

**UNDP Review of
NORAD Funding & NPA Technical Assistance
to UXO LAO
1997-2003**

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1 Executive Summary

1 NPA made a significant contribution to capacity building within UXOLAO as a whole, and not just through on-the-job training within the 2 provinces where advisers were based.

2 NPA always responded positively to the technical assistance needs expressed by UXOLAO.

3 The following are the lessons learned:

When planning such a project, every effort should be made from the start to maximize the time spent by TAs productively in the field.

There could have been better direct transfer of knowledge from other projects – NPA's institutional knowledge – which could have benefited the TAs.

In addition to the technical knowledge and skills, the important qualities for a TA are the ability to cope with a culture very different from their own and still get the job done; the willingness to transfer skills and not just do it all themselves; and the willingness in the early stages to act as a project manager and problem-solver of aspects beyond their immediate technical concerns.

A project could be divided into 2 distinct phases: start-up and implementation, with a different set of advisers and skills for each. Implementation would not begin until the targets set for start-up had been more or less achieved.

Capacity building can only operate within the culture of the organization, and can only be expected to progress at the same speed, and will be hampered by the same obstacles as other activities within the organisation.

4 The following are the expectations for future technical assistance:

There is a continued need for the Field STA until the 2 pilot projects have been implemented and evaluated and SEODs express confidence in their own abilities.

There is a continued need for a STA Finance/Admin because of the diverse and complex demands of managing and reporting on the Trust Fund, and donor confidence.

The TA post responsible for QM should be retained until all Support function procedures are in place and working reasonably smoothly.

Technical assistance to revisit the role and effectiveness of the Community Assistance Teams could be considered after creation of the National Mine/UXO Accident Database.

5 Technical Advisers developed very useful tools for measuring the progress of their capacity building but were themselves not formally and regularly assessed.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this review was to assess the results of the total NORAD contribution made between 1997 and 2003 to the UNDP UXO LAO Trust fund, including the in-kind contribution provided through Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) technical advisory programme in Sekong and Attapeu. The review focused on the two provinces of Sekong and Attapeu, and the ability of UXO LAO to run the programme there independent of permanent external (international) advisors, as well as the overall efficiency of the activities carried out in these two provinces.

The scope of the assessment covered all NPA technical assistance and capacity building support to UXO LAO for the period extending from 1997 to 2003 funded under the NORAD Grant, and also included contributions from NORAD in 1995 to UXO LAO and prior to NPA involvement in the sector.

The findings outlined in this report are the result of a review of documentation, visits to provincial UXO LAO offices and operational sites in Attapeu and Sekong provinces, visit to the UXO LAO National Training Centre at Ban Y'lay and interviews with UNDP, UXO LAO headquarters managers, UXO LAO international technical advisers, provincial UXO LAO offices, NPA-trained EOD technicians, former and current NPA technical advisers, and implementing partners.

The original Terms of Reference called for a 24-day mission, but in fact the assignment was completed in 20 days, in 2 separate visits either side of the Christmas/New Year holiday period. The team was also meant to include a Co-Evaluator but in the end what is contained in this Report is solely the work of the Team Leader. There were certain obvious difficulties in reviewing a project which had effectively ended more than a year ago, but it should be noted that there was an almost full set of records on NORAD and NPA activity held by the current NPA Technical Advisers funded by the USA, and they were also most helpful and co-operative in assisting this review, as were all UNDP and UXOLAO staff.

2 NPA Project Phase I Start-up 1996-97

In December of 1996, the National Programme Director of the LAO UXO Programme at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare attended a UN Conference in Jalalabad, where he had conversations with Mr. Niels Nikolaisen of NPA Oslo. He invited NPA to assist in expanding the capacity of the LAO UXO Programme. Basic training of staff at that time was being conducted by the US Military but the NPD requested assistance with on-the-job training.

Mr. Nikolaisen followed up this meeting with a letter to the NPD in late December, giving a positive response to the request, proposing a NPA delegation to Vientiane in February 1997, and outlining the possible staff support:

2-3 UXO technical advisers to train provincial staff and assist in selection of the best qualified persons to be supervisors.

1 Team Leader to train the provincial UXO co-ordinator in finance, administration and logistics management.

Mr. Harald Wie, Resident Representative for NPA Cambodia, wrote a further letter in January 1997, confirming NPA's interest, and proposing a fact-finding mission to the provinces of Sekong, Attapeu and Saravane in March 1997, comprising himself and Mr. Harald Smedsrud, Asia Co-ordinator at NPA HQ. This took place as planned.

The Lao Government had set a limit of 4 foreign NGOs to assist with the UXO LAO programme. MAG, Gerbera Germany and Handicap International were already providing support and NPA was welcomed as the fourth. NPA proposed to provide assistance in two of the Southern provinces identified in the National Survey on Socio-Economic Impact by Handicap International in 1997 as being 2 of the 12 most heavily contaminated provinces, and because of the challenges related to the remoteness and poor accessibility at that time.

In late May 1997 Mr. Harald Wie attended a meeting of the UXO LAO Steering Committee, at which the NPA proposal was discussed and approved in principle, with a desired start date in both provinces before the end of 1997. The proposal was for:

1 Senior Adviser based in Vientiane

2 Admin/Finance Advisers Sekong and Attapeu

4 UXO Clearance Experts, 2 each in Sekong and Attapeu

1 Community Awareness Adviser working in both provinces

NPA would provide the necessary vehicles, radios and computer equipment for the advisers, which would be handed over to the Government at the end of the project. The project would start in September 1997 and planned to run until the end of 2000. The estimated budget for 1997 was US\$ 462,500, and for 1998 US\$ 709,700. The remaining budgets would be prepared during 1998.

The Committee commented that:

The proposal was well thought out

It would allow operations in Sekong and Attapeu to have a high level of management and technical support

The time frame was realistic

The number of advisers should be reduced over the years, as field staff gained experience

The overall aim was that NPA would assist UXO LAO in the effort of clearing Laos of unexploded ordnance to reach the targets set in the yearly work plan. And NPA's capacity-building target was that the UXO operation in the provinces allocated to NPA would be running without international advisory assistance within 3 years, that is the end of 2000.

Following recruitment, Sekong staff would begin their basic training in July 1997 and Attapeu staff in October 1997. In the meantime, Handicap International was conducting a national UXO socio-economic impact study, which was published in October 1997 ("Living with UXO").

3 NPA Project Phase 1 1997-2000

The stated objectives of UXO LAO were to:

- Reduce the number of civilian casualties caused by unexploded ordnance
- Increase the amount of land available for food production and other development activities

It should be noted that there still remains no reliable and nationwide system for gathering data on mine/uxo incidents, so this first objective will be hard to assess.

And the development objective of NPA's project was:

To assist UXO LAO in the effort of clearing Laos of unexploded ordnance to reach the targets set in the yearly workplan.

Therefore, one method of assessing the success of the NPA project is to examine UXO LAO targets for each year, and check whether they were indeed achieved in the 2 provinces where NPA was providing technical assistance. Where targets were not achieved, it would be important to identify the obstacles and constraints possibly responsible for under-performance.

