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Lao People's Democratic Republic



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

QUARTERLY PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

QUARTER 1 - 2013

DATE: 15 April 2013

Award ID: 00063618

Project ID: 00080607

Project Title: Support to UXO Lao

2013 Annual Budget (UNDP): USD 4,970,164

Implementing Partner: UXO Lao

Period Covered: 1 January 2013 – 31 March 2013

1. Overall Analysis of Project Performance

At the end of Quarter 1, it can be reported that UXO Lao is on track in achieving its quarterly clearance and community awareness targets for 2013. In Quarter 1 of 2013, UXO Lao released 1,118 hectares of land through area clearance and technical survey activities reaching 84,658 beneficiaries in nine provinces. Within the reporting period, UXO Lao destroyed 18,397 items of UXO of which 8,180 were sub-munitions or bombs through clearance, technical survey and roving tasks. The 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 and the work undertaken is fully in accordance with national standards and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). In Q1, 91% of the cleared land is agricultural land.

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, 149 risk education activities were conducted by UXO Lao staff and Village Volunteers and reached 38,269 people (28% women, 26% men, 23% female children and 23% male children). This is on track with the targets set for Quarter 1 of 2013. Risk education activities are closely linked with survey activities by allowing villagers to assist survey teams in identifying the location of UXO. Further, 680 survey tasks were conducted in 568 villages locating 4,022 items of UXO including 2,543 sub-munitions or bombs, 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 the people living in areas of UXO contamination, but also to increasing socio-economic opportunities in some of the poorest districts. Besides areas cleared for agricultural land, 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 supplies, school constructions, hospitals, health centers, clean water projects, roads, and other development activities. The development projects supported by UXO Lao in Quarter 1 of 2013 were the Poverty Reduction Fund, Project Shoot, EFA, CARE and GIZ. UXO Lao works in alignment with the government's strategy on rural development and poverty eradication in accordance with the Social-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR.

As part of UNDP's continued effort to support the institutional capacity building of UXO Lao, the Terms of Reference for a planned capacity assessment study are currently being developed. The objective of this activity is to conduct a systematic capacity assessment of UXO Lao to determine where UXO Lao's institutional capacity stands at this point and to be able to determine which capacities require further training and support. The capacity assessment is expected to take place in Quarter 3 and 4 of 2013.

UXO Lao staff have further participated in various trainings and workshop on Quality management in mine action, financial management, IT training and the continued CMAC-UXO Lao partnership that are all fostering a culture of information exchange. 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. A detailed description of the organized trainings and their impact is provided in section 3 "Project Performance".

2. Project Risks and Issues

<i>Status of Risks and Risk Management Strategies and other challenges</i>	<i>Counter Measurements</i>	<i>Update</i>
Lack of financial sustainability/ high dependency of NRA/UXO Lao on donors' contributions (prodoc risk)	Increased GoL contribution to the UXO sector, as well as continued donor funding to support expanded activities over time. Prefer multi-year contributions.	The annual work plan for 2013 shows an unfunded amount of USD 1.8 million. Through UNDP and UXO Lao's resource mobilization efforts, UNDP expects to receive an additional funding from the Government of Australia and Switzerland in 2013, which will enable UXO Lao to achieve the activities it set out to do in 2013. While the GoL expressed its interest to provide funding to the UXO sector this year, there has been no updated on any increased GoL contribution to the sector at this point. .
Technical complexity of sector inhibits NRA and UXO Lao effectiveness (prodoc risk)	Capacity self-assessments and capacity building measures to be undertaken by UXO Lao with UNDP support, then capacity development plans undertaken Stay up to date with technical and non-technical developments in the sector	UNDP is currently in the process of drafting a Terms of Reference for the capacity-assessment of UXO Lao which is planned to be completed in Quarter 3 of 2013. In March 2013, Trials were undertaken in Champasack province to continue the development of a more efficient technical survey capacity. More information is reported on in the Project Performance section under Activity 4.

<p>Outdated Equipment and Vehicles. In some provinces have reported problems with outdated equipment and/or vehicles during their operations. A review of the situation is currently taken place to update the list of vehicles with the corresponding issues.</p>	<p>New Equipment and vehicles to be procured</p>	<p>The Government of Lao PDR has signed a bilateral agreement with the Government of Japan in May 2012, where the Government of Japan agreed to provide support to UXO Lao operations in the form of new equipment and a new fleet of vehicles in the amount of ¥900,000,000. (approx. USD 9,000,000) The new equipment and vehicles are expected to be received at UXO Lao by the end of September 2013.</p>
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Challenges and risks will be updated and reviewed on a regular basis by the project.

