

# HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL



PRESENCE SINCE **1996**  
with **mine action** activities

## Humanitarian Mine Action Strategy LAO PDR

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**THE LAO PDR IS THE  
MOST HEAVILY  
BOMBED COUNTRY  
PER CAPITA IN THE  
WORLD**

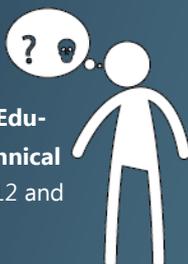
**430 UXO**

located and destroyed  
between 2014 and 2015



**6 415**

beneficiaries of Risk Edu-  
cation and Non Technical  
Surveys between 2012 and  
2015



**28 UXO VICTIMS**

identified and supported  
by HI teams and **106**  
additional persons with  
disabilities in 2014-15

## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO MINE ACTION

Handicap International's (HI) historic programme in the Lao PDR follows **Comprehensive approach to mine action methodology** that combines **survey and clearance** of unexploded ordnance (UXO) with **risk education, advocacy and livelihood development** for UXO survivors, families of victims and persons with disabilities (PwDs) in Sepon, Nong, Vilabuly and Phine in Savannakhet, the most UXO-affected province in the country.

### Land Release through Survey & Multi-Task Teams

HI's actions are rooted in the national priority for **releasing safe land** as quickly and efficiently as possible, to enhance economic development and reduce poverty levels. Through a **comprehensive survey methodology** comprising **Non-Technical Surveys (NTS)** and **Technical Survey (TS)**, **previously suspected hazardous areas can be released to communities through safe cancellation or clearance** whilst at the same time providing authorities with accurate data on remaining contamination from UXO, ultimately **improving clearance prioritisation**. This approach is proven to make **communities safer through the removal of single explosive ordnance and marking of hazardous areas**, and targets clearance to increase the rate at which land is returned to those who rely on it.

HI deploys skilled **Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams** to respond to the UXO threat: a **roving team to rapidly respond to UXO identified** during NTS, EOD operatives as part of the **4 TS teams to remove items as they are found**; and a **manual clearance team to conduct complete clearance** where confirmed hazardous areas containing cluster munitions and other UXO are identified through TS. A **vegetation cutting team** is also deployed to speed up the rate at which land is accessible for survey and clearance.

### Community Based Risk Management (CBRM) Strategy

A sustainable solution to community safety is currently being developed through the CBRM, which enables affected communities and authorities to take ownership of managing the risk from residual UXO threat through tailored training and on-going technical support in a UXO reporting system, risk awareness, first aid and victim assistance.

Through village-level **risk management committees**, UXO will be identified, marked and reported to the national authorities, whilst at the same time risk awareness is delivered to community members, particularly to at-risk groups including children, farmers and scrap metal collectors. Committee members receive training on identifying the needs and referring of victims and survivors of UXO accidents, as well as persons with disabilities at large, to appropriate medical or health services.



Non Technical Survey mapping with the villagers of Sobkong  
© Till Mayer/ Handicap International

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

- The Lao PDR is, per capita, **the most heavily bombed nation in the world**. Between 1964—1973, 270 million cluster munitions were released over the country during the Vietnam War.
- Over 2 million tons of ordnance were dropped, approximately 30% of which failed to explode.
- Since 1964, **over 50,000 casualties from UXO have been recorded**, including 29,469 people killed and 20,901 injured.
- To date, an estimated **25% of villages are still contaminated with UXO**.
- The National Socio-Economic Development Plan identifies UXO contamination not only as a major threat to physical safety, livelihoods and food security but also a significant cause of poverty.

## A HISTORICAL PRESENCE

HI's humanitarian mine action intervention in the Lao PDR **dates back to 1996** when the organization spent the first 9 years providing technical and institutional support to the national UXO operator, UXO Laos. **In partnership with UXO Laos, HI conducted the only nationwide survey on UXO contamination levels** in the mid-1990s. Over the past 15 years of implementing risk education, HI has continuously developed its methodology and uses a *Behavioural Change Communication* approach. This involves tailored messages and approaches to promote and sustain individual and community behaviour change, working in partnership with many actors from civil society.

## COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO MINE ACTION (CAMA)

All HI's actions in the Lao PDR are based on CAMA, a **HI-developed standard to maximize the impact of the action**. CAMA aims to link 4 pillars of mine action (clearance, risk education, victim assistance and advocacy) through optimized management and exchange processes. This **creates operational synergies and provide donors with better value for money**.

## A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

HI's intervention in the Lao PDR is rooted in the **UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)**, making a strategic connection with the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munition. EOD activities aim to make a sustainable contribution to **the achievement of the Laos-specific Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 9**, which aims at clearance of UXO from priority agricultural land by 2020 and a reduction in the number of casualties and rehabilitation of UXO survivors.

## VICTIM ASSISTANCE & ADVOCACY

Using a twin-track approach, **the promotion of the economic participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), including UXO survivors and their families, combines individual support with the development of capacities on disability and disability rights** in mainstream livelihood actors, as well as local authorities and service providers, to enhance access and inclusion for those affected; ultimately enhancing the sustainable impact of HI's intervention on the rural livelihoods in the province of Savannakhet.

## MRS KHAMPAN, AGED 78, FARMER IN SEPON KAO VILLAGE

*"I was afraid every time I had to go working out in my land. Some people in my village were not careful enough and accidents happened, so I was minding every step and farming was difficult. I was asking myself how long I would have to work with this risk! HI cleared my land and it changed my life. "from that moment, I would go to my land with a smile".*

## HI DEVELOPS ACTIVITIES IN THE LAO PDR THANKS TO...



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

