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Lao People's Democratic Republic



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic
and
United Nations Development Programme

**SUPPORT FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF
THE NATIONAL REGULATORY AUTHORITY FOR THE UXO /MINE ACTION
SECTOR (NRA)
AND
THE LAO NATIONAL UXO PROGRAMME (UXO LAO)
2013-2015**

**2013
ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT
(APR)**

01 January 2013 – 31 December 2013

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List of abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CA	Community Awareness
CCM	Convention on Cluster Munitions
DFA	District Focused Approach
DFID	Department for International Development
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
EU	European Union
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MRE	Mine Risk Education
NIM	National Implementation Mechanism
NRA	National Regulatory Authority for the UXO /Mine Action Sector
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
UXO Lao	Lao National UXO Programme
VA	Victim Assistance

I. PROJECT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Project Title:	Support for the institutional Strengthening of the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO /Mine Action Sector (NRA) and of the Lao National UXO Programme (UXO Lao) 2013-2015
Project Number:	UNDP PROJECT IDS: 00080296 (NRA) and 00080607 (UXO LAO)
Project Start/End Date	01 January 2013 – 31 December 2015
Implementing Partners:	National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector in the Lao PDR (NRA) and the Lao National UXO Programme (UXO Lao)
Donors	<p>2013 Donors: (through UNDP)</p> <p>Trust Fund¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • Ireland • Luxembourg • New Zealand • Switzerland (SDC) <p>Cost Sharing Agreements²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • European Union (EU) <p>Thematic Trust Funds³:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFID (UK) • Republic of Korea <p>UNDP Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP TRAC⁴

¹ A trust fund is a co-financing modality established as a separate accounting entity under which UNDP receives contributions to finance UNDP programme activities specified by the contributor. In order to help mobilize and manage international assistance, a UXO Trust Fund was established in Lao PDR in 2010, managed by UNDP, building upon a previous Trust Fund established in 1995.

² Support to a specific project or specific part of the project through a bilateral donor government, an international financial institution, or a private

³ Thematic Trust Funds are a type of open trust fund. They are a flexible co-financing modality designed to help UNDP align and focus its programmes around its goals, and to provide donors with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to this process.

⁴ UNDP Core resources are voluntary contributions by Member States to UNDP as a whole and every UNDP programme country receives a certain minimum amount of guaranteed funding from the global core budget. They are also called regular resources or Target for Resource Assignment from the Core (TRAC).

2013 Resource Overview⁵

UNDP PROJECT 2013 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW				
2013 APPROVED BUDGET vs. EXPENDITURE NRA			Budget ⁶ (USD)	Expenditure ⁷ (USD)
NRA	TRUST FUND	AUSTRALIA	64,316	64,316
		FRANCE	1,151	1,151
		IRELAND	343,246	297,426
		SWITZERLAND (SDC)	348,733	348,734
	TOTAL TRUST FUND		757,446	711,627
	COST SHARING AGREEMENTS	EU	143,987	143,987
		AUSTRALIA	390,000	340,262
	TOTAL COST SHARING		533,987	484,249
	THEMATIC TRUST FUND	DFID (UK)	86,605	86,605
	TOTAL THEMATIC TRUST FUND		86,605	86,605
	UNDP RESOURCES	UNDP TRAC	111,500	111,500
	TOTAL UNDP RESOURCES		111,500	111,500
TOTAL NRA BUDGET vs. EXPENDITURE 2013		1,489,538	1,393,980	
Delivery %			94%	
2013 APPROVED BUDGET vs. EXPENDITURE UXO LAO			Budget	Expenditure
UXO LAO	TRUST FUND	AUSTRALIA	1,689,063	1,700,827 ⁸
		IRELAND	400,307	388,170
		LUXEMBOURG	249,740	249,740
		NEW ZEALAND	1,016,135	1,016,135
		SWITZERLAND (SDC)	1,183,078	1,183,078
	TOTAL TRUST FUND		4,538,323	4,537,950
	COST SHARING AGREEMENTS	AUSTRALIA C/S	1,703,276	1,189,661
		AUSTRALIA RL	578,035	510,758
		EU	237,561	224,849
	TOTAL COST SHARING AGREEMENTS		2,518,872	1,925,268
	THEMATIC TRUST FUND	DFID	39,447	39,385
		REP. KOREA	15,000	15,000
	TOTAL THEMATIC TRUST FUND		54,447	54,385
	UNDP RESOURCES	UNDP TRAC	418,500	418,357
	TOTAL UNDP RESOURCES		418,500	418,357
TOTAL UXO LAO BUDGET vs. EXPENDITURE 2013		7,530,142	6,935,959	
Delivery %			92%	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET vs. EXPENDITURE 2013			9,019,680	8,329,939

⁵ Detailed Interim Financial Report 2013 in ANNEX I

⁶ According to latest approved budget revision

⁷ Expenditure as of 05 February 2014. UNDP Financial books officially close in April.

⁸ the deficit due to the exchange rate loss and will be cleared up in Q1 2014

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1) National Regulatory Authority

This Annual Project Report aims to capture the key activities and results achieved by the NRA in 2013, with regard to the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the UXO Sector in Lao PDR: *The Safe Path Forward II*.

The Report pays particular attention to the six activity results established in the 2013 Annual Work Plan (all six activity results are directly derived from the six objectives of *The Safe Path Forward II*), as well as capacity building through the provision of technical advisors and project results, at the outcome level.

The NRA was able to achieve an estimated 77 % of its work plan targets and to expend 94% of its budget⁹.

It has continued to perform its important role in the UXO sector, coordinating, regulating and monitoring the work of UXO sector operators, and has contributed significantly to the performance of the Sector as a whole. The NRA continues to assist the Government in achieving the UNDAF outcome, in a manner consistent with *The Safe Path Forward II (SPF II)* and that advances progress toward MDG 9.

The first NRA activity result is to improve risk education methodologies, to reinforce these methodologies and to better disseminate risk education messages among the operators. In 2013, the NRA made several recommendations and shared best practices with operators during monitoring missions and in quarterly meetings of the 3 Technical Working Groups. NRA and Risk Education operators considered at length, how to maintain a level of less than 75 casualties per year; and how best to address the main causes of accidents in 2013 such as "making fire". The NRA helped to develop specific risk education messages that were broadcasted via radio to reach communities and raise awareness in two severely contaminated provinces. 2013 targets for Risk Education were achieved and contributed to further reduce the number of UXO casualties from 56 in 2012 to 41 (13 people killed, 28 people injured) in 2013 (as of 05/02/2014).

NRA's second key activity result was partially achieved, with some delay in the entry of data contained in UXO Victim information forms collected via the Survivor Tracking System. Entry of this data into the Lao Victim Information System (LVIS) began in the third Quarter of 2013. The NRA Victim Assistance strategy was presented at the NRA board meeting (May 2013) and was agreed in principle. The NRA Board requested some modifications before it will grant official approval. The Victim Assistance Unit of the NRA is working on these modifications and a revised strategy will be submitted at the next NRA board meeting (early 2014) for approval. The Victim Assistance strategy was designed as a tool to guide the NRA Victim Assistance Unit's work to assist UXO victims within the broader disability and development frameworks in Lao PDR. These two important activities are expected to lead to increased results in 2014, including better delivery of services to UXO victims by the various stakeholders.

The third key activity result of the NRA for 2013 is to improve coordination of the sector, in order to be more efficient and effective: to ensure that survey and clearance activities reflect the development goals as prioritized by the Government and relevant national planning and policy frameworks. The NRA has achieved this key activity result. The NRA Clearance Unit collaborated with the National Leading Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication to continue data collection on government development priorities for

⁹ According to latest approved budget revision

each province. The NRA also organized two regional planning workshops for the Southern provinces and conducted a field visit to the Northern provinces to consult provinces directly. The NRA continues to better integrate UXO survey and clearance activities into the national socio-economic plans in support of Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. The NRA also continues to explore new technologies and/or approaches in the UXO sector in order to improve productivity and efficiency of release of land. In November the NRA conducted an important workshop to discuss and develop new UXO contamination assessment procedures.

The fourth key activity, the effective coordination and regulation of the UXO Sector, is on track overall. The NRA has continued to provide policy guidance and direction as required to ensure the effective coordination and regulation of the UXO sector and compliance with national standards, strategies and plans.

During all of its monitoring missions, the NRA QA/QC Unit assessed the compliance of operators with National Standards. In April 2013, the NRA QM team conducted an investigation regarding an accident which occurred in Xieng Khuang Province in Kham district on 7th April. The accident occurred at a UXO Lao clearance site, and resulted in the death of 1 child and injury of 2 other children. The investigation identified a number of areas where UXO Lao was lacking and several recommendations were made and approved by the NRA Board Chairman. The full report is available at the NRA office. The NRA circulated the report to other operators and donors and continues to follow up with UXO Lao. The NRA will ensure that all operators develop and maintain robust quality management systems, to prevent accidents as much as possible and to promote continuous improvement. If the funding situation allows, the NRA would like to recruit a second Quality Assurance / Quality Control team, to help monitor the increasing high number of clearance operators (18) in contaminated provinces.

The last two key activity results are also on track. In November 2012, the NRA Board Chairman issued Notice No 96 which elaborated the Roles and Responsibilities of the NRA. This notice has assisted the NRA in fostering better communication and coordination with the provinces and at the sub-provincial level. It also provides all involved in the sector with a clearer understanding of the mandate, role, structure, scope and objectives of the NRA. The NRA continued to advocate for increased financial support from the international community, as well as from the Government, which has agreed in principle to provide additional financial support to the sector. Funding levels will depend on the availability of funds and quality of the funding requests made to Government by the sector.

The Vientiane Action Plan was adopted at the First Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (in 2010). Lao PDR is in full compliance with both the CCM obligations and is implementing its national programme consistent with the Vientiane Action Plan.

Lao PDR has continued to play a leading role in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is in full compliance with its obligations under the CCM and will continue to ensure that it remains so. As it is expected that Lao PDR will be unable to clear all known contaminated areas within the initial 10 year deadline set out in the Convention, Lao PDR will be required to seek one and perhaps several extensions to this deadline. Lao PDR will seek such extension(s) in a timely and effective way. Lao PDR has also built into its work plan for 2014, developing national legislation *inter alia* to establish legal penalties for the commission of acts prohibited under the CCM. The UXO sector will also seek to assist the National Commission on Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly (NCDE) to strengthen its capacity to mobilize and coordinate services to UXO victims, within the broader disability context.

Additional details can be found in the section “Performance and Results NRA”, including the status of Key Performance Indicators established in the NRA 2013 Annual Work Plan and in the Project Document 2013 – 2015.

In addition to this Annual Project Report, the NRA will produce a detailed UXO Sector Annual Report for 2013, which will outline the achievements of the sector in general, including the comprehensive clearance statistics of each operator. The UXO Sector Annual Report 2013 will be released in June 2014.

2) UXO Lao

UXO Lao was able to achieve its annual clearance, survey and community awareness targets for 2013. For the period 01 January to 31 December 2013, UXO Lao released 3,295 hectares of land through area clearance and technical survey activities reaching 255,624 beneficiaries in nine provinces. Within the reporting period, UXO Lao destroyed 60,634 items of UXO of which 28,590 were sub-munitions or bombies, through clearance, technical survey and roving tasks. Removal or destruction of UXO increases the safety of people living in UXO impacted communities and increases the amount of safe land available for food production and other socio-economic development activities. The work undertaken is in accordance with national standards and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). 85% of cleared land by UXO Lao was agricultural land.

2013 UXO Lao clearance, roving, survey and risk education targets vs. results (targets set in 2013 AWP)

Activities	2013 Targets	2013 Achievements
Clearance/ Technical Survey	3,167 ha	3,295 ha
Roving tasks	1,550 tasks	1,754 tasks
General Survey Tasks	1,817 tasks	2,179 tasks
Risk Education Activities	639 villages visited	650 villages visited

UXO Lao further conducted risk education activities in the nine provinces designed to increase the awareness of people living in UXO affected areas about the dangers of unexploded ordnance and to change the behaviour of ‘high risk’ target groups. During the reporting period, 650 risk education activities were conducted by UXO Lao staff and Village Volunteers and reached 173,529 people (including 88,380 women of whom 40,316 were children and 85,149 men of whom 40,211 were children).

Risk education activities are closely linked with survey activities by allowing villagers to assist survey teams in identifying the location of UXO. Furthermore, 1,754 roving tasks were conducted in 1,176 villages removing 25,307 items of UXO including 11,026 sub-munitions or bombies, with a response time of not more than two weeks from request to task completion.

UXO Lao’s activities contribute not only to saving the lives of people living in areas of UXO contamination, but also to increasing socio-economic opportunities in some of the poorest districts. In addition to areas cleared for agriculture, UXO Lao also contributes to the Lao Government’s development projects, as well as those of other international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) to allow infrastructure development to happen including the establishment of irrigation projects, schools, hospitals, health centers, clean water projects, roads, and other development activities. UXO Lao works in alignment with the

Government's strategy on rural development and poverty eradication in accordance with the 7th Social-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR.

UXO Lao systematically tries to explore new, improved technologies where possible and has invested time in trials of technical survey in 2013. In March 2013, trials were undertaken by UXO Lao in Champasack province to continue the development of a more efficient technical survey capacity. One of the challenges of UXO clearance has always been to ensure that the clearance teams are used where the UXO are actually located. While a simple statement, this is challenging to achieve. Over the last 15 years, UXO Lao has significantly improved its ability to target clearance teams and now a much greater majority of clearance tasks operate on contaminated areas.

Technical survey is the key to this and UXO Lao is in the process of introducing an "evidence-based" approach to survey which aims to make targeting of clearance teams more effective resulting in even less land not containing UXO being cleared. The initial results of the March trials were promising and will now be discussed further with the rest of the mine action community in Laos, as well as with the NRA to discuss the acceptability of this process.

In November 2013, the NRA organized a workshop which was held in Pakse with the aim of discussing UXO survey procedures that support the implementation of effective survey throughout the country. The meeting was attended by all humanitarian operators in the country and was well attended by UXO Lao. In addition to the technical staff from headquarters in Vientiane, a Senior EOD Technician from each of UXO Lao's nine provinces attended and was part of the discussions. Total number of participants was 58. The outcome of this workshop is further described in Chapter 5 under outcome section.

The workshop covered operational and policy issues. The operation discussions focused on the methodology that Norwegian People's Aid have been using in the last two years in Laos (Cluster Munition Remnant Survey – CMRS) to undertake effective and targeted survey. This process is fundamentally different from standard technical survey processes in that it takes as its starting point a point of evidence as opposed to spending significant time and resources searching for evidence. This is possible in Laos as the cluster munition contamination allows the ground to be walked over by survey and clearance teams (and indeed much of the land is often in regular usage). This process was demonstrated in the discussion room, and also during the course of a field exercise. In general terms, there was a consensus that this methodology was good and focuses well on evidence – which assists with the targeting of resources

On the policy side, there was less consensus and much debate over the terminology "land release". While it is clear that the evidence based CMRS process of NPA would quickly and clearly define boundaries and consequently, the problem is that there appears to be a concern that by using this process, that less land would get cleared (and thus "released") – although the land that was to be cleared would be the land actually requiring clearance... This debate is still work in progress. The core issue is that for the last years, Laos has been reporting clearance of a number of thousands of hectares per year. By implementing a CMRS approach, the number of thousands of hectares cleared would likely be (possibly significantly) reduced. The land then cleared would, however, be absolutely sure to contain UXO (i.e., focusing on quality not quantity), but there would not be as much released, and thus on the surface at least, the statistics would indicate lower outputs.

