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THE LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 18: LIVES SAVE FROM UXO (UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE)

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals is a global agenda of the United Nations to cope with global challenges that is formulated into 17 goals including its indicators. The Lao PDR as part of global society and member of the United Nations commits to implement the SDGs but with one additional conditional goal that is SDG 18 Lives save from UXO (Unexploded Ordnance). SDG 18 as part of response toward local challenge reminds of the war’s impact which threatens peoples’ live all at once as well as the urgent need to solve the problem completely for achieving other 17 goals. How Lao is struggling with the implementation of the Goal 18 through various form of cooperations and partnerships is the precious part in the process of documenting the best practices of achieving SDG 18. This article aims to explore various initiatives of the Lao government and its implementation with international partners’ support. Target formulation is a positive initial step while the successfulness to fulfill the target is something that must be continuously conducted.

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals, Lives Save from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), Partnership, Peace

Abstrak

Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (TPB) atau Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) merupakan agenda global yang dirumuskan oleh PBB untuk mengatasi tantangan global yang dirumuskan dalam 17 tujuan dengan seperangkat indikatornya. Republik Demokratik Rakyat Laos sebagai bagian masyarakat global dan anggota PBB berkomitmen melaksanakan TPB namun dengan satu tujuan kondisionnal tambahan yaitu TPB 18 yaitu Penyelamatan Kehidupan dari Sisa Persenjataan Perang yang Tidak Meledak (Unexploded Ordnance – UXO). TPB 18 Laos sebagai bagian dari tanggapan terhadap tantangan lokal mengingatkan akan dampak perang yang membahayakan jiwa penduduk sekaligus perlunya menyelesaikan masalah sisa perang secara tuntas agar memperlancar 17 tujuan lain. Bagaimana Laos mengusahakan hal ini melalui berbagai bentuk kerja sama dan kemitraan menjadi bagian yang sangat berharga dalam rangka mendokumentasikan praktik terbaik khususnya TPB 18. Artikel ini ingin melihat berbagai insiatif pemerintah Laos dan pelaksanaannya dengan dukungan mitra internasional. Formulasi target merupakan langkah awal positif sementara keberhasilan pemenuhan target merupakan usaha yang masih harus dilakukan secara terus menerus.

Kata kunci: Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan, Penyelamatan Kehidupan dari Sisa Senjata Perang, Kemitraan, Perdamaian

1. Introduction

It is interesting to observe the engagement of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched by the United Nations (UN) through ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations) in 2015. As a developing country, Lao PDR has been showing its commitment to face the country's various development challenges. In March 2020, through the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the LAO PDR to the UN, Anouparb Vongnarkeo, Lao proposed to participate in the Voluntary National Reviews through the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) conducted by ECOSOC in July 2021 (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25881Letter_of_Permanent_Mission_of_The_Lao_Peoples_Democratic_Republic.pdf). Lao PDR wanted to share their successful experiences, challenges, and lesson learned in implementing previous SDGs program. Moreover, another interesting step is that Lao PDR ratified the national SDGs, namely SDG 18 Lives Safe from UXO (Unexploded Ordnance).

This article would like to lift up Lao's national initiative in SDG 18 and background of this important target, in order to achieve other SDGs target. In one side, this phenomenon shows how the developing countries have been keep struggling out of the war's vulnerable impacts after decades, to achieve the people's welfare; but in the other part without collaboration and cooperation in both national and international level, this problem could not be solved. The Lao PDR's experience in implementing SDG 18 hopefully could be a specific case for a lesson learned for other countries suffered from wars in the past or at present. A concrete initiative for world's peace contribution shall be explored from the Lao PDR.

2. Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative-explorative research method by analysing various articles, documents, and reports from Lao PDR and various organizations within the United Nations as well as other international institutions which had roles in facilitating the implementation of SDG 18 in Lao. Meanwhile, there are two concepts to analyse, namely: the UN's sustainable development concept to describe Lao's reality in developing the country which is more environment friendly and supporting a long-term life; and a partnership concept to explain the implementation of sustainable development in Lao, especially Goal 18: Lives Safe from the UXO (Unexploded Ordnance).

