

Assessment of the 2007-2010 UXO/MRE Strategic Plan in Lao PDR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
Purpose of the Assessment	3
Scope of the Assessment	3
Methodology	3
Summary of Key Findings	4
INTRODUCTION	5
Terms of Reference	5
Key Activities	5
Methodology	6
Report Layout	6
BACKGROUND	6
Establishment of UXO Lao	7
Establishment of the NRA	7
UNICEF and the UXO Sector	7
The UNICEF/MAG Risk Education Needs Assessment	7
The “Safe Path Forward” National UXO Strategy	9
The 2007-2010 Strategic Plan	10
The Current Status of the Strategy	10
Future Activities	10
FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CHALLENGES	11
THE WAY FORWARD	17
<i>Annex 1 – List of Acronyms</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Annex 2 - Assessment Matrix</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Annex 3 - Assessment Schedule</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Annex 4 - Assessment Methodology and Interview Guide</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Annex 5 - UXO Strategic Plan</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Annex 6 - NRA Monitoring Framework</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Annex 7 – Monitoring Tools</i>	<i>32</i>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Assessment

This assessment was jointly commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the National Regulatory Authority of UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) in an effort to examine the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the current NRA MRE Strategic Plan. To assess the overall progress of the strategy implementation and develop recommendations for how the plan may adjusted from a strategic, structural, monitoring and implementation perspective during the next phase of its development.

This report sets out a basic analysis of the components of the strategy, the relationship between the NRA and the different Risk Education/Community Awareness and Liaison actors in Lao PDR. It also discusses the level of interaction and capacity building that has taken place within the National Government structures and their implications on the long-term sustainability and quality control of the Risk Education process.

Scope of the Assessment

This assessment of the NRA MRE Strategic Plan makes up one part of a more comprehensive review of the risk education (RE) sector. A second and more specific assessment, commissioned by UNICEF and UXO Lao, will examine UXO Lao's Community Awareness work.

Though many issues, interlocutors and activities are inexorably linked in the overall process, this assessment has not attempted to analyse specific RE activities or operators, but has focused exclusively on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the NRA MRE Strategic Plan.

Methodology

This report is based on field work conducted over a two week period by Eric M. Filippino (*Mine Action Resources*) and Vanpheng Singharad (*Poverty Reduction and Development Association*), from September 1 to 14, 2010. Field work was conducted in Xieng Khouang and Savannakhet Provinces with further meetings in Vientiane. Meetings were held at the provincial and district-level, with representatives of the Ministry of Education and UXO technical operators; UXO Lao, MAG and HIB. In Vientiane interviews were conducted with World Education, MAG, key United Nations representatives and technical advisers as well as Lao Government representatives at the NRA, UXO Lao and the Ministry of Education.

The field portion of the research was preceded by a review of primary and secondary literature. Of particular importance was the *UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment* jointly conducted in 2006 by UNICEF, MAG and the Lao Youth Union, *The Risk Education Principles* issued by the NRA, the *National Strategic Plan for the UXO Programme in Lao PDR 2003-2013*, "*Safe Path Forward*" and the *Strategic Plan for Mine Risk Education in Lao PDR, 2007-2010*.

Summary of Key Findings

Relevance

- The process of developing the strategy has been logical, inclusive and participatory.
- The four goals, enabling objectives and supporting activities remain relevant to Lao PDR.
- The strategy correctly identifies the main capacity development and implementation challenges for RE in Lao PDR.
- The strategy is focussed on a traditional definition of RE.
- A greater emphasis could be placed on promotion of alternative income generation/integrated development activities.

Effectiveness

- The ability of the NRA to coordinate and direct RE efforts from a national perspective has increased.
- The coordinating function of the NRA and the development of the national strategy itself has fostered greater collaboration and focus of RE in Lao PDR.
- The level of involvement and commitment of other national partners has increased.
- There have been noteworthy capacity development efforts in promoting behaviour modification techniques. These could be increased and better reflected in the strategy.
- The RE Strategy has contributed positively to the development of policy, namely the draft Prime Minister's Order on Scrap Metal. This should be reflected more prominently in the strategy.

Efficiency

- The requirements to implement the activities in the strategy outweigh the current resources of the NRA.
- The desire to widen the donor base should be actively pursued.
- Coordination and oversight mechanisms will need continued attention.
- Further refinement of data flow and analysis mechanisms for RE activity, UXO incidents/accidents and behaviours should be emphasised. This significantly influences;
 - Coordination
 - Monitoring & Evaluation
 - Determination of indicators
 - Geographical priority setting and targeting
 - Incident reporting and follow-up
 - Clearance requests and timely response
- The NRA RE capacity development needs analysis should be a matter of priority. Areas of focus should include;
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Monitoring & Evaluation
 - Teacher Training
 - Resource mobilisation
- A detailed, albeit long range integration plan for the NRA and UXO Sector should be elaborated. This should include a specific plan for RE that reflects;
 - The pervasive UXO contamination
 - The many varied risk taking behaviours and target groups
 - Partial and limited integration models
 - The need for multiple partners
 - Resources
 - Training and technical support for local counterparts

INTRODUCTION

This assessment was jointly commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Lao National Regulatory Authority (NRA) in an effort to take stock of the current Risk Education Strategy and develop recommendations for the next phase of its development.

This report examines the basic components of the strategy, the relationship between the NRA and the different Risk Education/Community Awareness and Liaison actors in Lao PDR. It also examines the level of interaction and capacity building that has taken place within the National Government structures and their implications on the long-term sustainability and quality control of the process. The assessment identifies certain key areas which will need to be addressed in the next phase of the strategy's development.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference (ToRs) for this project were jointly developed by UNICEF and the NRA. They focus on the review and assessment of:

- The relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the UXO/MRE strategic plan
- Overall progress of the strategy implementation, and
- How the plan may be developed and adjusted from a strategic, structural, monitoring and implementation perspective.

The ToRs were adapted into an initial assessment matrix which formed the methodological underpinning of the work.¹

Key Activities

- Background Review
- Key informant interviews – Vientiane
- Key informant interviews – Xieng Khouang and Savannakhet
- PowerPoint Presentation of preliminary findings to the RE Stakeholders Meeting
- Review, Revision and Finalisation of PowerPoint presentation
- Submission of preliminary Assessment Report
- Review, Revision and Finalisation of Assessment Report
- Submission and acceptance of Final Assessment Report

Methodology

This report is based on field work conducted over a two week period by Eric M. Filippino (*Mine Action Resources*) and Vanpheng Singharad (*Poverty Reduction and Development Association*), September 1-14, 2010. Field work was conducted in Xieng Khouang and Savannakhet Provinces with provincial and district-level representatives of the Ministry of Education and UXO technical operators; UXO Lao, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Handicap International-Belgium (HIB). Further meetings in Vientiane were held with World Education and MAG, key United Nations representatives and technical advisers as well as Lao Government representatives at the NRA, UXO Lao and the Ministry of Education.²

¹ See *Annex 2*, The Assessment Matrix which summarises the key assessment questions and criteria employed when assessing each question, the type of data or indicators required to assess each question, the likely sources of such data, and the appropriate data collection methods.

² See *Annex 3*, *Assessment Schedule*

This field research was also supported by a review of primary and secondary literature. Of particular importance was the *UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment* jointly conducted in 2006 by UNICEF, MAG and the Lao Youth Union, *The Risk Education Principles* issued by the NRA, the *National Strategic Plan for the UXO Programme in Lao PDR 2003-2013, "Safe Path Forward"* and the *Strategic Plan for Mine Risk Education in Lao PDR, 2007-2010*.³

Report layout

The report is structured as follows:

- Terms of Reference and Methodology
- Brief introduction to the UXO Sector in Lao PDR
- Brief introduction to the strategic plan and its place in the national structure.
- Findings, recommendations and challenges regarding the strategy and its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Discussion of the way forward

BACKGROUND

As is becoming increasingly well known, during the period 1964–1973, Lao PDR was embroiled in a conflict which left it contaminated by an inordinately high quantity of UXO. In Lao PDR there are ten provinces identified as severely contaminated while a further eight of the remaining nine provinces are identified as having lesser levels of contamination. The actual numbers are almost impossible to estimate with any accuracy, but it goes without saying that the level of contamination is beyond comparison.⁴

As one would expect from such heavy residual contamination, the impact on the lives of the local population has been equally high. Data from the *National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase I* shows that mines and UXO have killed some 29,410 people with a further 20,726 injured between 1964 and 2008.⁵ An astoundingly high number especially when one considers the relatively small population of Lao PDR.