All in all however, the workshop was a great success and will almost certainly lead to a more refined and effective clearance process taking place in Laos in the future.

UXO Lao further continued to collaborate with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC). The UXO Lao-CMAC South-South Cooperation initiative, organized by JICA, was initiated in 2012 with the aim of sharing knowledge and exchanging experience in the sector and eventually contributing for Lao PDR to accelerate its efforts to combat UXO problem. UXO Lao's aim is to learn from this survey and assess in what way certain practices could be applied at UXO Lao. In 2013, UXO Lao participated in two workshops with the topics (1) National Standards/ SOP and (2) Mine Risk Education (MRE) and Victim Assistance / Information System and Data Management.

In 2013 through the support of the Government of Australia, UXO Lao has further trained and equipped 5 new clearance and 3 new CA teams in three provinces and through this will provide direct support to the "Laos-Australia Rural Livelihood Programme" (LARLP) in six districts in Laos. In rural Laos, access to secure land is one of the critical factors for ensuring subsistence, income generation, and greater resilience. The exceptional contamination of rural Laos by UXO means that any efforts to increase the productivity of land will require prior clearance of UXO. The LARLP is a 4-year, Au\$ 41.5 million programme whose goal is to increase the economic security and resilience of poor women and men in rural areas and with the objective to provide poor rural families, in particular women, with greater and inclusive access to social protection, financial services, productive assets and opportunities to generate income. In order to being able to implement the activities of the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihood Programme prior clearance of land is required which will be undertaken by UXO Lao.

UXO Lao maintains a training centre at Ban Y Lai in Vientiane where different training courses are conducted by UXO Lao instructors. A number of UXO Lao staff have participated in various trainings and workshops at the UXO Lao Training Center in 2013. These trainings aim to improve the technical and organizational skills of UXO Lao staff in their respective capacities with the overall aim to increase the institutional capacity of UXO Lao to better manage clearance and risk education programmes for the needs of communities at risk. UXO Lao A detailed description of the organized trainings and their impact is provided in section 2 "UXO Lao Project Performance, 2013 Training courses" see, p.35.

III. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

1. Background

Lao PDR is, per capita, the most heavily bombed nation in the world. During the Indochina war (1964-1973) more than 2 million tons of bombs were dropped on Lao PDR. Of 270 million cluster sub-munitions dropped, it is estimated up to 30% did not explode. 25% of all villages are estimated to be contaminated. UXO (unexploded ordnance) victims in Laos averaged up to 300 a year over the past decade, however, there has been a sharp decline in recent years, with 56 recorded casualties in 2012.

In 1996, the Government of Lao PDR, with the support of UNDP and UNICEF, established UXO Lao, a national implementation 'operator', to clear contaminated areas and to provide risk education. Over the years, numerous commercial and other non-commercial, national and international operators have become active in the sector as well.

In the early 2000s, a strategic plan entitled *The Safe Path Forward, 2003 to 2013* was adopted and a National Regulatory Authority (NRA) was created to regulate and coordinate UXO sector activities throughout the country. The NRA became operational in early 2006.

Since UXO Lao's inception in 1996 and the NRA's inception in 2006, UNDP has supported the UXO sector and works closely with both UXO Lao and NRA to increase national capacity and improve the policy and operating environment. UNDP's support has focused on resource mobilization in support of NRA and UXO Lao operations and capacity development, in part, through the provision of technical advisory services on policy, strategy, planning, technologies, as well as programme and financial management. It has focused on developing Lao national capacity to undertake the full range of activities in the UXO/Mine Action Sector to better coordinate and regulate the UXO sector, to survey and clear UXO contaminated land, provide UXO risk-education and to facilitate the provision of services to UXO survivors. In addition to co-chairing the UXO Sector Working Group and administering the UXO Sector Trust Fund, UNDP has provided significant technical support to the NRA and UXO Lao to help develop national capacity to clear contaminated areas, provide effective risk education and assist UXO accident survivors. To date, UNDP has mobilized more than USD 85 million for the UXO sector in Lao PDR.

UNDP has also contributed to developing Government capacity to engage in treaty regimes, particularly the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), and supported preparations for the historic first global Meeting of States Parties to the CCM held in Vientiane in 2010.

The UXO Trust Fund, co-managed by UNDP, has continued to expand. The Trust Fund facilitates an enhanced sector-wide approach and increased Government ownership, leadership and discretion over resource allocation in the sector. With UNDP support, the Government has raised approximately USD 22.2 million, which has been channelled through the Trust Fund in support of key activities in the sector.

2. Purpose of the new project document

In 2013, UNDP and the Government of Lao PDR signed a new project document outlining their continued co-operation for the period 2013-2015. The project document, which includes a comprehensive strategy and action plan for the next three years, was developed based on a 2012 evaluation of UNDP's support to the sector, as well as on a series of consultations with donors and partners.

The project officially started in April 2013 and will run until December 2015. The project implementing partners are: 1) National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector (NRA) and 2) Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO Lao). The total resources required for the project are USD 26,686,787 of which approximately 64% (USD 17,083,375) had been mobilized by the project as of December 2013.

The overall objective of this three year cooperation between the UNDP and the Government of Lao PDR is to support and further strengthen the institutional capacity of the NRA and UXO Lao in order to (i) achieve their national objectives for the UXO sector as set out in SPF II (ii) to meet all obligations under the CCM and other relevant treaties, and (iii) to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), particularly MDG 9 established by Lao PDR specifically for the UXO sector. Achieving MDG 9 is crucial, as it further provides increased access to assets and services to improve livelihood.

The project has two overall outputs:

- **Output 1: The National Regulatory Authority is able to effectively provide policy guidance, coordinate, and regulate the UXO sector in support of national development goals, implementing the national UXO sector strategy "Safe Path Forward II", and fulfilling international treaty obligations**
- **Output 2: UXO Lao is better able to manage clearance and risk education programmes for the needs of communities at risk.**

The NRA is mandated to coordinate, regulate and oversee all operations in the UXO sector. It has a unique position and responsibility to ensure that UXO operators act in accordance with the National Strategic Plan for the UXO Sector, the 2010-2020 Safe Path Forward II (SPF II). Achieving the Strategic Goal of the SPF II will contribute to the Intended Outcome as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resource Framework ("By 2015, national and local governments and communities have reduced the impact of unexploded ordnance on people in Lao PDR"). In this framework, the NRA will work on its six activity results aligned to the SPF II which included: Risk education approaches improved, reinforced and better disseminated; Better information & referral of UXO survivors; a strategy for victim assistance; More efficient release of priority land for agriculture and development coordinated and regulated in accordance with risk reduction and priority needs; Effective coordination and regulation of the UXO Sector; Better institutional development of the NRA and its integration into the regular set-up of the Government; and International treaty obligations met.

UXO Lao is the national UXO clearance operator in Lao PDR. The organization works in the nine most heavily UXO impacted provinces. UXO Lao clears land for agriculture, community purposes (e.g. schools, hospitals, temples, and water supply) and other development activities. It also conducts risk-reduction education activities (Community Awareness or CA) in affected communities.

UXO Lao seeks to improve its capacity to:

- (i) effectively and efficiently deliver clearance and risk education programmes wherever it is active in the country;
- (ii) carry out activities consistent with national priorities established for the sector;
 - ensure that all programme activities meet national standards;
 - coordinate with other operators active in Lao PDR;
- (iii) report on progress and remain transparent and fully accountable for financial and technical resources; and
- (iv) maintain open and effective communication with all stakeholders.

UXO Lao currently has more than 1,190 employees. The organization operates within the generic principles of mine action:

- (i) ensuring the delivery of safe land through area clearance and survey;
- (ii) undertaking reactive and proactive roving tasks (emergency EOD tasks);
- (iii) general survey activities; and,
- (iv) UXO risk-reduction education activities.

UXO Lao works to achieve results through activities which provide safe access to land in nine provinces; supporting communities at risk to be able to use land for socio-economic, developmental and humanitarian purposes and to reduce the risk of UXO related accidents for the Lao population. Provincial activities are supported through the National Office, the UXO Lao Training Centre and directed technical assistance.

Targeted project key results 2013 – 2015

With UNDP's and donors supports, the project will also seek to achieve the following key results for the period 2013-2015:

UXO Lao:

- 9,000 hectares of priority land released through UXO Lao operations (estimated);
- 200,000 UXO items destroyed by UXO Lao operations (estimated); and,
- 800,000 individuals supported through UXO Lao operations (estimated).

NRA

- District surveys and clearance plans completed (est. 23)
- Operators monitored and accredited (est. 100%)
- Operators reporting regularly to the NRA (est. 80%)
- Survivors tracked and, where required, supported (all known survivors)
- UXO Sector Multi-Year Work Plan until 2020 based on Safe Path Forward II and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, with strengthened links to National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPP) is developed, approved, implemented and monitored
- All relevant treaty obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions are being met
- There is a progressive, increased financial contribution from the Government of Lao to the UXO sector

IV. PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS NRA ON THE OUTPUT LEVEL



OUTPUT 1: The National Regulatory Authority is able to effectively provide policy guidance to coordinate, regulate, and steer the UXO sector in support of national development goals, implementing the national UXO sector strategy "Safe Path Forward II", and fulfilling international treaty obligations

1) Summary of NRA targets vs. results set in 2013 AWP

Within the NRA Annual Work Plan, there were 65 planned activities (among the six activity results directly driven from the six objectives of *The Safe Path Forward 2*) for 2013.

50 planned activities have been achieved.

6 planned activities have been partially achieved.

9 planned activities have not been achieved.

In terms of completion of the NRA Annual Work Plan:

77% of planned activities were "achieved".

86% of planned activities were "achieved or partially achieved".

14% of activities were not achieved.

Output indicators:

- No. of UXO survivors whose needs are tracked (2010: 0, 2015: 10,000 ,MoV: NRA Database).
Actual 2013: 9,325 Survivor Tracking forms collected and ongoing data entry.
- No. of districts with district clearance plans based on District Focused Approach (DFA) (2010: 0, 2015: 20, MoV: District Clearance Plans).
Actual 2013: No finalized District Clearance Plan, but Pilot project in 3 districts in 2012, and important ongoing survey efforts in 3 Southern provinces (in all 16 districts).
- % of operators accredited (2010: 33%, 2015: 100%, MoV: NRA Annual Reports).
Actual 2013: 100%
- % of operators reporting electronically to the NRA (2010: 13% , 2015: 80%, MoV: NRA database).
Actual 2013: 67% (Compared to 44% in 2012).
- Victim Assistance Sector Strategy drafted (2010: no, 2015: yes, MoV: NRA Annual Report).
Actual 2013: Draft Victim Assistance Sector Strategy presented to stakeholders and NRA Board, further changes to the document have been made.

- NRA report to consider the need for a national policy on 'UXO within the scrap metal trade' drafted (2010: no, 2015: yes, MoV: availability of NRA report including recommendations).
Actual 2013: The NRA has produced and sent notification to all operators and related ministries on the situation of the scrap metal trade, and on the necessity at this time, not to formulate a decree.
- % of population in UXO affected areas with improved knowledge, attitudes and practices related to UXO risk reduction (2010: NA, 2015: TBD ,MoV: KAP studies). **Next KAP studies will take place in 2015.**
- A Post Clearance Impact Assessment submitted to the Government (2010: yes, 2015: yes, MoV: report). **Next Post Clearance Impact Assessment will take place in 2015.**
- Timely submission of UXO SWG's quality inputs to RTM/RTiM (2010: Yes, 2013-2015: Yes, MoV: receipt by DIC/MPI). **Actual 2013: Inputs provided for the background document of the 11th High Level Round Table Meeting 2013.**
- UXO Sector Multi-Year Work Plan till 2020 based on Safe Path Forward II and CCM drafted, approved and implemented (2010: no, 2015: yes, MoV: availability of WP).
Actual 2013: Initial data collection to enable the drafting of the Multi-Year Work Plan in 2014.
- Increase in the percentage of 'un-earmarked' contributions to the UXO Trust Fund (2010: 25%, 2015: 50%, MoV: UXO TF Steering Committee Meeting report). **Actual 2013: 83%.**
- Increase in GoL contribution to the UXO sector (2010: in-kind only, 2015: financial contribution included, MoV: UXO Sector Annual Report). **Actual 2013: 18,000 USD to cover the rent of the NRA office (previously paid with funds from the international community).**
- Number of technical advisors supporting the NRA. **Actual 2013: 6, including 2 volunteers.**

2) NRA Project Performance

Activity Result 1: Risk Education methodologies improved, reinforced and better disseminated.

The 2013 targets for Risk Education were achieved with further reduction in the number of UXO casualties (41 casualties reported in 2013 so far). This outcome has been achieved thanks to the efforts of the whole UXO Sector. The Risk Education operators were supported through monitoring missions from the NRA (including recommendations and sharing the best practices within the sector) and the exchange taking place in the quarterly Technical Working Groups. The Risk Education operators discussed in the Technical Working Group how to maintain the level of less than 75 casualties per year; and how to address the main causes of accidents in 2013 such as "making fire". As a result, the NRA developed specific risk education messages that were broadcasted via radio to reach communities and raise awareness in two severely contaminated provinces.

Monitor UXO / Mine Risk Education activities conducted by operators in the country, including gender issues¹⁰

Monitoring is a key action of the NRA MRE Unit and this year the team conducted several monitoring missions in UXO contaminated provinces to ensure the effectiveness of MRE activities and also to support operators and local authorities. The following are some of their observations and recommendations:

- On 5- 12 May 2013, NRA and UXO Lao NO staff visited UXO Lao, World Education Organization and village volunteers in Xieng Khouang Province. Overall, the MRE team found the operators to be very skilled. The NRA has encouraged UXO Lao in various provinces to cooperate more closely with other operators such as the World Education Organization, to share experiences, knowledge and best practices.
- On 4-12 August 2013, the MRE unit carried out monitoring activities in Xieng Khouang province, where the team visited SOS and MAG operations at schools and within local communities. The team found that MAG (Community Liaison team) conducted and delivered MRE sessions as and when requested by the community partner, but there was a lack of risk education materials. The team found that SOS has good collaborations with local authorities and that enough risk education materials were in place. However, there is a need to take a closer look at the causes of UXO accidents in their project areas and to adapt their MRE activities accordingly.
- On 19-24 August 2013, the unit visited HALO Trust operations in Savannakhet and UXO Lao operations in Attapeu province. The team found that HALO Trust did not take all required actions as agreed in the MOU. There was evidence of inadequate Risk Education equipment and the HALO MRE teams rarely attended MRE Technical Working Group meetings. Another issue is that HALO Trust did not report MRE activities to the NRA (to be included in IMSMA). To address the foregoing issues, the MRE unit recommended that HALO Trust improve and train their staff in using their equipment and implementing their activities according to the standards set in the MOU. The HALO Trust has been encouraged to consult the NRA if the teams encounter any problems. For UXO Lao, the NRA noticed a lack of sufficient risk education materials. UXO Lao will provide books to the provinces early 2014 and continues to train new staff on the proper use of MRE materials.

