

Mine Action and Cluster Munitions Programme 2020-2024 – Lao
Annual Report 2023 (Submitted on May 1st 2024) – Humanity & Inclusion Reporting period:
01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023



Figure01: HI's Area Clearance team conducted clearance survey in the rice field with challenged tasks at Khangkhao village, Houameuang district, Houaphan province where HI EOD team founded 375 sub-munitions in this hole on 19th Feb to 7th March 2023.

ACRONYMS

AC	Area Clearance
BCC	Behavioral Change Communication
BNDA	Bamboo NTFP Development Association
CCM	Convention on Cluster Munitions
CHA	Confirmed Hazardous Area
CM	Cluster Munitions
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DIT	Diversity and Inclusion Training
DRPU	Disability Rights Promotion Unit
DRET	Disability Rights and Equality Training
DC	Disability Champion
DLSW	District Labor and Social Welfare
EP	Evidence Point
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
HI	Handicap International
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
IEC	Information Education and Communication
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IMAS	International Mine Action Standards
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
KAP	Knowledge Attitude and Practice
LDPA	Lao Disabled People's Association
LWU	Lao Women Union
MDCS	Mobile Data Collection System
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEPL	Nam Et-Phou Louey National Park
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRA	National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector in the Lao PDR
NTS	Non-Technical Survey
NS	Lao PDR National UXO/Mine Action Standards
PIMC	Provincial Implementation Management Committee
PNRA	Provincial Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector in the Lao PDR
PLSW	Provincial Labor and Social Welfare Department
PRF	Poverty Reduction Fund
QA	Quality assurance
QC	Quality control
EORE	Explosive Ordnance Risk education
RE/CL	Risk Education / Community Liaison
AVR	Armed Violence Reduction
SOP	Standard Operational Procedures
TA	Technical advisor
TOT	Training of Trainers
TL	Team Leader

TS	Technical Survey
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
VA Society	Victim assistance WCS Wildlife Conservation Society

Executive summary

The project ended in August in Lao PDR. The Specific objectives of the project have contributed to improving human security through the implementation of surveys and clearance tasks in the most contaminated areas in northern provinces. The UXO survivors/People with Disability (victim people) were given access to health care, psychological/psychosocial support for UXO victims and other vulnerable people was improved. In the meantime, the local authorities have strengthened their capacity to coordinate and implement their obligations.

In 2023, the project achieved 1,544,760 sqms of land released through clearance and reduction. HI supported the clearing of 949,760 sqms of land for beneficiaries, particularly poor families, so that they could use the safety land for rice cultivation, animal raising and cash crop production. With this achievement, HI has contributed to the progressive realization of the National Regulatory Authority strategy for the UXO/Mine Action Sector in the Lao PDR. Over 2,718 items of UXO were destroyed as part of the Roving Tasks, Clearance Tasks activities to protect the lives of people in the Cluster Munition Areas.

Over 2,808 people have benefited from EORE sessions and EO impact information. In practice, the villagers who participated in the EORE sessions demonstrated a clear understanding of the impact of UXO. HI has observed a change in the behavior and attitude of villagers and children, who avoid moving or touching the UXO when they discover them. All EO found has been reported through HI hotline number.

In 2023, the project supported 130 UXO survivors/People with Disability who were able to access health care, psychological/psychosocial support and UXO victims and other vulnerable people was improved.

Despite the initial challenges faced by HI, it's important to highlight the significant progress achieved in the project final months.