3. Project Performance

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

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

Clearance overview:

In Quarter 1 of 2013, 1,118 hectares of land were cleared through area clearance and technical survey reaching 84,658 beneficiaries across nine provinces in Lao PDR. 18,397 items of UXO were destroyed through clearance, technical survey and roving tasks of which 8,180 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.

91% of the total land cleared is agricultural land. The project reports no interruptions of clearance activities due to weather conditions in Quarter 1. It was however noted that in some provinces the project encountered problems with their fleet of vehicles. UXO Lao has signed an agreement with the Government of Japan who will provide a new fleet of vehicles in the amount of ¥900,000,000 that is scheduled to arrive in September 2013 and should help addressing the challenge of an outdated fleet of vehicles.

Out of 1,118 hectares of land cleared by UXO Lao, 83 hectares of land were cleared in direct support to development agencies' projects for the following projects: Poverty Reduction Fund, Project Shoot, EFA, CARE, GIZ). UXO Lao has cleared land at no cost to these agencies and thus also contributed 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. Until 2012, technical survey was considered as a separate activity and was recorded as such. From the beginning of 2013, as decided in the Regional Work Planning Meeting held in November 2012, UXO Lao now considers technical survey to be an integral part of the clearance process, which means that technical survey is no longer recorded as a discrete activity.

Roving Tasks:

439 roving tasks were conducted in 373 villages and 7,390 items of UXO were removed and destroyed. The project reports that 28% of the overall roving task target set in 2013 work plan were achieved thus far. 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:

680 survey tasks were conducted in 568 villages, mapping out 4,022 items of UXO. Survey teams collect data which is then shared with the NRA and entered into the national UXO database. 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, the communication network (radio usage and related issues) etc. Survey additional information if the roads are ok to drive on, the communication network is ok (radio)

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 149 CA activities reaching 38,269 people (28% women, 26% men, 23% female children and 23% male children).

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

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 *(This activity also includes the project management cost of the various UXO units at the National Office as outlined below)*

This section aims to report on notable progress, events and trainings of UXO Lao staff in their staff capacities or of the organization as a whole. It does not aim at listing each and every activity of UXO Lao's work, but rather highlights events and improvements that are notable and that the projects believes will have an impact on its institutional capacity building.

Capacity Assessment UXO Lao update

UNDP and UXO Lao are currently in the process of drafting the Terms of Reference for the planned capacity assessment of UXO Lao and NRA in 2013 which is planned to be conducted by a consultant within Quarter 2 and 3 of 2013. Based on the identified needs of the capacity assessment, further training will be provided for key UXO Lao staff in order to further improve the institutional capacity of UXO Lao.

Financial Management update

The Finance Unit organized a Refresher Training for all 6 National Office Finance Staff, to refresh their skills and understanding of the UXO Lao's financial management system AccPac that was first put into place in early 2012. A national AccPac consultant was contracted to conduct the training. The consultant further advised the Finance Unit on a possible training for increasing the financial management capacity of finance unit staff in the nine provinces and the training centre. The Finance Unit, with advice from the TA Programme and Finance, developed a proposal for UXO Lao's bilateral partner MAG to fund the required financial software including a three day training of all UXO Lao finance staff to be organized in May 2013. UXO Lao was successfully able to secure the funding from MAG for this important training and financial management software installation in the nine provinces and the training center, which will reduce one of the quarterly reporting bottlenecks – getting information from the provinces into the National Office checked and entered into the system.

Quality Management update:

Six UXO Lao staff members from the Operations, Data base, QM and Programme unit attended the Work Shop on Quality Management in Mine Action organized by GICHD (Geneva international Centre for Humanitarian Demining) in cooperation with the NRA at Donchan Palace 04-08 March 2013. The aim of the workshop was to enhance the capacities of officials and practioners in the mine action sector as follows:

- For understanding different QM approaches
- To establish a common QM related terminology
- For identifying, visualizing and improving both internal and costumer related processes
- For using QM tools
- For improving QM systems on the organizational and programme-wide levels
- To encourage the development of QM policies for mine action programme

The QM unit of UXO Lao is currently reviewing the lessons learned of the workshop and how to possibly incorporate them into UXO Lao operations.