Conduct four meetings of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on MRE

The MRE Technical Working Group's mandate is to coordinate MRE activities across Lao PDR with all MRE operators in the sector. The TWG also aims to identify and address gaps in MRE, share information, advice and ideas on how to successfully and effectively carry out MRE activities. In 2013, the MRE TWG met four times.

Discussions in 2013 highlighted the need to establish clear reporting mechanisms and guidelines on the use of MRE materials. Moreover, the TWG is a forum for operators to exchange knowledge on how to further improve and organize advocacy and engagement events such as the "Spirit of Soccer" tournament in Xieng Khouang and an MRE radio program in Xieng Khouang and Saravane Provinces. The TWG was also involved and assisted with the printing and distribution of MRE curriculum materials for primary schools in 42 districts in nine provinces, which was funded by UNICEF.

¹⁰ Further information on gender related activities to be found in Chapter IX Gender Mainstreaming Update

Ensure interaction with the Ministry of Education

To ensure the dissemination of Risk Education messages in primary school, the NRA worked closely with the Ministry of Education. At the beginning of 2013, the NRA did not have enough funding to print Risk Education materials to be used in schools. In an effort to mobilize resources, the NRA approached UNICEF and received 54,000 USD to hold a workshop on updating MRE Materials and print the MRE for dissemination. As a result, the NRA was able to produce five different MRE books, for each year of primary school. These books will be distributed by the Ministry of Education in nine contaminated provinces within the first Quarter of 2014.

UXO Radio Spots and related materials

The NRA cooperated with the Ministry of Information and Culture to gather more information on how to produce effective radio messages. The NRA completed the production of six radio spots with messages on how to prevent the UXO accidents when making a fire (one of the main causes of accidents in the years 2012 and 2013). In July 2013, the radio programs started to be broadcasted in Xiengkhuang and Saravane provinces. The NRA organized a follow-up meeting in September 2013 with representatives of both provinces, to assess the effectiveness of this new initiative.

Make available the report from the NRA about data collection on the scrap metal trade

The NRA sent a notification to all operators and related ministries on the situation of the scrap metal trade and on the recommendation, not to formulate a decree specific to scrap metal trade at this time. The internal report was produced based on a study/survey of the situation of the scrap metal trade in Lao PDR. It was determined that the trade in scrap metal is no longer the main cause of UXO related accidents, as it had been in the past. The report is available for review at the NRA. The NRA will continue to follow-up on the situation and may undertake further review and reconsideration of this issue in the future.

Activity Result 2: Practices of information management and surveillance of UXO survivors improved; a strategy for victim assistance formulated

In 2013, the targets for the Victim Assistance Unit were partially achieved, with some delay in the data entry of the forms collected via the Survivor Tracking System. However, important milestones have been reached through the collection of this valuable detailed information on survivors and the drafting of the NRA Victim Assistance strategy. These two steps will lead to important results in 2014, with the analysis and dissemination of information about the needs of the UXO survivors, which will allow a better delivery of services by the various stakeholders. The Victim Assistance strategy was designed as a tool to guide the NRA Victim Assistance Unit's work to assist UXO victims within the broader disability and development frameworks in Lao PDR.

Establish and maintain a nationwide Survivor Tracking System and help refer survivors to institutions/organizations in a position to address their needs

In 2012, a Survivor Tracking System was established to facilitate the collection of detailed information on survivors. Data continued to be collected in 2013. Entry of the data into the Lao Victim Information System (LVIS) started in 2013, which is funded by the USA. This tracking system will bring valuable information on the needs of the UXO survivors. Data analysis and dissemination will take place in 2014.

Finalize secure adoption and promote implementation of a national Victim Assistance Strategy, with attention to VA as a component of broader disability sector

After the first draft of the VA strategy was discussed with operators, comments were received and changes were made accordingly. One major point to note is that line-ministry input is still necessary to ensure their involvement to meet key VA objectives. During the NRA board committee meeting in May 2013, the VA strategy was presented and comments were received. Further changes to the document have been made, including a new section on resource requirements. The areas of data collection and coordination of VA will be led by NRA and will part of 2014 Annual Work Plan for the NRA. Next steps: Once the Lao version is ready, the NRA office will send the proposed strategy to the NRA Chairman for approval. It is expected that the final approval will take place early 2014.

On 10-14 June 2013, the NRA VA unit together with staff from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and NCDP (a total of 8 delegates) exchanged views and learned about UXO victim assistance with CMAA (equivalent to the NRA) in Cambodia.

Convene quarterly meetings of the Victim Assistance Technical Working Group

In 2013, the VA Unit organized four TWG meetings as planned. The Technical Working Group contributes to support the establishment of a network of VA organizations providing services to UXO survivors. The VA TWG highlighted the need for further progress on the data recording element of the Victim Tracking System, data collection with the operator reporting template and consolidation of information concerning various operators' activities, in order to be able to report adequately on the provision of assistance to survivors.

Activity Result 3: More efficient and effectively-planned release of land coordinated and regulated in accordance with development goals as prioritized in the NSEDP and other relevant national planning and policy frameworks

For Survey and Clearance, 2013 was a transition period which included new initiatives as highlighted in the Outcome section (Chapter VI) and described here below. With three regional planning workshops and data collection efforts on government development priorities, the NRA aimed to better integrate the UXO survey and clearance activities into the national socio-economic planning mechanisms, and especially linking them with Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. In this regard the sector continues to explore new improved technologies and/or approaches with the aim to improve efficiency of release of land. In this context, and based on the field experience of various operators, the NRA organized an important workshop in November to discuss and develop new UXO contamination assessment procedures.

Complete the testing of the District Focused Approach (DFA) before extending to other priority districts

The NRA Deputy Director (Operations), together with the Clearance Officer, analyzed and assessed the pilot project and convened a meeting of operators involved in the DFA pilot project – Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Handicap International (HI) - in order to determine next steps or alternatives. The specific objectives of this meeting were to: (i) share experiences among operators, outlining their respective methodologies in DFA (ii) to make recommendations based on an assessment of DFA, for inclusion into the development of standard survey methodology in Lao PDR and (iii) to bring the DFA pilot project to conclusion.

The key observations/lessons learnt and challenges identified are as follows:

- (i) Non-technical survey is generally very useful and necessary, though it may need to be followed by technical survey to validate findings;
- (ii) Participation of villagers and local authorities is extremely important, but can be time consuming and challenging throughout the survey process; nonetheless, it is essential to ensure that they accept and have confidence in the results of the survey process;
- (iii) It is critical that survey team members have a capacity in the local language;
- (iv) It is very important to engage female as well as male members of target communities;

It was recommended that the three operators that carried out the DFA pilot project share their experiences in a broad survey workshop to be held in the following months. It was also recommended that non-technical survey be included in standard survey methodology, and that it be participatory, i.e. carried out with the involvement and support of land owners, village and district authorities.

The DFA pilot project was thus brought to conclusion and the results informed discussions in a subsequent sector wide workshop on Survey entitled “UXO contamination Assessment Procedure Workshop” held in Pakse in November 2013. These activities continue to inform the ongoing development of improved survey methodology for Lao PDR.

Monitor, train and support clearance operators, including through the development of new methodologies and technologies for clearance and survey

After holding three regional planning workshops (Northern, Central and Southern), the Clearance unit cooperated with the National Rural Development and Poverty Eradication Committee to meet the Provincial Rural Development and Poverty Eradication Division and relevant operators to discuss UXO Clearance Plans in the provinces that will support the socio economic development in the years 2013-2014. From 20-30 May 2013, the Clearance unit of the NRA, in collaboration with the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (NCRDPE) visited Luang Prabang, Huaphan and Xieng Khouang provincial authorities to collect information and discuss how to integrate provincial development plans with the NCRDPE plan, and to agree on the priorities for UXO clearance specifically for these provinces. In 2013, in an effort to link clearance to rural development and poverty eradication, provincial Rural Development offices have officially been transferred the responsibility to coordinate clearance plans in their respective provinces and ensure that they are conducted in line with the national development plan and priorities. In Bolikhamxay, there had not yet been a transfer of this responsibility to the Provincial Rural Development and Poverty Eradication Division. The NRA continues to monitor the situation in Bolikhamxay.

The NRA Clearance Unit also conducted various monitoring missions. The unit monitored UXO Lao in Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, Huaphan, Bolikhamsay (where they invited SODI to join), Savannakhet, Salavan, Sekong, Khammouane (where they invited MAG to join) and Champasack. In Champasack, UXO Lao clearance operations were conducted very well. In Paksong District, UXO Lao achieved its targets, followed SOPs and National Standards accordingly.

Convene quarterly meetings of the Clearance Technical Working Group

TWG meetings were held in Q1 and Q2. TWG meetings did not take place in Q3 and Q4, but instead were replaced by a workshop on UXO Contamination Assessment Procedures, which involved the same stakeholders as the Technical Working Group. However, key topics which had been planned for discussion for the third TWG meeting were discussed at the UXO Contamination Assessment Procedure Workshop. The TWG

meetings covered an extensive range of issues including Senior Explosive Ordnance Disposal (SEOD) training, training standards, restructuring of governance arrangements in the UXO sector at the national and provincial levels, feedback from the participants at a Quality Management workshop (including recommendations), planning of the organization of the workshop on Survey / Land Release, etc. TWG stakeholder discussions indicate that there is good coordination within the sector.

Activity Result 4: Effective coordination and regulation of the UXO Sector

Provide policy guidance and direction as required to ensure the effective coordination and regulation of the UXO sector and compliance with national strategies and plans

Detailed description terms of reference concerning the role and responsibilities of the NRA were approved by the NRA chairman in 2012. This will provide the sector with a clearer understanding of the mandate, role, structure, scope and objectives of the NRA. It will also make it easier for NRA to coordinate activities within the sector and to ensure that Government development priorities are addressed. The Government is requesting that all development projects plan and budget for survey and clearance (if necessary). This has already begun. For example, Australia allocated additional funding to UXO Lao through the Lao-Australia Rural Livelihood Programme to ensure survey and clearance of its development project areas in three southern provinces. The NRA continued to ensure that all operators are properly accredited and monitored. Significant improvements were also made in the increase of the usage of entering data into the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) by operators.

Quality Management:

Process accreditation of all operators (including NGOs, commercial operators and the Lao Army), to ensure compliance with National Standards. Conduct QA/QC of operations and investigate potential accidents.

Accreditation has been granted to NPA, SODI, HI, BACTEC, PSD, XTD, THB, LAUNC, Sengphet and Engineering Department of Ministry of National Defence associated with MMG LXML. The NRA inspected the work of several operators during the year: UXO Lao, HI, NPA, Halo Trust, MAG and ASA Power Engineering Company, in 10 UXO contaminated provinces. The mission found that for some operators, the UXO clearance team leader did not ensure the proper marking of the field and in a few cases the team leader did not record information collected after conducting the QC of cleared lanes on the map.

During all of its monitoring missions, the NRA QA/QC Unit assessed the compliance of operators with National Standards. In April 2013, the NRA QM team conducted an investigation regarding an accident which occurred in Xieng Khouang Province in Kham district on 7th April. The accident occurred at a UXO Lao clearance site, and resulted in the death of 1 child and injury of 2 other children. The investigation identified a number of areas where UXO Lao was lacking and several recommendations were made approved by the NRA Board Chairman. The full report is available at the NRA office. The NRA circulated the report to other operators and donors and continues to follow up with UXO Lao. The NRA will ensure that all operators develop and maintain robust quality management systems, to prevent accidents as much as possible and to promote continuous improvement. If the funding situation allows, the NRA would like to recruit a second Quality Assurance / Quality Control team, to help monitor the increasing high number of clearance operators (18) in contaminated provinces

Information Management (IM):

Manage, maintain and publicize information from databases, including IMSMA, as required

In 2013, the IM unit continued to enter and validate historic and current data from UXO Sector operators and rolling out the IMSMA to operators in order to encourage a gradual move to electronic reporting. The NRA maintains the database for the whole UXO sector in Lao PDR. In this regard, the IM unit responds to requests for information from various stakeholders and provides information such as the contamination of a specific areas or clearance statistics among others. In March 2013, the Information Management Unit organized a training on the use of IMSMA for operators and commercial companies in Vientiane Capital.

Programme Unit:

Ensure monthly reporting from the NRA to the Lao Government.

Monthly reports are prepared and managed by the national staff and submitted monthly to the NRA Chairman and NRA board members. The NRA Office, as the secretariat of the NRA board has an obligation to report monthly to board members. The NRA assists the Board in all matters related to its oversight function.

Convene meetings of the UXO Sector Working Group, the NRA Board, the Programme Board and any other meeting required to meet the needs of the UXO Sector

The NRA Board meeting was held on 29th May 2013. This meeting was an excellent opportunity to present the 2013 Annual Work Plan, the NRA Victim Assistance strategy and the aforementioned new project document for NRA and UXO LAO supported by UNDP for the period 2013-2015. The meeting was a good opportunity to update the board on developments within the UXO sector and to introduce the above mentioned reference documents. At the suggestion of the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the NRA submitted an official letter to MPI to register the new project, before signature between NRA and UNDP. On 15 November 2013, the new project document for NRA and UXO LAO supported by UNDP for the period 2013-2015 was officially signed.

Consolidate the information on the UXO sector and in collaboration with UNDP, to strengthen the Sector Working Group contribution to Round Table

The Programme Unit collected a great deal of relevant information from operators in preparation of the UXO Sector Annual Report 2012. In addition to operators' reports, the NRA Programme Unit consolidated the achievements of the whole sector, not only in terms of number of hectares of land released through clearance, but also included technical survey, roving tasks, financial overview of humanitarian operators and the private sector, gender disaggregated data on field personnel, etc. This information will further be used at the Sector Working Group, and included in the SWG report, which will be an important input to this year's 11th High Level Round Table Meeting. 500 copies of UXO Sector Annual Report 2012 (English version) were printed and distributed to line ministries, donors, international organizations and operators.

Initiate 4th TWG on Policy, Coordination and Planning (target audience will be the programme managers)

On 20th June 2013, the NRA organized for the first time a UXO Sector Policy Forum on "Planning and Prioritization in the UXO Sector". More than 65 stakeholders participated, including Lao Government representatives, development partners, UXO operators and Technical Advisers. The aim was to brief stakeholders on the plans and processes to establish priorities in the sector and to allow operators and donors

to engage in substantive discussions on these and other topics. In order to further strengthen policy dialogue in the sector, the NRA is planning to organize another Policy Forum in 2014.

Update the NRA website

The NRA seeks to improve its capacity for effective communication, including processes and materials. To this end, the NRA reviewed the content of its website, and the PR unit made proposals to NRA management regarding potential changes. Written content and images have been updated and prepared thus far. In addition, the NRA sent one staff from the Public Relations unit for training on website upgrading and maintenance.

Establish NRA communication planning capacity and improved use of NRA print communications.