At the same time, NPA set itself this immediate objective:

The UXO operation in the provinces allocated to NPA will be running without international advisory assistance within 3 years, that is by the end of 2000.

For 1997 the project progressed as follows:

Planned Activities	Achievements
All NPA staff in country and deployed to the provinces	4 out of 7 staff in country and 3 deployed to the provinces
Project Office established in Vientiane	Established at UXO LAO Head Office
Operational activities started in Sekong	Community Awareness activities began in Sekong (but STA did not arrive until January 1998)

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start
Resident Representative	Harald Smedsrud	15.09.97
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen	10.09.97
STA EOD	Michael Hayes	1.11.97
TA EOD	Peter Gammon	19.11.97

The funding process went slower than planned and this affected the recruitment process. However, the remaining 3 staff arrived by January 10 1998.

Apart from a few villages visited as part of Community Awareness, no other operational activities were reported in the 1997 Annual Report for Sekong and Attapeu by UXO LAO. A major concern expressed by NPA was the lack of operational equipment. One international donor had pledged to supply all major equipment, that is demining equipment and supplies, vehicles, communications equipment and medical equipment, as an in-kind contribution but had been unable to fulfill its obligation in a timely manner. UXOLAO had to consider buying this equipment instead through the Trust Fund. When equipment did arrive, there were further delays in releasing this to the provinces. Subsequently the deminers for Sekong were on stand-by without pay following their basic Training Centre course in mid-September. Those for Attapeu were likewise on stand-by without pay after completion of their course in mid-December. A long recruitment process for administrative staff for both provinces finished at the end of December, and those appointed were young and inexperienced.

Arriving in the provinces in late November, the dry season, made the task of establishing bases there much easier. The 3 vehicles (Toyota Landcruisers) ending up costing approximately US\$30,000 more than budget because they were bought ex-stock instead of ex-factory through the UN, in order to get them there in time.

For 1998 the project progressed as follows:

UXO LAO Planned Activities	Achievements
CA visits to 78 villages in Sekong and Attapeu	73 villages visited (39 Sekong, 34 Attapeu)
10,000 people briefed on CA in both provinces	55,095 people briefed (10,409 Sekong, 44,686 Attapeu)
200 hectares cleared at national level	292 hectares cleared (3.77 Sekong, 4.52 Attapeu)
700 villages visited by Roving Teams at national level	1392 village visits (42 Sekong, 55 Attapeu)
48,000 UXO destroyed at national level	67,875 UXO destroyed (1598 Sekong, 1221 Attapeu)

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start	End
Resident Representative	Harald Smedsrud		
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
STA EOD Sekong	Michael Hayes		
TA EOD Attapeu	Peter Gammon		
STA EOD Attapeu	Stefan de Coninck	01.01.98	
TA EOD Sekong	Phil Holroyd	01.01.98	31.12.98
STA Mine Awareness	Dalma Foldes	01.01.98	31.12.98

Early in the year, operations were limited to building a state of readiness, due to basic equipment still not in place, and included activities such as cutting a road to the demolition area, clearing tress, constructing accommodation, fencing and garage facilities. Photos in the Sekong office show TAs assisting in these tasks. Clearance activities in Attapeu began at the end of May, using equipment donated by the Australian organization ADRA, on an area for ADRA's irrigation system. The main weakness in the Attapeu office was considered the understaffing in the Admin and Finance sections. The adviser was to provide on-the-job training and supervision in the areas of monthly and annual budgeting, accounting, procurement, office routines and procedures, personnel management and general management. Nevertheless, at the request of UXOLAO, the NPA Admin/Finance adviser was switched to HQ in late July.

In spite of the delays in obtaining equipment noted by NPA in late 1997, all the major national operational targets were exceeded, according to the 1998 UXO LAO Annual Report. It is surprising that apparently more people were briefed on CA in Attapeu than in any other province, indeed about half the total population of approximately 87,700. A lack of vehicles for both UXOLAO and NPA was still reported in the last quarter of the year.

NPA Capacity-building activities were training and supervising Community Awareness, Clearance and Roving teams, and the provincial and administrative staff in the running of all UXO LAO operations in the 2 provinces. A rough system for quarterly evaluations of the capacity building progress was implemented from the second quarter of 1998. The "Capacity Building Evaluation Form" was applied to the positions of Provincial Coordinator, Admin/Finance Assistant, Operations Assistant and Team Leaders. The indicators used were Leadership, Management, Administration, Communication, Security, Work Ethic and Initiative. In view of the delayed start to clearance operations in both provinces till mid-1998, the Capacity-Building immediate objective timeframe for NPA was changed to "in the course of the year 2001"

Early success in capacity-building was achieved by NPA in the two first Team Leader courses, claiming two first places and two seconds. Staff were considered capable of performing limited UXO clearance, but not mines, without constant supervision. Also, problems with the quality of hand tools such as trowels, machetes and prodders, were solved by advisers sourcing a local blacksmith, whose products were then to be adopted by UXOLAO, an early example of a local NPA initiative being taken up nationally. Likewise, the development of a completion report in Sekong, to be handed over to the land owner, was also adopted nationally. The TA for CA expressed some reservations about the recruitment process for the CA teams and felt they did not have enough basic knowledge and skills to follow the training. The recruitment of females seemed the most unsatisfactory, being younger, single and less educated. However, by the third quarter, the TA was able to report "tremendous progress" in the quality of the CA presentations to villages. Following back problems, she was transferred to HQ in September. Some of the good work was undermined in the final quarter when the CA Team Leader was replaced 3 times.

For 1999 the project progressed as follows:

UXO LAO Planned Activities	Achievements
CA visits to 64 villages in Sekong and Attapeu	123 villages visited (59 Sekong, 64 Attapeu)
150,000 people briefed on CA at national level	170,290 people briefed (11,617 Sekong, 33,559 Attapeu)
455 hectares cleared at national level	578 hectares cleared (20 Sekong, 10 Attapeu)
528 villages visited by Roving Teams at national level	1,670 village visits (85 Sekong, 78 Attapeu)
87,000 UXO destroyed at national level	89,093 UXO destroyed (2984 Sekong, 2545 Attapeu)

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start	End
Resident Representative	Harald Smedsrud Audun Holm	22.01.99	15.02.99
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
STA EOD Sekong	Michael Hayes		
TA EOD Attapeu	Peter Gammon		
STA EOD Attapeu	Stefan de Coninck		31.12.99
Field Manager	Erik Tollefsen	01.01.99	
STA Sekong	Tony Fish	21.01.99	
TA EOD Sekong	Robert G. Rae	31.12.99	

With regard to NPA capacity-building, the planned activities for 1999 were EOD advisory support consisting of:

Operational planning and reporting

Logistical planning and support

Methods of Operation: Safety Appreciation, Explosives Handling, EOD Techniques, Quality Control

Occupational Health and Safety

General Leadership and Management

Daily on-the-job Safety and Quality Supervision

In order to sustain the skills transfer, emphasis was placed on the production and introduction of SOPs for field operations, which were finalized and presented to the Technical Working Group in November, to be trialled by UXOLAO and Implementing Partners the following year. Also TOR for each post in the provincial organization were submitted to UXOLAO HQ for approval.