Establishment of UXO Lao

In 1996, in reaction to the mounting human, social and economic impact of UXO, the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO Lao) was established as a public institution under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Serving as both an implementation and coordination body UXO Lao, along with considerable input and support from the UN, international NGOs, commercial operators and their national partners, constituted "Mine Action" in Lao PDR.

Establishment of the NRA

In 2004, in order to separate the policy making and coordination functions from those of operational implementation, a formal mandate for the creation of a National Regulatory Authority of UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) was provided by Prime Ministerial Decree. By 2006 the Authority became fully operational. Up until this point these functions

³ See *Annex 4, Assessment Methodology and Interview Guide*

⁴ Lao PDR has the unfortunate distinction being the most heavily bombed country on Earth. See for example the Handicap International report, *Living with UXO: National Survey on the Socio-Economic Impact of UXO in Lao PDR*, Vientiane, 1997, for more specific information on the nature and scope of UXO contamination in Lao PDR.

⁵ National Regulatory Authority of UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (NRA), *National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase I*, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 2008.

were under the mandate of UXO Lao, however through the establishment of the NRA, UXO Lao was free to focus its resources more specifically on survey, clearance and community awareness, while the NRA could set policy and coordinate the various organisations active in the sector.

UNICEF and the UXO Sector

UNICEF has been heavily engaged in providing technical and financial support to the UXO Sector since its inception. Initially this support was provided via UXO Lao, and its more traditional partners in the Government Ministries, international and national relief and development community. More recently, UNICEF has begun to focus its support on the development and capacity building of the NRA.

The UNICEF/MAG/Lao Youth Union Risk Education Need Assessment

As a result of ongoing UNICEF supported monitoring and evaluation of the UXO risk education activities, UNICEF, together with the Lao Government decided in 2005 to support a comprehensive needs assessment to determine with more accuracy who exactly is at risk, what were the predominant risk taking behaviours (i.e., the specific activities that may bring an individual into contact with UXO or landmines) and what exactly could be done to mitigate and manage it. The results of the, *UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment* subsequently issued in October 2006, deserve some attention as they form the conceptual core of the NRA Strategy that evolved afterwards.

Building on the UXO Lao assessment of 2002, an internal UNICEF sector-specific evaluation in 2005 and the UNICEF commissioned Study on Scrap Metal collection,⁶ which were all developed in collaboration with the Lao Government, the needs assessment showed that there is an ever present, broad-spectrum risk for men women and children living in contaminated areas and that underlying this exposure to risk is a complex set of intertwined socio-economic factors.

Specifically, the assessment found that the general level of awareness among both adults and children regarding the risk associated with UXO was quite high. This is a logical finding considering the generations that have been exposed to UXO. There were however, specific income or livelihood supporting behaviours that were exposing people to the threat of injury. These behaviours were identified as;⁷

- Agricultural/food gathering activities, 28%
- Playing with UXO, 25%
- Collecting Scrap Metal, 21%
- Tampering with UXO, 20%

Rather than lack of knowledge or understanding *per se*, the assessment found that voluntary or intentional risk taking behaviour was by far the most common behaviour.⁸ The most common single way people intentionally take these known risks is through collecting or dealing with scrap metal, moving UXO from their farmland and dismantling UXO (reclamation of the explosive content).

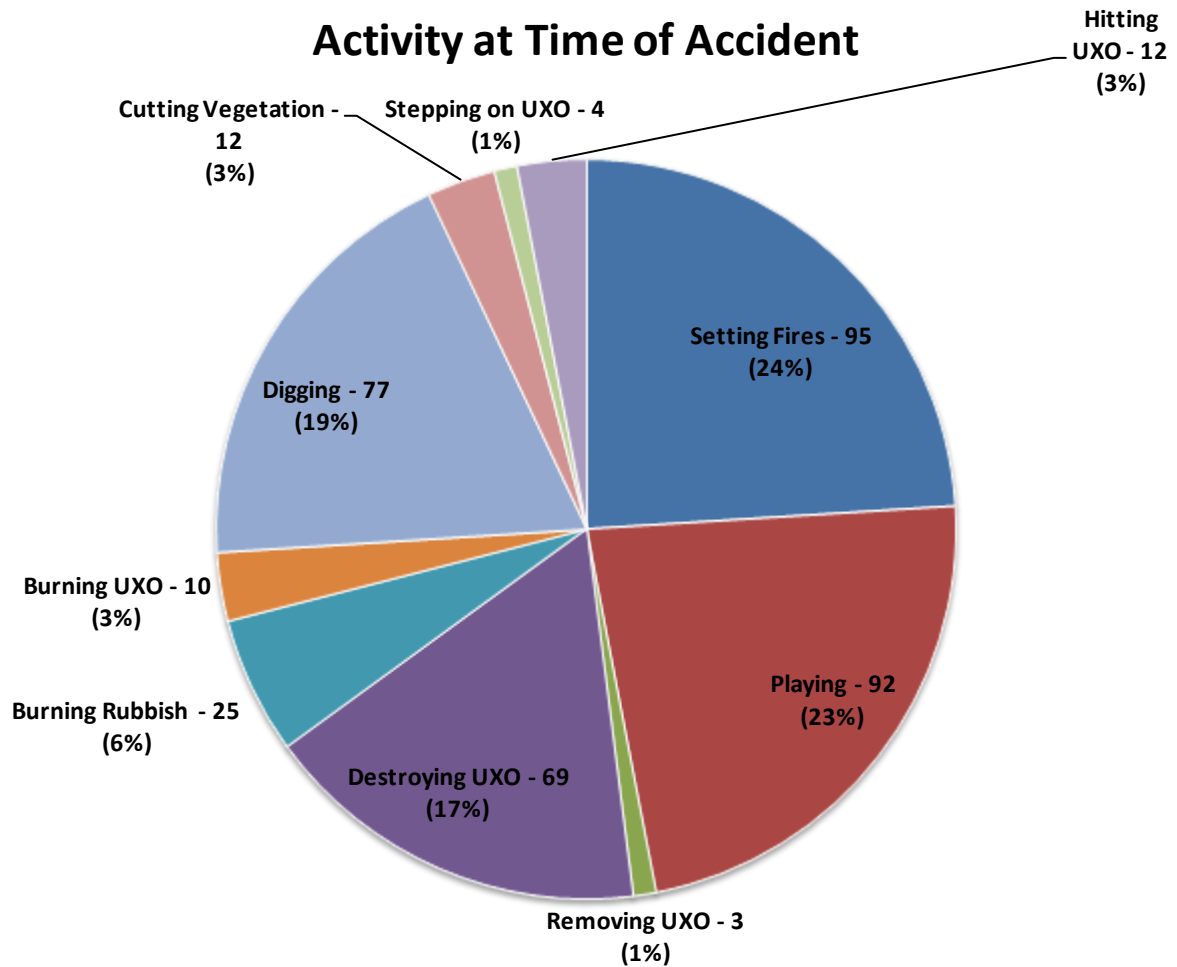
⁶ Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), *A Study of Scrap Metal Collection in Lao PDR*, Geneva, September 2005.

⁷ *UNICEF/MAG/Lao Youth Union UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment, Lao PDR, 2006*

⁸ The statistical findings of the 2006 Needs Assessment have subsequently been reaffirmed by the *National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase I*

These behaviours are in turn greatly influenced by underlying socio-economic factors at any particular place and time, i.e. price of scrap metal, access to alternative income generation activities and access to more suitable farmland.