3. The Lao People's Democratic Republic

Map 1. The Lao People's Democratic Republic



Source: <https://peta-hd.com/peta-negara-laos/>

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) or frequently mentioned as "Lan Xang" (country of Thousand Elephants) is a "land lock" country located in South East Asia land – adjacent to Myanmar and the People's Republic of China in Northwest, Vietnam in East, Cambodia in South and Thailand in West. In general Lao PDR is a country with fertile river valley with agricultural, plantation and mining products and natural forest area. Besides beautiful nature, Lao PDR has interesting destinations such as historical buildings, rich culture and diverse native people which are still doing local traditions. There are several tribes in Lao PDR, namely: 53,2% Laos, 11% Khmu, 9,2% Hmong, 3,4% Phoutay, 3,1% Tai, 2,5% Makong, 2,2% Katong, 2% Lue, 1,8% Akha, and 11,6% other tribes. The national language is *Lao*, and other languages such as Thai, English and France. (<https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laos>).

Politically, Lao had experienced colonization from some other countries. It was started with Thailand (18th century), France which later on combined with the France Indochina (19th century), Japan (during World War II), and finally achieved an independence in 1949 as the Lao Kingdom. In 2 December 1975 Lao Kingdom changed into the Republic of Lao following Pathet Lao's communist movement supported by the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Besides internal turbulences, the shaking Vietnam gave an impact on Lao as well with the second Indochina war. With country's size of 236,800 square kilometers and around 7 million populations, Lao has been pursuing the country's left behind condition with various cooperation including joint the ASEAN in 1997. Even though Lao PDR is known as the poorest country in South East Asia, but Lao's economic development has been significantly improving through infrastructure developments (roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, water supply system and dams) as well as investments and cooperation with various countries and international institutions.

4. Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs known as Global Goals adopted by all member countries of the United Nations in 2015 – as universal call to do actions to end poverty, to protect earth planet and to ensure that all human beings having peace and prosperity by 2030.

There are 17 established Sustainable Development Goals which are influencing each other areas, and that the development has to balance sustainability of social life, economic, and environment. Through “to Leave no One Behind” motto, various countries committed to prioritizing sectors/groups which need the most, therefore SDGs is planned to bring the world towards a total life changes through zero poverty, no hunger, reduced AIDS including no discrimination to women and young girls. All parties are expected to achieve this ambitious target where creativities, knowledge, technologies and financial resources of all societies are expected to achieve SDGs in every context. (https://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html).

SDGs initiative was launched in the UN conference on sustainable development, namely the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Goals in Rio de Janeiro 2012. The objective is to generate a set of universal goals for fulfilling urgent challenges faced by the world, especially in the area of environment, politics and economics. SDGs replaced MDGs (The Millennium Development Goals) which was started as a global initiative in 2000 for poverty eradication.

The MDGs consists of eight (8) measurable goals approved by all countries to overcome poverty and hunger, to achieve basic education for all, to encourage gender equality and women empowerment, to reduce child mortality rate, to improve maternal health, to fight against HIV/AIDS, TBC, Malaria and other contagious diseases, to ensure the sustainability of life environment, and to develop global partnership for development (https://kospel.kemkes.go.id/news/news_public/detail/37).

During 15 years, the MDGs had made improvements in several important fields such as income poverty reduction, better water access and sanitation, and reduced child mortality drastically through maternal health improvement. MDGs was an initial global movement to provide free basic education and later on many countries inspired to do investments for their future generation. Most importantly MDGs had done big steps in fighting against HIV/AIDS and other cured diseases such as malaria and Tuberculosis (https://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/background.html). Some main achievements were (i) more than one billion people had been released from extreme poverty since 1990, (ii) children mortality decreased by more than half since 1990, (iii) number of no school children half decreased since 1990 and infection cases of HIV/AIDS reduced by 40 percent since 2000 (https://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/background.html).

MDGs achievement provided valuable experience to start a new goal due to unfinished challenges. Various efforts were still needed to eliminate poverty, to achieve gender equality, to improve health services and provide education after elementary school. Therefore MDGs was getting an urgent call to change the world into a more sustainability road. All parties understood that MDGs was a commitment to solve what it was started and that the world is still facing bigger challenges at present. All 17 goals are interconnected and that a success in one area will influence other areas' successes. In encountering climate changes for example, it will come into another question how

we can manage the fragile natural resources. Achieving better gender equality or health will help reducing poverty and more justice, while inclusive society will decrease social gap and helping to achieve global economic welfare.

Further, need to be mentioned that MDGs was related with the historic agreement achieved in 2015 at the Climate Conference COP21 in Paris. Together with Sendai Framework for reducing Disasters Risks signed in Japan in March 2015, this agreement agreed for a general standard and target which shall be achieved to reduce carbon emission, risks management of climate change and natural disaster, and rebuilding better after crisis. It was obvious that MDGs was a unique programme because involving all problems which gave impacts to all human beings. MDGs confirmed an international commitment of all countries to end poverty permanently everywhere and quite ambitious to ensure that nobody was left. Most importantly it was involving all world citizens to develop a more sustainable planet, safer and more prosperous for all people.