The NORAD Report for the year states that all activities were implemented according to the plan and there were no changes to planned activities for the year.

Among details of the further achievements in capacity building were the following. In a demining course at the Training Centre, the top student was a female from the NPA provinces, and 20% of the EOD personnel in these 2 provinces were now women. The course average was 93%, which was the highest achieved, and reflected the input by NPA in introducing selection criteria for new recruits. An American team from the Training Centre visited NPA advisers, to further coordinate capacity-building and work towards national standards in the programme as a whole. The 3 Team Leaders in Attapeu were reported as now capable of conducting limited demolition tasks without the supervision of the TA and 80% of the daily operation of clearance site activities was handled by national staff.

As requested by NPA, a UNV was posted to each of Sekong and Attapeu, to undertake the role of adviser in office management, and thus allowing TAs to be utilized more as trainers in the field. The computerized accounting system was introduced and was of great importance to the efficient compilation of the 1999 accounts.

The cash flow of funds was reported as a constant worry, resulting in problems in paying local staff and in refunding advisers for expenses incurred. Other factors listed as limiting the effectiveness of operations were:

Vehicle and equipment shortfalls (e.g. 4 out of 8 vehicles non-operational in Attapeu)

HF communication equipment shortages

A lack of vehicles for field advisers

Sickness amongst advisers

Due to restructuring within UXOLAO, the organization no longer provided interpreters for NPA, and these were employed directly by NPA.

For 2000 the project progressed as follows:

UXO LAO Planned Activities	Achievements
CA visits to 90 villages in Sekong and Attapeu	813 villages visited (59 Sekong, 48 Attapeu)
109,000 people briefed on CA at national level	256,582 people briefed (7,487 Sekong, 21,826 Attapeu)
52 hectares cleared in Sekong and Attapeu	742 hectares cleared (28 Sekong, 51 Attapeu)
38 villages visited by Roving Teams in Sekong and Attapeu	2,046 village visits (64 Sekong, 92 Attapeu)
100,000 UXO destroyed at national level	80,538 UXO destroyed (3,414 Sekong, 5,021 Attapeu)

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start	End
Resident Representative	Audun Holm		
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
STA EOD Sekong	Michael Hayes		31.10.00
TA EOD Attapeu	Peter Gammon		
Field Manager	Erik Tollefsen		30.06.00
STA EOD Attapeu	Tony Fish		31.12.00
TA EOD Sekong	Robert G. Rae		31.12.00

For the first time in recorded history, the country was reported as self-sufficient in rice production. Given that the second of UXOLAO's objectives was to increase the amount of land available for food production, it could be hoped that the work of UXOLAO, together with its Implementing Partners including NPA, had played a role in contributing to this achievement.

After substantial inputs from NPA and MAG, and further consultations with other advisory agencies, UXOLAO promulgated SOPs for the national programme in mid-2000. These were to be translated and issued to staff in early 2001. Field staff in Sekong and Attapeu were reported as capable of carrying out most of their tasks without TA supervision. However, further formal training was considered necessary for certain posts:

Surveyors were given a 4-day formal refresher and continuation training course within the provinces.

Team Leaders and Section Commanders, together with some Instructors, were given an intensive 6-week course conducted by NPA staff at the UXOLAO Training Centre. Training was in accordance with procedures outlined in the newly-issued SOPS. The curriculum developed by NPA was then used by the Training Centre for the rest of UXOLAO Team Leaders and Section Commanders.

Potential Senior EOD Technicians were also supposed to have received formal training, but the course was cancelled in 1999 and again in 2000. This post was seen as the replacement for the International TA, as the prime technical authority for clearance activities at provincial level, authorized to carry out specific, more complex tasks. It was considered that selection, training and probation would take at least 9 months but no appointments were made in 2000.

There were no major changes in the Admin/Finance department and training of national staff progressed well. Planning for the eventual handover of responsibilities was considered well under way, and the key appointment of the national counterpart to the NPA adviser was finally made in the last quarter.

Following discussions with NORAD and UXO LAO, the decision was taken to extend the project by 6 months into 2001. The project would be officially handed over in June 2001 and NPA would retain 3 staff for the remainder of the year to monitor and conduct quality control of the handover. The focus in this last part of the project was to be the implementation of the Task Book, a certification of key personnel and their ability to perform their tasks. This would form the basis for deciding whether and to what degree NPA had reached its overall objective of building the necessary local capacity in 3 years.

4 NPA Project Phase 2 2001-2003

For 2001 the project progressed as follows:

UXO LAO Planned Activities	Achievements
CA visits to 95 villages in Sekong and Attapeu	766 villages visited (51 Sekong, 40 Attapeu)
324,000 people briefed on CA in both provinces	181,963 people briefed (5,566 Sekong, 8,888 Attapeu)
70 hectares cleared in both provinces	873 hectares cleared (23 Sekong, 50 Attapeu)
64 villages visited by Roving Teams in both provinces	2,107 village visits (74 Sekong, 85 Attapeu)
80,000 UXO destroyed at national level	82,724 UXO destroyed (2,420 Sekong, 6,409 Attapeu)

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start	End
Resident Representative	Audun Holm		08.03.01
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
TA EOD	Peter Gammon		31.12.01
Field Manager	Tony Fish	01.01.01	30.06.01
STA EOD	Robert G. Rae	01.01.01	

In order to monitor the effectiveness of training, a Task Book system was developed by NPA. Each technician was tested on specific operational tasks. Because of the success of the system in the 2 provinces where NPA assisted, UXOLAO adopted the approach to be implemented in all their active provinces. One TA felt the Task Book system should have been introduced much earlier into the programme, to avoid cramming too much into the countdown to phase-out.

The most concrete obstacle to NPA attaining its objective was considered the appointment and training of Senior EOD Technicians, one in each province, who at this stage should have been working as counterparts to the STAs, with the competence to handle the most difficult tasks (for example, big bombs and new UXO previously unknown to the teams.). After many delays, the process was begun and 45 candidates applied for 12 SEOD positions. A screening test in November reduced this number to 24, and these 24 attended a Main Selection Test at the Training Centre from December 1st to 9th. The top 16 candidates were chosen for the course. Thus, by the end of 2001 all the candidates for training had been selected through a transparent and competitive selection process. In a joint venture with NPA, MAG and the Training Centre, a 6-month course was planned to start in January 2002.

Factors continuing to hamper the effectiveness of operations in Sekong and Attapeu were:
 Vehicle and equipment shortages (2 vehicles in Sekong off the road for a year)
 Lack of PPE for the last 3 years, which prevented disposal of White Phosphorus filled munitions
 20% of Minelab detectors unserviceable
 Lack of HF radios caused by long periods away for repair

Both UNDP and UXO LAO expressed interest in keeping the position of Finance Adviser, due to lack of progress in appointment and training of the national Head of Finance. The Finance Unit experienced high staff turnover (50% in 2001), as staff became more skilled and found better paid jobs elsewhere. To counter this, a system of rotation was implemented in 2001, whereby each member was trained in all of the unit's activities. All accounting activities were handled by the national staff, with supervision limited to an end-of-week quality control check by the TA. All financial and accounting activities were computerized and network connected, and the unit was considered fully competent in computer operation and database maintenance. A Financial and Accounting Manual was 95% complete. The Financial Management, in particular the Trust Fund Management, had become increasingly complex, with an increasing number of funding sources, special earmarked funds and varied reporting requirements. Therefore, this continued to be handled by the TA and the UNDP Trust Fund Manager.