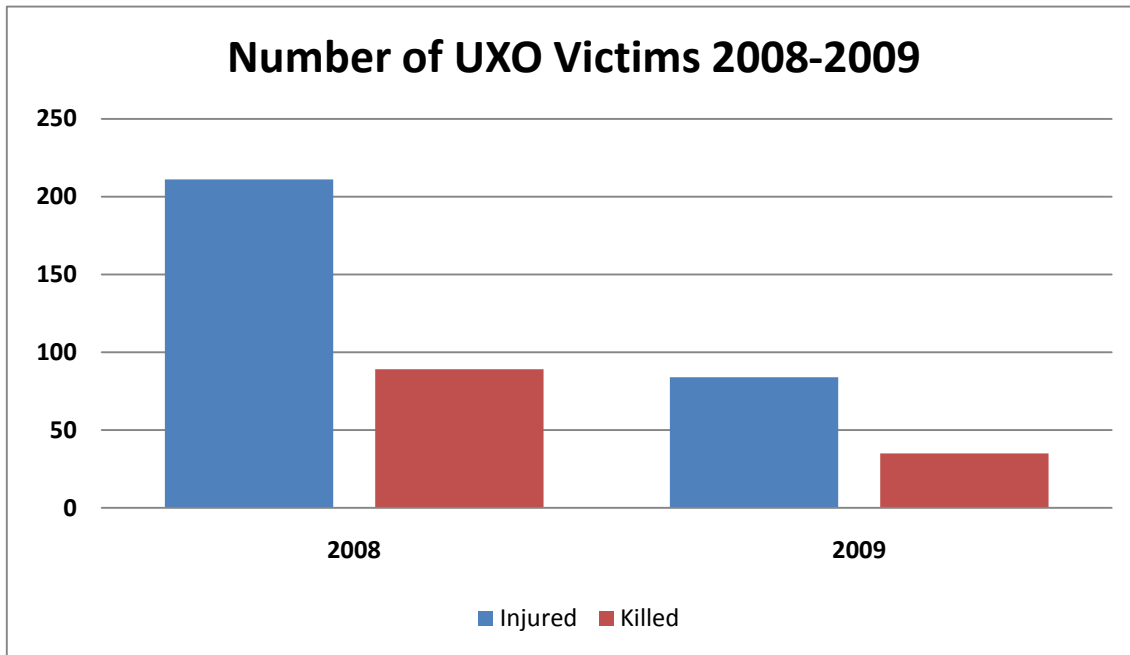
In any mix of scenarios it is evident that poverty is the driving force behind continued high levels of accidents in Lao PDR. More recent surveillance data from July 2010, shows that though there have been slight variations in the general profile of risk taking behaviour, it has remained consistent.⁹



Data Source: NRA National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase II, July 2010 Progress Report

What has changed, and encouragingly so, is the actual rate of victimisation. Though the overall pattern of life is still one of coping and co-existence with UXO, the actual numbers of accidents have been coming down:

⁹ National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase II, July 2010 Progress Report



Data Source, NRA National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase II, July 2010 Progress Report

The trend has clearly been one of falling accident rates. 8,142 villages from a total of 8,746 have been surveyed, and with only 604 remaining, the 2010 figures appear to be following the same trend.¹⁰ This is a very encouraging sign that cannot be attributed solely to clearance and scrap metal prices alone.

Though one indication of a very positive shift, the reduced accident numbers are not cause to scale back RE activities. The implications of the identified risk taking behaviours remain profound. Rather than dissemination of basic warning and safety messages alone,¹¹ risk education programmes need to find ever more innovative and sophisticated ways to promote behaviour change through linking with sustainable development. A much more complex and time consuming task.¹²

The “Safe Path Forward” National UXO Strategy

In 2004 the National Strategic Plan for UXO activities was formally adopted. Named *The Safe Path Forward, 2003 to 2013*, the strategy represented the first policy framework under which all UXO related activities would be conducted. Subsequently, a new strategy, *Safe Path Forward II, 2010-2020*, has been developed which reflects important developments and sector specific evaluations. It is also designed to ensure greater synergy with the government’s National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED).

Its six key strategic objectives are as follows,¹³

1. Reduce the number of UXO casualties from 300 to less than 75 per year.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Though not exclusively one or the other, as basic awareness will always form part of a comprehensive communication strategy for risk education, behaviour modification techniques will require the most focus

¹² HIB’s Household Garden Project, the HELVETAS “War Spoon” Project and MAG’s Community Liaison activities with scrap metal dealers are all examples of this new thinking.

¹³ *National Strategic Plan for the UXO Sector in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, 2010 – 2020 “The Safe Path Forward II”*

2. Ensure that the medical and rehabilitation needs of all UXO Survivors are met in line with treaty obligations.
3. Release priority land and clear UXO in accordance with National Standards and treaty obligations.
4. Ensure effective leadership, coordination and implementation of the national programme.
5. Establish sustainable national capacity fully integrated into the regular set-up of the Government.
6. Meet international treaty obligations.

All of these objectives require input and action across the sector, RE included, and the major enabling activities require a continued and detailed RE effort. As a result, a sectoral, RE specific strategy was developed in 2007.

The 2007-2010 RE Strategy

Using both the *Safe Path Forward I* as an overarching framework and the *UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment*, the RE Strategy was developed in a participatory and consultative manner. Government, NGO, Provincial and District level officials all fed into the process and the four following key objectives were determined as most relevant for the situation in Laos.

1. A targeted risk reduction strategy focusing on high risk areas and high risk groups.
2. A sustainable risk education programme.
3. Effective coordination and management of the risk education programme.
4. Effective monitoring of the risk education programme.

The Current Status of the RE Strategy

Turning the collective understanding of the various actors in Lao PDR into operational practice, overseen by a government coordination body, has been an extremely important effort. One the NRA can rightly be proud of. Practically universally endorsed, and still the normative reference for RE activities in Lao PDR, the strategy has had a clearly positive effect in enhancing the ability of the NRA to coordinate and direct RE efforts from a national perspective as well as fostering greater collaboration among all RE stakeholders.

The current strategy developed during 2006 and 2007 is set to expire at the end of 2010 and as such, the current review and revision of its progress is both timely and necessary. Doing so will help to reinvigorate activities and provide focus for the next strategic period.

Future Activities

There have been numerous capacity development efforts made through the implementation of the strategy over the past three years. Late 2010 and early 2011 however, will mark the beginning of a new strategic period for the UXO Sector in Lao PDR. Entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the 1st Meeting of States Parties to be hosted by Lao PDR in November, are significant milestones in the maturation of the sector.

No less significant for the RE Sector, these developments are the perfect springboard to take two decades of hard won knowledge and best practice and transform them into innovative and targeted action (see below for a for a discussion of the model HIB and MAG integrated projects and the scrap metal trade). And though micro-changes will continue to occur with the ebb and flow of certain economic activity, the profile of risk taking behaviour will remain essentially constant. Therefore, the next iteration of the RE Strategy, which will possess all of the necessary

support and building blocks, will continue to contribute to the drop in accident rates until they hopefully reach an almost negligible low.

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CHALLENGES

The scale and extent of UXO contamination in Lao PDR and its mandate to protect those at risk through communication and education means that seeking to reduce the impact of that contamination is a very relevant objective for UNICEF.

In supporting the NRA and the development of accurate and relevant strategic planning, UNICEF is fulfilling that objective. The strategy has set Risk Education in Lao PDR ahead and continues to chart an accurate course. There are however, limits to what education on its own can provide to those at risk, particularly given the underlying social and economic situation in Lao PDR. This means that further support and focus should look towards integration of risk education into broader UXO action as well as into development activities.

The assessment team has made the following findings:

RELEVANCE

The process of developing the strategy has been logical, inclusive and participatory

This participatory approach has allowed all of the relevant stakeholders to have a voice in the process and has in turn lead to what appears to be near universal endorsement. The assessment team did not hear a single dissenting voice regarding the legitimacy and relevance of the strategy process or resulting document. The next iteration of the strategy should attempt to duplicate the process previously employed, perhaps even expanding it to include a provincial level “fact finding tour” to facilitate an even deeper understanding and commitment among the province and district level representatives.

