

## 4<sup>th</sup> April, International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

In 2005, the United Nations declared 4<sup>th</sup> April as the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action to raise public awareness on the danger of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and mines. Around the world, many countries still suffer with the impact of mines and UXO and the 4<sup>th</sup> of April acts as a day of global observance for this continued issue.

In Lao PDR, UXO contamination remains a significant obstacle of socio-economic development as it limits people's access to their land and hinders agricultural development. Approximately 80% of Lao PDR's communities live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for a living, however, where UXO and mine contamination is prevalent, farmers are unable to grow food for their families and in turn, unable to escape the poverty trap. In addition, the threat of mines and UXO items impedes the construction of infrastructure, the tourism industry and stunts the overall economic growth of Lao PDR.

In terms of ongoing mine risk education and awareness activities in Lao PDR, last year 250,000 people in 516 villages, half of whom were children, were engaged by such educational activities. Many of these activities included puppet shows, songs, and games. Nowadays, mine risk education messaging reaches farther and wider than ever before through the use of textbooks and radio messages.

Today, on the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, a joint article was released by Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Chairman of the NRA and UNDP's Resident Representative to Lao PDR. The full article can be read on page 18 of the *Vientiane Times* today (4/4/2018).

UNDP released the statement on their website regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> of April

[http://www.la.undp.org/content/lao\\_pdr/en/home/presscenter/blog/2018/unexploded-ordnance--an-obstacle-to-development.html](http://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/presscenter/blog/2018/unexploded-ordnance--an-obstacle-to-development.html)

