

# Unexploded ordnance an obstacle to development

## How graduation from Least Developed Country status is linked to Laos' war legacy

The Lao PDR has just recently fulfilled, for the first time, the eligibility criteria to graduate from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. It has passed two of the three criteria for graduation: Gross National Income per capita and the Human Assets Index, and has come close to passing the threshold for the Economic Vulnerability Index.

This is a remarkable achievement which predicts a bright future for the country and its people – but, at the same time, it is by no means a time to lean back and rest. The level of development needs to be sustained in the coming years for graduation to happen.

The LDC graduation criteria are linked to a significant obstacle to Laos' development: unexploded ordnance (UXO). Many of the bombs that were dropped on Laos decades ago still lie in the ground, active and treacherous.

The majority of Laos' communities rely on agriculture for a living. But in areas where UXO

contamination is prevalent, fear rules the fields, hindering farmers' attempts to grow food for their families, unable to escape the poverty trap.

UXO has a direct impact on the economy of the country, as contaminated land could otherwise be used for the development of industry, tourism and the construction of infrastructure.

Victims of UXO accidents are facing serious obstacles to access the labour market as there is no network of special programmes to allow them to contribute to GDP. Transporting goods and services in contaminated areas adds to the challenge.

Children – the most valuable asset that Laos has for the future – are at risk, playing in areas not yet cleared or foraging in the forest. Children disabled by UXO drop out of school because of lack of infrastructure, emotional stress and, not least, social stigma. Schools and roads cannot be built because of the bombs hindering construction.

Looking for solutions and innovative approaches



UXO technicians use a metal detector in a rice field.

to solve the UXO problem is a continuing effort. The government set up UXO Lao, the national clearance operator in 1996, and established the coordinating body for the UXO sector, the National Regulatory Authority for UXO and Mine Action (NRA) in 2006. The technical skills of both

organisations have increased significantly in recent years.

Various important policies and documents were developed to coordinate the work of the UXO sector, including the national strategy plan for the UXO Sector in the Lao PDR, titled "Safe Path Forward II". Laos has launched a dedicated national Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 18, called "Lives safe from UXO".

Positive changes have been seen in recent years thanks to the evidence-based survey approach now used by all operators to clear the land, which increased the amount of UXO found

per hectare of land by more than four times, and allowed clearance to happen much faster. The surveys have resulted in more than 60,000 hectares of confirmed hazardous areas identified since 2015.

The number of UXO casualties has been reduced by 85 percent over the last decade. In recent years, fewer than 50 casualties have been reported annually, below the national target of less than 75 casualties a year. In 2017, the number of accidents was almost a tenth of what it was in 2008: 19 accidents. This is the second lowest number of accidents in the past decade.

The 19 accidents resulted in 41 casualties, the lowest number since the war.

Risk education messaging is reaching farther and wider than ever before. Via textbooks and radio messages, children and adults learn how to live with the hazard of UXO. In 2017 alone, more than 250,000 people in 516 villages, half of whom were children, were reached by such risk awareness activities, including puppet shows, songs, and games. Even broader risk education through school curricula and radio programmes is required, along with targeted interventions in the most contaminated villages.

With the introduction of SDG 18, the aim is to balance its three targets on mine risk education, victim assistance and clearance. Focusing on one of the three alone is not enough to ensure that by 2030, these SDG 18 targets are met and the impact of UXO in Laos is reduced, making lives safe from the threat of UXO.

In this regard, the government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Laos will continue to cooperate in order to reduce the impact of UXO on the country and ensure a smooth LDC graduation process.

--This is a joint article by the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Chairman of the NRA, and the UNDP Resident Representative to the Lao PDR.

### Asian Actuarial Scholarship Program, South Korea

Global Vision Laos (Korean NGO, under approval of Ministry of Education and Sports in Lao P.D.R) is pleased to announce the opportunity to compete for Asian Actuarial Scholarship Program (AASP) for undergraduate Lao students. AASP is awarded to Lao nationality students wishing to undertake master degree of 'Statistics and Actuarial Science' in South Korea.

