities and UXO survivors).	Vocational training, physical rehabilitation and psychosocial services were not provided to UXO survivors in 2019 as there were no funds to support this. The adoption of the new law to implement the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is an opportunity, as well as the new policy being drafted to implement this law. The finalisation of the new 10-year VA strategy is also an opportunity.

Sector outputs and activities	Progress	Challenges and opportunities
2c. Survey and Clearance	In 2019, 718 CHAs, equivalent to 11,725 ha of land, were identified and registered in the IMSMA National Database. The NRA, coordinating with all UXO operators, conducted UXO clearance on 4,361 ha. 60,059 items of UXO were destroyed through roving tasks and area clearance. 47,981 of these items were cluster munitions.	The need for survey and clearance is not met by the current resources. Opportunities include the potential use of a new electronic data collection mechanism.
B. Communication and outreach activities with the sector and across Sector Working Groups		
Communication and outreach activities	<p>The UXO sector is structured and coordinated under the leadership of the NRA. Each year there are: NRA Board Meetings, UXO Sector Working Group meetings, UXO Project Board Meeting (UNDP), regular IP meetings (NRA, donors and operators) and four UXO Technical Working Groups (TWGs) (survey and clearance, MRE, VA and information management). During 2019, the following TWGs were held: three MRE, one VA, one survey and clearance and two IM. Minutes of all TWG meetings are available on the NRA website www.nra.gov.la.</p> <p>An operational dashboard is regularly produced, updated and made available.</p>	<p>Challenges –two SWGs should be held, but only one was planned for 2019. Two are planned for 2020. Not all TWGs for each sub sector are held quarterly. Given the location of operators, it is difficult to get full attendance at the TWGs. The Treaty Support Unit conducts meetings to discuss the MOU process to ensure better alignment with government regulations. Submission of enhanced transparency reports by the operators to the NRA is needed in the sector.</p> <p>Opportunities- interpretation for all TWGs will be planned for 2020. The structure and relationship between the NRA and UXO Lao will be confirmed. The NRA communications team, with UXO Lao, will develop new materials and displays and conduct new outreach activities in 2020.</p>
C. Cross-sectoral thematic areas applied to all SWGs		
1. Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (in accordance to VDCAP 2016-2025) (Only	<p>Progress continues to be made on the harmonisation of processes and procedures, as well alignment with national priorities. South-south cooperation continued in 2019, working with ARMAC, ASEAN, Cambodia and Vietnam.</p> <p>Progress was made on the VD principles, in particular:</p>	Opportunities- increasing focus on greater and more inclusive partnerships, bringing private sector parties on board, regional partners, civil society organisations and other related stakeholders.

Sector outputs and activities	Progress	Challenges and opportunities
<p>narrative on each principles)</p>	<p>I Ownership- government planning, prioritisation and government-led initiatives (humanitarian teams of the Lao People’s Army). UXO Lao operations were strengthened and enhanced over the past year.</p> <p>II. Alignment- all UXO sector stakeholders continue to align their efforts to the UXO sector priorities.</p> <p>III. Harmonisation & Simplification- UXO national standards have been strengthened to allow for greater harmonisation and simplification and these standards continued to be disseminated through the NRA website.</p> <p>IV. Inclusive Partnership for Development Results- multiple organisations play complimentary roles to achieve UXO sector goals (example: collaboration on MRE activities, survey and clearance and VA activities)</p> <p>V. Transparency, Predictability, and Mutual Accountability- the NRA continues to strengthen and conduct monitoring, oversight, quality management and enhanced information management collection and validation.</p> <p>VI. Domestic Resource Mobilization- the Lao PDR government continues to increase its support to the sector.</p> <p>VII. South-South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation, and Knowledge Sharing- as mentioned above.</p> <p>VIII. Business as a Partner in Development- there are more than 20 UXO commercial companies that conduct clearance activities in Lao PDR, regulated by the NRA (following the Kampala principles).</p>	<p>Further opportunities in 2020 include: enhanced transparency and mutual accountability with stakeholders in the sector, domestic resource mobilisation, further harmonisation and simplification of processes and systems and south-south triangular cooperation.</p> <p>Challenges- there is currently no funding predictability in the sector. For the evidence-based survey methodology, national standards should be revised. This would ensure consistency in implementation. In 2019, landmine fields were identified in at least two provinces. In-country capacity is needed to address this. Timely provision of data reports from IPs to the national database needs to be enhanced.</p>
<p>2. Innovation and technology</p>	<p>New methodologies and technologies were explored through pilot projects, such as improved survey methodologies, new data collection tools, deployment of mechanical assets (e.g. brush cutters, detectors and heavy machinery), etc.</p> <p>The new IMSMA 2018 version was installed this year and is in use by the NRA and sector operators. IMSMA Core is planned to be installed later this year.</p>	<p>There are more technologies available at regional and global level; further experiments can be conducted through regional exchange and information sharing.</p> <p>Limited capacity of staff within the sector (quantity and quality). New innovation is needed within the sector, e.g. electronic data collection, IMSMA Core, new survey and clearance technology, etc.</p>

Sector outputs and activities	Progress	Challenges and opportunities
<p>3. Promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment and accelerating the adoption and implementation of the National Youth Policy</p>	<p>In 2019, UN Women, with support from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, published a manual entitled, “Manual for Trainers on Gender Mainstreaming in the UXO Sector Lao PDR”. The manual focuses on gender mainstreaming across all areas of the UXO sector and encourages equal employment between men and women. This report is available at www.nra.gov.la.</p> <p>There has been increased engagement with the Lao Youth Union and Lao Women Union in conducting MRE activities.</p>	<p>Opportunities include further dissemination of this training manual. Women are encouraged to apply for all sector positions.</p>

Way forward for 2020 and beyond:

- A second workshop to further review the UXO National Strategic Plan “Safe Path Forward II” (2011-2020) is planned in 2020 and it is also planned to develop a new UXO National Strategic Plan “Safe Path Forward III” (2021-2030) in alignment with SDG18 and the 2030 Agenda.
- A recent workshop was held in September 2019 to discuss the drafting of CCM legislation. The NRA, international operators, line Ministries and UNDP attended this event. A further workshop will be organized in 2020 to establish the drafting committee.
- In 2020, a five-year UXO sector plan and implementation plan (MRE, clearance, VA and IM) will be developed and finalised.
- Additionally, the extension request under Article 4 of the CCM was approved at the 9MSP in Geneva in September 2019. It is recommended that Lao PDR reports on its annual progress during the five-year extension period.
- In 2020, a funding/resource mobilization strategy for the UXO sector will be developed and finalised.
- A workshop on UXO survey and clearance prioritization is planned for 2020 to be included in the 2021 UXO Sector Work Plan.
- It is planned to establish a further two QM teams within the NRA in 2020.
- A further two humanitarian clearance teams of the Lao People’s Army will be trained and equipped in 2020. UXO Lao’s 5 Year Strategic Plan (2021-2025) will be drafted and finalized.
- It is planned to organize a workshop to strengthen UXO information management for the UXO sector and the NRA provincial authorities.
- A donor field visit is planned for the end of Q1 2020 as a method of garnering greater support to the sector.
- In Q4 2019, UNDP will conduct a mid-term project evaluation and an EU end of project evaluation. The scope of this evaluation will be forward-looking and can feed into the long-term strategy plan until 2030.