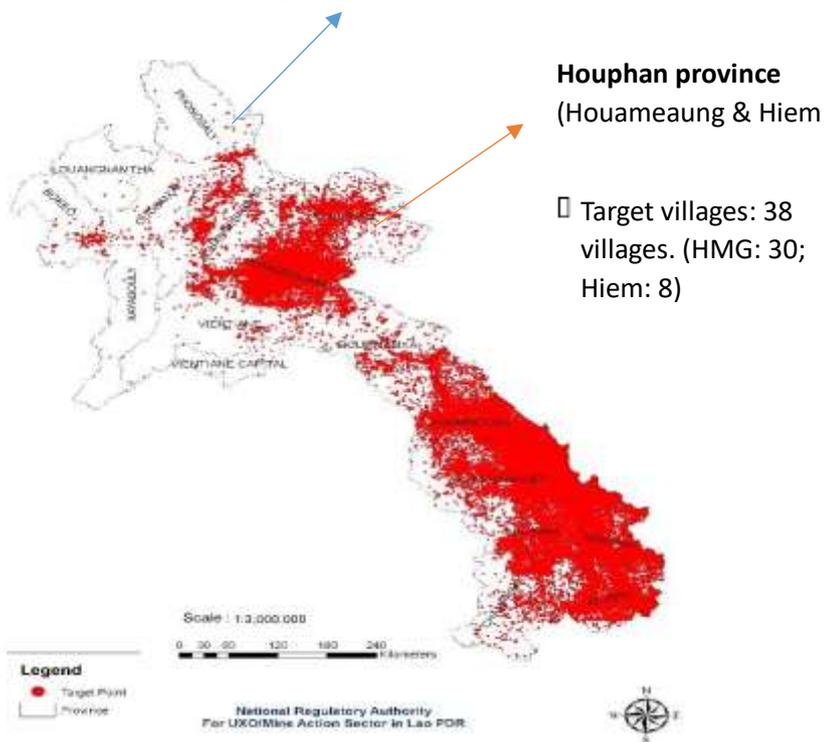
Context Summary and Operational Map

Context Summary

Operational Map

Phongsaly province (Khoua:8

villages & Mai: 13 villages)



districts)

Update on activities

Outcome 1: Human security is enhanced - communities and individuals impacted by EO are, and feel, safer

Output 1.1: Hazard Areas (including minefields) are defined based on evidence and following the CMRS and CWS procedures.

11 new villages were surveyed through non-technical surveys and suspected/confirmed hazardous areas were mapped based on indirect/direct evidence. The project also completed the selection and prioritization of areas to be cleared with local and village authorities and landowners.

595,000 sqms of contaminated land have been reduced through CMRS and CWS methodologies.

The victim case studies of the mine accident were shared with actors, local authorities and other stakeholders in the VA sector, in accordance with IMAS 13.10, in the targeted areas of intervention.

Output 1.2: The specific risk of landmines observed is documented, and integrated in the MA national strategy, national standards, and SOPs to mitigate future mine-related death/injury and to prepare the field for future demining interventions.

In 203, HI has reported as usual the suspected landmines finds (Landmine Technical issues), and the NRA was informed of difficulties encountered by the AC in the suspected mined area, but the NRA did not react and no National demining Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) was implemented.

HI installed the specific landmines materials (dangerous warning board of landmine) in 7 mine affected villages, in collaboration with local authorities. This suspected land mine issue was reported to NRA for next solution. HI deployed its team to conduct mine-specific EORE safety briefings, using relevant landmine models, for communities when mines are found near the village.

HI has completed the development of landmine victim testimonies, but NRA does not allow HI to share these testimonies with relevant MA sectors and development agencies. However, HI was able to bring in a mine victim survivor (Ms. Chan -Mine Victim person) to share her story to local authorities, stakeholders and villagers in the International Disability Day Event in Houameuang district, Houaphan province.

Output 1.3: Output 1.3: Risk of EO related death and injury are reduced safely and the feeling of safety is increased through land release activities.

The project EOD team was able to clear 2,718 items of EO and these were destroyed through Roving Task and Clearance activities in the targeted villages, including other villages outside the MoU, at the request of PNRA/NRA. Based on the Post-Clearance Assessment conducted by the project staff and the results of interviews, all the villagers said that *"We (beneficiaries)/village authorities appreciated, thank and very happy to receive very good support from HI's project, HI staff and donor - Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ). This project was useful and helpful for creating the safety lands."*

All cleared lands were used for their livelihood activities development, including safety public lands for infrastructure of communities and local authorities. All complete Area Clearance sites were subject to a monthly review of the community-based priority system.

Output 1.4: Communities living in EO contaminated areas improve knowledge, attitudes and practices about EO related risks.

Communities, including children from 11 new villages, fully participated in EORE safety briefing and awareness events at village and district levels. Over 2,808 people benefited from EORE sessions/EO impact information. All the villagers demonstrated a clear understanding of the impact of UXO. When villagers and children found EO, they immediately reported the UXO through HI hotline number.

Based on the KAP survey, 97% of women, men, girls and boys in the targeted villages has improved their knowledge and practice of EO risks by the end of the project.

Output 1.5: Communities living in EO contaminated areas improve their socio-economic capacity through the integrated response.

