



26 September 2013

Excellency,

Subject: Final Reports on the Government of Ireland's Assistance to Support to the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

I am pleased to submit our final narrative and financial reports on the Government of Ireland's contribution to support the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) which covers the period of January 2010 to December 2012.

Your government's contribution has been utilized to support 1) the Lao Government to organize the First Meeting of States Parties to the CCM, 2) Lao Government's Presidency and 3) the NRA's operations during 2012. The continued support from the Government of Ireland is crucial to allow the NRA to fully implement its initiatives and support the Lao Government's activities to meet the CCM obligations.

With reference to the attached financial report, there is a remaining balance of 1,923.73 USD. We would like to request for the kind consideration of your government's that this amount could be utilized in 2013 for NRA's general administration costs. It would be much appreciated if you could kindly advise us on this point.

I am very grateful for your Government's strong partnership with UNDP and commitment to support to the UXO programme.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink is written over the typed name and title of the Resident Representative.

Minh Pham
Resident Representative

H.E Mr. Damien Cole
Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary
Embassy of Ireland
Hanoi, Vietnam

CC: Mr. Phoukieo Chanthasomboune, National Project Director, NRA
Mr. Earl Turcotte, Chief Technical Advisor of the NRA

Interim Financial Report on Income and Expenses for the Government of Ireland
for the period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2012
Atlas Project ID: 00044218,75712,80296
(In United States Dollars)

			<u>Amount (USD)</u>
<u>OPERATING FUND</u>			
Balance as of 31 December 2009			500,000.00
Add:	Remittances to United Nations in 2010 ^{a/}		-
	Interest income ^{b/}		-
	Miscellaneous income ^{b/}		-
	Subtotal		<u>500,000.00</u>
		<u>Unliquidated Obligation</u>	
		<u>Disbursements</u>	
Less:	Staff and other personnel expenses	148,150.36	148,150.36
	Travel	18,392.18	18,392.18
	Contractual service	221,724.99	221,724.99
	Operating expenses	52,495.09	52,495.09
	Acquisitions	1,656.19	1,656.19
	Reimb to UNDP for Supp Svcs	21,493.34	21,493.34
	Unrealized exchange gain	(835.88)	(835.88)
	Sub total expenses	<u>463,076.27</u>	<u>463,076.27</u>
	Refund to donor		
	General Management Support cost		35,000.00
	Total Expenses and General Management Support costs		<u>498,076.27</u>
			-
			<u><u>1,923.73</u></u>
	Balance as at 31 December 2012		

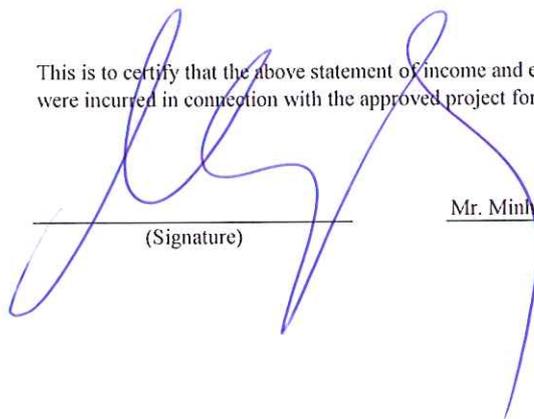
Notes:

a/ The project received income in 2010

b/ There is no interest and miscellaneous income.

This is to certify that the above statement of income and expenses is correct and that the expenses were incurred in connection with the approved project for which funds have been received.

07/1/13



 (Signature)

Mr. Minh Pham, Resident Representative, UNDP

 (Name and Title)

 (Date)

FINAL REPORT
to the
Government of Ireland

Project title:

Preparation, organization and Presidency of the First Meeting of State Parties to the
Convention on Cluster Munitions

Support to the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine action Sector in Lao PDR

UNDP Project ID: 00080296

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND

2. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT.....

3. PROJECT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

4. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING.....

6. THE WAY FORWARD.....

1. BACKGROUND

On 3rd December 2008 in Oslo, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), just after Norway. This prominent position reflected the facts that the Lao PDR is both the most cluster munitions - affected country on earth, and a country that played a leadership role throughout the negotiations that led to the adoption of the CCM in Dublin on 30th May 2008. Lao PDR was subsequently nominated to host and chair the First Meeting of State Parties (1MSP). This was seen by many as a way to 'root' the CCM in the country where the needs of affected communities are the most urgent.