5. Partnership

The important part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals is 17 goals, which strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. Cooperation and partnership with various stakeholders is an important factor to pursue and accelerate goals achievement. Cooperation is needed with various actors and sectors which are integrated collaborations, by unifying all resources: finance, knowledge and expertise. An innovative multi-sector cooperation would play an important role for the whole achievement, in every level as well.

Particularly, what we meant with partnership for Sustainable Development Goals is a voluntary initiative from various stakeholders conducted by governments, inter-government organizations, main groups and various parties with efforts for contribution towards implementation of development goals and commitment already agreed between governments as mentioned in Agenda 21, Johannesburg Action Plan, UN Conference document on sustainable development (Rio+20) with title “The Future We Want”, and the Third International Conference on developing island countries and Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development (<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/multi-stakeholder-partnerships-and-voluntary-commitments>).

SDGs 17 – “Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” – acknowledged that the partnership of various stakeholders is an important platform for action and sharing knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resource for supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in all countries especially developing countries. The 17 goals encourage and advancing effective partnership between public, public-private and civil society, to develop partnership experience and strategy.

In relation to the above, the UN’s Economic and Social Affairs Department will support, facilitate, and monitoring multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitment to sustainable development and sustainable development goals as well as to inform various conferences on sustainable development.

The Division will also manage an online platform for SDGs Partnership, a global registration related to commitment and partnership of various stakeholders through various UN conferences in supporting SDGs; such as following activities: SDG Summit

(2019), the UN OCEAN Conferences (2017 dan 2021), the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference (2014) and the Rio+20 Conference (2012).

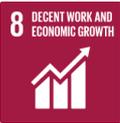
6. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Sustainable Development Agenda

Lao, together with 192 UN’s member countries supported and ratified SDGs in General Assembly 2015, with objectives to eradicate poverty, to solve injustice and disparity, and to overcome climate change before 2030 – an effort to bring the world into sustainable development path.

SDGs which implemented by Lao PDR government consists of 17 SDGs and additional national goal SDG 18 as described in below table:

Table 1. Sustainable Development Goals of Lao People’s Democratic Republic

No	Symbol	Goal	Note	Program
1.		Goal 1: No Poverty	To end poverty in every format and everywhere	Related Goal 1,9,11,13,16,17
2		Goal 2: Zero Hunger	To end hunger, achieve food security and nutrition improvement and advancing sustainable agriculture	Related Goal 8
3		Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	To ensure healthy life and improving welfare for all and at any ages	Related Goal 3, 10
4		Goal 4: Quality Education	To ensure inclusive and fair education quality, and promoting long life study opportunities for all	Related Goal 4
5		Goal 5: Gender Equality	To achieve gender equality and empowering all women and girls	Related Goal 5, 16, 17
6		Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	To ensure clean water supply management and	Related Goal 6

			sustainable sanitation for all	
7		Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy	To ensure access to energy – affordable, sustainable and modern for all	Related Goal 7
8		Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth	To promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full employment opportunities which is productive and decent for all	Related Goal 2, 9,10,12,17
9		Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure	To build strong infrastructure, to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and supporting innovation	Related Goal 1, 8,17
10		Goal 10: Reduced inequalities	To reduce gap or inequalities within and among countries	Related Goal 3,8,10,11,16,17
11		Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities	To create cities and settlement which is inclusive, safe, strong and sustainable	Related Goal 1,10,13,17
12		Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production	To ensure sustainable consumption and production pattern	Related Goal 8,13
13		Goal 13: Climate action	To take urgent and quick actions to reduce climate change and its impact	Related Goal 1,11,12
14		Goal 14: Life below water	To preserve and protect continuity in using oceans,	Related Goal

			seas and maritime resources for sustainable development	
15		Goal 15: Life on land	To recover and improve usage of sustainable land ecosystem, sustainable forest management, to decrease desertification, and stopping land degradation and returning land quality as well as discontinuing disappeared biodiversity	Related Goal 15
16		Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	To support inclusive and peaceful people/community life for sustainable development, to provide access for justice for all and building effective institution, accountable and inclusive in all level	Related Goal 1,5,10,17
17		Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals	To strengthen implementation means and to revitalize global partnership for sustainable development	Related Goal 1,5,8,9,10, 11,16,17
18		Goal 18: Lives save from UXO (Unexploded ordnance)	To overcome UXO problem for development	

Source: <https://www.la.undp.org/content/laopdr/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

So far Lao PDR has been implementing adaptation to the SDGs in Lao context. The initial material for discussion shall be found in Discussion Paper: The Sustainable Development Goals in the Context of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (2015), especially in the context of cooperation between the UN and Lao PDR government. The

paper tried to mapping out relation between international goals which has been adopted recently and indicative result at national level for each goal, although not yet definitive but more as a basis for further discussion.

