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Lao People's Democratic Republic



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QUARTERLY PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

QUARTER 3- 2013

DATE: 18 November 2013

Award ID: 00063618

Project ID: 00080607

Project Title: Support for the institutional strengthening of the Lao National UXO Programme (UXO Lao)

Project Start and End Date: 01 April 2013 – 31 December 2015

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

Implementing Partner: UXO Lao

Period Covered: 01 July 2013 – 30 September 2013

1. Overall Analysis of Project Performance

At the end of Quarter3, UXO Lao is on track in achieving its quarterly clearance and community awareness targets for 2013. In Q3, UXO Lao released 690 hectares of land through area clearance and technical survey activities reaching 35,758 beneficiaries in nine provinces. Within the reporting period, UXO Lao destroyed 17,370 items of UXO of which 8,367 were sub-munitions or bombies, 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. The work undertaken is fully in accordance with national standards and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). In Quarter 3, 78% of the cleared land by UXO Lao was 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, 176 risk education activities were conducted by UXO Lao staff and Village Volunteers and reached 46,528 people (including 23,849 women of whom 9,838 were children and 22,679 men of whom 9,760 were children). This is on track with the targets set for Q3 of 2013. Risk education activities are closely linked with survey activities by allowing villagers to assist survey teams in identifying the location of UXO. Furthermore, 428 roving tasks were conducted in 366 villages removing 8,410

items of UXO including 3,051 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 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 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 Social-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR.

As part of UNDP's continued effort to support the institutional capacity building of UXO Lao, UNDP plans to conduct a capacity assessment of UXO Lao which is scheduled to start in December/January 2013. 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 development and support.

A number of UXO Lao staff has further participated in various trainings and workshops. 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 initially showed an unfunded amount of USD 1.8 million. Through UNDP and UXO Lao's resource mobilization efforts, UNDP signed an agreement with the Government of Australia in June 2013 for additional funding in the amount of AUD 1.8 million over a period of three years. In September 2013, the Government of Switzerland extended its support to the UXO sector in Lao PDR with an additional contribution of USD3.79 million out of which USD 3,158,000 is set aside as unearmarked funding to support the operations of both UXO Lao and NRA. This additional contribution covers the period 2013-2015. UXO Lao's 2013 Annual Work Plan is now fully funded.
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, UXO Lao and the NRA have finalized drafting a Terms of Reference for the capacity-assessment of UXO Lao and the NRA. The assessment is expected to start in December 13/January 14. In March 2013, Trials were undertaken in Champasack province to continue the development of a more efficient technical survey capacity. During the first week of November, a national workshop will be hosted by the NRA, where survey

		<p>strategy and methodologies will be discussed, which may lead to UXO Lao revising its operational survey processes.</p> <p>More information is reported on in the Project Performance section under Activity 4.</p>
<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. All new equipment and vehicles were delivered to UXO Lao's Training Centre and the official hand-over ceremony is scheduled to be held in October 2013.</p> <p>UXO Lao plans to take a full assessment of assets and establish an asset management database in order to be able to fully monitor and manage its assets. This will be part of the 2014 Annual Work Plan.</p>

Challenges and risks will be updated and reviewed on a regular basis by the project.

3. Project Performance

OUTPUT 1: 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 Q3, 690 hectares of land were cleared through area clearance and technical survey reaching 35,758 beneficiaries across nine provinces in Lao PDR. 17,370 items of UXO were destroyed through clearance, technical survey and roving tasks of which 8,367 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.

541 hectares (78%) of the total land cleared 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. This issue should be resolved shortly as a result of the large fleet of vehicles received from the Government of Japan in September 2013. In May 2012, the Government of Lao PDR had signed an agreement with the 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. The official hand-over ceremony is scheduled to be held in October 2013.

Out of 541 hectares of land cleared by UXO Lao, 24 hectares of land were cleared in direct support to development agencies' projects in Lao PDR such as the World Food Program, Project Shoot, the Poverty Reduction Fund and JICA. These projects support the construction of school buildings, road construction as well as the development of rice paddies. 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. 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. During the reporting period, 98 hectares of land were released by technical survey teams across eight provinces, reached to 4,232 beneficiaries.