In 2010, the Government of Ireland agreed to provide funds of USD 500,000 to the NRA, through the UXO Trust Fund for Lao PDR, for the period of August 2010 to December 2012. Ninety two (92) % of this contribution was used for the preparation, organization and Presidency of the First Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The remaining 8% of the contribution (40,543 USD as at end 2011) has been used, in agreement with the Government of Ireland, to support two activities of the National Regulatory Authority during the year 2012, including:

- 1) Support the NRA Survey and Clearance Unit which coordinates and regulates the UXO Sector for the release of priority land for agriculture and development;
- 2) Support the NRA Treaty Support Unit which coordinates and ensures the implementation of the Government's obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions

2. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

In addition to the specific objectives linked to the First Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, please find here other aims of the project.

The objective of this Project is to assist the Government of the Lao PDR to continue to strengthen the capacity of the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) for the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector. The NRA is an inter-ministerial body established by a Prime Ministers Decree with the key responsibilities of coordination, regulation and monitoring to maximize the performance of the UXO sector. Its secretariat, the NRA Office, which is supported by UNDP, is the UXO focal point in Government. Among other things, it provides oversight to implementing organizations and ensures they are working to National Standards for the sector.

The NRA also has prime responsibility to ensure the implementation of MDG 9: "Reduce the Impact of UXO in Laos in accordance with the National Strategic Plan for the UXO sector *The Safe Path Forward II*" approved in June 2012. This MDG would support and "further function

as a multiplier to MDGs 1-8 by providing increased access to assets and services for improved livelihoods.”¹

According to the 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), the Government should “continue addressing the UXO problem.” The Plan lists the following among targets for the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare: “Remove UXO from about 12,500 ha; reallocation: around 11,875 ha for agriculture and 625 ha for other activities.” As part of a section on measures to achieve MDG targets, the Plan states, “Attempt to remove UXOs from risky areas to promote production and raise people’s livelihoods.”

The Project comes under the UNDAF Outcome 9 of the Country Action Programme Plan 2012-2015 **(By 2015, national and local governments and communities have reduced the impact of unexploded ordnance on people in Lao PDR)**

Activity results of the Project as described in the 2012 Annual Work Plan included the following:

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

Activity Result 2: Better information & referral of UXO survivors; a finalized victim assistance strategy.

Activity Result 3: Release of priority land for agriculture and development coordinated and regulated in accordance with risk reduction and priority needs.

Activity Result 4: Effective UXO Sector coordination, regulation and information management advanced.

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

Activity Result 6: International treaty obligations met.

3. PROJECT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

In the interim report submitted on April 19th, 2012, the following key achievements for the period of 2010 to 2011 were presented:

- The effective management and secretariat structures were put in place that enable the Lao Government to meet all of its Convention commitments, with the International Treaties Support Unit(ITSU) established in 2010 and located in the NRA Office.
- Skills and resources were available to ensure a successful First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP), with some 1,200 delegates from 40 States Parties to the CCM, 47 Signatory

¹ “The MDG Compact for Lao PDR: Fully committed to attaining the MDGs by 2015 and the Lao PDR specific MDG 9 on the reduction of UXO impacts by 2020 on the occasion of the Vientiane High Level Round Table Meeting,” 20 October 2010.

States, 34 Observer States, many UN agencies, international organizations and civil society representatives.

- Lao PDR has the structure and staffing in place to be an effective President of the Convention. As President, the Lao PDR chaired all CCM meetings and undertook several universalization demarches in order to promote the CCM internationally, in particular at events involving UN member states, ASEAN and the Non-Aligned Movement.

During the period January to December 2012, the Irish contribution was used to: 1) to support the NRA Clearance Unit in charge of the coordination and the regulation of the UXO sector for the release of priority land for agriculture and development and 2) support to the NRA Treaty Support Unit in charge of the coordination and the implementation of the Government's obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

1) **Support to the Clearance Unit:**

- In 2012, the Clearance Unit organized three Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings on Clearance. The fourth TWG meeting was replaced by a workshop on training standards. The senior EOD experts from the various UXO clearance operators (UXO LAO, MAG, NPA, SODI, HI and some commercial companies) attended this workshop (the outcomes of the meeting are mentioned below). The TWG meetings allowed all the operators working on Clearance to share information and discuss issues, work undertaken and results achieved. It also allowed operators to better plan for the next quarter.
- The Clearance Unit together with the Quality Management Unit organized training for senior EOD experts in Vientiane Capital Province. The issues discussed include: the development of a 10 year plan for clearance of bombies, the UXO humanitarian training of the Lao army (with US funding), UXO technology for clearance, the District Focused Approach pilot project to survey, communication methodology among local SEOD including how to act faster to work more closely, the submission of information and data from commercial companies to NRA regarding land cleared and insurance for workers employed in the UXO sector. This training has provided the senior EOD experts with opportunity for concrete discussion and exchange of ideas on big bombs disposal, marking of clearance sites, or QA/QC activities. The workshop enabled senior EOD experts to review Standard Operating Procedures and to discuss amendments of the National Standards on Survey and Clearance. The amendments were proposed to the NRA board for consideration. Following this workshop, in 2013, the NRA Information Management Unit will provide training to the commercial companies on the submission of information and data on land clearance.
- The Clearance Unit monitored the operations of 5 humanitarian organizations (including UXO Lao – a government entity) and 6 commercial companies that are operating in 10 provinces. The aim of the monitoring is to control and ensure that clearance operators are operating in line with the National Standards and to help operators to improve their performance. After the monitoring missions NRA Clearance Unit regularly followed up on their mission observations and as necessary, discussed them at Technical Working Group meetings.