The SDGs implementation is a milestone achievement of Lao PDR government with the assistance of The United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) in Lao; consists of specialists, UN’s fund and program worked for Lao, together with the World Bank which supported SDGs’ localization and Lao’s national development targets through equal and sustainable socio-economic development. UNCT worked supporting Lao government and its people for eradicating poverty, to ensure development approach based on rights, to support sustainable natural resources usage and cultural heritage preservation, as well as promoting human rights, gender equality and good governance. The UN focused on assistance towards the most vulnerable and poor, especially women, children and young people.

In order to support 18 goals (Table 1), UNCT had cooperation with Lao government and broader development community, including civil society and private sector. The UN’s tasks in Lao were guided by Lao PDR–United Nations Partnership Framework (<https://laopdr.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>). The framework, besides to ensure planning cycle and SDGs implementation in Lao were running as planned, there were also Progress Report. So far Progress Report 2018 and 2020 had been issued.

With the end of Lao–UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021, therefore a new framework is being prepared, namely Lao PDR–United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Development Framework 2022-2026.

In general, Lao PDR–UN Partnership framework has been achieved following milestones:

Table 2. Achievement Milestones of the Lao PDR’s Sustainable Development Goals

Milestones	Description
1	Sustainable development. With almost 60 percent national planning indicator connected to indicator of SDGs, Lao PDR presented its first Voluntary National Review in implementing 2030 Agenda in 2018. Previously in 2016, Lao adopted SDG 18 for Lives Save from UXO (Unexploded Ordnance).
2	Good life. Lao PDR made investment in reducing poverty and job opportunities improvement. In 2018 the UN stated that Lao country status deserved for an upgrade from the Least Developed Country due to its success in fulfilling criteria of human resource asset and GNI per capita.
3	Social protection. Lao PDR made priority on access improvement for social protection benefit, including for the weakest. In 2016, the UN introduced Noi, fictive advocate figure representing Lao girls. In 2019 Lao PDR renewed its social commitment under international mechanism.

4	Climate change, disaster management and environment. Lao PDR had been strengthening disaster management through the Framework for National Disaster Recovery. Lao is the first ASEAN member country which ratified Paris Agreement in 2015. In 2019 also adopted the National Green Growth Strategy.
5	Education. Lao PDR has achieved universal level in basic education registration and aiming to improve access for inclusive and equal education. In 2019 Lao reviewed again its commitment through the UN's Children Right Convention.
6	Health, water and sanitation. Lao PDR has been keep improving access for health service quality, water and sanitation and advancing by implementation the National Health Insurance 2019.
7	Food safety and nutrition. Lao PDR is very committed to improve food safety, especially for the weakest and developing nutrition monitoring system.
8	Institutional development. Lao PDR has been improving the implementation of public service and strengthening institutions, both in local and national policies. In 2017 conducted the Lao Social Indicator Survey II supported by the UN.
9	Access for justice. Lao PDR ensured that its people enjoy better access to justice and human rights fulfillment. In 2020 Lao participated in the third cycle of Universal Periodic Review.

Source: <https://laopdr.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>

Various entities were involved in implementation SDGs in Lao, such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labor Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Trade Center (ITC), The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN Desa), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), United Nations of the Economic and Social Commission fo Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN Habitat), United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programe (UNDP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), United Nations

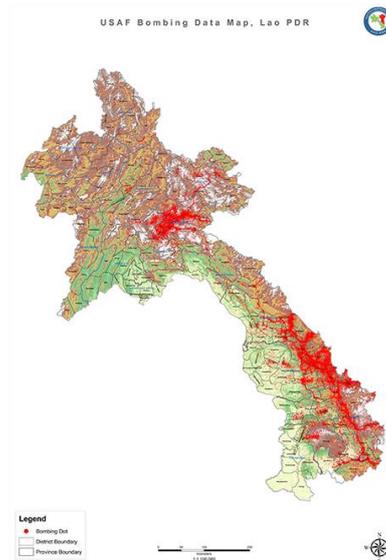
High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), World Food Program (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO). (<https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/lao-peoples-democratic-republic>).