The four goals, enabling objectives and supporting activities remain relevant to Lao PDR

The strategy has borrowed heavily from the 2006 UNICEF supported MAG/Lao Youth Union RE Needs Assessment, and rightly so. The needs assessment remains the single most authoritative reference on risk taking and its findings still apply. Some regional changes in behaviour have occurred due to the drop in scrap metal prices and other socio-economic factors, but none of these shifts have been dramatic enough to require a re-direction of the strategy or supporting activities.

Unless there is significant information that the assessment team are unaware of, no data suggested that the target audience, nor the high risk behaviours, have changed significantly. Consequently, using the same four core goals as the starting point, the next strategy should focus on innovative and timely implementation.

The strategy correctly identifies the main capacity development and implementation challenges for RE in Lao PDR

Overall the scope of the strategy is broad and comprehensive. It identifies the main philosophical, capacity development, nationalisation/integration, implementation challenges and choke points for RE in Lao PDR. There do not appear to be any major focus areas that have not been included. Through the next strategic plan development process new issues will likely be raised, however the assessment team feels the core goals and enabling objectives of the current strategy should remain.

The strategy is focussed on a traditional definition of RE

The current strategy is focussed on a more traditional definition of Risk Education as a primarily awareness raising activity. This is only logical, as awareness raising has been the dominant approach for most Risk Education activity in Lao PDR. That being said, while not dispensing with awareness raising methodologies and techniques entirely (they should always form part of RE efforts), the next strategy should take a stronger position on the need for behaviour modification methodologies (where appropriate) and stronger development/livelihood programme links.

A greater emphasis could be placed on promotion of alternative income generation/integrated development activities

As previously touched on, there are currently innovative and integrated RE activities being tested in Lao PDR. Namely Handicap International Belgium's Household Garden Project in Savannakhet and the MAG supported HELVETAS "War Spoon" project in Xieng Khouang. What distinguishes these two projects is that they are designed to form part of a wider effort to solve the needs of a community rather than as stand-alone activities.

Though relatively small in scope, both projects are a model for the way in which RE messages and behaviour modification can be tied into an income generating activity. And whether they fall under what are defined as a "Safer Villages" or Community Liaison concept, they should be studied more closely and the lessons learned incorporated into the strategic direction of RE.

The strategy could more directly reflect national policy regarding the scrap metal trade

Almost immediately upon initiation of risk awareness activity in Lao PDR it became clear that the local population has exploited the commercial and practical value of UXO on an ongoing basis. They are used whole as ornaments to attract the attention of tourists, as practical implements such as tools, fence posts, lamps, housing supports, roofing materials, boats and the like. In addition to this more casual use, there is the pervasive cash based industry of scrap metal collection.

Aware of this, the strategy has contributed positively to the development of national policy, namely the Prime Minister's Order regarding Scrap Metal that is soon to be issued. The next iteration of the strategy will need to use this Order as a mandate to clearly direct RE activities towards addressing scrap metal collection as predominant risk taking behaviour. This may include initiatives such as, working directly with scrap metal dealers and the foundries as MAG has been trying to do in Xieng Khouang or working with the Ministry of Finance in an attempt to set price controls.

EFFECTIVENESS

The ability of the NRA to coordinate and direct RE efforts from a national perspective has increased

The RE Technical Working Group, the bi-monthly reports and provincial level workshops are all mechanisms of the NRA RE coordination process. These have come about as a direct result of the strategy and have been a positive step. Data collection, analysis and dissemination (discussed below) are important coordination mechanisms that will need further emphasis.

The coordination function of the NRA and the development of the National Strategy itself has fostered greater collaboration and focus of RE in Lao PDR

As mentioned, the process of developing the strategy involved discussion with a full range of stakeholders, national and international. All of these various parties had ample opportunity to consult and determine not just the contents of the strategy itself, but also their respective roles and responsibilities within it. This has set in motion a process of collaboration and support that the assessment team believes continues today.

The level of involvement and commitment of other national partners has increased

For the past two years the strategy has served as an overarching framework that has put the different RE activities into context and has created a broader picture of how these activities function.

Up until the establishment of the NRA and the development of the RE Strategy, various operators had been pursuing RE based on self-determined need, institutional perspective and overlap with other ongoing projects. Each UXO Action/RE stakeholder had carved out an independent and unique niche which on the one hand allowed them to pursue what they were good at, but on the other, contributed to a disjointed approach of the RE Sector. This is not to say that their efforts did not contribute to risk mitigation in Lao PDR, they did, but the advent of the RE Section at the NRA and the national RE Strategy has helped to bring the different operators together into a more cohesive and mutually supporting process. The 2007-2010 RE Strategy has set this process in motion, but work remains and the next RE Strategy should continue to emphasise this coordination aspect.

EFFICIENCY

The requirements to complete the activities in the strategy probably outweigh the current resources of the NRA

The large number and scope of activities versus available resources is unbalanced. This comes as no surprise and is true for most projects and programmes regardless of the sector.

Though sound, the desired activities, even with the combined effort of the UXO operators, Lao Ministries and other stakeholders, likely outstrips the current capacity of the NRA to achieve within the suggested time period. Though undoubtedly more carefully broken down in the work plan, the strategy too should reflect the operational reality of Lao PDR and attempt to prioritise objectives and set them within more obvious time frames.

The desire to widen the donor base should be actively pursued

UNICEF has been the backbone of RE support to the NRA. The Lao Government has pledged an increase in the funds it will allocate from the national budget (the percentage to be directed towards RE is not yet known), but the NRA RE Section would still be well served to expand its potential support base. Increased access to the UNDP/UNICEF established Lao PDR Trust Fund, applications to the Australian Ministry of Sport (Spirit of Soccer) and plans for targeted proposals at the Convention on Cluster Munitions 1st Meeting of States Party's (CCM MSP) are solid first steps in this direction.

Coordination and oversight mechanisms could be strengthened

The NRA has increased both the specific mechanisms and the overall levels of national programme coordination in Lao PDR (the RE TWG and bi-monthly reporting being the most

structured examples). Even with this notable progress, there remains a gap at the province and district levels, as some organisations still operated in partial isolation.

The NRA plans to establish offices at the provincial/district level as well as develop village level focal points would be a very effective method for filling the coordination gap. It would facilitate significant progress towards national programme coordination, which is required to:

- Allocate resources effectively to MRE based on an objective assessment of need.
- Ensure high quality interventions through monitoring both of activities and of changing circumstances.
- Share information on priorities, current activities and future plans; and
- Avoid the risks of duplication or contradictory messages within and across provinces and between different actors.

Further refinement of data flow and analysis mechanisms should be emphasised

The Information Unit of the NRA maintains a national database using the latest version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) which is populated with historical reports and to a certain extent, with the ongoing reports from UXO operators. However, In assessing the various mechanisms and data flow in Lao PDR the assessment team found that, though data is being generated by many organisations, village representatives, district and provincial authorities, it does not appear to be consistently channelled to a single point for either storage or analysis. Further, the type of data collected, the form the collection takes (verbal, written, specific forms, etc) are also not completely harmonised.

It appears as if organisations collect data for their own purposes and to serve their own operations, which of course they should, but there does not as yet appear to be a robust enough mechanism to ensure they report this information to the NRA uniformly or with regularity. This significantly influences:

Coordination

The collection, regular analysis and dissemination of data are powerful tools to coordinate both within the RE Sector, but also within the UXO Sector in general. As is, data collected by one element of the UXO Sector does not appear to be routinely shared among the other parts of the sector. Though some exchange certainly exists, the RE Strategy could play a stronger role in ensuring that victim, behavioural, contamination and clearance data is shared throughout the UXO Sector.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are really only possible with an ongoing, stable and consistent flow of data. Quantitative evaluation can readily be made with basic data, but true results oriented qualitative analysis requires a historical point of reference as well as subsequent key data to be effective¹⁴.

Determination of indicators

Interlinked to monitoring and evaluation processes, the setting of reliable indicators also requires consistency and uniformity of data.

¹⁴ In late 2008 the NRA developed a Monitoring Framework for RE activities that addresses process, tools and indicators. See *Annex 6, NRE MRE Monitoring Framework*.

Geographical priority setting and targeting

Recent data on incidents and the risk-taking behaviour that led to the incident will allow for a more systematic determination of specific at risk groups within certain geographical areas.