The procurement process had been improved by the design of proper Requisition/Procurement Forms and clear step-by-step procedures, developed in 2000 and revised and approved in 2001, so that all procurement related matters were handed over to the Logistics Unit. The Administration and Finance section was planned to run independent of international advisers by the end of 2004, well beyond the timeframe set for the project as a whole.

For 2002 the project progressed as follows:

UXO LAO Planned Activities	Achievements
CA visits to 94 villages in Sekong and Attapeu	120 villages visited (71 Sekong, 49 Attapeu)
People briefed on CA in both provinces: no targets	160,053 people briefed (7,068 Sekong, 12,389 Attapeu)
82 hectares cleared in both provinces	138 hectares cleared (77 Sekong, 61 Attapeu)
100 villages visited by Roving Teams in both provinces	137 village visits (60 Sekong, 77 Attapeu)
80,000 UXO destroyed at national level	98,963 UXO destroyed (3,388 Sekong, 8,359 Attapeu)

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start	End
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
STA EOD	Robert G. Rae		

The EOD STA spent the first half of the year heavily involved in the conducting of the SEOD course at the Training Centre, and the subsequent field exercises. Consequently, both provinces operated without his supervision. When the course was completed, 14 out of the 16 candidates had passed. All 4 of those from Sekong/Attapeu passed and were recommended for SEOD appointments immediately, without further field training or assessment.

The comprehensive Financial and Accounting Manual, nearly completed in 2001, was completed 100% and reviewed by the Finance Unit staff.

An independent 23-day Programme Review of the NPA Capacity Building Support to UXOLAO was conducted in September. The aims were:

To assess the level of national EOD capacity established in Sekong and Attapeu provinces and within UXOLAO HQ as a result of NPA technical support since late 1997

To determine what, if any, ongoing requirements there were for NPA capacity building support in future.

The conclusions were that UXOLAO had made great strides in establishing itself as the coordinating body and local capacity for UXO clearance, and that NPA had contributed significantly to these achievements. UXOLAO was considered a viable organization, and there was still value in NPA's continued support to the organization, and an ongoing role for NPA to complete the capacity building process and to help establish systems within UXOLAO HQ to support and sustain that capacity.

During the second quarter of 2002, the Implementing Partners completed the handover of their capacity, as required by UXOLAO. This created a funding crisis, as some of the IP donors did not automatically transfer their funding to the Trust Fund, on the grounds that they could not fund government employee salaries. NPA managed to obtain funding of US\$196,901 from the USA to cover the costs of the TA project, including TA salaries and allowances, national staff costs, and transport and running costs. NORAD then agreed that the funds they contributed to the Trust Fund, most of which UXOLAO would have used to support the NPA project, could be used instead to fund UXOLAO operating costs in Sekong and Attapeu. In spite of these efforts, it was decided to go ahead with staff cuts, and the Provincial Authorities were notified of the reduction to take effect on July 15th. Each province would have only one clearance team, comprising 34 staff, one survey team of 2 and 8 management/admin staff. It was very unfortunate this occurred right at the end of NPA's 6-year efforts in capacity-building.

For 2003 the project progressed as follows:

NPA Project Staff

Function	Name	Start	End
STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		May?
STA EOD	Robert G. Rae		March?

The funds of \$127,552 carried over from 2002 were used to cover some personnel and operating expenses for the year in Sekong and Attapeu, approximately \$42,000 in each province, and \$10,000 for Saravane province, plus final NPA adviser costs and Review costs. There is no clear record of the exact finishing date for each of the advisers, nor any record of Roy's Final Report, not with NPA Laos, nor NPA Regional Office in Cambodia nor in Oslo. In the case of Roy Vilhelmsen he had served from September 10th 1997, the very start of the project, in both field and HQ, and was apparently the last to leave.

The other missing Final Reports are those of Peter Gammon, November 1997 to December 2001, more than 4 years served, and Phil Holroyd, 1 year in 1998. In fairness it should be pointed out that otherwise NPA record-keeping has been very good, with copies of quarterly reports, travel reports, and other useful documents.

5 Finance

This section examines NORAD contributions to the Trust Fund and to the NPA Project.

NORAD Contributions to UNDP Trust Fund

Year	Amount US Dollars	Percentage of Total Trust fund
1996	865,399	30%
1997	432,729	16.6%
1998	398,406	11%
1999	380,228	8.7%
2000	276,395	19%
2001	279,230	8%
2002	249,990	6%
2003	(127,552c/f)	-
Total	2,873,377	11.5%

The final contribution in 2002 brought the total contributions to \$2,874,201, which was nearly 11.5% of the full cash contributions to the Trust Fund for this period. This makes the Norwegian Government the third most important donor in the history of contributions to the UXOLAO Trust Fund.

The contributions were even more significant when it is noted that they were totally non-earmarked. Such funding is extremely important to UXO LAO, since it enables it to support its national salary staff costs. In July 2002 UXOLAO experienced a cash flow crisis precisely because of a lack of such unearmarked funding, and had to lay off around one third of its workforce in the provinces. This was of course extremely disruptive, and it took over a year for the organization to return to full strength.

To the donor, the value in making use of such a Trust Fund, particularly with non-earmarked funds, are seen as the following. UNDP is able to look at the big picture, including government plans, implementing partner proposals, other areas of UXO work such as victim assistance and so on, whereas donors who may not have a resident representation here will consequently not have the same access to the necessary overview. Thus UNDP is able to coordinate funding for UXOLAO in a coherent way for the Government of Laos and the Donors. It is often the case that the Government faces a complex task in tracking all the funding, and donors may duplicate each other's efforts in the UXO sector, as they can not always be fully aware of the up-to-date plans of the many donors involved.

UNDP is able to ensure that funds being used by GoL/UXOLAO are done so in a manner that follows international standards and rules. Further, UNDP provides support services such as

procurement and financial reporting, and the Annual Audit, which is conducted by an international, professional organization. The reporting requirements for donors are varied and complex, and UNDP can understand and communicate these with UXOLAO and assist in meeting donor requirements. The use of such a Fund also reduces the administrative costs for each individual donor.

The existence of the Trust fund permits a certain flexibility for the management of UXOLAO which has proved important in the past. For example, unspent funds can be carried over from one year to the next, as they were from 2002 to 2003 for NORAD, allowing the last NPA technical advisers to wrap up their duties in an organised manner. In addition, the Trust Fund can come to the rescue of an Implementing Partner in the event of a cash flow crisis. This occurred twice in the case of NPA, who experienced funding shortfalls in 1997 and 1998, and UXOLAO, through the Trust Fund, was able to provide funds and secure the uninterrupted implementation of the NPA project

UNDP is also very active in the crucial role of raising funds and communicating with donors on pledges. It organizes the Annual Steering Committee meeting and important public relations exercises, such as visits to the field by Ambassadors and others, to enable them to see for themselves the value of the work being done. More than one Ambassador has spoken of the impact such a visit has on their belief in the justification for continued funding.

