



**Minutes of the Technical Working Group UXO/Mine Clearance
Held at the NRA Conference room
On 1st June 2007**

Attendance:

Dr. Maligna Saignavongs, Director NRA
Mr. Thongphone Keosayadet, Chief of OPS NRA.
Mr. Sommai Xaixongdeth, Chief of Standards and QA
Mr. Tim Horner, STA NRA.
Mr. Phil Bean, OPS/QA TA.
Mr. Karl Semancik, President AGNA
Mr. Chris Bath, UXO Project Coordinator HIB
Mr. Soullanh, UXO Assistant Project Coordinator HIB
Mr. John Dingley, STA UNDP UXO Lao
Mr. Paul Stanford, Technical Operations Manager PCL
Mr. Gabriele Giannini, APO WFP
Mr. Jonathon Guthrie, OPS Milsearch.
Mr. Lee Moroney, TA ETS, NPA
Mr. Vilaysack Vongsayachanh, Demining Officer NRA
Mr. Phouviengsavanh, Officer National Standards NRA.
Mr. Michael Inthavong, PTA NRA
Mr. Bouaphet Phommavong, TWG Technician NRA

Apologies:

Ms. Jo Durham, Country Programme Manager, MAG
Mr. Nigel Orr, Programme Manager FSD.

Agenda Item 1, Opening and Introduction:

The meeting opened at 14:00 hrs. Mr. Thongphone Keosayadet welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained why it had not been possible to have a meeting since 18 January 07 due to much international and provincial travel by NRA staff.

Dr. Maligna Saignavongs provided a brief overview of Clearance in Lao PDR and discussed the work of various organizations working in the clearance field. Dr. Maligna Saignavongs then handed over to Mr. Thongphone Keosayadet to introduce the agenda of the meeting and the participants.

Mr Thongphone confirmed acceptance of the minutes of the last meeting and briefed the meeting on a number of topics of general interest including the outputs of the Vientiane Declaration round table meeting that he had attended the previous day on behalf of the NRA; programmed visits of the GICHD, 1-10 July by Mr Tim Lardner on the topic of Risk Mitigation and 18-28 July by Mr Alan Arnold for the installation of IMSMA Version 4.

Mr Paul Stanford raised a question about training support from the NRA. MAG had received the support of NRA to provide training for deminers in Xieng Khouang and Mr Paul wanted to know if this training support would be available in the same way, that is at no cost, for other operators. In reply Mr Tim Horner stated that in principle the NRA would help where possible. Mr Phil Bean reminded the meeting that the resources of the NRA were limited and that their role as regulators would limit their ability to act as implementers for routine training. Training support might be available from other organization like UXO LAO but at cost. Requests to the NRA for training support would be considered on a case by case basis.

The meeting progressed to the main agenda:

Agenda Item 2, Monthly Progress Reports:

Mr. Vilaysack Vongsayachanh presented about the monthly progress report and thanked all of our operators for submitting information. The monthly progress report of NRA was proving to be of great interest and was very important for the NRA to finalize and report to the NRA board and donor and other UXO stakeholders. It is intended to externally distribute the progress report information both in hard copy and through the NRA website in due course.

The reported clearance as the result of UXO clearance operation in the first four months of the year 2007 showed a big increase compared with the same period in the last year.

- Total area have been cleared more than 1.500 Ha. And total UXO were destroyed more than 15.000 items. This indicated that the progress is the result of the operators actively working and responding to 'development' and community needs.

- The numbers of UXO accidents are increased if compared with last year. First four months of this year there are 30 UXO accidents, resulting in 64 casualties. The cause of the accidents from:

1. Farming : 25 people (2 death)
2. Fire: 18 people (3 death)
3. Collection scrap metal are: 16 people (10 death)
4. Playing with UXO: 5 people (3 death)

Due to that issue we should all assist in taking some action to solve this problem.

Mr. Vilaysack Vongsayachanh requested that all of the operators should submit their monthly progress and completion reports to the NRA office on time.

Action: All UXO Organisations to submit monthly progress reports to the NRA no later than the 22nd of the following month.

Agenda Item 3, Completion Reports:

Mr Vilaysack asked that the clearance operators submit their 'completion' reports to the NRA in both hard and soft copy so that the central data base can be maintained. Currently only FSD and HI(B) were regularly submitting completion reports and all clearance operators should now do this in the format that each use.