This means that identifying and reporting on how communities are managing the risks associated with interaction with UXO, including through informal, village-level clearance activities and scrap metal collection, as well as those promoted by external factors.

Currently organisations have areas of RE operation that appear to be based on deployment of their clearance assets or other internal programme considerations. As Lao PDR is so heavily contaminated, this method has still resulted in high-risk areas and high-risk populations being reached. However, as the number of surface and/or readily accessible contamination has slowly reduced, areas of RE priority may not necessarily be the same as those for clearance.

Incident reporting and follow-up

The victim assistance section at the NRA has done an impressive job of analysing the historical incident data in the *National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents, Phase I* and are strengthening the process of ongoing collection in *Phase II*, the Lao Victim Information System (LVIS).

RE however still needs to play a strong role in the collection and analysis process to ensure data is thoughtfully turned into useable information that is in turn fed back into the planning/tasking process. RE can also play a role in the ongoing surveillance/follow-up on victims and their needs.

Clearance requests and timely response

The process for a local community to report when they find a suspicious object appears to differ somewhat from province to province and organisation to organisation. This is another important operational element that would benefit from a more structured data and information flow. RE can play an important role in the reporting chain for this information and help assure more timely UXO spot clearance.

The NRA RE capacity development needs analysis should be a matter of priority

The NRA RE Section has come a long way in a short period of time. Only operational since 2006, the section has assumed a leadership position and is a vital resource for the sector. As it continues to grow it will not only need to determine the specific skill sets required for it to fulfill its own mandate, but also those of its partners, particularly those on the provincial and district levels.

The capacity development needs analysis is a fundamental step in establishing exactly what capacities are required and what the specific steps might be for attaining them (through training, technical assistance, monitoring or other capacity building activities). This in order to develop the ability and confidence among local counterparts in the techniques and approaches required for the overall management of a UXO RE programme. Areas of focus should include;

- Data collection and analysis
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Teacher Training
- Resource mobilisation

A detailed, albeit long range, integration plan for the NRA and UXO Sector should be elaborated. This should include a specific plan for RE that reflects;

The pervasive UXO contamination

As the UXO threat in Lao PDR is clearly a long-term issue, the national structures developed to address it must be sustainable, robust and able to adapt their approach as needs change.

The many varied risk taking behaviours and target groups

As there are a large number of different risk taking behaviours and target audiences in Lao PDR (i.e., men, women, children, different language and ethnic groups, children who do not attend school, adolescents, etc.) there are an equally large number of different methodologies and mechanisms required to provide the appropriate RE. As such, no one organisation can assume operational control of more than a small part of the RE process. This presents probably the single biggest capacity development and integration challenge for any RE programme with a national focus.

The need for multiple partners

A common misconception (not just in Lao PDR) is that the Ministry of Education (MoE) will be the eventual home for any RE programme. The MoE however only has a mandate and the specific experience to work with school age children (in the case of Lao PDR this would be primary school with ongoing discussion about expansion into lower secondary).¹⁵ Further, the MoE applies certain educational techniques and methodologies that may be appropriate for language, science and other similar instruction, but they are generally not in a position to combine education with income generating/development projects.

As an example, if the RE programme was integrated into the MoE's normal work it would provide good awareness coverage among primary aged children who attend school (which is a necessity in its own right) but, it would neglect large portions of the at risk population. The same would be true of any single organisation or ministry. Therefore, whether the desired activity is awareness instruction, community liaison or as part of a development/income generating initiative, it will be necessary to develop agreements with multiple partners in order to address the different audiences, risk-taking behaviours and methodologies.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Lao MoE has taken on responsibility for and provides UXO awareness instruction for the primary grades. However, the curriculum they have developed and adopted is still supplemental and not part of the formal national curriculum.

¹⁶ Potential partners include the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Lao Red Cross, Lao Women's Union and the Lao Youth Union. Ultimately however, in order to find the best long-term solution a detailed capacity analysis of the potential partners will need to be developed and matched against the various high-risk geographical areas and groups.

Partial and limited integration models

As a result of the long-term and complex nature of the problem, the sector must be prepared to consider only partial or limited handover/integration. Only certain organisations or ministries have demonstrated a willingness and competence to incorporate RE into their operations and though part of the NRA responsibility is to try and increase this, in reality there will be limits to what can be achieved.

No one Mine/UXO Action discipline can ever be fully effective if it works in isolation from the others. Therefore, the question of integration applies equally to victim assistance, data base/information management and eventually clearance. And whichever specific integration model is adopted for RE, it should be phased, timed and implemented as part of the NRA's overall integration plan.

Training and technical support for local counterparts

As mentioned, under the section on the capacity development needs analysis, developing the necessary skills sets among partners is both a key function and challenge for the NRA. Any plan for integration of RE would therefore need to be closely tied to the sector wide capacity development plan. Also as previously touched on is the NRA plan to establish offices at the provincial/district level as well as develop village level focal points both of which will aid the sector wide integration process.

Resources

The resource implications of integrating RE are also quite significant as RE will need to be done in one form and in one place or another for the foreseeable future. National Ministries and NGOs already operate under tight budgets and the additional responsibility of implementing RE will only add to this burden. An agreed and sustainable funding/budgeting arrangement will need to be reached to ensure quality is assured.

The question of integration of RE activities is often misunderstood as it is assumed to be a self-contained and simple activity. As mentioned, integrating RE into existing national structures is a far more complex task than it may appear on the surface. Unlike UXO clearance, integrating the operational activities of RE requires institutional capacity development on a very wide scale and should therefore be planned and implemented cautiously.

THE WAY FORWARD

The RE Section at the NRA has developed into a strong asset for the UXO/RE Sector. It has assumed a leadership role and very capably represents the Government of Lao PDR on the issue. This has come about to a large extent through the development and application of the current strategy.

The different RE operators in Lao PDR have supported the NRA RE Section and have in turn been supported by it. The assessment team believes that the next strategy can and should further define the nature of the problem and promote effective solutions within a process that develops national capacity and sustainability.

Annex 1 – List of Acronyms

CA – Community Awareness

CCM – Convention on Cluster Munitions

GICHD – Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

GoL – Government of Lao PDR

HIB – Handicap International-Belgium

IMSMA – Information Management System for Mine Action

KAP Survey – Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice Survey

LVIS – Lao Victim Information System

MAG – Mines Advisory Group

MRE – Mine Risk Education

MSP – Meeting of States Parties

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NRA – National Regulatory Authority of UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR

RE – Risk Education

TWG – Technical Working Group

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

UXO – Unexploded Ordnance

UXO Lao - Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme

VA – Victim Assistance

WE – World Education

Annex 2, Assessment Matrix

Issue/Question	Criteria	Possible Indicators	Sources of Data (Preliminary)	Data Collection Methods
Is the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan relevant to the needs of the NRA and more broadly, has it contributed to fulfillment of the overall Mine/UXO strategic plan for Lao PDR?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevance ▪ Effectiveness ▪ Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concrete examples of contributions to the mine/UXO action process in Lao PDR ▪ Existence of cross-sectoral policy/legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NRA, UNICEF, UNDP and UXO Lao, survey and planning documents, project plans and other relevant reports. ▪ Views of relevant stakeholders such as the NRA, the UN, NGOs, UXO LAO and other government ministries. ▪ Comparison with overall Lao PDR UXO/mine action strategy and those of other mature mine/UXO action programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desk review ▪ Semi-structured interviews
How has the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan development process been managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Efficiency ▪ Coherence ▪ Effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of stakeholder participation ▪ Evidence of stakeholder acceptance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant reports from the NRA, UNICEF, UNDP, and UXO Lao. ▪ Views of UN, NGOs, the NRA, UXO LAO and other government ministries and district authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desk review ▪ Semi-structured interviews
Subsequently, how well has the implementation of the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan been managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Efficiency ▪ Coherence ▪ Effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concrete examples of stakeholder participation ▪ Evidence of stakeholder acceptance ▪ Roll-out time frames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NRA, UNICEF, UNDP, and UXO Lao programming documents, project plans and relevant reports. ▪ Views of the NRA, the UN, NGOs, UXO LAO and other government ministries and district authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desk review ▪ Semi-structured interviews
Has the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan contributed to the adoption of safe behaviour and subsequently to a reduction in UXO/mine accidents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevance ▪ Effectiveness ▪ Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existence of recent casualty data showing a reduction ▪ Existence of increased reporting of incidents/objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NRA, UNICEF, UNDP, and UXO Lao KABP Surveys, accident and other relevant reports. ▪ Views of the NRA, the UN, NGOs, UXO LAO and other government ministries, district authorities and mine-affected communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desk review ▪ Semi-structured interviews