- The Clearance Unit for the first time launched three Regional Planning Workshops for UXO clearance. The aim of the workshops was to collect data at provincial level on UXO clearance and to link it to the development projects of the UXO contaminated provinces, in order to determine priority areas for survey and, if necessary, for clearance over the next decade. This is an important step for the NRA, as it seeks to strengthen its capacity in the establishment of planning priorities in consultation with various levels of government in the UXO sector. More than 180 stakeholders participated in the three workshops. Two events were chaired by H.E. Asang Laoly, Vice-Prime Minister and co-chaired by H.E. Bounhueang Duangphachan, Chairman of NRA board. Clearance operators active in concerned provinces and Chiefs or Deputy Chiefs of Department from line ministries such as Planning and Investment, Natural Resources and Environment, Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, attended the workshops. Notification 93 from the government was presented at the workshops which requires that all development projects in areas affected by UXO, must allocate sufficient budget for UXO survey, clearance and quality assurance, as necessary. This may lead to provinces requesting additional support from central government and/or donors for UXO clearance in priority areas. It is notable that, just a few months after the announcement of Notification 93, AusAID allocated additional funding support to ensure survey and clearance of development project areas and risk education capacity of UXO LAO staff in six priority districts of the Laos Australia Rural Livelihood Program (LARLP) funded by AusAID in Southern provinces.
- At the global level, Ireland and Lao PDR co-chaired the Clearance and Risk Reduction working group at the CCM intersessional meeting in Geneva. 2 NRA staff and the UNDP chief technical advisor to the NRA participated in this meeting, to support the Lao delegation. The Lao PDR delegation had regular and good interaction with the Irish delegation during the intersessional meeting in Geneva and at Meetings of State Parties; both countries are currently consolidating presentations and inputs from the various stakeholders. In addition to participating in various international meetings, Lao PDR will remain co-chair of the Clearance and Risk Reduction working group until 2014.
- Funding from Ireland was also used to support the NRA Clearance Officer to participate in the Fourth Biannual Technology Workshop co-organized by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and UNMAS, 4-6 September 2012. More than 90 mine action researchers and practitioners from more than 30 countries attended. The meeting allowed participants to share ideas and experiences with mine action methods and techniques. After the workshop, the Clearance Officer shared his experience with other operators in Technical Working Group meetings organized in Laos, and received great interest. This workshop is organized every two years. In 2014, the Clearance Officer is planning to attend the workshop, if funding allows, to exchange experience and lessons learned with other countries.

2) Support to the International Treaty Support Unit:

The financial contribution from the Government of Ireland was used by NRA to support the Lao Government to continue working to fulfil its international obligations:

- To ensure continuity of International Treaty Support Unit (ITSU) work and advocate for CCM implementation, the NRA deployed two staff to coordinate with humanitarian operators in providing information and inputs to the CCM report. The two staff has supported NRA in gathering data for inputs into CCM Article 7 reports, in a timely manner. As a result, Lao PDR was one of the first countries to submit its report on Article 7 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (Transparency measures).
- Lao PDR was very active during the negotiation of the CCM. Lao PDR hosted the first Meeting of State Parties in 2010 and held the Presidency of the CCM throughout the following year. In 2012, Lao PDR was able to send 5 Lao delegates to attend the CCM Intersessional Meeting in Geneva. See more details in Section 1 above.
- Funding from Ireland allowed attendance of H.E Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs to participate in the Third Meeting of State Parties in Oslo from 11 to 14 September, 2012. The Vice Minister's attendance reinforced Lao government support to the CCM. Lao delegates played an active role on the international stage: six statements were delivered during the plenary session and the delegation engaged in debate on several key issues. The Article 7 Progress Report on fulfilling the obligations of the CCM was presented. The Lao delegation also held bilateral meetings with the ministries of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Germany, Canada and several other donors. This high level attendance to a Meeting of State Parties, thanks to the Irish contribution, allowed Lao PDR to continue to be an active player in the CCM, since it hosted the First Meeting of State Parties of the CCM.

4. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- The main challenge of the NRA in 2011 was the departure of six key staff members (one half of NRA key staff): two successive Risk Education (MRE) Officers, one Research Officer, one Standards/Quality Management Officer, one Finance Officer and one Deputy Director. **This high turnover represented a significant challenge for the NRA** and delayed some activities such as the District Focused Approach to UXO Survey. While each departure had its own cause, an important element leading to the departure of staff was the growing difficulty for the NRA to compete with salaries offered in the private sector in Vientiane. In 2012, actions were taken to mitigate this situation, including introduction of a salary increase of 20% from 1st August 2012 and a 'family consideration' (taking into account the number of dependents). An additional 5% increase was implemented from 1st January 2013 for all staff of UNDP projects. **In 2012, the NRA workforce was stable.** NRA did not lose any key staff, a very positive improvement compared to the year 2011.
- The results of the District Focused Approach pilot project (coordinated by the NRA and implemented by three INGOs) have not yet been determined. As the pilot project nears completion, NRA and government's consideration is necessary, before any extension to other districts or modification / agreement concerning a common methodology. **The survey and mapping of UXO contamination in Lao PDR is still very necessary and pressing.** The NRA is planning to organize an important workshop on Survey in October 2013, to take

stock of the DFA pilot project and to agree on a common survey methodology within the Lao UXO Sector.

- The NRA consistently encourages operators to research and develop new clearance methodologies to improve effectiveness and efficiency. In 2012, a machine trial took place in Xiengkhouang province supported by JMAS, however, this particular machine was not deemed to be appropriate, in light of the high level of UXO contamination in Lao PDR. The NRA will encourage more trials, in 2013-2014. Other operators have planned to test new technology in vegetation cutting. To ensure coordination and relevance, all trials are reviewed and approved by the NRA.
- Funds allocated to MRE work in 2012 were limited. In the past, UNICEF contributed to MRE activities in the UXO sector. However, in 2012, UNICEF cut funding in these areas. Given the limited funding and continued importance of MRE work, the NRA would welcome more contribution in this area. Another challenge for the MRE sub-sector is to determine how best to measure MRE performance. In 2013-2014, MRE operators and the NRA will collaborate to work on this topic, under the guidance of NRA Deputy Director for Operations.
- In terms of reporting from commercial clearance operators, NRA does not receive information from all commercial clearance operators on numbers of hectares cleared and therefore, sometimes it restricts NRA's ability to report accurately, in the framework of the CCM.

5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING:

- In 2011, the NRA pursued a policy of actively recruiting women for 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, specifically the ITSU officer, Risk education officer and Finance officer.
- In 2012, particular attention to gender was ensured through the following activities:
 - The Knowledge, Attitude and Practices Survey, the UXO casualties database and the Survivor Tracking system, systematically disaggregated data according to age and gender.
 - Pilot District Focused Approach to UXO Survey: building on findings of the Post-Clearance Impact Assessment (PCIA) according to which "... there does seem to be different types of impact for men and women depending on post-clearance land use," the District Survey ensured active participation of women in the preparation of the district clearance plans.
- According to the KAP Survey, women are not participating to an adequate degree in UXO MRE campaigns. Therefore, in 2012, the NRA held two workshops on gender mainstreaming in MRE- one in Savannakhet Province at the technical level and one in Vangvieng Province at the policy level. The workshops were of great interest from both male and female participants. The NRA will organize another workshop in May 2013, to mainstream gender in UXO Action programme. This will not only cover NRA staff but also the staff from UXO operators.

- In the area of human Resources management, NRA has considered gender balance in their recruitment policy. During the reporting period, 16 positions have been advertised in newspapers (in Vientiane times), NRA recruited 15 staff members: 7 women and 8 men.

6. THE WAY FORWARD:

The NRA, UXO Lao and the UNDP have jointly developed a new project document that will guide their cooperation in the Sector for the years 2013-2015. This document sets out the key elements of UNDP support to the implementation of the National Strategic Plan “The Safe Path Forward 2” and the multi-year work plan for the sector, which is currently being developed. Activities focus on institutional strengthening, providing support to UXO victims, better coordination within the UXO Sector and accelerating prioritized land release, in support of national development priorities.

The Government of Ireland has been a consistent and generous partner to the UXO Sector in the Lao PDR, contributing more than USD 4.7 million since 2006. The Government of Ireland signed an agreement with UNDP in 2012, committing to contribute additional funding in the amount of EUR 2,000,000 to the UXO Trust Fund, between 2012 and 2015. The funds will be used to support activities envisioned in the aforementioned project document, 2013-2015, including Institutional Capacity Development based on a comprehensive capacity assessment, survey and clearance focusing on development priority areas, the support to the development of new methodologies and technologies for clearance and survey, the coordination of targeted risk education activities, focusing on behaviour change within identified at-risk groups, collecting and using reliable data and to coordinate assistance to both existing and new victims of UXO.