Action: All UXO Clearance Organisations

Agenda Item 4, National Standards:

Mr. Sommai Xaixongdeth, stated that The National standard has already been translated in to Lao version and that it was intended to provide a seminar for the NRA Board to explain the content of the standards. At the moment the NRA and the UXO Sector were working to the Draft version of National Standards as part of a review and proving process. During this period of application some comments or a need for amendment of the draft national standards may become apparent. If operators and UXO Implementing Organisations have comments or propose amendments they should send these in writing to the NRA. All points will be considered and where appropriate circulated for information / discussion as part of the National Standards review process.

Comments have since been received from Milsearch, PCL and from within the NRA.

Action: All

Agenda Item 5, Accreditation:

Mr Sommai Xaixongdeth, informed the meeting that a number of applications for accreditation had now been received by the NRA, and clarified that all operators should submit their applications as soon as they were ready. The NRA would process application as they could and would help organizations like UXO LAO and the MOD in their preparation of applications if required.

Action: All organizations requiring accreditation by the NRA.

Agenda Item 6, Risk Mitigation Study / Model:

Mr Tim Horner briefed the meeting on the progress of the trial of the GICHD Risk Mitigation model, this was being carried out by UXO LAO, MAG, FSD, in parallel with their ongoing technical survey and clearance task selection process. The GICHD model was identified to be in need of calibration and Mr Tim Lardner would visit between 1- 10 July to help with this process. Tim Horner invited HI(B) to join in the process of the trial and to participate in the coming visit. A briefing would be arranged for the UXO Sector towards the end of the GICHD visit.

Action: NRA

Agenda Item 7, Provincial NRA Offices:

Dr Maligna Saignavongs briefed the meeting on the progress of establishing Provincial NRA Offices. The idea was to improve coordination and reporting at the Provincial level and to set up two provincial offices, as part of a 'pilot' programme, in Savannakhet and Xiang Khouang. Eventually it was intended to have offices in each of the 14 UXO contaminated Provinces. In September 2006 the NRA had met with representative from the 14 Provinces to discuss the

topic. In Xieng Khouang the provincial authorities had agreed to provide an office co-located with the provincial administration building, near the GPAR office.

The idea was the staff the Provincial NRA Office with 3 people. The Chief or head of the Office would be appointed by the Provincial Authority (two names would be submitted to the NRA to enable a mutual selection), this person would be paid by the province with travel allowances paid by the NRA. The remaining staff would be contracted by the NRA. The exact roles and responsibilities of the Provincial NRA offices would be confirmed during the trial period. A budget had been allocated for office equipment, computers and motor cycles.

Action: NRA

Agenda Item 8, Expansion in to the remaining 5 UXO Contaminated Provinces.

Dr Malign Saignavomgs and Mr Thongphone discussed the expansion process with the TWG. Requests for support had been received from Phongsali and Vientiane provinces and a formal process of reporting and planning for expansion needed to be established. The NRA intended to visit the three Northern Provinces and to discuss the need for UXO support with the Provincial Authorities and to provide them with data and maps that show possible contamination.

The process of establishing full national reporting and response systems would also be examined to ensure that communities and the relevant authorities were aware of the process.

Action: NRA Operations

Agenda Item 9, Any other business.

Mr Gabriele Giannini from World Food Programme requested information on how WFP projects in Khammouane Province could be included in provincial UXO workplans. The areas of focus for WFP spanned geographical areas of responsibility of two UXO Organisations. Mr John Dingley undertook to meet separately and discuss how late notice tasks from WFP could be coordinated and inserted in to the annual workplans. It appeared that up to 30% of the UXO LAO workplan was flexible to meet late emerging priorities.

The NRA noted a requirement to meet with WFP and discuss the work planning processes to harmonise external development agency priorities with District and Provincial priorities and strengthen the provincial prioritization and work planning process. It was noted that 'short notice' tasks usually cause other previously selected tasks to be postponed or deleted and it was important the relative 'priority' was assessed in this process. Some weakness in institutional capacity to retain knowledge was noted across the development and provincial planning organizations leading to a need for progressive outreach support from the NRA.

Action: NRA Operations and Policy

Next Meeting:

The intention is to revert to having a clearance TWG on the last Thursday of the month, consequently the next meeting is scheduled for 14.00 hrs on the 28 June at the NRA.

Topics for the agenda should be forwarded to the NRA. The current plan is to focus on issues of liability if UXO are subsequently found on previously cleared and released land. Factored into this discussion will be reference to clearance depths.

Closure:

The meeting closed at 16.00 hrs

Thongphone Keosayadet
Chief of Operations
National Regulatory Authority