Finally, the GoL 10-year Strategic Plan states that the Trust Fund will be maintained, and will be the preferred vehicle to support all aspects of UXO/Mine Action in Laos PDR.

Disbursements

Year	Amount Disbursed USD	For Sekong & Attapeu	Total Costs for Sekong & Attapeu	NORAD Percentage of Total Costs
1996	0	0	No Operations	-
1997	210,584	0	No Operations	-
1998	1,172,774	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
1999	514,437	281,927	314,699	90%
2000	447,276	314,646	428,327	73%
2001	271,097	95,732*	441,356	Incomplete data
2002	118,871	114,664	291,927	39%
2003	95,655	85,148	End of project	End of project
Total	2,830,694			

* = 6 months only

Amount Disbursed is the total in US Dollars of the NORAD funds spent in that year on UXOLAO operations as a whole. The next column shows the amount of NORAD funds that went to cover operating costs for the two provinces in which NPA were working. Approximately 90% of the operating costs went on personnel, the balance consisted of running costs, and expendable and non-expendable equipment. Total costs shows UXOLAO complete costs in conducting operations in those 2 provinces. The final column indicates the percentage that NORAD contributed to operations in those 2 provinces.

The above figures are based on the UXOLAO Financial Reports made available, covering the following periods:

01.01.1999 – 31.12.1999
01.01.2000 – 31.12.2000
01.06.2001 – 31.12.2001
01.01.2002 – 30.09.2002
01.10.2002 – 31.12.2002
01.01.2003 – 31.07.2003

NORAD Contributions to the NPA Project

These in-kind contributions include:

- cash contribution to implementing partner NPA
- supply of equipment and vehicles
- provision of expert personnel
- rental of UXO LAO office

Year	US Dollars
1997	205,000
1998	342,466
1999	800,000
2000	850,000
2001	400,000
2002	204,425 (switched to Trust Fund; USA funded the NPA project)
Total	2,801,891

6 Conclusions

1 NPA made a significant contribution to capacity building within UXOLAO as a whole, and not just through on-the-job training within the 2 provinces where advisers were based.

First off all, NPA advisers contributed a great deal to formal training courses:

NPA OJT in level 2 survey techniques formed the basis of the national survey course. 23 teams were trained in this approach and operated in the 9 provinces of UXOLAO operations.

In 2000 NPA ran two 6-week Team Leader courses at the Training Centre for Sekong and Attapeu personnel and this was subsequently used as the basis for the expanded curriculum used nationally.

In 2002 a 3-week Methods of Instruction course was run with the assistance of MAG

Also in 2002, NPA assisted in designing and conducting a SEOD course, with input from other Implementing Partners.

NPA provided a 2-week CASEVAC training course for medics from Attapeu and Sekong and the medical instructors from the Training Centre, with 1 week at the Centre and 1 week in the field.

Further, they left behind copies on paper and disc of all such materials:

SEOD Course on CD

Team Leader Course on CD

Team Leader Task Outline on paper

Accident and CASEVAC procedures Training Plans on floppy disc

CASEVAC Training Course on CD

Initial Survey: UXOLAO Attapeu Expansion to Phouvong District on paper

Surveyors Tasks on paper

Course outline on cluster bombs for basic EOD technicians on paper

The NPA TAs also developed other important materials:

The Community Awareness adviser worked with the teams to produce CA messages and themes through non-formal sectors of education which used posters, exercise books, story books, video, T-shirt and bags to carry the messages. They also developed participatory activities such as story-telling, songs and quizzes. The adviser also wrote Terms of Reference for the CA Team Leaders, to detail their duties and qualifications. She conducted on-the-job and refresher training in the areas of basic UXO safety; use of Codan radio; medical planning; pre-testing of materials; accident reporting; data gathering; analysis of target audiences; basic leadership and management skills; and communication skills.

With input from MAG and other IPs, NPA contributed to national SOPs, completed in 2000 and issued to staff in 2001

In order to monitor the effectiveness of training, a Task Book system was developed by NPA. Each deminer was tested on specific operational tasks. Because of the success of the system in the 2 provinces where NPA assisted, UXOLAO adopted the approach to be implemented in all their active provinces.

Capacity Building Evaluation Form on paper in English and Lao, for use with all provincial office posts, in conjunction with TORs.

Presentation on Capacity Building Support to UXOLAO on CD

Render Safe Procedures Manual: simple, straightforward explanations of various bomb fuses found in Laos and the recommended procedures for disarming or destroying them.

Financial & Accounting Procedures Manual completed in 2002

And these materials are still in evidence today. The SEOD for Attapeu commented that Team Leader Lesson Plans and the Task Book were his close friends. The SEOD for Sekong said he keeps his Task Book with him at all times and uses it to train others.

Overall NPA is credited with consistently taking the lead amongst the implementing partners and working for the good of UXOLAO as a national organization, in addition to ensuring high quality work in their provinces of Sekong and Attapeu specifically.

Within the 2 provinces, some examples of their proof of success in OJT was:

In a demining course in 1999 at the Training Centre, the top student was a female from the NPA provinces, and 20% of the EOD personnel in those 2 provinces were women. The course average was 93%, which was the highest achieved, and reflected the input by NPA in introducing selection criteria for new recruits.

Further success in capacity-building was achieved by NPA in 2000 in the two first Team Leader courses, claiming two first places and two seconds.

When the SEOD course was completed in mid-2002, 14 out of the 16 candidates had passed. All 4 of those from Sekong/Attapeu passed and were recommended for SEOD appointments immediately, without further field training or assessment. One of those is still working as SEOD today in Sekong and another is working as SEOD in Attapeu. They both started in 1998 with NPA TAs in Sekong, completed the NPA Team Leader course and are good examples of what NPA achieved in capacity-building, and how their efforts are still contributing significantly to UXOLAO's work today.

On the site visit in Attapeu in December 2004, a clearance team had just completed 2 tasks without any international technical assistance at all. The current Field STA recruited by NPA said he had never visited that site before, as he was confident of their abilities to clear everything except large bombs.

2 NPA has always responded positively to the technical assistance needs expressed by UXOLAO.

The project arose out of discussions with the National Programme Director at his request, in which NPA consulted and reacted to suggestions, in what was very much a consultative process. The first project proposal was given a very positive response by the Steering Committee, who noted that it was a well thought out proposal which would allow for operations in Sekong and Attapeu with a high level of management and technical support. These two provinces were selected because they were in the number identified by Handicap International in their 1997 study as being heavily contaminated, and NPA were keen to take on the challenge of the remote and inaccessible locations.

On-the-Job-Training was exactly what the EOD Technicians required, since they could not possibly have covered all forms of UXO likely to be encountered in Laos and their disposal in their initial basic Training Centre course, nor have been given enough hands-on practice under supervision. For example, the Training Centre was teaching a 3-man drill, while most provinces later adopted a one-man drill. Also, in early 1999 the 2 provinces were still applying battle area clearance drills to a minefield scenario benchmark, which slowed down the clearance rate. OJT also provided the essential safety factor, which ensured that there has only been one serious accident in the lifetime of UXOLAO, and safety was always mentioned first in interviews with field staff in the provinces in December 2004 when questioned about the benefits of NPA technical assistance.