7. SDG 18 Lives Safe from UXO (Unexploded Ordnance)

It is interesting for Lao that besides SDGs 17 which already challenging, the Lao needed to add SDG 18 in 2016, namely Lives Safe from UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) or saving the lives from the remaining bombs and other war’s weaponry which are not exploded. Compared to other countries in the world, Lao suffered the heaviest bomb attacks during cold war. During Indochina war between 1964-1973, it was recorded the US made bombing mission more than half million times (580,000 or every 8 minutes in 24 hours during 9 years), brought more than 2 million tons of explosives in order to defence from the speed of the North Vietnam troops passed by Lao region (<http://www.nra.gov.la/uxoProblem.php>). The unloaded material included more than 266 million “bombies” (subminitions) generated from 270 million bomb clusters.

Moreover, as the war area during war independence against France colonialism and civil war between Pathet Lao and the Lao Kindom’s troops, it also left various unexploded weaponry such as heavy bomb, rockets, grenades, artillery ammunition, mortar, landmines, and others. It was predicted around 30 percent of those weaponry did not explode and keep staying in various locations hurting and killing civil people, as well as prohibit socio economic development and food security – because located in potential agriculture areas (<https://www.uxolao.org/the-uxo-problem/>). Asia Brief reported that there were 80 million unexploded bomb in the country during post conflict period between 1950 and 1970, and buried in the forest, agriculture field, villages, school areas, roads and densely populated area which potentially dangerous and even could kill the civilian (<https://reliefweb.int/report/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/asia-brief-hidden-danger-uncovering-uxo-problem-lao-pdr>). NRA predicted about 25 percent of 10,000 villages in Lao are contaminated UXO. Map 1 shows bombing areas by the US Air Force or USAF (the United State of Air Force) marked by red color during war period 1964-1973.

Map 2. US Air Force Bombing Area, Lao PDR



Source: http://www.nra.gov.la/resources/Map/Bombing_Map_Mini.jpg

Picture 1. Example of UXO (Unexploded Ordnance)



Source: <http://www.nra.gov.la/uxoProblem.php>

SDG 18 about UXO was approved by Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and UN's Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the ASEAN Summit 2016 and introduced a logo of walking handicapped person with red background leaving behind ammunitions towards a potent future (ww.mofa.gov.la/index.php/activities/state-leaders/1377-laos-makes-history-launching-sustainable-development-goal-18).

SDG 18 was expected to form core goals of the new sustainable development started in early 2017. The objective of SDG 18 UXO is to decrease the victim, to fulfill the victim's needs, and to clean up the country for bigger benefits of the poorest group in Lao.

During the meeting Secretary-General Ban Ban Ki-moon stated:

“More than half of the casualties caused by UXO in the Lao PDR in recent years have been children, most often young boys. With SDG 18, we aim to put an end to this horrible trend once and for all. The socio-economic impact of UXO contamination means that people lack confidence in the safety of their land, which in turn has negative impacts on the income of rural farmers and their families and inhibits the development of the country as a whole. I welcome the Government's commitment to free its people from UXO with a powerful tool like a national SDG which will make sure efforts are

coordinated for full impact. With the implementation of the SDGs, the United Nations is delivering on its promise to leave no one behind. He acknowledged the support of national institutions, development partners and civil society organisations, which are all crucial for the implementation of the SDGs in the Lao PDR.” (<http://www.mofa.gov.la/index.php/activities/state-leaders/1377-laos-makes-history-launching-sustainable-development-goal-18>)

Meanwhile Prime Minister Thongloun highlighted below:

“Our government, through SDG 18, will make sure that UXO are cleared to the extent possible by 2030, in high-risk areas, which are often the poorest areas of our country. We will also focus on ensuring that all survivors receive the support they need to lead dignified lives. For us to be successful we rely on a joint effort. As a first step of implementing SDG 18, the government is planning to carry out a comprehensive national survey of UXO contamination, which will help to target clearance work in high-risk areas and reduce the number of casualties”.

(https://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/09/07/lao-pdr-writes-history-by-launching-sustainable-development-goal-18.html).