The QM unit, through their three mobile QM teams, also undertakes inspections of operations related processes, products and infrastructure on a regular basis. The three QM teams have completed 15 inspection rounds in Q1 in all nine provinces as follows:

- Quality assurance of demolitions (34 teams assessed)
- Quality assurance of clearance work (67 teams assessed)
- External Q inspection of cleared land (38 sites inspected)
- Assessment of Accident Response Practices (57 team assessments)
- Quality control of external quality control report (45 issues)
- Quality control of completion survey reports (45 issues)
- Quality control of UXO demolition report (17 issues)

The QM unit is reporting that UXO Lao operating within national standards and that UNDP spot-check

recommendations are being followed up and implemented.

Public Information update:

A training is currently being organized through the support of MAG (UXO Lao bilateral donor) on updating the UXO Lao website. The aim is to have a UXO Lao staff from the PI unit be fully trained on how to maintain and update the UXO Lao webpage and ensure that the information on the webpage is up to date.

IT update:

The IT unit installed Microsoft outlook at several computers at the UXO Lao National Office that did not yet have outlook installed or were in need of an update. A general IT user training and Microsoft outlook training was also organized through the support of MAG for UXO Lao national office staff as well as Training center staff during Q1 of 2013. In order to improve the systematic backing up of information, external HDD were procured and installed for every unit in the UXO Lao national office and data was successfully backed up in the UXO national office as well as the training center. The IT unit further installed the new Kaspersky Antivirus software 2013 at the national office, the Training center and in all nine UXO Lao provincial offices.

Database unit update:

UXO Lao IT, database and admin staff have participated in an information-exchange event organized between UXO Lao and CMAC in Cambodia in March 2013. This is an ad-hoc survey fully sponsored by JICA through bilateral funds.

The aim of this survey is to study the database CMAC is using for

- CMAC IMSA: recording clearance information. The CMAC IMSMA database seems to be an interesting model as it has tools for electronic sketch mapping whereas UXO Lao does the sketch mapping by hand
- CMAC admin database: CMAC has an updated database on all HR related information (staff members, sick leave, payments, etc) whereas UXO Lao still mainly operates on hard copy documentation
- Database on equipment: Lessons learned from CMAC were also that their database has an updated electronic list of all equipment. This model could potentially be duplicated in UXO Lao after careful review.

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.

Logistics/Procurement update:

The Logistic/Procurement unit submitted the 2013 procurement plan to the Lao National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, Ministry of Planning and Investment and UNDP for approval.

Activity 3: Provide Training for Clearance 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 fixed curricula that are 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

During Quarter 1, one SEOD Clearance Technician training course was organized end of March 2013, where five UXO Lao staff were trained along with other participants from other UXO operators. The training is still ongoing and the project will report back in Quarter 2 with further information. The objectives of this course are to provide the participants with the following skills to in order to be able to fulfil the duties of a UXO Lao Clearance Technician as follows:

- Understand UXO clearance operations safety requirements
- Identify common mines and UXOs found in Lao PDR (basic level)
- Know the basic UXO clearance operating procedures of the trainee's organisation
- Assist with an accident response plan
- Assemble and operate the standard UXO detection equipment that the trainee's organisation uses
- Carry out area clearance drills
- Operate the standard communication equipment that the trainee's organisation uses
- Carry out the duties of a sentry
- Know demolition safety procedures.
- Assist with the preparation and firing of explosive charges.
- Assist with the recovery and transport of UXOs
- Assist with the construction of protective works

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 a “new” “evidence-based” approach to survey which aims to make targeting of clearance teams more effective resulting in even less land without 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 Quarter 2 of 2013. There is a national workshop planned to take place in May where all operators will come together to discuss methodology and the best ways forward.

4. Update on Partnerships

Bilateral partnerships update

- In May 2012 the Government of Japan, represented by the Japanese Ambassador to Laos Ms. Junko YOKOTA, signed the exchange note with Dr. Thongloun SISOULITH, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR, for the 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. The grant aid was signed between JICA and the Ministry of Planning and Investment. The purpose of the project is to improve UXO Lao UXO clearance equipment and vehicles to enable UXO Lao to conduct UXO clearance operations in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

In February 2013, the UXO Lao National Director travelled to Japan in order to be part of the procurement committee for this project and the Mitsubishi Corporation and the Sirius Corporation Company were officially selected as the supplier for this bilateral project which will enable UXO Lao to receive the computers, vehicles and equipment at the end of September 2013.