- An Australian volunteer supported the NRA Public Relations technician until the end of June 2013.
- On 17-18 September, NRA staff (Public Relations technician staff and TA) participated in a communications training at the UNDP Country Office. Participants learned how to improve their communication capacity, including techniques to write stories that have meaning and how to use various tools of communication.
- In 2013, more than 50 articles were published in local newspapers (Vientiane Times and Lao language newspapers) concerning the UXO issue and the achievements of the various operators active in the UXO Sector.
- On 3- 8 June 2013, the NRA supported Lao media (Vientiane Times, Vientiane Mai, Army Media, Lao Star, Lao National television and local media) to conduct a media field visit in Saravane and Champasack Provinces. Many questions were posed and responses given. Several articles were produced and released (articles are available at the PR Unit). The NRA highlighted the importance of providing and publishing accurate information and figures in the articles. The NRA further organized for a UXO display to be exhibited at the Lao National Museum in Vientiane to further raise awareness on the UXO issue in Lao PDR.

Establish and manage, with Australia's and UNDP's assistance, a Small Grants Facility (with dedicated Secretariat established in NRA) in support of civil society activities in the area of MRE and VA over 4 years.

Australian funding for the Small Grants Facility was received in July 2013. A concept paper describing the Facility is in production and Terms of Reference (TOR) for a technician or officer who will coordinate the work of the Facility at the NRA were drafted during Q3. Recruitment of the staff is planned within the first quarter of 2014. The draft TOR has been sent to the NRA management for review and consideration. A brainstorming session will be organized in the 1st quarter 2014, to openly discuss the process and the selection criteria with the donors and other interested stakeholders. The Government of Switzerland committed an additional funding of 316,000 USD to be received in March 2014, to provide grants for enhanced survey actions in Lao PDR.

Convene UXO TF Steering Committee and Annual Project Review meeting (for 2012).

An Annual Review Meeting was organized by the NRA on 12th February, 2013. This meeting was conducted to assess the performance of the project against its yearly targets and to discuss the Annual Work Plan for the following year. The review was conducted, based on the Annual Project Report and an up-to-date Combined Delivery Report. This meeting was followed by a meeting of the Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) to consider a new three year programme of cooperation between NRA/UXO Lao and the UNDP to "Support for

the Institutional Strengthening of the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector (NRA) and of the Lao National UXO Programme (UXO Lao) 2013-2015.”

On 20th June 2013, the NRA together with UNDP held the UXO Trust Fund Steering Committee meeting which was attended by UXO Trust funded members (Australia, France, Ireland, SDC), and UNDP. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Minh Pham, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Lao PDR. The aim of the meeting was to report on the contributions received and the use of the funds administered by UNDP. It was a valuable opportunity for discussion among UXO TF members. Donors requested more detailed reporting on the use of funds and copies of audits. It was recommended and agreed that various processes would be streamlined, and that the Trust Fund Steering Committee and the (future) Project Board, described in project document 2013 – 2015, would hold joint meetings.

Organize anniversary celebration of the entry into force of the CCM and Mine Awareness Day.

In cooperation with the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the NRA organized a large event to mark the Mine Awareness Day on 6th April. The event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Alounkeo Kittikhoun, and Mr. Minh Pham, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, along with several government representatives, UN agencies, donor representatives, international organizations and individuals. The International UXO/Mine Awareness Day aims to raise awareness of the continuing humanitarian threat and obstacle to development posed by UXO and to promote commitment to a world free from a threat of UXO. A “fun run” was held on Lane Xang Avenue in Vientiane. More than 1,000 people gathered for the early morning walk, with a route that took them from Patuxay to the presidential Palace and back. Prior of the walk, the agencies involved in UXO clearance in Laos held a special ceremony and beat drums to celebrate this important day.

The NRA, with the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also celebrated the 1st August anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The NRA organized a full day of celebration activities together with Handicap International (HI). The day started with an official opening ceremony, which was followed by a range of exhibitions on the UXO issue in Lao PDR, which were presented by different organizations working in the UXO sector in the country. Sporting events were also held. Approximately 1,000 participants were in attendance at the several events. In the evening, a charity concert was organized by HI, together with the Lao Ban Advocates, NRA, UNDP, World Education, the Lao Disabled People Association, the Quality of Life Organization and Lao Bangfai.

Liability workshop in Phnom Penh

On 8-10 May, the NRA Deputy Director (Support) and UNDP Technical Specialist Programme attended (TA) participated at a regional Mine Action Liability Workshop in Phnom Penh. The workshop was organized by CMAC and GICHD, with 22 participants working in five countries of the region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam). The report is available at the NRA/ Programme Unit. As a follow-up, at the end of June 2013, two consultants from GICHD came to collect information and consult stakeholders in Lao PDR, in order to develop a curriculum and plan for future training. Three workshops participated by the government, NRA and operators were organized in October 2013.

Deliver a workshop on Quality Management in Mine Action to NRA & UXO LAO staff, to other humanitarian operators, with the support from GICHD in March 2013.

The NRA, in collaboration with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), organized a workshop titled "Quality Management in UXO/Mine Action Programmes". Forty members of staff from the UXO sector in Lao PDR participated, including NRA, UXO Lao, humanitarian operators and commercial companies. The workshop, held on March 4-8, was supported by GICHD, UNDP, MAG and UK Aid. Participants learned about different approaches to quality management and how to establish common management-related terminology for identifying, invigorating and improving internal processes, using quality management tools.

Activity Result 5: Improved institutional development of the NRA and integration into the regular set-up of the Government

The NRA is a stronger institution in 2013 than the previous years, with a stable team (no more high staff turnover as experienced in the past), clearer mandate and structure, also with stronger links to the Government Office. The NRA is supported by two UNDP technical advisors to further develop the capacity of national counterparts (see more below). Improved institutional development included also the introduction of a new financial resources management system, good follow-up of the procurement plan and other administrative activities.

On 21 August 2013, NRA together with GICHD organized training on Measuring Development Results in the UXO Sector in Lao PDR for 45 staff from the UXO Sector, including the NRA, UXO Lao, Humanitarian Operators and UNDP. This meeting aimed to provide information on the use of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) for UXO clearance. The goal was to not only train people how to do cost-benefit analysis, but also to ensure that they are familiar with the overall concept and techniques and are confident in knowing when CBA might be useful in analyzing data to inform decision-makers (e.g. in setting priorities). Based on this workshop, the NRA is currently looking into possibilities on how to further introduce the use of CBA within the sector. CBA will also enable Government and donors to have a better picture of the contribution the UXO programme is making to development and poverty reduction.

In collaboration with UNDP, conduct capacity self-assessment to map out current capacity baselines, and formulate 3-year Capacity Development strategy with a robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework based on current capacity baselines

Draft Terms of Reference were developed in the third quarter 2013. Recruitment of the consultant will take place in the beginning of 2014. The Capacity assessment has a scheduled completion time of three months.

Clarify NRA structure and organigramme at HQ and sub-national levels; including a review of roles and responsibilities.

The NRA mandate and structure were clarified at three Regional Planning Workshops that were organized in 2013. The NRA organized a follow-up workshop on 27 September 2013 to present the Strategic Objectives of the UXO Sector, as detailed in the National Strategy Plan. Notification No. 093 on UXO clearance for socio-economic development projects in the Lao PDR was presented to Development Partners and relevant line Ministries. This notification requires that all development projects undertaken in contaminated areas must plan for survey and clearance as necessary, and build the cost into their budgets.

Clarify the position of NRA within the Lao Government and secure Lao government resources for the UXO Sector

The NRA (and UXO LAO) programme and finance staff received training from the Government on how to introduce a request for government budget. The NRA submitted official requests to cover the rent of the NRA office, and several other activities. Since January 2013, the rent of the NRA office has been paid by the Lao Government.

Attend the Annual Program Directors meeting, international workshops on mine action technology, information management and other subjects relevant to the NRA

A delegation from the NRA, UXO Lao and MoFA attended the sixteenth International Meeting of National Mine Action *Programme Directors and UN Advisors*, held on 10-12 April 2013. They also attended the Inter-sessional meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions from 15-18 April 2013 in Geneva. This participation has multiple advantages: to inform the Lao delegation on the developments in the sector at the international level; and to raise awareness about and support for the UXO sector in Lao PDR, in addition to formally representing Lao PDR in these important fora.

Finance Unit:

Prepare annual and quarterly work plans and reports. Ensure appropriate management of finances and proper documentation.

This is a permanent responsibility of the Finance Unit, which is managed by national staff, with support from a UNDP TA. In July, the Finance unit cooperated with the Programme Unit, the TA and other units to review expenditures in the first 6 months of the year and requirement regarding budget for the last 6 months of 2013. The audit of 2012 financial transactions did not highlight any problems with payments and supporting documentation at the NRA. The 2013 Annual Work Plan was finalized and signed during the first quarter of 2013. The Finance Officer also oversaw all finance related activities such as budgeting, expenditure control and accounting.

Prepare various reports for UNDP, donors and the Lao Government.

This is also a permanent responsibility, managed by the national staff. Each NRA unit provides monthly reports to NRA management, in the Lao language, which are transmitted on a monthly basis to the Lao Government. Based on these reports, the Programme Unit, with the support of the UNDP technical advisor, prepares quarterly reports to UNDP as well as other donor reports.

Introduce and maintain a new effective financial resources management system (ACCPAC).

The Procurement of a new financial resources management system for the NRA was finalized during the first quarter of 2013. Discussions took place in February and March regarding the customization of the software. Training of the national staff took place after the Lao New Year. Some work remains to be completed before it will be fully functional. Significant progress took place during the third quarter, but there is still some delay in the data entry.

Logistics /Admin Unit:

Ensure logistical and administrative support for NRA activities, as well as follow-up of operators.

A procurement plan for the year 2013 was finalized during the first quarter. QA/QC equipment was procured in the second quarter. Other procurement actions (mainly IT equipment) occurred in Q4.

Activity Result 6: International treaty obligations met

Lao PDR has continued to play a leading role in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, at domestic level but also at the international level. Lao PDR actively participated at the Intercessional meetings in Geneva and at the Fourth Meeting of State Parties in Lusaka, Zambia. The Lao delegation made substantive statements in all key sessions.

Provide annual updates on CCM i.e. Article 7 and 11 of the CCM Report.

The NRA has updated the annual CCM Article 7 (Transparency) report and submitted it to MoFA in early March for onward transmission to the UN as depositary. The report is available.

Help prepare domestic legislation, to be compliant with CCM.

Domestic legislation has not yet been developed, but will be in the future. The NRA will consult with the International Committee of the Red Cross and relevant other organizations within with respect to state of the art legislation to ensure full compliance with the CCM.

Participate in the CCM Intercessional meeting in Geneva.

A delegation from NRA, UXO Lao and MoFA attended the sixteenth International Meeting of National Mine Action *Programme Directors and UN advisors* on 10-12 April 2013 and the Intercessional meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions from 15-18 April 2013.

Participate in the 4 MSP in Lusaka, Zambia.

Lao PDR actively participated in the 4th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Lusaka, Zambia in September 2013. The Lao delegation with a total number of seven participants (3 from MOFA, 2 from NRA and 1 from UXO Lao, with support of the UNDP CTA) made substantive statements in all key sessions and held bilateral meetings on the margins of the event with key donors who were present and available such as: Australia, Canada, Ecuador, Germany, Japan and Norway.

3) Performance and Results Civil Society Funding Facility

As part of new project document signed in 2013, the NRA agreed to establish a Civil Society Funding Facility (CSFF) through which funds can be directed to both domestic CSOs and international NGOs, primarily in support of Victim Assistance and Risk Education activities in Lao PDR, which currently receive far less attention and resources than UXO clearance. Given the strong interest and need in expanding survey activities, this area will be eligible for support as well. This is work in progress and at present, the NRA in consultation with UNDP, is developing a concept paper for the establishment of the CSFF which will set out the proposed goal, objectives, governance arrangements, structure, institutional/organizational eligibility criteria, criteria against which their proposals will be judged, selected, etc. The draft concept paper will be shared with donors shortly, after which NRA/UNDP will convene a meeting with all stakeholders to discuss and further finalize by the end of February. Thereafter, the NRA intends to submit it for approval at the next NRA Board meeting expected to be held at the end of February 2014.

Australian funding for the Small Grants Facility was received in July 2013 in the amount of USD 375,723. The Swiss funding for the NGO window in the amount of USD 316,000 was received in September 2013.

4) Capacity Building through the provision of Technical Advisors

The NRA is supported by a Chief Technical Advisor and a Technical Advisor (Specialist) for Programme and Finance. UNDP Technical Advisors continued to help to develop Lao national capacity to undertake the full range of activities in the UXO/Mine Action Sector primarily in the areas of donor relations, resource mobilization, and programme and financial management.

UNDP Chief Technical Advisor

The following summarizes his main activities and results achieved, based on the Terms of Reference for the UNDP CTA position, including the following objectives.

Objective 1: Enhanced NRA management, sector coordination and policy development.

Objective 2: Enhanced NRA strategic planning and programming activities that may lead to the achievement, but not limited to, the new 10 year strategy for the UXO sector, The Safe Path Forward II, as well as the Convention on Cluster Munitions and on national MDG 9 regarding the UXO Sector.

Objective 3: Increased or sustained funding for the UXO Sector;

Objective 4: Coordinated technical advice/services provided to the NRA;

Objective 5: Planned capacity building activities delivered according to the needs of the organization;

- Assisted the NRA with the early stages of roll-out and implementation of the new 10 Year Strategy for the UXO Mine Action Sector, approved by Government;
- Currently assisting in the development of a multi- year work plan for the UXO Sector (2014-2020) to implement the UXO Sector Strategy ensuring in particular, addressing identified Development Focal Areas established by the National Government in close consultation with the Provinces;
- Participated in two Regional Planning Meetings in the North and South of Lao PDR to present the new strategy and consult provinces on priorities for the Sector through to 2020;

- Assisted with preparation for and participation in the *Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)* Meeting of States in Oslo in September and Intercessional Meeting of Standing Committees to the CCM in Geneva in April. This included supporting preparation of Article 7 transparency report; statements in plenary and for Lao/Japan side event at the Meeting of States Parties in Oslo. Also provided advice with respect to substantive issues under review or negotiation by States Parties during such meetings.
- Participated in Annual meeting of Mine Action National Programme Directors and their UN Advisors, including advising Lao delegation on various issues;
- Helped prepare for and participated in meetings with donors, operators and other stakeholders during the aforementioned international events;
- Assisted in the preparation of the report for the national Round Table Process;
- Assisted in the preparation and negotiation of a 3-year Programme Agreement that will govern cooperation between/among UNDP and NRA and UXO Lao 2013-2015;
- Participated in review and consideration of other (bilateral) agreements with donors;
- Reviewed, input into and edited wide range of documents in English produced by the NRA including reports, correspondence, memoranda of understanding, etc;
- Provided suggestions guidance to NRA colleagues on a regular basis;
- Assisted in the preparation of the UN Portfolio of Projects, published annually;
- Assisted in formulated response to large number UNDP corporate requirements;
- Provided input into and reviewed various communications products including UNDP Brochure, UXO Sector Annual Reports, UXO sector fact sheets;
- Provided input into development of new NRA Victim Assistance Strategy;
- Participated in meetings with wide range of UXO sector operators to discuss/plan activities; Also input into various memoranda of understanding governing their activities in Lao PDR:
- Participated in preparation for, meeting, reporting and follow up for : Annual Sector Working Group meetings; quarterly technical working group meetings; ad hoc staff meetings in NRA;
- Participated in regular meetings of UNDP UXO Sector team, UNDP All Staff Meetings, ad hoc issue-specific meetings with UNDP management team;
- Provided advice to NRA Management and Staff on an ongoing basis;
- Convened regular meetings of Technical Advisors including volunteers in NRA to improve coordination and communication;
- Currently, participating in preparing for Institutional Capacity Assessment by NRA and UXO Lao and 'visioning' exercise within NRA, to identify institutional model for the future;
- Currently assisting in the establishment of a Civil Society Funding Facility in the NRA;

UNDP Finance and Programme Technical Advisor

The NRA is supported by a UNDP Technical Advisor who provides strategic advice on all matters relating to finance and programme.

