



Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)

Extension Request under Article 4 Convention on Cluster Munitions

(August 2025 – August 2030)

A: Executive Summary

Introduction:

- Lao PDR, with this submission, is requesting a further extension to Article 4, covering from 01 August 2025 to 01 August 2030.
- Lao PDR signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions on the 3rd of December 2008 and ratified the convention on the 18th March 2009. Lao PDR hosted the First Meeting of States Parties (1 MSP) in 2010, where State Parties adopted the Vientiane Declaration and Vientiane Action Plan (2011 – 2015).
- Lao PDR's first Article 4 deadline was 1st August 2020. An extension request was submitted for a further 5 years, running from 01 August 2020 to 01 August 2025 which was approved on the 04 September 2019.
- Lao PDR will also be requesting further extension requests beyond the period of this extension request due to the massive extent of contamination and clearance rate.
- The massive levels of cluster munition contamination in Lao PDR, following the intensive 9-year bombing campaign by the US government, 1964 to 1973, has left the country the most contaminated country in the world. Efforts for clearance began in earnest during the mid-1990s with the establishment of a national clearance capacity (UXO-Lao) and the subsequent establishment of the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) with the support of the UN system. Since the 1990s, the country has strived to clear the massive areas of cluster munition and other UXO contamination with the support of numerous development partners, working with other clearance operators and actors engaged on the risk education and victim assistance sectors.
- Despite significant financial investment and significant progress in clearance, the size of the task of clearance means that the government of Lao PDR will not be able to clear all of national territory in the extension request period. It is estimated, from US bombing data, that the total suspected area contaminated in Lao PDR is close to a third of national territory, or around 87,000 km². This figure was estimated from US bombing data where bombing missions over the period of 1964-1975, covered approximately one third of the Lao PDR national territory. For Cluster Munitions contamination, the initial estimation of cluster munition contamination area in the Lao PDR amounted to approximately 8,470 km², this initial estimation is based on 70,000 individual cluster munitions target locations with each cluster munitions strikes producing a footprint of up to 12 hectares. Therefore, the extent of cluster munition contamination is an on-going process of CMRS.

Progress of the 1st Extension Request:

- Since the application for the previous extension, Lao PDR has implemented a Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS) approach to identifying Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs) for clearance with a focus on habituated areas, where CHAs are identified using evidence points (the presence of cluster munitions or other UXO). The adoption of this approach has enabled the government of Lao PDR to better identify priority areas for clearance, specifically where human habitation (villages) are impacted by unexploded ordnance. The adoption of this approach has enabled the government to start identifying a baseline of contamination, excluding areas which are far from human settlement. However, it is recognised that in prioritizing habituated areas for clearance, Lao PDR will be leaving significant tracts of contaminated areas in unpopulated areas, which will be left as residual contamination.
- Further, Lao PDR has seen some good progress in keeping UXO casualties low from over a hundred casualties in 2011 and in the years prior, to a low of 20 in 2022.
- Cluster munition contamination, however, remains an obstacle to particularly rural development, where the presence of unexploded cluster munitions and other unexploded ordnance hamper rural development and are concentrated in areas which also coincide with poor districts in the country.
- The extension request is increasingly based on the ongoing CMRS Technical Survey process where over the period of the First Extension Request from 2021 to 2023, the Lao PDR undertook technical survey using the CMRS methodology to identify more than 65,133.93 hectares of contaminated land and in the same period, has cleared over 16,943.38 hectares of this amount, equating to 26% of the identified total for the period.
- It is important to note, however, that the total amount of CHAs for clearance will continue to increase as further CHAs are identified. The majority of TS has been undertaken in 5 provinces in the south and significant progress in Xiengkhuang in the centre of the country. However, there are still ongoing survey processes in other provinces and the Government of Lao PDR expects this figure of total CHAs to clear, to further increase as TS continues.
- With a current budget of around US\$ 30-45 million per year (2022) and an annual clearance rate of approximately 5000 - 6500 hectares per year, there is a significant amount of clearance to be undertaken. The Government of Lao PDR will continue to encourage existing donors and diversify new donors to maintain (and possibly increase) Overseas

Development Assistance for the sector to work towards funding levels are maintained or increased during the extension period.

- Clearance in Lao PDR is undertaken by UXO Lao, the national clearance operator, Unit 58, the humanitarian clearance unit of the Lao People's Army as well as international INGOs, notably Halo Trust, Humanity and Inclusion, MAG and Norwegian People's Aid. In all, the sector employs a little under 5000 staff engaged in clearance, risk education, victim assistance and at the national authority (2023).
- Over the current extension period from 01 August 2020 to 01 August 2025, the period was also significantly impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic which restricted clearance, risk education and victim assistance activities.

Lesson Learns and Way Forward for the 2nd Extension Request

- Lao PDR is a mountainous and forested country where rural communities located far from large cities and towns. These geographic challenges present specific challenges to operators in undertaking clearance in high impact areas.
- Lao PDR is planning to increase productivity and coverage over the next extension period through the better utilization of data to improve coverage to impacted communities. As TS CMRS is completed in provinces, more resources will be redirected to clearance activities. Further, Lao PDR aims to better use data to examine the best utility of resources to ensure resources are focused on the areas that present the most threat. An on-going study of the depth of ordnance, for example, is finding that significant number of ordnance are found at shallow depths. Utilising this data to ensure resources are better focused on areas of contamination may impact on productivity, reaching more villages and clearing more hectares with the same budget, without impacting on the threat exposure to impacted communities.
- Lao PDR will also look at other areas for innovation, to better direct resources to clear as many ordnances with the available resources. The Government of Lao PDR is projecting a modest upturn in productivity over the next extension period, should investment levels be maintained. The Lausanne Action Plan highlights the importance of innovation in increasing outputs and outcomes and Lao PDR will work to encourage innovation in the sector to increase impact with available budget.
- It is projected that Lao PDR will clear approximately 50,000 hectares over the forthcoming 5-year extension period, with an estimated of 561,000 cluster munitions destroyed.