The Steering Committee suggested that NPA reduce the number of TAs over the life of the project and this was done. The project began with a total of 6 TAs plus Resident Representative in 1998 and then by 2001 this was reduced to 4 TAs plus Resident Representative, and further reduced in 2002 to just 2 TAs.

When UXOLAO felt that the work of the CA TA was complete at the end of 1998 and assistance no longer needed, the post was terminated.

Likewise, when UXOLAO requested the transfer of the STA Finance/Admin to HQ, even though these services were sorely needed in the provincial offices, NPA complied.

When UXOLAO requested the continuation of the STA Finance/admin in 2001, again NPA were happy to oblige. The project was extended once to 2001 and then again to 2002.

All in all, NPA has never sought to impose its own views of what was needed on UXOLAO, in spite of the considerable non-earmarked funding that NORAD provided over the years to the Trust Fund, and has always listened and reacted helpfully. This is further demonstrated by the fact that even today there are 3 Advisers recruited by NPA at work in UXOLAO, and all UXOLAO staff interviewed expressed a desire for continuing NPA support in one form or another, which underlines the relevance and benefits the organization perceives in such assistance.

3 Opportunities and constraints: lessons learned

In December of 1996, the National Programme Director of the LAO UXO Programme at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare attended a UN Conference in Jalalabad, where he had conversations with Mr. Niels Nikolaisen of NPA Oslo. Little more than 12 months later, NPA had a Resident Representative in Vientiane and 6 TAs in the field. This was a very credible achievement. The opportunity had been seized by NPA and the project was off to a flying start.

Thereafter, things did not go quite so smoothly. UXOLAO was attempting to start operations in 9 provinces at more or less the same time, with very little infrastructure and capacity available in either HQ or the provincial offices. The EOD technicians selected for Sekong and Attapeu completed their training in 1997 but lack of basic equipment meant they could not be deployed. This caused a 6-month delay in starting operational activities. The time was spent as productively as possible, preparing the provincial office and supporting facilities. However, in addition to the frustration this must have caused all concerned, it meant that expensive TA time was spent on basic manual tasks such as building fences. The project was later extended beyond the original endpoint of December 2000 to 2001 and then 2002. One cause of these extensions must have been the months lost at the start.

Throughout the life of the project, there were repeated claims from TAs that neither NPA nor UXOLAO possessed enough serviceable vehicles to maintain operations, nor radios. For the first 12 months, 6 TAs shared 3 vehicles. Given that their role was on-the-job training and this can only be conducted in the field, it is hard to see how this could work. The end result was that these vehicles were exhausted by continuous use far quicker than normal.

Interpreters were initially supplied by UXOLAO but later employed by NPA. Again, their role is critical to the success of the purpose of building capacity. They need to be motivated, reliable, dedicated and with a commitment to learning about their work and improving their language skills. They need to act as driver, interpreter, guide and minor problem-solver for TAs, if TAs are to be employed to maximum effect. Since national staff cost far less than TAs, there is no point in saving a few dollars by not using them, since this hampers the efforts of the far more expensive and hard to find TAs.

When planning such a project, every effort should be made from the start to maximize the time spent by TAs productively in the field.

A lot of the most important work in the project was only done near the end, principally the testing of personnel against the discrete tasks in the Task Book, which was naturally very time-consuming, and the formal training and development of the STA Field counterpart, the Senior EOD Officer. The latter was especially important, as the most senior operations officer in the province with overall responsibility for all clearance operations. Their on-the-job training needed to be extensive, to build experience and confidence in comparatively young men (SEOD Attapeu now aged 28). They could also serve a useful function by substituting for the TA when they were in Vientiane, on leave or sick. But they were only appointed and trained in

the final year of the project, 2002, though this was not due to a lack of effort on the part of NPA.

The project could therefore have benefited at the start from an overall but simple timechart (Gantt Chart), drawn up by working backwards from the endpoint of the project, to show which key national personnel would need to be in place by which date, in order to have adequate formal and on-the-job training to be at the required skill level by handover. It seems the timeframe was based on the periods to be served by different TAs, but not linked to what they should have achieved in terms of capacity building. Such a plan would have helped management monitor progress and make corrections where required. It would also contribute to the budget planning process, so that adequate funds were allocated for formal training, in which NPA inevitably became involved, and not just running expenses for the on-the-job training. It could not of course prevent some of the delays that occurred, nor guarantee timely completion but nevertheless a useful guide and reporting tool for all involved.

Personnel issues which were reported by TAs were the delay in getting repaid for running costs rather than having petty cash available for such purposes; travel time needed to collect personal cash from the nearest bank; and the nature of accommodation shared by both families and singles. These may appear minor but they do affect mental well-being in remote and difficult locations, and could have been better arranged with more planning. Such issues must be common to any similar project, and can be anticipated.

Indeed, several TAs make mention of the lack of direct transfer of knowledge from other projects, of which such personnel issues are a part. Although all received a briefing of some kind at the start, more information of lessons learned from other projects would have been appreciated. Individuals brought their own experiences to the project and NPA, with its many different projects in demining around the world, has potentially a large amount of institutional knowledge. Each individual at the end of a NPA project writes a Final Report and receives a debriefing. If all this information is collated and analysed, this could be made available to individuals joining the next project. It seems from TA comments they would have welcomed more of such background experiences and information from NPA.

Certain shortfalls in funding occurred during the project, which also contributed to TAs being out of pocket in the field. On at least two occasions NPA had to request UXOLAO to lend or grant them funds from the Trust Fund, to cover project expenses (\$68,000 in 1997 and \$30,000 in 1998). It is not quite clear how this came about, perhaps a gap between a pledge and the actual amount which could be allocated that year, but such problems take up valuable project time resolving and will definitely hamper capacity-building. However, they do occur from time to time in most types of development projects and donors, and the Trust Fund was able to bail NPA out.

Not all TAs were able to adapt so well to the cultural methods of working, and get on quite so well with their colleagues and counterparts. While it may not be necessary to have prior experience in the region, a certain experience in coping with cultures very different from their

own, and still managing to get the job done, is an essential prerequisite for a TA. Also essential is the willingness to transfer skills and not just do it all yourself, plus the willingness in the early stages to act as a project manager and problem-solver, looking at aspects beyond their immediate technical concerns. Difficult to define, but perhaps some assessment of these attitudes and capabilities can be made at the interview stage.

All the final reports from both TAs and Resident Representatives stress the need for better initial planning and preparations. It is to their credit that NPA got the project off the ground so quickly, but this also worked against them to some extent. Perhaps such a project should be divided into 2 distinct phases: start-up and implementation. Implementation would not begin until the targets set for start-up had been more or less achieved. Start-up could be conducted by 2 TAs with some demining/EOD knowledge but also project management experience, with one located in HQ and one in the field.