Throughout 2013, the advisor worked closely, on a daily basis, with his national counterparts and provided formal and on-the-job training. He coached the Finance Unit in the areas of strategic financial management, budget preparation, internal monitoring, variance analysis, financial reporting, audit compliance and the procurement and implementation of a new accounting software *Accpac*.

The advisor provided capacity building support to the Finance Unit in order to improve the financial management capacity of the NRA. He also monitored the financial transactions and supporting documents of the NRA (more than 250 transactions in 2013) with particular attention to donor funds channelled through UNDP, in order to ensure that these funds have been utilized for the intended purposes and in accordance with UNDP rules and regulations.

The advisor facilitated coordination among support services, such as finance, procurement and human resources management, providing concrete recommendations and promoting continuous improvement.

In collaboration with the nine NRA officers (Support services and Operations), the advisor contributed to the development of the 2013 and 2014 Annual Work Plans, as well as to the Results and Resources framework which is a key element of the new project document 2013-2015 between UNDP and the Lao Government.

Throughout 2013, the advisor also helped to strengthen capacity within the Programme Unit, particularly in the areas of collecting and reporting more accurate information. The 2012 UXO Sector report, the 2012 Annual Project Report, quarterly reports and other donor reports were prepared jointly by the national staff and the advisor. For the UXO Sector report and the NRA financial report, the advisor focused on capturing the achievements of the sector (outcomes, outputs, and financial data).

V. PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS UXO LAO ON THE OUTPUT LEVEL



OUTPUT 2: UXO Lao is better able to manage clearance and risk education programmes for the needs of communities at risk

1. UXO Lao Project Performance¹¹

Activity 1: Release priority land in accordance with Lao National Standards and the *Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)* in nine or more provinces for safe access to contaminated land for socio-economic and humanitarian purposes and reduce the risk of UXO related accidents through risk education programs

2013 UXO Lao clearance, roving, survey and risk education targets vs. Results (targets set in 2013 AWP)

Activities	2013 Targets	2013 Achievements
Clearance/ Technical Survey	3,167 ha	3,295 ha
Roving tasks	1,550 tasks	1,754 tasks
General Survey Tasks	1,817 tasks	2,179 tasks
Risk Education Activities	639 villages visited	650 villages visited

Clearance overview:

Between January and December 2013, 3,295 hectares of land were released through area clearance and technical survey reaching 255,624 beneficiaries across nine provinces in Lao PDR. 60,634 items of UXO were destroyed through clearance, technical survey and roving tasks of which 28,590 were sub-munitions or bombs. The methodology used for prioritizing land for clearance is in accordance with the national Safe Path Forward II strategy endorsed by the Government of Lao PDR in July 2012.

2,805 hectares (85%) of the total land released is agricultural land. Some project sites in Saravane, Sekong and Attapeu faced minor interruptions of their clearance activities due to bad weather conditions caused by a heavy storm that hit the South of Laos. It was also noted that in some provinces the project continued to encounter problems with their fleet of vehicles. Recognizing this problem, the GoL had signed an agreement with the

¹¹ Complete Clearance and community awareness statistics per province attached in Annex II

Government of Japan to provide a new fleet of vehicles and operational equipment in the amount of ¥900,000,000 to UXO Lao. All new equipment and vehicles were successfully delivered to the UXO Lao Training Centre in September 2013.

Out of 3,295 hectares of land released by UXO Lao, 157 hectares of land were released in direct support to development agencies' projects in Lao PDR that supported the construction of school buildings, roads, fish ponds, irrigation systems and the development of rice paddies among others. UXO Lao has cleared land at no cost to these development projects and thus also contributes to further socioeconomic development in the country. UXO Lao does not clear land for commercial investors or for investment purposes.

Technical Survey:

Technical survey is successful in identifying UXO locations and the release of land through technical survey increases the amount of land safe for farming and other socio-economic development purposes. It maximizes UXO Lao's resources as technical survey determines whether a particular area should be subjected to area clearance methods or not. During the reporting period, 439 hectares of land were released by technical survey teams across eight provinces, reaching 36,312 beneficiaries. Given discussions in the previously mentioned workshop in Pakse in November 2013, it is possible that UXO Lao will review this decision and the policy may change.

Roving Tasks:

1,754 roving tasks were conducted in 1,176 villages and 25,307 items of UXO were removed and destroyed. The project is on its way to achieve its roving task targets set in the 2013 work plan. The aim of roving teams is to remove or destroy surface UXO items reported by villagers or by UXO Lao survey team members. Through the removal or destruction of UXO, land is made safe for people to walk on and use for productive purposes, as well as improving and providing equitable access to land, markets, and socio-economic services.

General Survey Task:

2,179 survey tasks were conducted in 1,406 villages, mapping out 12,541 items of UXO. Survey teams collect data which is then shared with the NRA.. Data collected includes location of UXO found, areas requested to be cleared, as well as cleared or released land. Data is also used to generate detailed maps for use by UXO clearance teams and for use by government and other development authorities. UXO data is available for policy and development planning. Additional data fields are identified and collected as well such as information on the accessibilities of roads, whether the roads are safe to drive on, and whether the communication network is ok, etc. This information is collected for internal purposes in order to ensure effective operations.

Community Awareness:

Content of Community Awareness activities are decided at the national level and agreed upon by all operators conducting such activities. Activities to convey the messages include puppet shows, songs, dances, and games that are adapted for specific age groups. During such activities, villagers are also encouraged to identify the location of UXO they may have found in the surrounding areas. The CA teams conducted 650 CA activities reaching 173,529 people (including 88,380 women of whom 40,316 were children and 85,149 men of whom 40,211 were children).

The project continues to attract active community volunteers for community awareness activities. UXO currently engages 372 CA village volunteers including 82 males and 290 females who raise awareness on the risk of UXO within their communities.

Update on UXO Lao accident in Xiengkhuang province

On April 7th 2013, an accident occurred in Xieng Khouang province on a site where UXO Lao were working. The day of the accident was not a working day, but a number of items of UXO had been left on site under protective sandbags awaiting destruction the following week. Several local boys went onto the site, removed a number of UXO from under the sandbags, and began playing with them. An explosion of a bombie killed one boy and injured two more.

An investigation was subsequently undertaken by both UXO Lao and NRA. The report identified a number of areas where UXO Lao were lacking and a number of recommendations were made. These included bolstering the equipment for teams in the field, ensuring daily demolitions were undertaken and ensuring all acting team leaders are qualified to undertake the work required of them. Over the course of the months following the accident, UXO Lao has acted on these recommendations and there has been continual development since the accident in Xieng Khouang in April 2013.

Investigations identified a number of shortfalls in UXO Lao's capacities and equipment, and these have been, or are in the process of being, rectified. UXO Lao has taken follow-up actions thus far as follows:

- All equipment identified as being deficient in UXO Lao's holdings have been ordered and the majority was received by the end of Q3
- The Team Leader in charge of the site was immediately demoted and during the course of Q3 left UXO Lao of his own volition
- Refresher Training sessions are being planned and are taking place in Q4 2013/Q1 2014 for all staff identified as requiring it
- QM capacity continues to be strengthened
- Financial assistance was provided to the families of those killed and injured in the accident
- UXO Lao has employed a family member of the dead boy

Activity 2: Assess, strengthen and improve UXO Lao programme management capacity through provision of training and advisory services and mobilize sufficient resources for UXO Lao to enable Lao PDR to move towards meeting MDG9 targets and CCM obligations

Capacity Assessment UXO Lao update

As part of UNDP's continued effort to support the institutional capacity building of UXO Lao and the NRA, UNDP plans to conduct a joint capacity assessment of UXO Lao and the NRA. The objective of this activity is to conduct a systematic capacity assessment of both institutions in order to determine where UXO Lao and NRA's institutional capacities stands at this point and to be able to determine which capacities require further development and support. In Q4 of 2013, UXO Lao, the NRA and UNDP finalized the Terms of Reference for this assessment. The assessment is scheduled to start in Q1 of 2014 with a scheduled completion time of around three months.

Financial Management update

UXO Lao has been working with the new financial software "*AccPac*" at the National Office since early 2012. While the overall financial management capacity at the UXO Lao National Office has improved with the use of this new software, the provincial offices were still entering their financial information on Excel sheets which were then sent to the National Office and entered manually into *AccPac* by the UXO Lao Finance Unit. The additional time required to manually enter the information sent by the provincial offices to the National Office was costly and created difficulties in the timely closing of accounts.

In June 2013, UXO Lao procured the accounting software "*PAS*", which allows UXO Lao's provincial offices and the Training Center to enter their financial information into the *PAS* software, which is linked to the National Office software *AccPac*. With the new software, the National Office is now able to easily review and approve financial information entered by the provincial offices and the Training Center, as the financial information can now be automatically uploaded into *AccPac*. A three-day training course, sponsored by MAG, was organized for all UXO Lao finance staff from 19 -21 June 2013, where the staff received hands-on training on the use of the new *PAS* software.

The Finance Unit in the National Office started the trial period immediately after the training took place and is regularly reviewing the test entries of the provincial finance staff and is providing further individual feedback and training via phone and email. According to the Chief of Finance, the individual training and support being provided via phone and email has been proven to be successful to date and no further group training is planned before the end of 2013. The Finance Unit will continue to review the progress and conduct further training if required in 2014.

HR update

UXO Lao is currently looking into opportunities to procure a HR database software for UXO Lao which will be part of the 2014 Annual Work Plan. UXO Lao is currently tracking all HR related matters on Excel sheets and hard copy documents, but there is not yet a formal HR software in place.

UXO Lao filled three new positions at the National Office including the DNPD Secretary, Deputy Chief of Programme Unit and the Chief of Technical Survey (TS). While the position of a Chief of Technical Survey has been part of the organizational structure plan for many years, this marks the first time that such a position is filled and emphasises UXO Lao's commitment to an effective survey process. The Chief of Technical Survey's role will be to coordinate UXO Lao's expanding importance in the processes of technical survey to support more effective clearance processes. The Chief of the Technical Survey Unit will manage all aspects of Technical Survey activities within UXO Lao. The main duties include ensuring effective application of TS procedures and efficient use of TS resources with an aim of increasing the overall operational effectiveness of UXO Lao. Duties also include continuous improvement of TS methodologies through information sharing with other organizations, conducting trials, etc.

In addition to these posts, 56 field staff were recruited and trained in Q4 of 2013 in order to form five new clearance teams and 3 new survey/Risk Education teams funded by the Government of Australia that will operate in the provinces Savannakhet, Champasack and Saravane.

Quality Management update

The overarching goal of Quality Management in UXO Lao is to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and safety of UXO Lao operations through strict enforcement of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). UXO Lao has a comprehensive set of SOPs which are in compliance with National Standards and donor requirements. Compliance checks against those SOPs are conducted by staff at different organizational levels (team level, provincial HQ and National HQ level) using standard inspection checklists. Follow-up on corrective or preventive action identified during compliance checks is monitored by the QM Unit with the help of provincial Quality Representatives.

The QM inspections that are directly implemented or commissioned by the QM Unit cover two main areas: 1) UXO Lao Field Operations, inspected by three mobile QM teams, each team covering three provinces, and 2) Operations Support Services, inspected by 10 Internal Audit teams, one team in each provincial office and one team at the National HQ. Inspection follow-up is supported by a network of 18 provincial Quality Representatives (QR), each province having one QR Operations and one QR Operations Support.

In 2013, the main outputs from Mobile QM Teams comprise of 562 assessments on area clearance, each of which takes about half a day for implementation (incl. travel time):

- QA of Area Clearance Operations (152 assessments)
- QA of UXO Disposal (117 assessments)
- QA of Accident Response Practices (105 assessments)
- QC of Cleared Land (160 assessments)
- Post Clearance Assessments done 6-12 months after clearance (28 assessments)

Of the 160 QC checks done on cleared land, more than 96% passed or had minor issues. 6 sites failed the 2% sampling and were recommended for re-clearance.

Post Clearance Assessments have shown that nearly all cleared land is in productive use and that land users feel safe using it. There were only two instances where land was not in use, due to lack of funding or labor. It has also been identified that despite land owners being briefed on the clearance limitations (e.g. 25 cm clearance depth), many carry out activities that involve digging beyond those limitations.

Further to the assessments on area clearance, the Mobile QM Teams also conducted the following inspections:

- QA of Non-Technical Survey, also called 'General Survey' (20 assessments)
- QA or Risk Education Activities (8 assessments)
- QA of Provincial External QC of Cleared Land (16 assessments)
- Inspection of Free-From-Explosives UXO, e.g. display or training UXO (984 items)
- Medical Theory Tests (520 tests)
- QC of Clearance and Roving completion reports (107 reports)
- Inspection of explosives stores and records

QM inspections not only led to immediate corrective actions on the ground but also helped identifying training needs (e.g. on first aid and medical theory). Furthermore, its results fed into annual staff performance appraisals.

A total of 20 Internal Audits (also called 'Office Audits') have been carried out in nine provincial offices, the National Training Center and Vientiane Head Quarter, covering areas such as Financial Management, Procurement, Logistics & Fleet Management, Human Resources, Fixed Asset Management and IT. Each of these audits took two to four days for implementation. In 2013, the areas with the highest number of observations were Fixed Asset Management and IT. All of those observations were non-critical and got rectified immediately.

To ensure that QM inspection work is carried out to a high standard, staff from the National office QM Unit conducted a total of 5 QM monitoring visits. Two were to assess the work of Mobile QM Teams and three visits were made to inspect Internal Audit teams. Most recommendations for improvement were directed at Internal Auditors.

The QM Unit's responsibilities further included IT Management. Part of this work was to conduct or participate in IT needs assessments, install & setup of new equipment, maintain & repair existing IT equipment, conduct short end-user trainings, ensure data & IT security and conduct IT inspections at the National Office and selected Provincial Offices. Effective January 2014, IT management will move from the QM Unit to the Database Unit in order to benefit from potential synergies.