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) action plan, along with the EORE/VA framework, encompassing quarterly, semi-annual, and annual work plans, has been endorsed and sanctioned by the District Labor and Social Welfare Office (DLSW). The primary Clearing Hazardous Areas (CHA) has been communicated to local authorities and NRA Provincial offices.

As per the findings of the Post-Clearance Assessment (PCA), all cleared lands were utilized according to initial plans and in alignment with the objectives of the local villagers. Approximately 80-90% of the cleared areas were allocated for enhancing subsistence activities, such as livestock husbandry, rice cultivation, and the cultivation of cash crops like corn and cassava. About 10% of the cleared land was designated for infrastructure projects such as village meeting rooms, water supply systems, bridges, roads, and school buildings. These cleared areas are poised to significantly benefit the entire community, providing access to essential resources like water and education, as well as facilitating agricultural activities.

The project facilitated Area Clearance for Nam Et-Phou Louey National Park (NEPL), enhancing tourist sites to ensure the safety of the park's wildlife eco-tours. NEPL/WCS collaborated to enhance tourism sites using the cleared lands, securing grant support from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) for tourism development. The cleared lands have led to increased income from tourism services, benefiting villagers in 13 neighboring villages.

This influx of revenue not only encourages the protection of endangered wildlife but also boosts the income of villagers in the Houaphan province.

Furthermore, additional development initiatives were requested by local authorities and development organizations such as Caritas, INGOs, and the Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF). HI supported 6 hectares of Area Clearance tasks aimed at direct socio-economic impact, including the improvement of irrigation systems for local farmers to enhance rice cultivation and cash crop production. This initiative also included clearing land for the construction of Gravity Flow Water Systems (GFWS) to provide clean drinking water to community residents. Moreover, land cleared for farmers in targeted villages to expand animal farming was made possible through grants supported by the PRF organization. Various factors were taken into account to maximize the effectiveness of these actions, including seasonal considerations, village accessibility, projected beneficiary numbers, proximity to minefields, and the level of danger to communities.

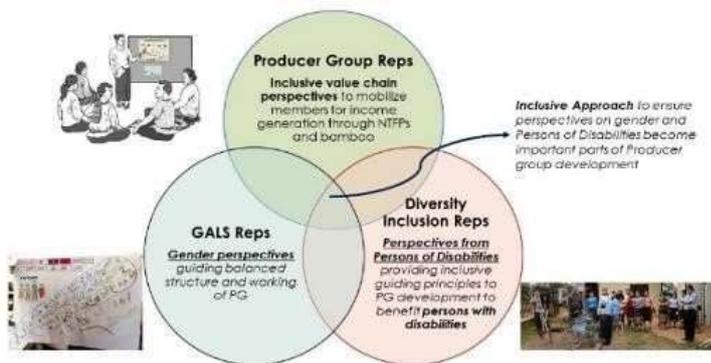
Effective coordination with rural development stakeholders and local authorities has led to numerous requests for non-CHA clearance tasks aimed at development purposes, which have been identified and prioritized. This concerted effort directly contributes to local development plans in affected villages.

Outcome 2: Resilience of communities is enhanced in the face of EO contamination

Output 2.1: Tailored community safety committees' approach at village level provide durable solutions/dynamics to mitigate the risks of EO accidents ensuring flexible response and conflict sensitivity.

The project applied a participatory gender approach in every target village, collaborating and coordinating with the District Lao Women Union office to jointly implement EORE activities. EORE data recording for the entire project duration (direct beneficiary sheet) showed that 51% (women: 3,915; men: 3779) of women participated in EORE activities and other project activities. This showed high participatory of women or high balance of gender. A project staff provided the training of Diversity and Inclusion to local authorities and BNDA to demonstrate where they could better support the implementation of the project with HI project staff.

During the EORE activity implemented by the RE team, all hotline number stickers were posted in almost every household and information boards of each village. When the villagers founded the EO, they very often reported through HI's hotline number and the project NTS and Roving Teams responded to 100% of EO disposal/demolition.