They would:

- Analyse the current skill levels for field and management personnel

- Analyse state of readiness for field operations – vehicles, detectors etc

- Profile the requirements for TAs

- Examine current logistical operations

- Examine financial operations

- Assess TA field needs in terms of vehicles, radios, single or family accommodation, banking and so on.

- Order necessary equipment for TAs, and other supplies

They would then conduct formal and OJT to bring support services such as Logistics and Finance up to a reasonable standard, possibly bringing in short-term experts for the task. They would also monitor the state of readiness to begin field operations and with sufficient notice, give the green light for the deployment of TAs. In short, they would as far as possible prepare the ground for the Field TAs, who could then “hit the ground running”.

This is of course an idealized way to operate, and could create problems of its own, such as recruiting TAs but then possibly having to delay their deployment. But time spent on a good start-up should mean time, resources and frustration saved in implementation.

An ongoing obstacle to greater productivity is the system for procuring spares and repairs, which has been reported on by various TAs over the years and still remains a barrier to greater productivity. It is obvious that if a deminer does not have a functioning detector or vehicle to get him to the site, or other essential equipment, a day is lost. It would be interesting to know how many man-days are lost in this way in a year. The current system of requiring 3 estimates for any purchase irrespective of the value and approval from HQ is unworkable.

After many years of operation it should be easy to work out the budget required to maintain vehicles, repair detectors, replace batteries and so on. The cash to effect as much of this as possible in the province must be made available for an extended period of six months or a year, and this can be spent without authorization from HQ. They will of course continue to monitor such expenditure. The current Finance and QM TAs should be able to assist with the implementation of this simple system. Further, an electronic technician should be employed for each province, such as a local radio repair technician given some extra training, to service and

conduct minor repairs of detectors. The system must switch from control to pro-active management, as stated in the 10-year Strategy:
“The streamlining of practices in procurement, in equipment maintenance and in general support functions, in order to ensure optimal use of all assets.”

It was reported in 2001 that on the operational level in the provinces the day-to-day running of tasks continued reasonably well, with some motivated and capable individuals working for the programme. However, at the provincial management level, it was claimed there were individuals not working for the common good. Many instances had apparently occurred of the misappropriation of UXOLAO manpower, vehicles and other resources for personal benefit, as well as the recruitment of relatives in a non-transparent manner into posts for which they were not suited, and this was described as a growing tendency. Both such issues would clearly impact on NPA’s efforts in capacity building.

The staff cuts which were made in 2002 must also have had an impact on capacity building. Although previous manning levels were later restored, some of those trained must have been lost in the process of re-employment. Such a scenario is a one-off but this takeover of resources could have been better planned in a phased, long-term manner, to allow adequate time to secure the necessary funding. NORAD and NPA certainly did what they could to minimize the shortfall, by seeking USA assistance to fund the Advisers, and switching the NORAD funds to UXOLAO personnel costs.

4 Recommendations for future technical assistance

It is interesting to start by considering the issues outstanding in the September 2002 Capacity Building Review, and whether these still require any form of technical assistance:

Planning and Prioritising

The Review commented on the annual workplan process that land not designated as a priority task was cleared anyway, and a recent Field Review reiterates this and suggests better use of all types of data, from bombing records to accident reports to surveys and socio-economic reports, to form an improved, integrated prioritisation process. It is understood there will be a pilot project to examine how to do this effectively in 2005, conducted by the current NPA Field STA. Therefore, there is a continued need for this STA until the pilot project is complete, and if successful, until it has been applied nationally. Also, management and technicians in both provinces expressed a need for continuing STA field support in order to assist SEODs to gain more confidence in big bomb work, and generally encourage and share responsibility with them.

Monitoring Land Use

The Review pointed out that there was no post-clearance analysis of use of land. Following the creation of the National Regulatory Authority by Resolution from the Office of the Prime Minister in April 2004, the task of conducting Post Clearance Impact Assessments is clearly designated to the new Authority, and technical assistance has been

secured from Japan. There is therefore no need to consider any technical assistance from NPA.

Accident Reporting

The Review commented that there was no comprehensive national system in place for tracking UXO-related accidents. A Feasibility Study into a National Network for UXO Accidents was completed in February 2004 by Handicap International, and it is understood that funding and assistance has now been secured to set this up. Therefore, no technical assistance from NPA is envisaged for this.

However, this could be the right moment to revisit the role and effectiveness of the Community Assistance Teams. Support from NPA was only provided for 8 months in the field and this was considered adequate at the time. That was more than 6 years ago and the impression gained from visits to Sekong and Attapeu in December 2004 is of an activity that has diminished in scope and enthusiasm from the original. For example, some remote villages have still not been visited at all, whereas others have seen the same "show" several times. Likewise, the range of activities used has been reduced - the puppets are broken and therefore not used; the drama is no longer used because it is considered out of date, and no funds are available to produce a new one. It hardly seems a question of funds to write a new drama, but of initiative and motivation.

Once profiles of victims are better established, the opportunity to improve targeting of villages most at risk (number of accidents divided into district population) and redesign the whole CA village visit could be taken, and TA assistance could be sought for this.

Equipment and Other Support to Operations

The Review felt that general support to operations provided by UXOLAO was weak. The constraints on field activities this generates, and the recommendations for improvement, have been made in Section 3 and does not require any additional technical assistance.

Recruitment and Hiring

The Review claimed that people were hired/fired or promoted/demoted on criteria other than aptitude, training and performance. Clear and transparent procedures are in development by the Quality Management TA, and have been used successfully in the past, for example the selection of candidates for SEOD training. This does not require future technical assistance but the will of UXOLAO management to ensure procedures are always followed. Donors who fund capacity building do not like to see their efforts wasted by such negative practices so it is very much in UXOLAO's interests to pursue this.

Mine Clearance

The Review pointed out that the Level One Survey produced by Handicap International indicated a significant number of minefields but EOD technicians had not been trained to do mine clearance. The National Accident Database and the pilot project on

Prioritisation/Planning should reveal whether there is any need for this in the immediate future.

Therefore, it can be seen that most of the above points from the Review of September 2002 have already been addressed in some way. Other areas of possible future technical assistance are the following:

Productivity

The question of productivity is a key issue to look at. UXO LAO, in spite of obstacles such as unwieldy logistical support, nearly always seems to manage to meet or even exceed its Workplan targets. This is admirable but does suggest these targets are not set high enough. The Prime Minister's 10-year National Strategic Plan seems to agree with this view, because it calls for an increase in yearly clearance from 850 hectares in 2002 to 2000 hectares in 2008 without an increase in staff. That is an increase in productivity of 135%. Again, NPA will be conducting a Pilot Study in Area Clearance Systems, with a view to adapting practices to circumstances and thereby increasing productivity. Therefore, there is a continued need for this STA until the pilot project is complete, and if successful, until it has been applied nationally.

Finance/Admin

There seems general agreement on the continued need for a STA Finance/Admin. The Finance Unit is considered competent in routine Accounting but the demands of managing and reporting on the Trust fund are diverse and complex. The Adviser also provides a certain "peace of mind" or "insurance" for donors with regard to the appropriate use of their funds.