Since year 2011, the department of Statistics and Actuarial Science of Soongsil University in Seoul, South Korea provides 2 years master degree program named Asian Actuarial Scholarship Program for foreign students. This program is sponsored by Korea life Insurance Social Contribution Committee for the purpose of educating Asian students who will be working as practicing actuaries in Asian Insurance industry. After Graduates from AASP, it would be provided the opportunity to work at a Korean insurance companies having business in Laos or other related organization.

#### 1. Requirements for the Applicant

- Undergraduate degree or prospective graduate in relevant area (Applicant should major in mathematics major, because this course is for Actuarial Program)
  - Only Lao nationality is eligible to apply
  - Proficiency in English
- (\*All classes are taught in English and thesis is written in English)

#### 2. Scholarship value

- Full scholarship for 2 years (4 semesters)
- Living expenses (dormitory, meals, purchasing books, etc)
- One round-trip airfare

#### 3. Required Documents

- English self-introduction letter (no forms)
  - University transcript
- (\*submit those requirements through e-mail address below)

#### 4. Application deadline : 20, April, 2018

#### 5. Interview method

- It will be taken place directly by Korean Professor of Soong-Sil University at Vientiane, Laos (the beginning of May, 2018)

#### 6. Enrollment : September 1st, 2018

#### 7. Contact information :

- Global Vision Laos
- Tel: 021-419-340
  - E-mail : globalvision.laos@gmail.com
  - Contact Person for Inquiries: Mr. Phoxay 020-2800-0509/030-5700-8385



### ສູນຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານທາງດ້ານການຄ້າຕໍາລາດພິການ

ສູນຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານທາງດ້ານການຄ້າຕໍາລາດພິການແມ່ນສູນຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານ ທີ່ປະກອບໄປ ດ້ວຍຂໍ້ມູນກ່ຽວກັບວິທີກໍາ, ມາດຕະການ, ຂຶ້ນຕອນ, ແບບຮ່ວມ, ຂໍ້ສະເໜີທາງດ້ານການຄ້າ, ຂ່າວສານ ແລະຂໍ້ມູນສື່ມວນຊົນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ ກັບການຄ້າ ດ້ານບໍລິການຂອງ ສປປ ລາວ.

ສູນຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານທາງດ້ານການຄ້າຕໍາລາດພິການແຫ່ງນີ້ ຈະສ່ວນວຍຄວາມສະດວກໃຫ້ແກ່ ບັນດາຜູ້ປະກອບການ ແລະ ນັກລົງທຶນທັງພາຍໃນ ແລະ ຕ່າງປະເທດ ໃນການຊອກຫາຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານ, ບັນດາຂໍ້ກຳນົດ, ກົດໝາຍ ແລະ ລະບຽບການຕ່າງໆທີ່ຈຳເປັນສຳລັບ ການຄ້າເປັນທຸລະກິດ ແລະ ການລົງທຶນ ດ້ານບໍລິການໃນ ສປປ ລາວ.

ວິບໄຊ ສູນຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານທາງດ້ານການຄ້າຕໍາລາດພິການ ສາມາດ ນຳໃຊ້ໄດ້ຢ່າງງ່າຍດາຍຜ່ານ [www.laoservicesportal.gov.la](http://www.laoservicesportal.gov.la) ໂດຍເວັບໄຊຕ໌ຜູ້ກ່າວນີ້ ມີສອງພາສາຄື ລາວ - ອັງກິດ ໃຫ້ສາມາດເລືອກໃຊ້ໄດ້.

ສູນຂໍ້ມູນຂ່າວສານທາງດ້ານການຄ້າຕໍາລາດພິການ ຕັ້ງຢູ່ທີ່ ກົມມະໂຍບາຍການຄ້າຕ່າງປະເທດ, ກະຊວງອຸດສາຫະກຳ ແລະ ການຄ້າ.



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