HI collaborated and partnership with Oxfam to conduct the capacity building of Gender Action Learning System of the 20 relevant local authorities, HI staff, community GALS Champion Facilitators and BNDA staff. Based on GALS technical supported by Oxfam, the local authorities became GALS trainers. 3 modal villages (Hongthong, Homphan and Namthip villages) were

selected to be GALS Champion villages. More than 17 families received a certificate from the Houameuang District Governor. After applying the GLAS tools to their real life, their families' status changed positively, creating gender equality/balance, and they were able to increase their general income and gradually escape from poverty. Since they have a socio-economic development plan integrated with CSC strategies, they feel more comfortable improving their livelihood activities in the safety lands. It means they do not collect Non-Timber Food Production in the forestry where there is high risk of EO contamination areas. By showing the good practice of GLAS tool, project staff organized exchanges of GLAS champions with other neighboring families in other target villages. 15 GALS-Champion Community Facilitators showed their neighborhoods household how to apply the GLAS tools with the help of Oxfam's Gender Specialist and HI.

Output 2.2: National capacity increased through the provision of material, technical and/or financial support to local authorities, local CSOs, HI staff, NMAA Provincial offices, District and Provincial Offices of Education and Sports and District UXO focal points

HI provided a range of training courses such as the data-based management (IMSMA program), how to develop the work plan/prioritization of AC tasks, NTS-Operation, SOP of AC and QA/QC for 16 Lao staff from the 2 PNRA provincial offices and relevant local authorities. Since their capacity increased, they better developed the plan on HMA, Quality Management and Information Management and GAD inclusion. The authorities were also able to better support the BUZA project's implementation.

HI has completed the review and development of the HI EO Reference manual through an online application (see picture), which has already been proposed to the sector.

1 HI-HEO home page



The HI-EO application was oriented to the UXO sector how to use the functioning of this app. HI clearance/survey teams in Laos were able to access and use the application in a userfriendly way to easily identify the type of EO, faster than using the EO reference manual.

(Please click on the link for more information about how Humanity & Inclusion has developed a new to help deminers work more safely. The app lists all the number of ExplosiveWeapons found in #Laos and includes useful information on how to safely destroy them so they no longer pose a threat to communities).

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As its project has ended, HI has completed developing a project proposal document of a new demining project in the Houameuang district to apply with any potential donors wishing to support demining project in Lao PDR.

Output 2.3: Increased coordination, access to services and risk awareness through the implementation of a UXO Education Center in Houaphan Province.

HI collaborated and partnered with PNRA to run an UXO Education Centre in Xamneua district, Houphan province, where people living in EO contaminated areas, internal and external visitors and other government staff can receive general awareness of the impact of EO, including information on landmines, CMC and VA. Through project implement period, there was over 1,200 visitors visited and learned on the impact of EO in Houaphan province and understood about HI's UXO project since 2018 to 2023. Most of the visitors were young children from primary, secondary and higher schools, some CSFs visited the HI UXO center to take beautiful photos to show members of their community.

HI, in collaboration with local authorities, organized the Internal Mine Action Day event in Houameuang district on landmines awareness. This event was very useful and helpful in reminding all villagers and authorities who live in landmine areas to avoid moving, touching and collecting EO to sell or destroy themselves. The International Disability Day Event was conducted with local authorities and other stakeholders during the project implementation. The event promoted inclusion, the rights of People with Disability and the proper case management of landmine victims. Over 300 people were sensitized to and recognized the key messages of the International Disability Day Event, which followed the UN theme.

A Directory of services is being developed for HI social workers and CSC CFP. HI project staff have been busy carrying out other activities according to the actions and deadlines included in the MoU with the government. There has therefore been a delay in processing the collection of service directory data

from numerous stakeholders, and this activity has not yet been completed. But it will be completed by other project activities, as HI has added this task to another action plan as part of another HI project in Phongsaly province in 2024.

HI organized regular meetings with 8 local stakeholders (PNRA, PLSW, Vice Provincial Governors, district governors, DLSW offices, DEoS, DHO, Caritas, PRF, MoFA, NRA, NEPL/WCS, DAFO) at provincial and district level to improve coordination and access to services.

HI organized 2 information sessions on EO safety for local CSOs, NPAs, NGOs and authorities to help them understand the risk posed by EO, including landmines, and adopt safe behaviors in their areas of intervention (according to the needs) at the provincial level.

Output 2.4: Survivors, and other most vulnerable beneficiaries, are referred to relevant medical, MHPSS, or rehabilitation services and followed up

In 2023, HI supported 196 UXO survivors/People with Disability (women: 79; men: 95; girls: 8; boys: 14) to access healthcare, psychological/psychosocial support and improve the situation of UXO victims and other vulnerable people.

HI's medical team provided Basic First Aid training to 40 CFPs and health care staff so they could intervene in time in an accident.