Picture 2. SDG 18 Inauguration, Laos PDR



Source: https://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/09/07/lao-pdr-writes-history-by-launching-sustainable-development-goal-18.html

8. UXO Impact on Lao PDR's sustainable development

Based on the National Survey Report of UXO Socio-Economic Impact in Lao, data showed 2,861 villages (25 percent of total villages in Lao) were contaminated UXO. In 375 villages UXO were found throughout transportation lines and affected trade and communication. There were 993 villages contaminated UXO in low land and 707 villages contaminated in high land which affected to the agriculture area. 10 out of 18 provinces have one or more districts with heavy UXO impact, namely Savannaketh, Xieng Kuong, Saravane, Khammouane, Sekong, Champassak, Saysomboune, Houaphan, Attaperu, Lhuang Prabang. Five villages contaminated significantly by UXO: Luang Namtha, Phongsali, Bolikhamxay, Vientiane province, and Vientiane prefecture. While 3 provinces were reported had no significant UXO: Bokeo, Oudomxay, Sayaboury.

Various UXO types founded in the villages:

Table 3. UXO Types in Lao PDR

No	UXO Type	Location
1	Anti-personel bomblet BLU serie	1,553 villages
2	Big bomb 100-1000 kg	1,156 villages
3	Mortar	782 villages
4	Projektil from artillery and armoured weapon	555 villages
5	Contaminated landmine	214 villages

Source: Living with UXO Final Report National Survey on the Socio-Economic Impact of UXO in Lao PDR 1997, Handicap International, Laos.

Victim related to UXO as reported by the International Handicap Socio-Economic Survey (1997) reached 10,649 people since 1973, while accidents related to UXO recorded 200 cases per year and 20 years later since Indo-China war at least every two-day UXO accidents still happened. Children victims reached one-third of total UXO victims with increasing trend, since they live in UXO environment and no education for its danger. In general accidents were happened when the residents worked at agricultural fields or collected forest harvest or when the villagers wanted to use UXO's metal scrap or component for various purposes. The Government then prohibited UXO scrap trading to reduce the risks when collecting UXO metal-scrap which reached one-fourth out of total victim.

Both victim' physical and psychological impacts were very vulnerable. Anti-bomblet type was deadly or giving wound, defect and serious trauma. Amputations were done for the upper side, hand and frequently victim suffered of blindness, deaf and burnt wound. A long term treatment needed and gave implication on household economic and hospital costs.

UXO had impact for development in various level. In macro level, the war gave impact on Lao's development. Destroyed infrastructure and UXO will be keep threatening buildings, roads, bridges, hydropower units and irrigation scheme. In micro level, UXO gave impact on daily life activities for villagers and limit their movement as they could not expand new agriculture field. People should adapt since UXO problem not yet solved and influence the victim and their families. In other words, UXO's contamination put contribution to poverty.

9. Lao Government's initiative in UXO Program

Considering that the handling of UXO's impact should be systematic, continuously and with supports from various parties, thus Lao government has been working on several initiatives related to UXO's implementation, namely discussion on SDGs in Lao's context, to conduct national survey on UXO's impact on socio-economic, defining UXO initiative in the national SDGs, implementing SDG 18 UXO with various international cooperation.

Related to SDG 18, Lao government had done its first step with document: Discussion Paper – The Sustainable Development Goals in the Context of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2015), though still limited in describing UXO target that

the Government was expected to keep doing this specific goal and there were not yet specific target related to mines and UXO – namely conflict and post-conflict issues. Goal 11 was seen as the most appropriate for UXO’s goal and target, while Goal 16 is the only goal which mentioned death as violence.

Table 4. SDG 18 and Implication for Development Planning

Lao SDG Formula	Main Result SDG 18	Relevant Target SDGs	Indicative Area Program for next development intervention and indicator
<p>Goal 11. To develop city and residential area which inclusive, safe, durable and sustainable.</p> <p>Goal 16. To promote peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, provide access for justice for all and to develop effective institution, accountable and inclusive in all level.</p>	<p>Safe residential, agriculture and under control road</p> <p>To reduce death and wounds from UXO’s incidents.</p>	<p>11.1, 11.2, 11.7</p> <p>16.1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total cleansing of UXO from main agricultural land. ▪ To reduce number of victims due to UXO’s incidents ▪ Medical and rehabilitation needs for all UXO’s survivors fulfilled as agreement’s obligation within the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