Roving Tasks:

428 roving tasks were conducted in 366 villages and 8,410 items of UXO were removed and destroyed. The project reports that 70% of the overall roving task targets set in the 2013 work plan has been 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:

552 survey tasks were conducted in 474 villages, mapping out 3,899 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, whether the roads are safe to drive on, and whether the communication network is ok, etc.

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 176 CA activities reaching 46,528 people (including 23,849 women of whom 9,760 were children and 22,679 men of whom 12,919 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.

UXO Lao accident in Xiengkhuang province

There has been continual development since the accident in Xiengkhuang in April 2013, where one boy was killed and several more injured during a weekend on a UXO Lao clearance site. 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. More specifically:

- 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 Trainings are being planned and will take place in Q4 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

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

As part of UNDP's continued effort to support the institutional capacity building of UXO Lao and the NRA, UNDP plans to conduct a capacity assessment of UXO Lao and the NRA respectively. The objective of this activity is to conduct a systematic capacity assessment of both institutions in order to determine where UXO Lao's and NRA's institutional capacity stands at this point and to be able to determine which capacities require further development and support. In Q3, UXO Lao, the NRA and UNDP finalized the Terms of Reference for this assessment. The assessment is scheduled to start in January 2014 with a scheduled completion time of 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 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 has started the trial period right 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. The trial period is expected to last until 31 December 2013. 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 proper HR software in place.

UXO Lao has advertised three positions in Vientiane during Q3 including the DNPD Secretary, Deputy Chief of Programme Unit and the Chief of Technical Survey (TS). The Deputy Chief of Programme Unit is supposed to support the current Chief of Unit with all activities including drafting project proposals, annual work plans, as well as drafting reports for key stakeholders among other tasks. The Deputy Chief of Programme position was created in order to further strengthen the resource mobilization efforts of the UXO Lao Programme Unit. 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.

Workshop on Measuring Development Results in the UXO Sector in Lao PDR

In August 2013, UXO Lao staff participated at the training on "Measuring Development Results in the UXO Sector in Lao PDR" organized by NRA together with Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Participants included 45 staff from the UXO Sector, including line ministries, NRA, UXO Lao, Humanitarian Operators and UNDP. This meeting provided information on the use of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) for UXO clearance with the aim not only to train people how to do cost-benefit analysis, but also to ensure they are familiar with the overall concept and techniques, confident in knowing when CBA might be useful in analyzing data to inform decision-makers (e.g. for setting priorities). This will enable the government and donors to have a better picture of the contribution the UXO programme is making to development and poverty reduction and more aware of what is needed to equip NRA and its partners to use CBA effectively.

Quality Management update

The purpose of Quality Management (QM) in UXO/Mine Action is to confirm that operational procedures for UXO/Mine Action are appropriate, are being applied and will achieve the stated requirements in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

The QM unit at UXO Lao monitors the compliance of UXO Lao staff and operations with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) through field and office inspections at national and provincial offices.

In Q3, the QM unit can report the following achievements:

1. Field Inspections

On Q3, the Quality Management Unit reviewed and updated the inspection plan for September-October 2013 and further reviewed and updated the budget for the three QM teams (South, Center, and North) for the period November- December 2013 based on the planned Q4 inspections to be undertaken.

The following assessments took place during Q3:

- Assessment of Clearance Teams (All Teams)
- Assessment of Demolition Sites
- Assessment of SEOD's knowledge of external Quality control mechanisms
- Assessment of the ARP (Accident Response Plan)

The overall outcome of this inspection was satisfactory. There were a number of issues identified requiring remedial actions. These have been identified to the appropriate teams/units responsible, and will be followed up accordingly.

2. Testing and Assessment of new white phosphorus accident response plan

The QM unit completed the testing of a new Accident Response Plan (ARP) that focuses on white phosphorous accidents in April 2013. The testing took place 31 March – 4 April 2013 in Xiengkhuang province. Thus far, UXO Lao has only used a general UXO Accident Response Plan that did not take into account the different nature of UXO related white phosphorous accidents. White phosphorous is a substance that is toxic and burns violently when exposed to the air and extra precautions are necessary when carrying out this type of detonation. The new white phosphorous ARP allows UXO Lao to be prepared to provide assistance in case of white phosphorous UXO accidents. The white phosphorous ARP has already been implemented in all nine UXO Lao provinces and the senior medics are monitoring the progress and following up on the progress of this new scenario every 2 months. During Q3, three QM mobile teams continued to monitor the proper implementation of this new scenario.