Logistics/Procurement update

- Following an operational review of assets of all nine provinces in Q2, UXO Lao identified a significant shortfall in the numbers of key operational equipment (radios and megaphones) required to be able to allow UXO Lao to operate within its own SOP – and respectively, the Lao National Standards. As a result, UXO Lao together with UNDP initiated the procurement process for an additional 271 handheld radios (complete with accessories) and 237 megaphones for UXO Lao in Q3 which have already been delivered.
- The procurement of the operational equipment for 5 new clearance teams and 3 new CA teams as part of the Australia Rural Livelihood Program has been completed.
- As part of the UXO Lao-JICA project on "*Supporting the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Clearance in Surrounding Areas of Main Roads in the Lao PDR*", UXO Lao, together with supplier agencies in Laos, completed the process of gathering the necessary documents for the tax exemption and import of the equipment and vehicles under this project to Lao PDR. The equipment and vehicles reached Vientiane mid- September 2013.

Activity 3: Provide Training for Clearance and other UXO Lao Personnel according to National Standards

A high standard of training is essential for the development and maintenance of the capacity to carry out safe, effective and efficient operational activities in Lao PDR. To ensure a high standard of training, the NRA has set training standards for key sector appointments and to specify requirements for the management and conduct of training.

UXO Lao maintains a training centre at Ban Y Lai in Vientiane where different training courses are conducted by UXO Lao instructors. Courses follow curricula that are generally aligned with the NRA published National Standards. Internal validation of formal training courses is carried both during and upon completion of the course.

Internal validation includes:

- The regular assessment of instructors on their general instructor skills and methods of instruction. Assessments are done against an objective checklist and cover both theory and practical lessons.
- Trainee feedback sessions at the end of each formal training course to discuss the completed course and provide feedback on relevant topics. The feedback session are overseen by a staff member not involved with the management or conduct of the course.
- Visits to UXO/mine clearance operations by training staff

2013 Training courses

Between January and December 2013, the following training courses have been completed:

Training Course	No. of Courses		
	conducted	Total Graduates	Number of female graduates
Deminer/Clearance (EOD Level 1)	3	112	37
SEOD (EOD Level 4)	1	19	3
Medic	2	13	6
Risk Education/Non-Technical Survey	1	9	0
Risk Education	1	11	4
Clearance Team Leader (EOD Level 3)	1	30	7
Risk Education Team Leader	1	7	0
TOTAL	10	201	57

Besides the regular training conducted at the Training Centre, 34 UXO Lao staff from nine provincial offices, HQ and the Training Center completed four separate training courses on the use of Vallon, Ebinger, Mine Lab detectors as well as the new handheld and vehicle mounted radios. The objective of these training courses was to re-train UXO Lao staff on new equipment received through the Japanese Government.

In addition, UXO Lao had five students who graduated from the EOD level 4 – Senior EOD – training course run by the NRA with support from UXO Lao and other operators. This course generally runs every two or three years and provides the highest level of training possible for EOD operators in Lao PDR.

Activity 4: Review and adopt improved technology where possible for effective and efficient operations (technological and methodological innovations and sector best practices)

In March 2013, trials were undertaken in Champasack province to continue the development of a more efficient technical survey capacity. One of the challenges of UXO clearance has always been to ensure that the clearance teams are used where the UXO are actually located. While a simple statement, this is challenging to achieve. Over the last 15 years, UXO Lao has significantly improved its ability to target clearance teams and now the vast majority of clearance tasks operate on contaminated areas.

Technical survey is the key to this and UXO Lao is assessing the possibility of introducing an “evidence-based” approach to survey which aims to make targeting of clearance teams more effective resulting in even less land not containing UXO being cleared. The initial results of the trials were promising and will now be discussed further with the rest of the mine action community in Laos, as well as with the NRA to discuss the acceptability of this process. The full assessment of this new evidenced based approach is still under way and the project hopes to be able to report further results.

In November 2013, the NRA organized a workshop which was held in Pakse with the aim to discuss UXO contamination procedures that support the implementation of effective survey throughout the country. The meeting was attended by all humanitarian operators in the country and was well attended by UXO Lao. In addition to the technical staff from headquarters in Vientiane, a Senior EOD Technician from each of UXO Lao’s nine provinces attended and was part of the discussions. Total number of participants was 58. The outcome of this workshop is further described in Chapter 5 under outcome section.

The workshop covered operational and policy issues. The operation discussions focused on the methodology that Norwegian People’s Aid have been using in the last two years in Laos (Cluster Munition Remnant Survey – CMRS) to undertake effective and targeted survey. This process is fundamentally different from standard technical survey processes in that it takes as its starting point a point of evidence as opposed to spending significant time and resources searching for evidence. This is possible in Laos as the cluster munition contamination allows the ground to be walked over by survey and clearance teams (and indeed much of the land is often in regular usage). This process was demonstrated in the discussion room, and also during the course of a field exercise. In general terms, there was a consensus that this methodology was good and focuses well on evidence – which assists with the targeting of resources

On the policy side, there was less consensus and much debate over the terminology “land release”. While it is clear that the evidence based CMRS process of NPA would quickly and clearly define boundaries and consequently, the problem, there appears to be a concern that by using this process, that less land would get cleared (and thus “released”) – although the land that was cleared would be the land actually requiring clearance... This debate is still work in progress. The core issue is that for the last years, Laos has been reporting clearance of a number of thousands of hectares per year. By implementing a CMRS approach, the number of thousands of hectares would be (possibly significantly) reduced. The land then cleared would be absolutely sure to contain UXO (i.e., focusing on quality not quantity), but there would not be as much of it, and thus at the surface at least, the statistics would indicate lower outputs. All in all however, the workshop was a great success and will almost certainly lead to a more refined and effective clearance process taking place in Laos in the future.

2) Capacity Building through the provision of Technical Advisors

UXO Lao is supported by a Chief Technical Advisor and a Technical Advisor (Specialist) for Programme and Finance.

UNDP Chief Technical Advisor

The Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) works closely with the senior management of UXO Lao to support their work and their liaison with UNDP and the donor community. This has involved numerous field visits to UXO Lao operations to undertake observation and follow up visits as well as supporting an accident investigation team following an accident in Xieng Khuang. The CTA has supported UXO Lao and contributed to and attended workshops on subjects such as quality management, information management, survey processes and principles. During the course of the year, he has assisted the transition of UXO Lao from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to the Prime Minister's Office as well as supported the introduction of a new National Programme Director, Mr Thiphasone Soukhathammavong. Part of this process was working with the new director to begin to understand the UNDP systems and processes as well as accompanying him on a fact-finding mission to Cambodia where he met the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) and was introduced to technologies which may have potential to benefit clearance in Laos. UXO Lao has also supported a number of high level visitors including the Australian Foreign Minister, the Governor-General of New Zealand and the High Level Round Table meeting. These field visits, although organised by UXO Lao, were additionally supported by the CTA.

UNDP Technical Advisor for Programme and Finance

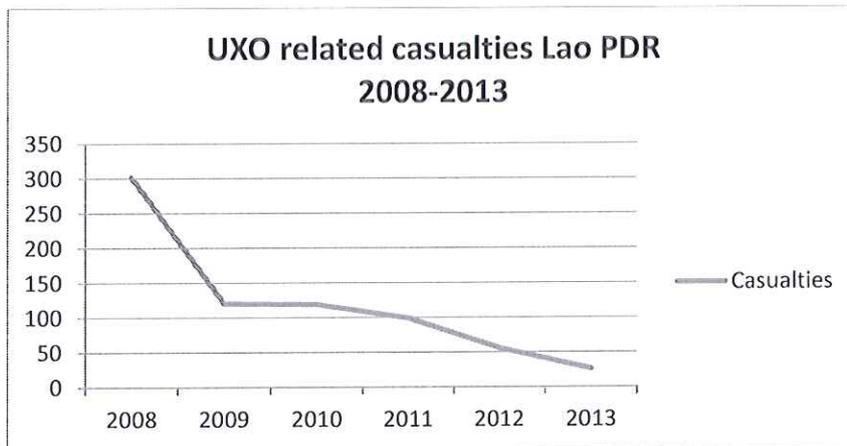
Support provided by the TA for Programme and Finance focused on the areas of Programme, Finance and Logistics in 2013. In 2013, the TA worked closely together with the Programme Unit to develop donor proposals, annual work plans and progress reports. The TA worked with the unit on a new improved reporting template for Quarterly Progress reports as well as the Annual Review Report template and has been further working with the unit to introduce an improved results-based planning and reporting approach to UXO Lao. This is an on-going activity. The TA supported the Finance Unit through coordinating the introduction of a new provincial financial management software and worked closely with the unit on reviewing and improving internal budget categories to improve the financial planning and reporting of UXO Lao operations. The TA has further started the process of reviewing UXO Lao internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and together with the relevant units updating its internal UXO Lao SOP to be aligned with the newly issued National Implementation Mechanism (NIM) SOP that were published in September 2013. The review thus far includes the areas HR, logistics, procurement, finance and admin. The update of UXO Lao's internal SOPs is expected to be completed by June 2014. Together with the procurement unit, the TA further worked with UXO Lao staff to introduce proper standardized procurement templates that follow Government guidelines as well as the newly introduced UNDP NIM (National implementation mechanism) guidelines. In Q4 of 2013, the TA worked closely with the Finance and Programme Units to introduce an improved results-based annual work plan and encourage provincial offices to review their needs and base the work plan on targets to be achieved in 2014. The improved 2014 UXO Lao annual work plan provides more results-oriented details as to what each unit plans to achieve and is intended to be used as a management tool to be able to monitor and review the progress of the organization against set targets.

VI. PROJECT RESULTS ON THE OUTCOME LEVEL

Primary UNDAF/ UNDP Country Programme Outcome(s): By 2015, national and local governments and communities have significantly reduced the impact of UXO on people in the Lao PDR.

In 2013, the NRA and UXO Lao contributed to the further reduction of the impact of unexploded ordnance in Lao PDR. Good progress continued to be made in the area of UXO sector policy and coordination that has collectively contributed to the outcome results.

The NRA continued to play a leading role in UXO Sector coordination and supported the implementation of the national strategic plan “The Safe Path Forward II” approved by the Lao Government in June 2012. The most notable sector outcome result achieved in 2013 was a significant reduction in the number of UXO casualties, from approximately 300 per year as recently as 2008, to 56 in 2012, and 41 in 2013 (Data as of 05 February 2014, NRA).



To reduce the number of casualties, the NRA works with operators to improve risk education methodologies and messages, and to better disseminate risk education messages throughout contaminated areas. In 2013, the NRA started a new radio programme in two provinces, with specific messages to address the main causes of UXO accidents. The NRA also collaborated with the Ministry of Education to revise the UXO risk education curriculum materials to be used in primary schools. By the end of 2013, the NRA will print more than 9,000 curriculum books to distribute in all affected provinces, in support of risk education in schools.

UXO Lao, as the largest and single national operator in UXO Lao, has contributed to reducing the impact of UXO on people in the Lao PDR as follows:

For the period 01 January to 31 December 2013, UXO Lao released 3,295 hectares of land through area clearance and technical survey activities reaching 255,624 beneficiaries in nine provinces (85% of the total land cleared is agricultural land).¹² Within the reporting period, UXO Lao destroyed 60,634 items of UXO of which 28,590 were sub-munitions or bombies, through clearance, technical survey and roving tasks. The

¹² UXO Lao data only at the moment. The NRA will report on the overall UXO sector data in the Annual UXO Sector Report to be published in June 2014

removal or destruction of UXO increases the safety of people living in UXO impacted communities and increases the amount of safe land available for food production and other socio-economic development activities. The work undertaken is fully in accordance with national standards and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

Out of 3,259 hectares of land released by UXO Lao, 157 hectares of land were cleared/surveyed and released at no cost in direct support to development agencies' projects in Lao PDR. These projects support the construction of school buildings, road construction as well as the development of rice paddies and thus also contribute to further socioeconomic development in the country.

In relation to Victim Assistance, further progress has been made in 2013. In 2012, a Survivor Tracking System was established to facilitate the collection of detailed information on survivors. Entry of the data into the Lao Victim Information System (LVIS) started in 2013. This tracking system will bring valuable information on the needs of the UXO survivors. Data analysis and dissemination will take place in 2014.

Another step to better support UXO victims was the development of the Victim Assistance strategy for the NRA. The strategy was presented at the NRA board meeting (May 2013). While agreed in principle, the NRA Board requested several modifications before granting official approval, which should take place in early 2014.

While significant progress has been made, there remain some challenges in the sector. There is a critical lack of reliable baseline information concerning the level and location of UXO contamination in the country. To address the challenge, two important initiatives for survey and clearance brought change in 2013 (and for the coming years):

The first important development is NRA increased efforts in improving the coordination of the sector in order to ensure that survey and clearance activities reflect the development priorities established by the Government and relevant national planning and policy frameworks. To this end, the NRA organized two regional planning workshops in Savannakhet and Pakse for the Southern provinces of Lao PDR. As a follow-up, the NRA Clearance Unit has continued data collection on government priorities for each province, in particular concerning areas identified as Focal Development Areas (FDA). The NRA Clearance Officer increased collaboration with the National Leading Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. The NRA is now working with operators to ensure that government priorities are reflected in their work plans.

Planning and Prioritization for Survey and Clearance was also a central theme of the first Policy Forum convened by the NRA.

The second important development in 2013 is the new focus on survey. Experience of various operators during the pilot project called the 'District Focused Approach' carried out in 2012, has helped to inform the ongoing development of new UXO contamination assessment procedures. These procedures were discussed at length during a workshop in Pakse in November. The workshop also considered the experience of one operator in 3 three Southern provinces. The objective of the overall exercise is to develop streamlined and updated standard survey procedures in order to more effectively and efficiently establish a national baseline concerning the degree and extent of UXO contamination in Lao PDR. If these procedures are approved by the NRA board, it could bring significant change to the sector and improve the efficiency of non-technical and technical survey, ensuring that only contaminated areas are cleared in the future.

Meeting national targets will require a significant scaling up of resources and capacities. UNDP together with the NRA and UXO Lao continued to advocate for increased financial support from the international community, as well as from the Lao Government. However, there remain significant challenges in the area of resource mobilization. Substantial additional resources continue to be required to respond adequately to the need for awareness raising materials and activities, the provision of proper assistance to UXO survivors, and to expand survey and clearance in the coming years. The current development of the UXO sector-wide multi-year work plan, Government Notification 93/NRA as well as initiatives such as Policy Forum, which provides an opportunity for constructive dialogue between stakeholders, are expected to provide clearer direction for planning and priority setting for the sector.

VII. CONTRIBUTION TO AID EFFECTIVENESS

This project has been guided by the principles of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to contribute to progressively realizing its principles of Ownership, Alignment, Harmonization and Simplification, Managing for Results and Mutual Accountability. UNDP continues to provide technical assistance to the NRA and UXO Lao and to further assist these institutions in achieving the Government's capacity development objectives and strategies. In addition, the creation of the Trust Fund for the Full Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in the Lao PDR within the Framework of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness has enabled partners to implement common arrangements and **simplified** procedures. The strength of the Trust Fund modality is the decreased focus and reliance on earmarked funds and the increased flexibility and focus on programme wide needs as identified by the programme and the Lao PDR Government. In 2013, the following donors contributed through the Trust Fund: Australia, Ireland, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Switzerland.