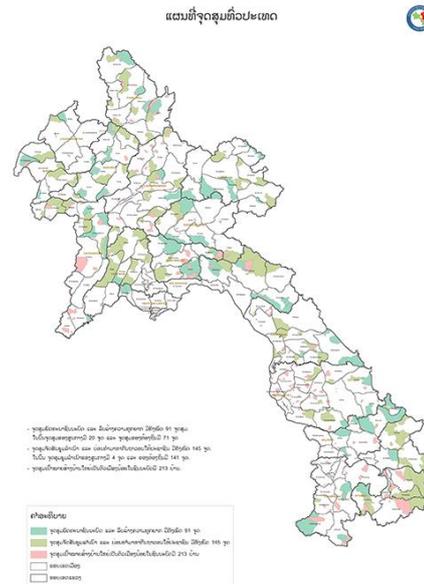
Source: Discussion Paper: The Sustainable Development Goals in the Context of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, The United Nations in Lao PDR, November 2015, page 20

SDG 18 handling was especially implemented by The National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector (NRA) as Lao’s public institution. This institution was responsible for regulation and having coordination with all operators in Lao which worked on post-war’s impact of unexploded weapons such as bomb, artillery, grenades, land mines and others.

The objective of NRA was to enable all Lao citizens for living freely from UXO threats, to help supporting national development and affording all UXO victim to integrate with community and their needs shall be fulfilled comprehensively. UXO statistics 2021/22 recorded 652 accidents, 146,312 hectares of dangerous areas, 72,443 hectares of area had been cleaned and 1,698,885 UXO were destroyed (<http://www.nra.gov.la/index.php>).

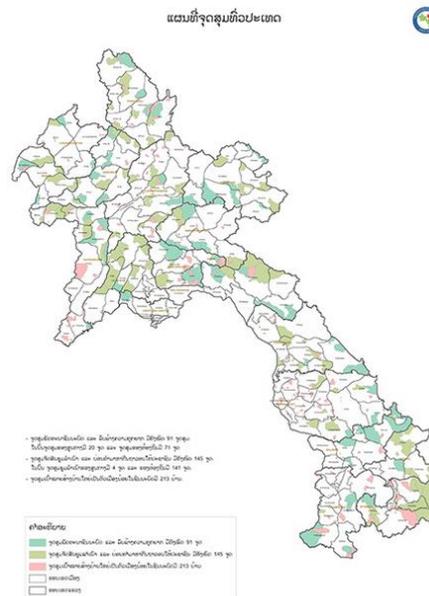
The following map showed focused area for implementation of UXO program and achieved progress.

Map 3. Focused Development Area of UXO Program



Source: http://www.nra.gov.la/Map_Gallery.php

Map 4. UXO Advance Sector Map



Source: http://www.nra.gov.la/Map_Gallery.php

NRA had seven (7) working unit, namely (i) Clearance Unit with two main responsibility areas: technical process for land cleaning or survey and related with the coordinator for cleaning sources to be sent to priority regions; (ii) Education Unit for Mines Risk with focus on UXO prevention related to happened accidents through improving communication and awareness; (iii) Victim Supporting Unit with mandate as listed at RNA’s strategic plan; (iv) Information Management Unit – is an important component where RNA acts as information’s main point of various sector and receiving and keeping data from UXO main activity area; (v) Quality Management Unit – this

National Standard Unit responsible for preparing and making the Lao's National UXO Actions Standard, and to ensure that standard has been implemented by all UXO organization in the country. At present the Unit consists of two (2) main members and will be expanding to involve a number of mobile team which can verify obedience; (vi) Community Relations Unit with two focus areas: to increase issue about UXO in Lao both national and international level, and supporting information exchanges between all main stakeholders in UXO's sector; (vii) International Cooperation and Agreement Support – supporting unit for agreement cooperation established by Lao's government when ratifying Convention on Cluster Munition and other agreements. Development in this area will improve Lao's tasks because it will relate with rights for agreement's obedience. Therefore NRA added extra capacity for facing this challenge.

Through interactive dashboard of various UXO's operation data in Lao can be monitored, for example: accidents statistic and victims every month/year and its cause, technical survey of each year/province/operator, cleansed area every year for agriculture and development area.

10. UXO LAO

Without international assistance, initiative such as UXO could not be executed due to its huge scope of problem. In 1990, in the beginning the assistance was done through NGOs and later on through the UN. With supports of UNDP and UNICEF, UXO Lao (Lao National Unexploded Ordinance Programme) was established in 1996 through Prime Minister's Decision Letter No 49, 13 February 1996 and working under the Ministry of Manpower and Social Welfare. In 2013 UXO Lao moved to the National Committee for Village Development and Poverty Alleviation, but in 2016 it was returned to the Ministry of Manpower (<https://www.uxolao.org/background-2/>).