3. Post Clearance Assessment (PCA)

UXO Lao currently undertakes post clearance assessments, as opposed to post clearance impact assessment (i.e. they assess outputs, not longer term outcomes and impact). Survey teams visit cleared areas 6-12 months post-clearance. They typically conduct PCAs on 25% of their agricultural task and 100% on non-agricultural tasks. The data is then analyzed at UXO Lao Headquarters. In Q3, UXO Lao conducted PCA for 28 clearance sites. The Post-Clearance Assessment conducted in Q3 found that out of 28 sites, 2 sites (one agricultural and one building site) were not being used at the moment as the owner ran out of money and was not able to mobilize enough manual labor for the sites.

Logistics/Procurement update

- Following an operational review of assets of all nine provinces in Q2, UXO Lao had 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 Standing Operational Procedures – 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.
- 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. The equipment and vehicles reached Vientiane mid- September 2013.

Visit to the CCM in Zambia by Mr. Thiphasone Soukhathammavong, UXO Lao NPD

From 9-13 September, the new UXO Lao National Program Director (NPD) Mr. Thiphasone Soukhathammavong attended the 4th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) in Zambia. Attendance from 105 countries included 58 from CCM State Party Members, 18 signatory countries and 29 notice countries. The purpose of the meeting was to report on the implementation progress of the obligations under the CCM of the member countries. The meeting also endorsed the progress report of Vientiane Declarations and the 2014 work plan

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

Q3 Training courses

During Q3, four training courses were organized with total 59 graduates including 15 females as follows:

- one UXO Clearance course (23 graduates)
- one Medic course (6 graduates)
- one Team Leader course (23 graduates)
- one Risk Education Team Leader course (7 graduates).

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

Planned Trainings in Q4:

- Clearance/Deminer course: (11 November – 20 December): Total trainees: 21, including 14 from Savannakhet and 7 from Champasack
- Survey/Risk Education: (18 November-20 December 2013), Total trainees: 6, (2 Saravane, 2 Savannakhet, 2 Champasack)two staff from each province
- Medic course: 18 November -20 December 2013, Total trainee 5, (2 Saravane, 2 Savannakhet and 1 from Champasack)

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 Q4 of 2013. There is a national workshop planned to take place in November 2013 where all operators will come together to discuss methodology and the best ways forward.

4. Update on Partnerships

Bilateral partnerships update

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 official hand-over ceremony will be held in October.
- 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.

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 T-shirts that are handed out to Lao villagers as part of the UXO Lao Mine-risk education (MRE) efforts.

World Without Mines

- The private Swiss Foundation World Without Mines (WWM) has been providing funding to UXO Lao in Khammuane province since 2007. As part of the agreement, WWM conducts short monitoring missions at least 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.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

- 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

Results of the assessment as well as a more concrete plan on a potential collaboration between ICRC and UXO Lao should be available by the end of December 2013.

South-South Cooperation:

- **CMAC-UXO Lao workshop**

The selection of participants for the 4th workshop as part of the Lao-Cambodia South-South Cooperation in the UXO/Mine Action Sector between UXO LAO and CMAC supported by JICA was undertaken in Q3. The topic of the workshop was Risk Education, Data Management and Victim Assistance in the UXO/Mine Action Sector. 14 UXO Lao staff and 1 NRA staff will be selected for the Work Shop which is scheduled to be organized between 25-29 November in Cambodia.

- **CMAC visit NPD and CTA UXO Lao**

In September 2013, the NPD of UXO Lao and the Chief Technical Advisor travelled to Cambodia for a two day visit. During the visit they met with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), Cambodian Mine Action Authority (CMAA) and with the Royal Khmer Armed Forces (RKAF), who manage the Cambodian national training centre for peacekeeping operations (including demining and UXO) for Cambodian troops employed on UN peacekeeping missions.

The visit included discussions with key management of all three organizations and demonstrations of equipment and processes which may prove to be beneficial to the operations of UXO Lao. These included observations of the use of UXO detection dogs, deep searching technologies and bomb cutting technologies.

The visit gave the new director the opportunity to understand how other countries operate, and effectively implement their programmes and it is believed that there are lessons that have been learned in Cambodia which might feed into the development of more effective operations and technology in Laos.