Annex 3, Assessment Schedule

Date	Location	Proposed Meeting/Activity
Wednesday, September 1	Vientiane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrival, 2100
Thursday, September 2	Vientiane NRA VTE Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0930 - Preliminary briefing and planning with UNICEF and the NRA ▪ 1500 - Meeting with local consultant
Friday, September 3	Xieng Khuang NRA VTE UXO LAO Office XK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0900 – Refinement and finalisation of evaluation work plan and tools ▪ 1300 - Flight to Xieng Khuang ▪ 14:00 - meeting with District Education Office ▪ 1530 - UXO Lao Xieng Khuang Office
Saturday, September 4	Xieng Khuang MAG Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0900 - MAG ▪ 1400 –Visit to Ban Naphia scrap metal project
Sunday, September 5	Xieng Khuang Field where/who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0900 – Field visit report drafting ▪ 1410 - Flight to Vientiane
Monday, September 6	Vientiane MOE WE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1000 – World Education ▪ 1430 – Ministry of Education
Tuesday, September 7	MAG NRA VTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0930 - MAG ▪ 1100 – NRA VA
Wednesday, September 8	Savannakhet/Sepon UXO LAO Sepon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0730 - Flight to Savannakhet/Sepon ▪ 1500 –UXO Lao Sepon Office/field visit CA
Thursday, September 9	Savannakhet/Sepon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0900 – Field visit with HIB
Friday, September 10	Savannakhet/Sepon UXO LAO Sepon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1510 - Flight to Vientiane
Saturday, September 11	Vientiane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidation and drafting of preliminary report and PPT presentation
Sunday, September 12	Vientiane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidation and drafting of preliminary report and PPT presentation
Monday, September 13	Vientiane NRA VTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1330 – Presentation of preliminary findings with the NRA MRE Technical Working Group ▪ 1500 – Meeting with Bruce Powell ▪ 1300 - Follow-up from debrief/redrafting
Tuesday, September 14	Vientiane NRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0830 - De-brief with Director, NRA ▪ 1000 - Re-drafting of presentation and preliminary report Final ▪ 2145 - Depart

Annex 4, Methodology and Interview Guide

METHODOLOGY

The core of the assessment will be the following two main activities: interviews and observation. In particular, the assessment will rely most heavily on the use of interviews as the primary data collection technique.

Secondary Data Collection

Desk Review/Background Research

The desk review will describe the overall process by which the 2007-2010 Mine/UXO Risk Education Strategic Plan was developed, the thinking behind its design and its expected outcomes. Specifically, this part of the assessment will draw evidence from the MRE/UXO Strategy itself, the 2006 UNICEF/MAG Risk Education Assessment as well as other relevant reports, studies and evaluations.

Primary Data Collection

Key Informant Interviews

The assessment will rely most heavily on interviews for primary data collection. The purpose of the interviews will be to have local practitioners and beneficiaries reflect and weigh the projected and desired outputs of the strategy against actual outcomes. The interviews will, depending on context and interview subject, either be semi or unstructured.

For example, informants on the district or village level may have location specific, “compartmentalised” knowledge and as these individuals tend to have less familiarity with investigative questioning a less structured approach may generate a greater freedom of expression. On the other hand, key informants in the capitol may have a more national or “big picture” vision, more familiarity with evaluation and assessment and therefore respond more favourably to semi-structured questions.

An assessment matrix, based on the key issues identified in the terms of reference, can be found below. From this draft an interview guide has been developed, also below.

Fully Structured Interview

The field portion of the assessment will not make use of a fully structured interview format. Though some structured interviewing may be utilised when verifying responses across different Government institutions.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The assessment will make predominant use of open questions in as semi-structured format as they generally tend to be more flexible and allow for a more free flowing exchange of information. This in turn will bring other important issues into focus.

Unstructured or Open Interviews

Additionally, there may be call for open-ended, exploratory interviews with some of the relevant stakeholders. Though “interview” may perhaps be an inadequate word to describe the differing levels of conversation from which data and information can be gathered, these discussions will be conducted more informally in order to not only put the respondent at ease, but to develop a clearer sense of people’s perception of the desired outcomes as they weigh against actual evidence of benefit.

On-Site Observation

An additional, important step in the verification of the data will be the process of on-site observation. This will allow the assessor to get an impression (generalised at least) of how UXO affect people's lives. It will also help shed light on how the strategy has brought about change with the direction of the awareness efforts. Of course, it also forms part of the overall process of verifying the accuracy of earlier responses.

Group Meetings

During the field level research work it may be necessary to convene small roundtable discussions within the affected community. This can take the form of an open ended discussion or even presentation. Care will need to be taken to include both women and children in the process.

Focus Group Discussions

Owing to the nature of the assessment, that of a strategy rather than a programme *per se*, and in the interest of practical, logistical and time constraints, relevant local informants will be approached using individual interviews rather than in a focus group.

Survey/Questionnaires

Formal surveys are intrinsically limited, as they rely on the honesty of the respondent and are based on the assumption that self-reporting can accurately describe a given situation. Their use is further complicated in this instance by varying literacy rates among village level respondents. I have therefore elected not to use formal questionnaires as part of the assessment.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviewee: _____ Place: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

General Questions

- What is your function?
- What specific services does your organisation provide?
- Were you involved in the development of the current strategic plan?
- If yes, please describe your involvement?

Selected Relevance Questions

- How is the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan relevant to your needs?
- How is the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan relevant to the needs of the NRA?
- How does the strategy relate/coordinate/compliment other Government, UN strategies in UXO/mine action and development?
- Is the strategy designed to meet the most pressing needs of the community?
- Did the strategy design process address political and institutional realities?
- Does the strategy design address ethnic and cultural realities?
- Overall, is the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan adequate to address local challenges?
- Were risks and assumptions properly identified?

Selected Impact Questions

- Generally, what progress was made towards the strategy's goals?
- Has the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan contributed to the adoption of safe behaviour and subsequently to a reduction in UXO/mine accidents?
- Are village level institutions operating effectively?
- Have beneficiaries been able to build sustainable livelihoods?

Selected Outcome Questions

- Was progress made towards planned medium-term objectives? How?
- Has security, in its widest interpretation, been achieved?
- Do national policies and institutions sustain the achieved benefits?
- Are activities sustained through village-level institutional arrangements?
- Is the NRA coordinating the programme effectively?
- Are local partner activities effective and continuing?
- Have the capacities of local partners been enhanced? How?
- What factors were particularly helpful, or detrimental, to results?
- Were there any unintended outcome-level results (positive or negative)?

Selected Output Questions

- Are the outputs consistent with the plan? Are there unexpected results?
- Have unforeseen circumstances been appropriately addressed?
- What factors were especially helpful or detrimental to the results?
- Has the NRA's capacity for coordination been enhanced?
- Have results been of an acceptable quality standard?

Selected Efficiency Questions

- Were human resources sufficient and of acceptable quality?
- Were material/equipment resources sufficient, and obtained at reasonable cost from appropriate sources?
- Were techniques applied appropriately, safely and efficiently?
- Were partnership arrangements productive?
- Was management leadership effective?
- Were reporting arrangements sufficient?
- Was there effective coordination between all players in the UXO/mine action sector?

Other

- What, if any, are the ways the UXO/MRE Strategic Plan could be strengthened?