HI project staff coordinated with the national hospital to request the mental health training specialist to provide mental health support to 16 local health care staff at provincial and district levels and established mental health referral pathways.

Progress against Outcomes

RESULT	INDICATORS LIST	BASELINE	TARGET	ACHIEVED - between 01/01/2023 and 31/12/2023	ACHIEVED - between 01/09/2020 and 31/12/2023
Outcome 1: Human Security is enhanced: people are and feel safer in their communities	1.1.# of direct beneficiaries of EOD spot tasks	0	N/A	20 751	24,644
	1.2. # of direct beneficiaries of land released through clearance and reduction	0	15 480	10 399	10,429
	1.3. # of indirect beneficiaries of land released through clearance and reduction.	0	14 374	17 579	17,579
	1.4. # of RE beneficiaries demonstrating safer behaviour	0	N/A	11 660	11,661
	1.5. # of communities observing safer community behaviour.	0	39	24	39
	1.6. # of beneficiaries who report feeling safer following land release and EOD clearance	0	N/A	82%	82%
	1.7. % of direct beneficiaries surveyed reporting improved livelihoods and/or access to services	0	50%	60%	60%
Outcome 2: Resilience of communities is enhanced in the face of	2.1: 75% of target group report increased confidence, knowledge and support to access available services through the network of Community focal points (CFPs)	N/A	75%	70%	70%

EO contamination	2.2: 20 villages shows an active participation in Community Safety Committees (CSC) strategies through CFPs and/or local authorities	0	20	26	39
	2.3: Provincial NRA offices and/or local authorities are contributing to the quality of the interventions by planning regular Quality Assurance visits and evaluations and providing a list of recommendations for HI	0	1	1	1
	2.4: A # of collaborations is observed during the project implementation between development actors	0	16	6	13
	2.5 # of survivors supported reporting physical and/or psychological improvement following victim assistance (i.e. as result of medical assistance, prosthetics, MHPSS)	0	200	130	193

Cross-Cutting

Gender

HI applied gender balance approach by encouraging village woman leaders and village authorities in the community and all women and girls to participate in project activity implementation. It showed high gender balance and participation.

For building the capacity of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the project teams, especially CSIM team, collaborated with Oxfam to secure the support of a gender expert to provide Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training to twenty local authorities (PNRA, DLSW, PLWU, DAFO, DLWU, DESS), Administration office, and Community GALS Champions.

By following GALS approach, HI and local authorities selected 3 very strong villages which had high performance applying GALS modal, this including high gender equality/participation and GALS Campions.

Conflict Sensitivity

As mentioned in previous reports, under this component, the Conflict Sensitivity training package could not be delivered to 120 CFP, as Lao PDR political did not allow and it was not in line with the local context. As a result, only 9 HI staff members were trained. The RIMA project was constantly on the lookout for potential negative ripple effects, particularly when selecting areas for clearance and selecting beneficiaries for Victim Assistance. Even though it was a challenge to openly discuss conflicts and disputes especially in presence of authorities, HI team and key staff members had been trained to create a mindset from the field team. The RIMA team applied the best way of integrating these elements at community level through the Community Safety focal points. To ensure the project was well represented in all ethnic groups, the project had mixed teams of people that speak local languages and can help when it is necessary for community liaison, and awareness-raising activities.

Sustainability & Coordination

During this period, the project did not see much impact and sustainability. HI's budget could see small sustainable such as capacity building for PNRA/DLSW SOPs and understood more for mine action operation that could be sustainable to support local UXO actors to follow national standard. The Community Safety approach will be sustainable, as HI has supported communities assigning CSFPs and provided RE training package to those volunteers, and for long-term sustainability those CSFPs could do the RE awareness by themselves. UXO teacher training activities will be sustainable, as the primary teachers continue to use their knowledge to provide information on the UXO RE to their students each year.



Communications

Over 760 Sub-munitions/Blue26 were founded and destroyed in Korhai village, Houameuang through Roving Task activity.

Woman deminer screened UXO/CM at Narsarm village, Houameuang with challenged of location/areas and vegetation cutting.



HI's VA staff and local health staff

CSFP practiced on EORE awareness activity at the village level



identified UXO/mine survivors and People with Disability in Khoua and Mai districts, Phongsaly.



EORE safety briefing session in Yangthuey village, in January 2023 at Mai district, Phongsaly province.