Harmonization and Simplification, Mutual Accountability - National ownership, Donor Participation and Alignment have greatly been improved in all stages of the project development and implementation. This was evident in the process of developing the new project document during 2012/2013 which ensured that international development partner's goals are aligned to those of the project and that the national partners are part of the project development process. In 2013, UNDP and the Government of Lao PDR have approved the project document for both NRA and UXO Lao. This project document was also developed with the aim to provide a unified approach to resource mobilization with the focus on supporting the ongoing programme and developing the ability to respond to programme needs effectively. In this regard, the project document intends to also serve as a basis for funding proposals for the UXO Trust Fund. The key aim is to support the national objectives for the UXO sector. In addition, the project aims to provide support to Lao PDR to meet all obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions and to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDG9, established by Lao PDR to reduce the impact of UXO in the country. Currently, ambitious Government UXO clearance targets are not being adequately met, and there is a need to scale up survey and clearance activities as well as the provision of services to UXO survivors. During the project implementation the Project tries to encourage national speakers/officials in workshops to ensure sustainability and national ownership and expertise transfer. As a new initiative, UNDP will also support the NRA to establish a Civil Society Funding Facility in support of civil society activities in the areas of Victim Assistance and Risk Education.

Managing for results - Furthermore, the Project applied a 'result based management' approach to ensure effective use of project resources. Government capacities in results-based management have increased, as was evidenced by the implementation of the NRA's and UXO Lao's Annual Work Plans in 2012 and 2013. The Annual Work Plans are the main reference document for purposes of monitoring the implementation of the activities of the NRA and UXO Lao. The past two annual work plans have shown improvement in incorporating specific capacity developments needs of UXO Lao and NRA staff and set learning goals accordingly which resulted in the overall improvement of the management capacities of Lao staff. The NRA and UXO Lao's Programme Units are progressively improving its report writing skills and are collecting and reporting more accurate and relevant information. The Technical Advisors are further working closely with national counterparts to improve their capacities in financial management, to strengthen financial management skills, highlighting the importance of good supporting documents for each financial transaction; to further develop

reporting skills and to improve the accuracy, form and substance of reports. HACT procedures were followed by the project; ICE &FACE forms were used accurately for POA request and reporting.

VIII. UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIPS

UNDP partnerships update 2013

Australia

In January 2013 the Australian Foreign Minister announced an additional AUD 5.4 million (approx. USD 5.5 million¹³) in support of the ongoing Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) clearance, mine risk education and survivor assistance work in Laos. As part of the pledged AUD 5.4 Million, the Government of Australia and UNDP have thus far signed an agreement in 2013 in the amount of AUD 2.6 million to support the NRA and UXO Lao. During the course of 2013, UXO Lao, supported by the CTA, hosted a visit by the Australian Foreign Minister, Bob Carr.

The Government of Australia also announced in June 2013 that it is further increasing its support to UXO Lao with an additional AUD 1.8 million contribution under the Laos-Australian Rural Livelihood Program. The new funding enables UXO Lao to increase its survey, clearance and risk education capacity in six districts, including Phine and Sepone (Savannakhet), Sukhuma and Moonlapamok (Champasak), and Lao Ngarm and Saravane (Saravane), where poverty reduction activities are hindered by the presence of UXO. These six districts are primary targets under the Laos Australia Rural Livelihoods Program, a AUD 43 million program that provides poor rural families, in particular women, with greater and inclusive access to social protection, financial services, productive assets and opportunities to generate income.

Canada

In October 2013, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird announced that the Government of Canada will be providing more than CAD 1 million to support the UXO sector in Laos. The funds will be channelled through UNDP to UXO Lao and directly to the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). The funds will go towards clearance of UXO-contaminated land to make it available for economic and agricultural development as well as to assist the Government of Laos in meeting its obligations under the CCM. CAD 500,000 will be provided to UXO Lao for the period January – March 2014 for clearance and QM activities.

DFID/UK

In 2013, USD 39,447 were used to fund training courses at the UXO Lao Training Center. NRA has utilised 86,605 USD to support the overall NRA operations with focus on institutional capacity development.

EU

In 2012, the European Union (EU) renewed its commitment to assist the UXO sector in Lao PDR, through its contribution to the UNDP to support UXO clearance and risk education operations in Attapeu province as well

¹³ Estimated using UNDP July 2013 exchange rate

as the NRA's institutional capacity development. Through this, the EU provided a multi-year contribution of 1.3 million Euros, covering the period from October 2012 to August 2015.

Ireland

In January 2013, the Government of Ireland confirmed its commitment to support the UXO Sector in Lao PDR through a multi-year contribution of €2 million (approx. 2.7 million USD) through to 2015. The contribution will further strengthen the capacity of the NRA and UXO Lao, the two national institutions tackling the deadly legacy of unexploded ordnance in Lao PDR. The funding will be channelled through the UXO Trust Fund, administered by UNDP.

Luxembourg

In 2011, the Government of Luxembourg committed 750,000 Euros to the UXO Trust Fund in support of UXO Lao operations. The funds will be distributed over a 5-year period (2011 – 2015). These are vital resources to support the Government of Lao PDR in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions that entered-into-force in August 2010.

New Zealand

The Government of New Zealand has been funding UXO Lao Xieng Khouang operations since 2011 through the UNDP administered Trust Fund. In order to support the Lao Government to meet the obligations under the CCM, New Zealand had extended its support in 2012 with a three year contribution to UXO Lao for operations in Xiengkhuang province in the amount of USD 1,889,330. (2012-2014)

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea provided USD 15,000 to UXO Lao operations in 2013. The funds were used for operations equipment.

Switzerland

The Government of Switzerland extended its support to the UXO sector in Lao PDR with an additional contribution of USD 3.79 million for the period 2013-2015. The funds will go towards strengthening the capacity of the NRA as well as supporting the on-going clearance operations of UXO Lao. The contribution will be channelled through the UXO Trust Fund, administered by UNDP. USD 3.16 million of the latest contribution is un-earmarked support for the day-to-day operations of NRA and UXO Lao, including the UXO sector coordination and regulatory work, clearance, surveys, risk education and training. The remainder of the funding will be allocated to Non-Governmental Organizations for developing UXO survey methodologies. The funds will be spread over the next two years until 2015

UNESCO conference Plain of Jars

The Provincial Coordinator of Xieng Khouang province and the Chief Technical Advisor attended and contributed to a conference organized by UNESCO to move forward the proposal of the Government of Lao PDR to have the plain of Jars classified as a World Heritage Site. This proposal is on-going and UXO will be a key and critical element of the proposal and the appropriateness of the site for such classification.

Bilateral partnerships update

The following section lays out support that has been provided to the Government of Lao PDR directly by donors (not through UNDP)

Government of Japan:

- As part of the UXO Lao-JICA project on *“Supporting the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Clearance in Surrounding Areas of Main Roads in the Lao PDR”* for the amount of ¥900,000,000 UXO Lao, together with the supplier agencies in Laos, completed the process of gathering the necessary documents for the tax exemption and import of the equipment and vehicles under this project to Lao PDR. All equipment and vehicles were delivered to UXO Lao Training Centre and officially handed over to UXO Lao in October 2013.
- UXO Lao together with the Embassy of Japan, JICA, NRA, and the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (NCRDPE) had discussion on the new pilot project that will be supported by the Japanese Government. The project is called *“The Project for Improvement of Equipment for UXO clearance Activities”*. This pilot project plans to introduce new brush cutting machines to UXO Lao and will take an integrated approach composed of three pillars: 1) trials of machines, 2) supporting UXO clearance and developing the capacity of UXO Lao, and 3) linking development and UXO clearance. The application was submitted to the Government of Japan mid September 2013.
- The Government of Japan supported UXO Lao operation in the provinces Saravane and Sekong with a total of USD 786,516 for the periods April 2012 – March 2013.

JICS (Japan International Cooperation System)

In December 2013, the Government of Japan signed an agreement with the Government of Lao PDR to provide a grant in the amount of Japanese Yen 864,000,000 (approx. USD 8.4 million) to the Government of Lao PDR for brush cutting activities. This Project is to introduce mechanization to, and thereby increase the efficiency of, brush cutting works as part of UXO clearance operations while establishing a forward post that will become a Field Base for local clearance teams. Furthermore, through supporting the smooth operation of these elements in the model areas, the project seeks to accelerate UXO clearance operation in order to remove obstacles to development in the poverty stricken areas of Laos.

Through this, it is expected that UXO clearance and rural development will be organically linked and will contribute to the realization of overall goal of promoting poverty reduction.

JMAS (Japan Mine Action Service)

JMAS supported UXO Lao operations for the period August 2013 – July 2014 in the amount of USD 236,184. JMAS and UXO Lao are currently in discussion for JMAS to fund the construction of a new training centre for UXO Lao, including new equipment for the centre. This project is scheduled to take place in 2014.

In 2013, JMAS further conducted trials with UXO Lao on cutting bombs with an electric saw. The purpose of cutting bombs, according to JMAS, is that the method can be used mostly for bombs found close to residential

areas, which allows a lower degree of risk to property damage and fewer evacuations. In the trial, a 250lb bomb with a M904 nose fuse and a dummy tail fuse was used. The bomb was cut as planned by the JMAS TA and a UXO Lao SEOD. JMAS is expecting that the method will be a part of UXO Lao operations in the future when it comes to destroying bombs in Lao PDR. The introduction of the method will be on the agenda of discussions among UXO clearance operators within the coming months. .

Intrepid foundation

In September 2013, UXO Lao received additional bilateral funding from the Intrepid Travel Foundation in the amount of USD 4,618. These funds have been raised by Intrepid travellers, along with matching donations from Intrepid Travel to support UXO Lao activities especially on Risk Education. The funds are planned to be used in 2014 for CA awareness materials that are handed out to Lao villagers as part of the UXO Lao Mine-risk education (MRE) efforts.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

In 2013, the ICRC sent a Weapon Contamination specialist to assess and plan with UXO Lao possible support for first-aid trainings. The mission aimed to:

- Precisely define and agree with UXO Lao the scope, content and target audiences for the medic training/s ;
- Agree the scope and depth of the UXO Lao medic manual and curriculum revision to be carried out;
- Agree the timing, content and details of the ICRC support;
- Ensure that the necessary preparations are made for the medic mission, including venues and material required for trainings, venue of the trainings, student numbers and type and responsibilities

As a result of this mission, the ICRC agreed to support UXO Lao with the provision of medical training in the 2014.

MAG (Mine Advisory Group)

In 2013, MAG provided USD 11,530 to UXO Lao for the Financial Management Training including funds to procure a financial management software for the nine provincial offices.

Poland

In 2013, the Government of Poland signed an agreement with UXO Lao to provide funding for operations equipment in the amount of USD 15,651

USA/Sterling International

In 2013, the USA has provided USD 1,058,750 to UXO Lao for direct operational support for two provinces - Savannakhet and Champasack. Two technical advisors and a fund's manager were also provided to the sector, with one TA being located in the QM unit of UXO Lao, the other TA located in the operations unit of NRA. The advisor located in the operations unit of the NRA focuses specifically on National Standards and technical EOD matters providing support and advice to technicians. An additional advisor and Fund's manager of US Sterling International further provides strategic support and advice to the NRA.

World Without Mines (WWM)

In 2013, WWM provided USD 150,000 to UXO Lao. As part of the agreement, WWM conducts a short monitoring mission once a year. In September/October 2013, the UXO Lao QM Unit Chief accompanied representatives of World Without Mines on a field visit in Khammouane province to undertake a monitoring mission. This represents also a good opportunity for UXO Lao to work together with WWM to follow up on the development progress of WWM sponsored activities. The result of the assessment was satisfactory.

South-South Cooperation

CMAC-UXO Lao workshops (organized through the support of JICA)

In 2012, JICA, in cooperation with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) and UXO Lao initiated the Laos-Cambodia South-South Cooperation on UXO/Mine Action Sector with the aim of sharing knowledge and exchanging experience in the sector and eventually contributing for Lao PDR to accelerate its efforts to combat UXO problem. UXO Lao's aim is to learn from this survey and assess in what way certain practices could be applied at UXO Lao. This project is fully funded by JICA and proves to be a successful initiative in regards to the institutional capacity building of UXO Lao.

Under this initiative, there are six planned workshops taking place in Lao PDR and Cambodia respectively, out of which four have had already taken place to date:

Workshop 1) Demining tools, Methodology and Technology / Survey

Place: Cambodia, Duration: 2 weeks

Year: 2012

Workshop 2) Training

Place: Cambodia, Duration: 1 week

Year: 2012

Workshop 3) National Standards/ SOP

Place: Lao PDR, Duration: 3 days

Year: 2013

Workshop 4) Mine Risk Education (MRE) and Victim Assistance / Information System and Data Management

Place: Cambodia, Duration: 1 week

Year: 2013

Workshop 5) Senior Management and Middle Management / Linking Mine Action and Development

Place: Lao PDR, Duration: 3 days

Year: 2014

Workshop 6) Feedback and Action Plan

Place: TBD

Year: 2014

GICHD partnership

In 2013, the NRA had a strong collaboration with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), with four key results:

- 1) A better knowledge within the UXO Sector (NRA, UXO Lao, operators) about Quality Management
- 2) Informed stakeholders about the overall concept and techniques how to do cost-benefit analysis how to measure development results in the UXO Sector.
- 3) A legal review mission and three workshops in October (adapted to three different audiences: line ministries, the NRA and UXO LAO, INGOs and commercial companies) on the topics of Contracting and liability.
- 4) An introduction about the IMSMA (Information Management System for Mine Action) Version 6 which will replace the IMSMA Version 5 currently used by the NRA and other operators, with new functionalities and a simplified reporting approach.

UNDP Goodwill Ambassador

In 2013, UNDP appointed Ms. Alexandra Bounxouei as its first National Goodwill Ambassador for Lao PDR. UNDP National Goodwill Ambassadors can play a meaningful role in articulating and advocating development messages. As a public figure, they can use their status to reach diverse audiences and help influence decision makers, political leaders and donors to remain committed to the goals of UNDP. Ms. Bounxouei will focus her advocacy work on UXO issues.

IX. UPDATE ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In 2011, the NRA pursued an active policy of recruiting women into key positions. While none of NRA officers were female in 2010, three officer positions are now occupied by women (about one third of NRA officers): Research Officer, Risk Education Officer and Finance Officer.

In 2012, particular attention to gender was ensured in the following projects: The KAP Survey, the UXO casualties' database and the Survivor Tracking System systematically disaggregated data according to age and gender. In addition, in March 2012, the NRA held a workshop on gender equality for MRE, in Vang Vieng.

In February 2013, the NRA assigned a female Programme Technician to be the Gender Focal Point for the NRA. She has been tasked to ensure that gender balance is taken into account and was in charge to coordinate the Gender Mainstreaming workshop in 2013.

A very first training on Gender within the Lao UXO Sector was held on 9 May 2013. The NRA together with the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP) organized a training on mainstreaming gender in UXO/Mine Action Programme for 35 staff from the UXO Sector in Lao PDR, including the NRA, UXO Lao, Humanitarian Operators and UNDP. Participants learned how to mainstream gender into Mine Action programmes in the areas of employment, recruitment and training, project cycle management, land release, UXO risk education, community liaison and victim assistance. Overall, feedback was very good and participants requested additional training, including at the provincial level, if possible.