Annex 5, Strategic Plan for Mine Risk Education in Lao PDR, 2007-2010

PROGRAMME VISION: A LAO PDR IN WHICH STAKEHOLDERS WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF UXO VICTIMS THROUGH A SUSTAINABLE, TARGETED RISK REDUCTION STRATEGY

GOAL	ENABLING OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. A targeted UXO risk reduction strategy focusing on high-risk areas and high-risk groups.</p>	<p>a. To identify highly impacted communities and at-risk groups. b. To deliver risk education to identified at-risk groups. c. To increase UXO awareness and behaviour change among targeted at-risk groups. d. To mainstream gender considerations in MRE activities e. To promote a timely response to requests for clearance of UXO by affected communities. f. To facilitate the timely reporting of UXO casualties at local levels.</p>	<p>i) Analysis of existing data on risk-taking and incoming victim information data to identify high-risk areas and high-risk groups, ensuring a distinction between intentional risk-taking and unintentional risk; ii) Application of recommendations from the UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment (October 2006) in programme design and monitoring; iii) Development of new MRE messages and materials, in local languages where appropriate and taking into account gender considerations and regional best practices, to target at-risk groups, including farmers and people engaged in scrap metal collection or dealing; iv) Participatory review of procedures for responding to clearance requests and enhancement of existing procedures to ensure community reports are responded to by clearance bodies; v) Support and encourage local authorities to report on UXO casualties and ensure all known UXO incidents are reported to data collectors for the Lao Victim Information System (LVIS).</p>	<p>NRA with support of MRE Technical Working Group members NRA MRE Unit and MRE Operators NRA in cooperation with MRE Technical Working Group, Operators, at-risk communities & Ministry of Information & Culture NRA Technical Working Groups and UXO Operators NRA, UXO Operators, local authorities, LVIS</p>
<p>2. A sustainable risk education programme.</p>	<p>a. To integrate risk education into government plans, priorities and budgets. b. To integrate risk education into development plans and activities. c. To identify alternative sources of funding for risk education. d. To build community capacity to respond to the UXO threat and associated vulnerabilities e. To ensure awareness & involvement of GoL regarding international & national legislation & treaties.</p>	<p>i) Advocacy with government at central and provincial levels for inclusion of risk education in development plans and budgets; ii) Advocacy and dialogue with donors and development operators on the importance of UXO risk education as a cross-cutting theme in plans, budgets and agreements; iii) Continue to support and expand risk education in the school curriculum and develop a focus on out-of-school youth; iv) Develop and implement a pilot project on parenting orientation; v) Continue to support and develop projects that build on local coping strategies and encourage community responsibility for risk management and reduction vi) Advocacy for adherence to and implementation of relevant international and national legislation on weapons and assistance to victims.</p>	<p>NRA, UN agencies and donors, including through donor roundtable NRA, UN agencies and donors, including through donor roundtable Ministry of Education & World Education/Consortium, NRA & donors UNICEF and HIB MRE Operators, NRA & donors NRA, UN agencies and international NGOs</p>

<p>3. Effective coordination and management of the risk education programme.</p>	<p>a. To develop the capacity of the National Regulatory Authority to coordinate and regulate the national risk education programme. b. To develop the capacities of local authorities to coordinate local community and school risk education projects. c. To contribute to the collection, input and updating of UXO casualty data and ensure use and analysis for project planning and monitoring.</p>	<p>i) Conduct an assessment for capacity development of National Regulatory Authority for coordination and management of risk education and develop and implement a capacity building plan; ii) Produce annual work plans and reports for the risk education programme, including the work of the National Regulatory Authority and MRE operators; iii) Convene and facilitate regular MRE Technical Working Group meetings; iv) Review and update terms of reference for the MRE Technical Working Group and its members; v) Encourage local authorities to identify and document existing risk education initiatives; vi) Encourage local authorities to identify their roles and responsibilities in managing risk education projects; vii) Encourage local authorities to promote the integration of risk education into other projects, including in education, health, and women's issues; viii) Participate in workshops concerning the development, implementation and use of a victim information system;</p>	<p>NRA, MAG and UNICEF NRA with input from MRE operators NRA with support from MAG & UNICEF NRA MRE TWG NRA, NRA Provincial Offices & relevant MRE operators NRA, NRA Provincial Offices & relevant MRE operators Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, Fund for National Construction and Committee for Planning and Investment NRA and MRE operators</p>
<p>4. Effective monitoring of the risk education programme.</p>	<p>a. To establish and manage a central reporting system for risk education activities. b. To establish a national monitoring system for risk education projects.</p>	<p>i) Conduct a mapping exercise of risk education activities and develop an MRE report form for the central database; ii) Collect regular reports from MRE operators and compile information to give an overview of MRE activities in Lao PDR; iii) Develop a national monitoring framework for MRE in Lao PDR and undertake periodic monitoring of MRE activities iv) Develop an agreed set of indicators for measuring progress towards the objectives and goals of the MRE National Strategy.</p>	<p>NRA with support from MRE TWG NRA with support from MRE TWG NRA MRE & QA NRA & MRE TWG members</p>

Annex 6 - NRA MRE Monitoring Framework

1. INTRODUCTION

The NRA MRE unit is responsible to direct the strategy of the risk education sub-sector and to provide regulation, accreditation and oversight of all UXO/MRE activities in Lao PDR. The UXO operators and organisations that conduct UXO/MRE in Lao PDR are: UXO Lao, Handicap International Belgium (HIB), MAG, World Education/Ministry of Education, FSD/Care International, and PCL.

In 2007 an MRE strategic plan was developed with the involvement of the MRE operators and related stakeholders for the period 1st January 2007- 31st December 2010. The strategic plan was approved in early 2008 by the Lao government. During 2009 the NRA MRE Unit will begin to monitor all the MRE activities to ensure they are in line with National MRE Strategic Plan and to measure progress towards the objectives.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the MRE Unit Monitoring is as follows:

To track what we are doing:

- The monitoring will help the NRA MRE Unit to track the MRE activities being conducted by MRE operators in the field, to compare those activities with the project proposals, work plans and organisational strategies.
- To ensure that those MRE activities are in line with the National MRE Strategic Plan (2007-2010), the National Standards and the Key Principles for MRE.
- The monitoring will help to determine the effectiveness¹ and efficiency of the MRE operators.

To learn and improve:

- The monitoring will help the NRA MRE Unit and MRE stakeholders to analyse the current situation of MRE activities and coordination and to document the lessons learned so that MRE activities can improve.

To provide accountability:

- The monitoring will support the NRA MRE Unit and MRE stakeholders to be open and accountable in their activities.

2. WHAT WE WILL MONITOR

The MRE Unit monitoring will cover the following areas:

MRE operators' activities in the Lao PDR: This includes how MRE operators implement the activities; what approaches and methods they use; how the activities measure against the work plan; how the activities and methods are in line with the MRE strategy, the key principles and the National Standards (chapter 13).

- How well do the MRE activities meet the objectives set (are they doing the right job)
- How well do the MRE activities use the inputs to meet the objective set (are they doing the job right)

Coordination: To ensure that we have effective coordination we will monitor the coordination between the NRA and MRE operators, MRE operators and MRE operators, and how well MRE is integrated with clearance and roving teams (UXO reporting and response) and in terms of reporting UXO victims.

Project design: We need to ensure that the design of all MRE projects are in line with the MRE strategy and national standards, and how do they collect and analyze the information for project design.

Changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviour: The NRA MRE unit need to monitor levels of knowledge about UXO risk with different target groups, what risk behaviour and beliefs have been changed and with which risk group.

Sustainability of projects: The sustainability of UXO/MRE programs is one component of the MRE strategic plan, so the NRA MRE unit should track how well the MRE activities were designed to be a sustainable program.

Coverage: The NRA MRE unit needs to know how well MRE activities reach at risk group and highly contaminated areas.

Message and material use and distribution: The NRA MRE unit will also monitor the MRE messages and materials used with the different risk groups to ensure that they are used with the right target groups and messages and materials are consistent and clear.

Consideration of gender and ethnicity: The NRA MRE unit will check how MRE activity design, implementation and monitoring take gender and ethnicity into consideration and how the activities impact on men, women, boys and girls and different ethnic groups.

Compliance to national standards and other government directives: The NRA MRE Unit will also ensure that MRE activities support and relate to national and local level government plans and directives.

Changing situation in the field: To ensure that MRE activities remain relevant, the NRA MRE Unit will track changes in the local situation (for example relating to the scrap metal trade) that may impact on risk taking behaviour.

