Key Principles for UXO Risk Education in Lao PDR

The aim of this document is to ensure consistency in the way UXO Risk Education is approached in Lao PDR by highlighting key principles that should be followed by all UXO Organizations and Institutions implementing UXO Risk Education activities. The principles are in line with the following documents:

- UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment, 2006
- Strategic Plan for Mine Risk Education in Lao PDR, 1st January 2007 – 31st December 2010
- UXO Risk Education National standards

Key Principles

- **Geographic targeting:** In Lao PDR risk education operators aim to better target geographic areas for risk education, focusing on areas with high levels of UXO contamination and/or high incidence of accidents. Areas where there is an active scrap metal trade involving items of UXO, are also suitable target areas.

- **Targeting of high-risk groups:** “High-risk groups” refer to people who are exposed to UXO risk to a greater extent than other people and therefore are more likely to have a UXO accident. While all people living in a UXO contaminated environment are at some level of risk, some people may be more at risk than others and it is these people that risk educators must make a special effort to target. The following groups have currently been identified as particularly high risk:
  - Adults who actively collect scrap metal and/or deliberately dismantle UXO
  - Scrap metal dealers
  - Adults who move UXO out of farming land
  - Adults and children who work on agricultural land
  - Children who opportunistically or actively collect scrap metal
  - Children who play or tamper with UXO
  - Out of school youth and young children

- **Risk Minimization for Adults:** Risk education for adult high-risk groups will focus on risk minimization (safer practices) messages and discussions rather than no-risk messages, recognizing that livelihood needs often force people to take risk.

- **No Risk for Children:** Risk education for children will continue to focus on no-risk messages discouraging children to take risks with UXO, recognizing that children are less able to rationalize the risks they are taking.

- **Scrap Metal Trade:** Scrap Metal Dealing is a business, but risk educators still have a duty to help make the trade safer. Risk Educators will work with scrap metal dealers and collectors to help prevent dangerous items entering the trade, to educate about safe and unsafe practices and to assist with reporting procedures to ensure that hazardous items are removed from the scrap metal yards by response teams.
• **Local Authorities:** Risk educators should ensure that they coordinate and share information with local authorities regarding risk education activities.

• **Ethnicity and Language:** There are different ethnic groups in Lao PDR with their own languages and dialects. Wherever possible risk education activities should be held in appropriate local languages. Risk educators should at all times respect local culture and traditions and respect the people they are working with.

• **Gender:** Gender considerations (the different activities, responsibilities and needs of men and women) should be integrated into all Risk Education activities.

• **Local Responsibility:** Risk Educators have a responsibility for helping local people develop the skills to manage UXO risk in their own communities. Communities, teachers, parents, local authorities and relevant security officers are to be encouraged to take responsibility for promoting safer behaviour in their communities and for imposing penalties on people who conduct high-risk UXO behaviour that they find to be unacceptable.

• **Payment:** Risk Educators should never pay for information or pay for ordnance.

• **Village Hospitality:** Risk educators should not take advantage of village hospitality in terms of the provision of food or souvenirs. Risk educators should contribute to food costs while visiting or staying in villages.

• **Handling UXO:** Risk Educators should never touch, handle or move UXO in the course of their work, even if they know the UXO is safe. UXO should be marked and reported to the bomb disposal teams.

• **Reporting and Response:** Risk educators have a duty to educate people how to report the UXO they find, but it is also important to make sure that there is a response to the report. This requires good coordination at provincial and district level to ensure the reports reach the relevant operators and that the operators send roving teams to respond to the requests.

• **Legislation:** Risk education messages in Lao PDR should be in line with relevant legislation. Currently provincial notices provide some guidance on regulation of the scrap metal trade. Risk educators have a responsibility to be aware of the current provincial notices and future legislation that may be developed and to support local authorities and relevant security officers to implement the legislation as required.

• **Development Interventions:** Where possible UXO Risk educators and local authorities should try and link contaminated communities with development interventions that could introduce activities that will reduce the need for people to continue to take risk.

• **UXO Casualties:** Risk educators and local authorities have a duty to report UXO incidents to UXO Operators working in the area or the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) Victim Assistance Unit, telephone 021 244 218 / 020 220 7224. This is to ensure all incidents are recorded in the national database.

This document has been produced by the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) with agreement from the UXO/MRE Technical Working Group members. It is intended to be used by risk education operators to guide their working approaches. It will be distributed to provincial and district authorities in the UXO affected provinces to ensure that the relevant authorities are informed of the approaches and principles.

Vientiane, date: 15/10/2008

Director NRA:

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