In the 2012 UXO Sector Annual Report, published in 2013, the NRA collected and consolidated disaggregated data on personnel working in the UXO sector. Among the 3,519 staff working in the UXO sector in 2012, 1,016 are women (29%). As of June 2013, 40% of the NRA project staff is female.

UXO Lao follows the Lao Government's policy on gender. Around 20% of UXO Lao staff are female. UXO Lao provides equality in the workplace and in its HR policies, encouraging female applicants at all levels.

UXO Lao employs female staff in management and in operations. UXO Lao has three all-female UXO clearance teams, and also employs women as medics, deminers, and CA personnel. In 2013, UXO Lao has further seen an increase in the number of its female staff in more senior field positions. Out of 30 graduates of the EOD 3 clearance team leader course organized in 2013, 7 were women. One female team leader in Attapeu province recently supervised the bomb cutting trial that was organized by JMAS.

In 2013, UXO Lao has also for the first time established a Gender Focal Point who also participated in the NRA organized Gender workshop this year. Data collected at Community Awareness Events are now disaggregated. More than 50% of recipients of CA sessions are female, 45% are children and 78% of village volunteers are female.

UXO Lao is currently only collecting gender disaggregated data for community awareness activities. In 2014, UXO Lao plans to further introduce gender disaggregated data collection for beneficiaries of clearance/release of land as well.

X. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AUDIT AND SPOTCHECK RECOMMENDATIONS

1) NRA

In June 2013, the NRA received the KPMG NIM audit report for the year 2012. There were a relatively small number of observations and recommendations, some of which were already implemented in 2012 (eg. signature of the bank on reconciliations by the Finance Officer). The introduction of the NIM (National Implementation Modality) Standard Operating Procedures in November 2013, gave the necessary guidance on tolerance, with the need to provide an explanation when the project delivery for an activity result against the budget is above or below a 10% range. For asset management, the NRA has continued to insure any vehicle that is used in the project. The Finance Officer is the focal point within the NRA for future audits and follow-up.

2) UXO LAO

UXO Lao has addressed all 2013 audit recommendations and had as a result also initiated a review of the internal UXO Lao Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in order to update them based on the newly issued NIM guidelines. This process has been led by the TA for Programme and Finance, and the project was able to finalize the complete HR SOP review and come up with action points that will also address and resolve issues that were noted during the audit, such as the payment of DSA to field staff. Additional UXO internal SOP in the field of Finance, Procurement, Logistics, HR & Admin are currently being reviewed and the project hopes to complete the full assessment of the SOP by June 2014.

- **Risk 1: Insufficient financial support by Government and continued high dependency of NRA/UXO Lao on donors' contributions**

With the signing of the new project document in 2013, UXO Lao, the NRA and UNDP agreed on their respective outputs to be achieved for the period 2013-2015, with a total budget of USD 26.68 million. Of this multi-year budget, only 64% has been mobilized to date. Therefore, additional support will be needed in order to be able to fully fund their operations for this period. The Government of Lao PDR has funded the office rental for both UXO Lao and the NRA in 2013 and discussions on increased government contributions are expected to continue in the course of 2014.

In order to ensure that clearance for socio-economic development projects takes place according to National Standards and that development projects factor in the cost of clearance, Notification No. 93 on UXO clearance for socio-economic development projects in the Lao PDR was again presented to development partners and relevant line ministries in September 2013. This notification requires that all development projects undertaken in contaminated areas must plan for survey and clearance as necessary, and build the cost into their project budgets.

- **Risk 2: Technical complexity of sector inhibits NRA and UXO Lao effectiveness**

UXO Lao and the NRA, with support from UNDP, will conduct institutional capacity assessments of UXO Lao and the NRA during Q1/2 of 2014. The aim is to assess capacities that have been developed thus far, to identify areas that require further support and to formulate a strategy and plan to strengthen NRA and UXO Lao capacity during the project period. The assessment is an important step in ensuring that both organizations have the capacity to carry out their functions effectively and efficiently.

In terms of the clearance capacity, one of the challenges of UXO clearance has always been to ensure that the clearance is only undertaken where there is actual UXO contamination. While a simple statement, this is challenging to achieve. Over the last 15 years, UXO Lao has significantly improved its ability to target clearance teams and now the vast majority of clearance tasks operate on contaminated areas. Technical survey is the key to this and UXO Lao is currently developing "evidence-based" approach to survey which aims to make targeting of clearance teams more effective. Trials were undertaken in Champasack province by UXO Lao to continue the development of a more efficient technical survey capacity

The initial results of the trials were promising and will now be discussed further with other operators in the mine action community in Laos, as well as with the NRA, to discuss the acceptability of this process. A full assessment of this new evidenced based approach is still ongoing and the project hopes to be able to report further results.

¹⁴ According to the risk log established in the project document

During the first week of November, a national workshop was hosted by the NRA, where survey strategy and methodologies were discussed. Updated national standards for survey are expected to be presented for discussion at the upcoming NRA board meeting end of February 2013.

- **Risk 3: Provincial and District authorities reluctant to accept NRA proactive, centralized role in prioritization and planning of activities**

The NRA mandate and structure was clarified during the three Regional Planning Workshops organized in late 2012 and 2013, to present the strategic objectives of the UXO Sector as detailed in the National Strategy Plan. Notification No. 093 on UXO clearance for socio-economic development projects in the Lao PDR was also presented to Development Partners and relevant line Ministries. This notification directs that all development projects undertaken in contaminated areas must plan for survey and clearance as necessary, and build the cost into their budgets. These workshops are comprehensive and participatory consultative processes where all affected provinces and UXO sector operators are involved. These processes allow for effective and efficient prioritization and sequencing of activities to be undertaken in the sector through to 2020 and promote greater cooperation.

- **Risk 4: Some clearance activities may involve development projects which could contribute to the resettlement of people, particularly vulnerable groups, in a manner that does not meet the standards set by the Lao Government**

Expropriation of land for public use is a common practice throughout the world. It is essential however, that affected families and communities are compensated and/or relocated in a fair, equitable and timely manner.

In November 2005, the Government of Lao PDR issued Prime Ministerial Decree 192 establishing national standards on Compensation and Resettlement of People Affected by Development Projects. Decree 192 includes Technical Guidelines for Compensation and Resettlement that must be strictly and properly complied with.

Services provided within the UXO sector, specifically survey and clearance may be applied or offered to ensure the safety of persons being resettled and to meet obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions to clear all contaminated areas. UNDP is working with national counterparts and partners in addressing any concerns identified in this regard.

- **Risk 5: Insufficient opportunity for dialogue among NRA, donors and operators**

There has been progress in the past year in reducing the overall number of meetings, at the same time, increasing opportunities for substantive dialogue. The Government has agreed to UNDP's suggestion that the Annual Review Meeting, UXO Sector Trust Fund Steering Committee Meeting and the UNDP Project Board Meetings could be consolidated into one meeting with wide participation, including donors, operators and other key stakeholders. They have also agreed to the suggestion that

the first such meetings at least be held back-to-back with the next UXO Sector Working Group in order to ease the travel burden on donors not located in Vientiane.

Based upon a recommendation made in the last UNDP evaluation of the UXO sector, the Government has established a "Policy Forum" for more in-depth discussion and debate of policy, practice development and other important issues, involving key government ministries, development partners and operators. The first Policy Forum held in June 2013 focused on planning and prioritization in the UXO sector and was widely welcomed and seen to be successful. The NRA intends to convene two such Policy Forum Meetings each year focusing on major issues, to complement SWG/ARM meetings and Technical Working Group meetings held in each of the three sub-areas of the sector, each quarter.

- **Risk 6: Lao PDR may fail to comply with obligations contained in the CCM**

Lao PDR is in full compliance with its obligations under the CCM and will undertake the following to ensure that it remains so. It is expected that Lao PDR will be unable to clear all known contaminated areas within the initial 10 year deadline set in the Convention and will be required to seek one and perhaps several extensions to this deadline. Lao PDR will seek such extension(s) in a timely and effective way. Lao PDR has also built into its work plan for 2014, developing national legislation *inter alia* to establish legal penalties for the commission of acts prohibited under the CCM. The UXO sector will also seek to assist the National Commission on Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly (NCDE) to strengthen its capacity to mobilize and coordinate services to UXO victims, within the broader disability context.

- **Risk 7: Changes in governance arrangements or key personnel in NRA or UXO Lao.**

In 2013, in order to achieve great coherence in the governance of the UXO sector, UXO Lao moved from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to the Leading Committee for Poverty Eradication and Rural Development reporting to the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office who is also the chairman of the NRA board. Through the move to the Committee for Poverty Eradication and Rural Development, the Government of Lao PDR aims to further link UXO clearance with Poverty Eradication and Rural Development. The Government of Lao PDR has been committed to ensuring a smooth transition.

Furthermore, UXO Lao's former director retired in June 2013 and has since then be replaced by a new UXO Lao Director, Mr. Thiphasone Soukhathammavong. Mr. Soukhathammavong comes with a vast experience of working within the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication and aims to further strengthen the linkage between UXO clearance and rural development and poverty eradication.

XII. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

1) NRA

- **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:** Collecting/receiving reliable and complete information is still a challenge in the UXO Sector. Data and other information often arrive late and figures are not always consistent. The quality of statistics depends on the accuracy of the information provided by each operator. In 2012, only 44% of clearance operators reported electronically to the NRA. In 2013, all six humanitarian operators and some commercial clearance companies, in total 67% of clearance operators, reported electronically. Important progress has been made, but to fully document UXO Sector achievements, all operators must report in a detailed and timely manner. To address this challenge, the NRA continues to emphasize the importance of clear and accurate data. NRA has also provided some training to both humanitarian and commercial operators, on the effective use of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) maintained by the NRA for the UXO Sector.

2) UXO LAO

- **SUPPORT TO CONVENTION:** The signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) raised expectations that additional longer term funding would become available, allowing UXO Lao to increase its clearance capacity. This has only partially occurred yet. UXO Lao was able to increase its clearance staff by 56 people in 2013 and was able to secure funding for these additional teams until the end of 2015. Increases in clearance capacity are essential for Laos to meet its CCM targets and UXO Lao has prepared plans accordingly; however long term secure funding is needed for these plans to be implemented.
- **CASH FLOW AND DONOR REPORTING:** Financial management is carried out properly as per the rules and regulations of NIM. However, single year funding agreements result in difficulties for long-term planning and inappropriate amounts of time are devoted to proposal development, drafting of reports and agreement management. Multi-year, un-earmarked funds assist the programme to ensure proper financial planning.
- **INTERNAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS:** UXO Lao currently only has a Financial Management System, but is still lacking proper software systems such as a HR database and an asset management system. In 2013, UXO Lao received a large amount of equipment from the Government of Japan, which further confirmed the need for an improved asset management system in order to properly manage such large amounts of assets and also link them to UXO Lao's internal financial management system. UXO Lao plans to conduct a thorough assessment of its internal information management system and introduce a new asset management and HR database by mid-2014. UXO Lao further continues to work on improving the use of IMSMA at the provincial and national Level and plans to migrate IMSMA data from the old IMSMA version currently used to the updated IMSMA version in 2014.

- **ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR UXO LAO AND THE NRA**

With the signing of the new project document in 2013, UXO Lao, the NRA and UNDP agreed on their respective outputs to be achieved for the period 2013-2015 with a total budget of USD 26.68 million. Out of this multi-year budget, 64% has been mobilized so far and further support will be needed in order to be able to fully fund their operations for this period.

Furthermore, in 2014, UNDP is planning to conduct a full capacity assessment of both UXO Lao and the NRA in order to assess what capacities have successfully been achieved thus far, and to determine what areas might need further support. Based on the outcome of the assessment, further funding might be required in order to fill possible gaps in human resources and/or equipment for example.

XIII. 2014 WORK PLAN PRIORITIES

1) NRA – 2014 WORK PLAN PRIORITIES

A) What are the priority actions planned for the following year to overcome constraints, build on achievements and partnership, and use of the lessons learned during 2014?

In 2014, the NRA plans to further improve the coordination of the UXO Sector in the implementation of the national strategic plan "The Safe Path Forward II". Among other results, the NRA will focus on its institutional strengthening through conducting a full capacity assessment to formulate a Capacity Development Strategy, providing support to UXO victims, better risk education methodologies and accelerating prioritized land release in line with national development priorities.

B) List major adjustments in the strategies, targets or key outcomes and outputs planned.

The new project document signed in 2013 outlined the strategy, targets, outcomes and outputs planned for the next three years. To date, there has been no revision of this strategy. The NRA follows the targets it set in the project document.

C) Estimated total budget required for the following year (2014): USD 2,397,958

2) UXO LAO – 2014 WORK PLAN PRIORITIES

A) What are the priority actions planned for the following year to overcome constraints, build on achievements and partnership, and use of the lessons learned during 2014?

- In 2014, UXO Lao plans to further update its internal information management systems through introducing a HR database and an asset management system among others.
- Pending ongoing discussions with the NRA and the UXO sector, it remains to be seen in what capacity, and in what form, technical survey will further be used.
- The work planning process continues to be revised and streamlined and will draw from lessons learned during the 2013 work planning process. The 2014 work plan focuses more on developmental activities in accordance with the national strategy to support the 7th NSEDP.
- UXO Lao is further looking forward to collaborating with the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihood Program (LARLP) to potentially undertake an assessment of M&E in UXO Lao and find ways to better track the impact and outcomes of UXO clearance on the livelihoods of people and poverty reduction.
- During 2014, UXO Lao will work in 64 districts in nine provinces including 37 of the poorest districts; undertake 679 Community Awareness visits, conducted by both CA teams and village volunteers. UXO Lao will also undertake 1,789 General Survey tasks and expects to complete 1,537 Roving tasks. Following on our previous survey and planning work, UXO Lao expects to release 3,490 Ha of land through clearance and technical survey to support development and poverty reduction in Laos.

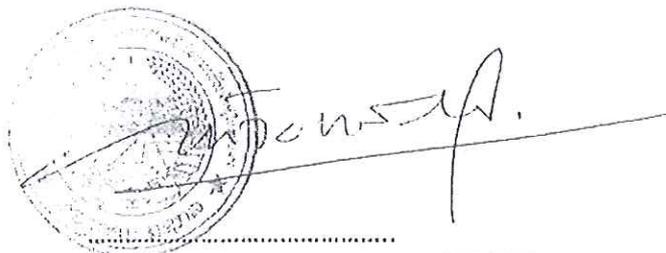
B) List major adjustments in the strategies, targets or key outcomes and outputs planned.

The new project document signed in 2013 outlined the strategy, targets, outcomes and outputs planned for the next three years. To date, there has been no revision of this strategy. UXO Lao follows the targets it set in the project document.

C) Estimated total budget required for the following year (2014): USD 9.4 million ¹⁵

¹⁵ The total budget includes USD 4.8 million channeled through UNDP donor agreements, USD 2.2 million funded through bilateral agreements between Lao PDR and donors directly and around USD 2.2 million unfunded. See Annual Work Plan 2014 for further details

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