3. MONITORING PROCESS

Monitoring visits will comprise the following process:

Desk Review: Before the field visit a desk review will be conducted as follows:

- Read the project proposal to understand the project concept, the project objectives, the needs and issues the project is addressing and the proposed approaches to meet the needs.
- Read project reports to understand what project has done so far and what are the outputs, so that we have a clear picture before the field visit.
- Read related documents such as the National Standards, MRE strategy and key principles to refresh our memory of so that these documents can be referred to during the visit and guide our point of view.
- The desk review will help to prepare some questions for the field visit.

Field visits: The field visit may comprise of all or some of the following activities:

- To observe the MRE activities including MRE materials used, approaches and techniques used, target group, participation etc.
- To interview with organisation staff, community and/or target group.
- To observe the UXO presence, livelihood activities, risk taking situation, metal detector /scrap metal trade situation in and around the community.
- Focus Group Discussions with villagers, target group, MRE staff, to gather key information.
- Informal interviews with villagers, target group, MRE staff (general discussion but noting the key points).

- Formal interviews with villagers, target group, MRE staff using semi-structured question guidelines and/or questionnaires.
- Spot check: The NRA MRE Unit may ask the operator to allow the monitoring team to visit activities without prior notice.

Gender and ethnicity will be taken into consideration when organising the interviews and FGD and when observing the activities to ensure that all sectors of the population have an opportunity to participate and to make sure that the appropriate language is used where possible.

Meeting/Workshop: Meetings or workshops may be held for a day or a half day to bring relevant stakeholders together to brainstorm or discuss the progress of a project or current risk taking challenges.

Feedback Meeting: After finishing monitoring the activities the monitoring team will provide a debrief to the concerned organisation in the field. Once the monitoring report is finished, the report will be shared with the relevant operator at HQ level.

4. HOW OFTEN DO WE MONITOR

Each organisation conducting MRE activities should have a monitoring visit at least once a year. Regular MRE IMSMA reports outlining activities, locations and target groups will also be submitted to the NRA for analysis.

With organisations, such as UXO Lao, that has extensive operations in many provinces, we would discuss with the CA coordinator to target provinces where it is felt there is some need to monitor and improve activities. If some operators are working in the same province, the monitoring team may undertake the monitoring of both operators' activities in one trip.

The monitoring visit will be conducted over two or three days depending on the activities and the situation (distance to travel etc).

The monitoring will be done by the NRA MRE unit. In some cases the MRE monitoring may be conducted together with QA, and members of the QA team may also be present. The MRE Unit may also request a member of the MRE operator to accompany the monitoring team, and if the key stakeholders agree it might be possible for representatives from other MRE operators to join and learn from the activities of others. Related ministries, Information and Culture and Education, and/or UNICEF representatives may also occasionally accompany the monitoring team.

5. MONITORING TOOLS

The following are the proposed tools that will be used when conducting the monitoring for MRE activities in Lao PDR:

NRA UXO/MRE Activity Form: This form will be submitted by operators to the NRA on a regular basis to update on MRE activities and the information will be entered into the central database for analysis. Information will include: what activities took place; where they took place; who is the target group; and how MRE links and coordinates with clearance, roving and victim.

Question Guideline Forms: This form will help to guide interviews with the MRE operators, focusing on issues such as behavioral objectives, activities, methods, materials targeting and incorporation of cross-cutting issues such as gender and ethnicity. The guidelines will ensure that all the relevant topics are covered in the interviews.

Short KAP Questionnaires: These questionnaires will be used with target communities to understand the levels of knowledge, attitudes and practice and how these change over time as a

result of the MRE activities (or other factors). The questionnaire will need to be used in the same communities over a period of time (maybe once a year). The data from the questionnaires will be cross-checked with KAP information from the operators themselves.

Case Study Forms: These forms will be used to document specific stories of individuals and communities to show how behaviours have changed as a result of MRE activities. These case studies can be used for donor reports etc.

Training Appraisal: The forms will be used to evaluate training sessions conducted by operators.

Findings and Follow-Up Matrix: This matrix will provide a simple format to document the date of monitoring, the main findings and any follow up action agreed with the MRE operator. This form will be used to check progress on subsequent monitoring visits.

Photographs: Photographs may also be taken to document activities, materials and the general situation in target areas.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT

The NRA MRE Unit will follow this code of conduct when undertaking monitoring of MRE activities in Lao PDR:

- The monitoring will be conducted with a positive, learning approach to improving MRE activities in Lao PDR.
- Confidentiality will be respected – people who provide information during the monitoring visits will not be required to give their names and the MRE Unit will not share information with other organisations without the approval of the concerned organisation.
- The monitoring process will aim to strengthen partnership and coordination.
- The monitoring will be conducted in a fair and neutral manner.
- The monitoring will be conducted in a way that respects the opinions of all people, regardless of their sex or ethnicity.

Annex 7 – Monitoring Tools

Question area	Question	Reference Documents & Tools to Cross-check information
Project design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the objectives of your project? 2. How did you identify the project objective? 3. Where are the target areas of the project (village, district province)? 4. Who are the beneficiaries/target groups of the project? 5. How did you identify the target group and target area? 6. Can you explain how your project is in line with the MRE strategy, National Standards and UXO MRE Principles? 7. How well did the victim information inform your project design? 8. How do you consider gender in the project design and implementation? 	<p>Information to be gathered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interview with project staff ▪ Desk review of relevant documents including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project proposals ○ Other project documents (KAP surveys, etc) ○ Victim Information Data ○ UXO Risk Education Needs Assessment 2006
MRE operators' activities in the Lao PDR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you implement MRE activities (step 1, 2, 3,)? 2. What approaches and methods do you use (methods or technique with target group)? 3. How the activities measure against the work plan (progress to achieve work plan)? 4. How are the activities and methods in line with the MRE strategy, Key Principles and the National Standards? 5. How do you consider gender, age and ethnicity in your activities and approach? (for example, RE team composition; use of appropriate materials; targeting of specific risk groups) 	<p>Information to be gathered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project staff, ▪ Observation of activities in the field ▪ Review of the MRE Activity reports (IMSMA) submitted to the NRA.

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Coverage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you reach your target groups? 2. Where and when do you meet them? 3. What challenges do you have to meet your target groups? 	Information to be gathered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project staff ▪ Observation of activities in the field ▪ Review of the MRE Activity reports (IMSMA) submitted to the NRA.
Message and material use and distribution:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What MRE materials are you using at the moment? 2. What is the behaviour objective and target group for each material? How does it fit with your project objective (giving information or change behaviour)? 3. If you developed the materials yourself, what was the process? (look at pre test and post test) 4. Do you develop for specific at risk group or general? 5. Why did you develop these MRE materials? 6. How do you use the materials you developed? 	Information to be gathered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project staff ▪ Observation of MRE materials used in the field ▪ Review of the MRE Activity reports (IMSMA) submitted to the NRA.
Changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What knowledge do you want your target groups to gain? 2. What are the specific attitudes and behaviours you want your target groups to change and/or modify? 3. What have been the successes and what have been the challenges of changing people's attitudes and behaviours? 4. How have you changed your approach to address the challenges? 	Information to be gathered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project staff ▪ Interviews with local communities, particularly target groups ▪ Case studies of individuals or groups who have changed their behaviour ▪ Observation in local communities ▪ Review of the MRE Activity reports (IMSMA) submitted to the NRA

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Sustainability of projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you have a plan for project sustainability of the MRE activities of your project? 2. Can you explain how the plan will be implemented? 	
Coordination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you coordinate with others operators working in the province? 2. How do you coordinate with the local government? 3. How do you coordinate with the NRA and MRE Sector? 4. Do you report UXO to clearance and roving teams as part of your RE activities? Can you explain how this works? 5. Do you report UXO accidents or refer UXO victims to services? Whom do you report to? 6. How good is the support received from clearance and roving teams? 7. How long is the time frame between reporting and response? 	<p>Information to be gathered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project staff ▪ Interviews with other operators and local government ▪ TWG meeting minutes ▪ Review of the MRE Activity reports (IMSMA) submitted to the NRA.