UNDP partnerships update

Visit of the New Zealand Governor General to UXO Lao in Xiengkhuang Province

- In August, his Excellency Lieutenant General The Right Honourable Sir Jerry Mateparua GNZM, QSO Governor- General and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Realm of New Zealand with his wife and delegation visited UXO Lao field operations in Xiengkhuang province on 13 August, 2013. The visit was accompanied by the UXO Lao Director as well as the Chief Technical Advisor. The Government of New Zealand has been funding UXO Lao Xiengkhuang 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 (2012-2014)

UNESCO conference Plain of Jars

- The Provincial Coordinator of Xiengkhuang 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 is a key and critical element of the proposal and the appropriateness of the site for such classification.

New Funding from SDC

- The Government of Switzerland extended its support to the UXO sector in Lao PDR with an additional contribution of US\$3.79 million for the period 2013-2015. The funds will go towards strengthening the capacity of the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action (NRA) as well as supporting the on-going clearance operations of UXO Lao, the two national institutions tackling the deadly legacy of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Lao PDR. The contribution will be channeled through the UXO Trust Fund, administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). US\$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.

Celebration of the 3rd Anniversary of the CCM in Vientiane

- The Government of Lao PDR celebrated the third anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) on 03 August 2013. UXO Lao, among other operators, organized an exhibition of UXO Lao's work and visitors were able to learn more about the organization and its important work. The event further included speeches by the Lao Government, UNDP as well as several other partners. The event was filled with theatre plays, songs, puppet shows, and a presentation of a documentary among many other events. Lao singer Ms. Alexandra Bounxouei performed at this event which was her first public performance as UNDP's Goodwill Ambassador since her appointment in April

this year. In her role as a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador she is focusing her advocacy work on the UXO issues. During the event, she took the stage along with other Lao artists including Aluna, Annita, Tar A'Pacts, Toun Diva and Lao Bangfai, and more. The funds raised by the event are used to support UXO survivors.

5. Audit, audit recommendations and follow-up

The project has updated the status of the 2011 audit recommendations as requested by UNDP. 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 is currently working on addressing the recommendations and is updating the status of the audit recommendation follow up on a regular basis. Spot checks for 2013 will be undertaken in late October.

6. Priorities for Quarter 4 of 2013

Besides general clearance and community awareness operations that UXO Lao set out to do as described in the 2013 Annual Work Plan, UXO Lao plans to further conduct the following activities:

New National Programme Director UXO Lao

Mr. Thiphasone Soukhathammavong has been appointed the new UXO Lao Director in July 2013. In Q4, Mr. Thiphasone is planning to continue undertake missions to the provinces to familiarize himself with the Programme and staff of UXO Lao. The UXO Lao Director will further accompany the High Level Round Table Meeting delegation to a field visit of UXO Lao operations in Luang Prabang Province.

Technical Survey Trials progress

During the first week of November, a national workshop will be hosted by NRA, where survey strategy and methodologies will be discussed, and may lead to UXO Lao revising its operational survey processes. It is likely that this may result in the rerolling/training of clearance teams to introduce a capacity to undertake a Cluster Munitions Remnants Survey (CMRS) which will assist UXO Lao in more effective operations.

Laos-Australia Rural Livelihood Program

Through the newly committed funds from AUSAID to support the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihood Program, UXO Lao will continue to procure all necessary equipment to be able to start operations of the five new clearance teams and three new community awareness raising teams as planned. The project has, with the support of UNDP, successfully procured 90% of the planned equipment. The remaining equipment will be procured in Q4 of

2013. The AUSAID RL Teams are planned to be deployed beginning of January 2014.

CMAC-UXO Lao workshop preparations

The 4th CMAC-UXO Lao workshop (Topic: Risk Education, Data Management and Victim Assistance) will be organized from 25-29 November 2013 in Cambodia. The workshop is part of the ongoing series of workshops in relation to the South-South Cooperation on UXO/Mine Action Sector between UXO LAO and CMAC. 14 UXO Lao staff and 01 NRA staff will participate at this workshop

PREPARED BY



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Date 22 NOV 2013

CLEARED/APPROVED BY



Mr. Thiphasone SOUKHATHAMMAVONG

National Programme Director

Date 22 NOV 2013