- JICA donated 21 Laptop computers and LCD Projector worth USD 28,200 to UXO Lao. JICA further provided IT skill training courses where 135 UXO Lao staff from nine provincial offices participated in the JICA sponsored IT training.
- In 2013, the Foundation World Without Mine continues to support UXO Lao’ operations in Khammuan provinces with an amount of USD 150,000 for the year 2013

UNDP partnerships update

- In February 2013, UXO Lao and UNDP organized the visit of the Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr. Aside from meetings with the Lao Government in Vientiane, the Minister travelled to Luang Prabang province to investigate what he called “the terrible legacy of the second Indo-China war”. Australia is currently one of the main donors helping Laos to deal with these deadly remnants of the war, and on Wednesday the Foreign Minister announced an additional \$5.4 million AUD (approx. \$5.3 million USD) in support of the ongoing Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) clearance, mine risk education and survivor assistance work in Laos. Speaking at a UXO clearance site in Luang Prabang province, Minister Carr vowed that “Australia’s absolutely on it” to help Laotians to reclaim their land from the UXO, so they can safely use it for farming and their children to play on it.
- In late January 2013, a Norwegian delegation, led by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad as President of the 3MSP to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, joined the CTA for a field visit to Xiengkhuang province to gain a detailed understanding of field operations of UXO Lao, as well as Mines Advisory Group and World Education. This gave UXO Lao an excellent opportunity to showcase its work among one of the most influential individuals (and donors) in the Cluster Munitions sector at the moment.
- In Quarter 1 of 2013, the UXO Programme Unit and UNDP finalized the donor reports for the Government of Ireland, Switzerland and DFID and developed and submitted a new funding proposal to the Government of Switzerland for additional funding in the amount of USD 3,000,000 to support UXO and the NRA.

5. Audit, audit recommendations and follow-up

The project has updated the status of the 2011 audit recommendations as requested by UNDP. Please find attached the 2011 NIM audit recommendation update attached in Annex I.

In March 2013, the UXO project also underwent the 2012 UNDP NIM audit. The Chief of the QM unit acted as a focal point at the project for coordination and questions and all requested documents were presented to the auditors on time.

UXO Lao has further concluded its own office inspection (formerly called internal audit) in February 2013, which included all nine provinces, the national office as well as the training center. The findings are currently only available in the Lao language but are expected to be translated into English in Q3 of 2013. The QM unit also followed up on the office inspection at the UXO Lao provincial office in Luang Prabang. The follow up report is still to be developed at this point.

6. Priorities for Quarter 2 of 2013

Besides general clearance and community awareness operations that UXO Lao set out to do as described in the 2012 Annual Work Plan, UXO Lao plans to further assess the lessons learned from the technical survey review that was completed in Champasack province in March 2013. In regards to the 2012 NIM audit, the project expects to receive the completed NIM audit recommendations within Q2 and will work on reviewing and implementing agreed upon recommendations. The project further plans to follow up on the internal office inspection as well.

UXO Lao is currently also reviewing its procedures and plans to update the job descriptions of all UXO Lao staff at the National Office as well as at the Training Center. A review of UXO Lao procedures in the Logistics, Finance and Administration unit is also planned. The QM unit is planning an office inspection visit in Khammoune, Sekong and Xiengkhoung during Q2 of 2013.

The mobile QM teams are planning the following inspections/assessments in Q2:

- The Inspection External Quality Control for land handover site
- Assessment General Survey
- UXO identification Test for Technical Survey staffs and Team Leaders
- Assessment Quality Assurance of Demolitions.
- Basic Medic test for (Ops, SEOD, Team Leaders, Medics, Deminers and Drivers)

In June 2013, through the support of JICA (bilateral donor) it is planned to organize another part of the CMAC-UXO Lao partnership events where the survey that has taken place this quarter in Cambodia will be continued.

UNDP Lao and UNDP further plan to move ahead with UXO Lao's capacity assessment and plan to have the Terms of Reference finalized and a consultant recruited to start the capacity assessment by the of Quarter 2 in 2013

In order to improve the financial management capacity of the nine provinces and the Training Center, UXO Lao plans to procure a financial management software to allow them to be able to enter their expenditures into the software directly, which could then be uploaded into the UXO Lao national office database, verified and monitored by the UXO Lao Finance Unit in Vientiane. Fully funded through UXO Lao's bilateral donor MAG, UXO Lao plans to organize a training for all UXO Lao finance staff (National Office, Training center and 9 provinces) on the use of this new finance software including the installation of the software on the computers.

PREPARED BY



Ms. Heuangphachanh Panpadith

Chief of Programme and Public Information Unit

Date 22 JUL 2013

CLEARED/APPROVED BY



Mr. Wanthong Khamdala

Acting Programme Director, UXO Lao

Date 22 JUL 2013