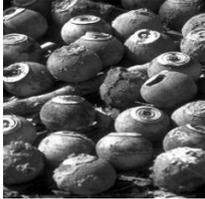
The main mandates of UXO Lao were to reduce number of victim caused by UXO, and to increase land area for food production and other actions for socio-economic development.

UXO Lao has the National Office in Vientiane and operates in nine (9) most affected provinces: Huaphanh, Luangprabang, Xiengkhuang, Khammuane, Savannakhet, Salavan, Sekong, Champasak and Attapeu. In every province, its provincial office will cooperate with the province government office for village development and poverty eradication, and various other ministries such as health, education, agriculture, forestry for planning purpose.

UXO Lao cleaned wide location for agricultural goal and community activities such as schools, hospitals, worship places, water supply and other developments. UXO Lao at least runs five (5) main activities: (i) Roving Task – RT, (ii) Technical Survey – TS, (iii) Non-Technical Survey – NTS, (iv) Cluster Munitions Hazard – CHA), and (v) Community Awareness – CA. These five main activities still related to the new UXO's operational concept.

Type of UXO threats already identified were,

Picture 3. Type of UXO Threats

UXO Type	Description
	<p>Cluster Munitions/Bombies: known as cluster with highest victims, or highest risks. 48% UXO had been found and moved or destroyed.</p>
	<p>Land Serviced Munition: rocket, shell, dangerous mortar but not high risk. 50% UXO had been found and moved or destroyed.</p>
	<p>General purpose bombs. Dangerous but not high risk. 1% UXO had been found and moved or destroyed.</p>
	<p>Land Mines. Causing victim, dangerous but not high risk. 1% UXO had been found and moved or destroyed.</p>

Source: <https://www.uxolao.org/bombcuttingbyuxolaoseodabctvbombdisposalinlaospart4of4u-s-giveslaos90millionfundsboosttohelpclearunexplodedordnanceuxolaosdeadlylegacyofbombsbombiesanduxopart2uxolaotechnicianms-saysamoneclearingth/>

UXO Lao now employed 1,060 national staff and the biggest program supported by UNDP. It was recorded UXO Lao's achievement since January 1996 up to 31 December 2016 (<https://www.uxolao.org/organization/>) were,

- (i) Education Tasks regarding mines/bomb risk: to conduct education activities in 11,992 villages, and reached around 3.186.125 people including 1,331,764 children.
- (ii) Non-Technical Survey Task: doing 22,803 survey, collecting information and UXO mapping in 3,784 villages.
- (iii) Roving task of 29,386, cleansing or destroying UXO on surface land in 3,918 villages.

- (iv) Cleansing Task for more than 34,686.150 hectares of agricultural area and 5,377,519 hectares for other development projects (4,753,716 benefit receivers)
- (v) To ensure cleansing of Hazardous Areas – CHA: cleansing 13,561.930 hectares, including 12,701.9080 hectares for agriculture and 860,850 hectares for other development purpose.

UXO Lao besides supported by UNDP for both substance and financial through implementation of main management functions (financial monitoring, audit, donors' mechanism coordination, procurement) as well as with NRA and donor institution which done financial access and technical advisory support, namely: Armor Group North America, Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS), Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) (<https://www.uxolao.org/organization/>). While partner and donor countries were involved in SDG 18: UK, Australia, Canada, European Union, Japan, Norway, Ireland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland, UK Aid, JICA, The Intrepid Foundation, Spirit of Soccer Lao, Sterling International Group, World Without Mines, NPA, COPE (Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise).

11. Conclusion

Lao PDR as a country which is still struggling to cope with poverty has been optimizing resources to do global program for SDGs 2030. Especially for the national goal 18 namely Lives Safe from UXO (Unexploded Ordnance), without solving this, the land and life environment in Lao could not support the development goal for people's welfare.

Lao added SDG 18 strategically within the overall 17 SDGs and consistently doing national coordination with various stakeholders – local, national and international.

International partnership actors such as country, NGO and its network provided significant impact especially since SDGs 2016 intensification program in the form of increased education for UXO risks' awareness in villages, increasing survey and mapping, finding out and destroying UXO in land surface, land cleansing for agriculture and other development, as well as discoveries and destruction of various bomb' types.

If all those efforts and UXO program implementation can be done continuously with supports from various stakeholders and there is no potential conflicts happened, thus in 2030 it is expected SDG 18 of Lao PDR could be achieved.

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