Quality Management

The projected increase in yearly output envisaged in the 10-year Strategy also depends on "the strengthening of the organisation's internal management processes (e.g. budgeting, procurement, logistics) through the introduction of Quality Management practices". Therefore the TA post responsible for this should be retained until these practices are in place and working reasonably smoothly.

5 Monitoring Methods of Technical Advisers

This will be examined from two aspects. First, the methods that the NPA Technical Advisers used to monitor progress in capacity-building and second any methods that were applied to monitoring the work of the TAs themselves.

For the methods that were utilized by TAs to assess the progress made in building the capacity of key field personnel, the point that needs making first is the lack of a broad timescale for the components. While the project had an endpoint fixed from the start, the stages which needed to be completed before the project could be considered to have achieved its aim, and therefore before handover could be made, were not identified in detail or sequence or timing. This is not easy to do with great

accuracy at the very start of a project, since it will depend on factors such as the rate at which the target personnel are able to acquire the necessary skills and consequent experience. And some of the target personnel may not even be known at this stage, as was the case with the SEOD personnel. Nevertheless, drawing on experience from other projects, an attempt could be made to map the phases, their logical sequence and attach some rough timescales for each. All this could then be refined at the end of year one, and monitored regularly. It should be shared with the host organization, in this case UXO LAO, who should also be required to make a commitment to it, especially in terms of their inputs, such as the creation of SEOD posts. This commitment could even be formalized in the form of a service agreement.

Having said that, the Advisers did construct means of measuring progress in developing skills, principally the Capacity Building Evaluation Form, which was applied to provincial management and administrative staff, and the Task Book for EOD Technicians. The Task Book in particular is a very thorough exercise in assessing all the discrete tasks required of an EOD Technician, and it is hoped this can be adapted for use in similar NPA projects. It is important to produce the necessary SOPs for the technical mine/uxo clearance work in a particular country, but it is equally important to be able to formally assess, and even certify, as happened in Laos, an individual's ability to perform according to those SOPs.

The overall impression is that the NPA TAs developed adequate means of monitoring progress in their stated aim of capacity building. The fact that they did not achieve their original rate of progress, namely that the UXO operation in the provinces allocated to NPA would be running without international advisory assistance within 3 years, which was by the end of 2000, was down to several factors:

- The 6-month delay in the start-up of operational activities in Sekong and Attapeu
- The lack of a phased and sequenced timeframe for the components of capacity building
- The long delay in identifying and training the STA counterpart: the SEODs
- The funding crisis in mid-2002
- Occasional gaps in replacing TAs

With regard to the methods used to monitor the work of the TAs, the principal device was self-reporting in the form of a Quarterly Report from the field of each province. This Report covered many aspects of the period, not just the TAs contribution to capacity-building, and while very informative could not be expected to serve as the only means of monitoring the TAs. Otherwise, it appears there was no formal method of making regular assessments of TAs. Certainly, there were issues and not every TA was allowed to complete his contract. If reports exist, such as an annual Performance Review, they would probably be expected to remain confidential, and were not in the files made available for this review. Without evidence to the contrary, therefore, it can only be said that methods used to monitor TAs were informal and not documented.

Annex1 Terms of Reference

Review/Assessment of Norad funding and NPA Technical Assistance to UXO Lao 1997-2003

24-day Mission

Purpose

This review/assessment is being carried out to assess the results of the total NORAD contribution (1997 – 2003) to the UNDP UXO Lao Trust Fund, including the in kind contribution provided through Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) technical advisory programme in Sekong and Attapeu. The review shall focus on the two provinces Sekong and Attapu with emphasis on UXO Laos ability to run the programme independent of permanent external (international) advisors, as well as the overall efficiency of the activities carried out in these two provinces.

Scope

The scope of this assessment covers all NPA technical assistance and capacity building support to UXO Lao for the period extending from 1997 to 2003 funded under the Norad Grant (also should also include contributions from Norway to UXO Lao in 1995 and prior to NPA involvement in the sector).

Background

NPA advisors arrived in the Lao PDR in September 1997. The role of the advisors was to provide on-the-job training to and supervision of UXO LAO staff in the areas of financial administration, community awareness and EOD. This support was to be provided at the provincial level as a supplement to training provided by UXO LAO at its national training center.

NPA assigned 6 Technical Advisors (TA) to the programme: 1 community awareness advisor; 4 EOD specialist advisors; and 1 finance advisor to work in Sekong and Attapeu Provinces in the southern part of the country. Liaison between NPA and UXO LAO was facilitated by a NPA project manager based at UXO LAO HQ in Vientiane

Assistance was to be provided for three years (until end of 2000) at which time it was expected that provincial operations would run efficiently without international advisory assistance. NPA covered the cost of expatriate TA salaries and some TA support equipment including vehicles, communications equipment and computers. UXO LAO provided all other equipment. Operational responsibility for meeting clearance and community awareness targets remained with UXO LAO.

At the end of 1998 UXO LAO indicated that no further external advisor in the field of community awareness was needed and the CA TA contract was terminated. This

“available” position was from 1999 filled by a NPA Field Manager responsible for both provinces. The total number of TAs (incl. the Manager position) in the country remained 7 throughout 1999. In the fall of 1998, on request of UXO LAO, the Finance Advisor was transferred to the UXO Lao HQ leaving the total number of technical advisors in the provinces at 5 throughout 1999.

By the end of 2000 the number of advisors was reduced to 3, 1 technical advisor in each province and the finance advisor at UXO LAO HQ. In June 2001 the Field Manager position was withdrawn leaving 1 TA in each province for the rest of the year.

The initial Capacity Building program ended in 2001. As there was a need for follow-up in the provinces due to the delayed training of senior EOD technicians, and a need for NPA’s participation in developing and conducting senior EOD courses at the UXO LAO training center, UXO LAO requested that NPA continue to provide the support of one EOD Technical Advisor. UXO LAO also requested that NPA extend the secondment of the Finance Advisor for one more year. Accordingly NPA maintained two TA positions in Laos for all of 2002 and until early 2003

Areas under Review

The assessors will:

Assessment of the Technical Advisors

- Make an inventory of all types of NPA technical assistance to UXO Lao for the period of 1997-2003.
- Make an assessment of the added value of the various categories of technical advisors.
- Identify constraints in case of non-achievement of the objectives as set in the job description.
- Assess the effectiveness of UXO Lao staff training/ capacity building provided by NPA advisors.
- Compile, review and assess all management tools and documents left to UXO Lao after the departure of technical advisors.

General Assessment

- Make a general assessment of the added value of Norad contribution and the NPA assistance to UXO Lao during this period.
- The assessment of NPA technical assistance will be in the context of the overall technical assistance received by UXO Lao
- Review the evolution and pertinence of NPA technical assistance during the concerned timeframe.
- Assess the extent to which UXO Lao has maintained and used the documentation produced by the technical advisors after their departure.
- Assess the impact of the Norad contribution on improving UXO Lao management efficiency (with specific reference to provincial operations in Attapeu and Sekong and looking at issues such as recruitment process and training of national TA leaders,

- coordination and communication between UXO Lao Vientiane and the provinces).
- Assess the perception of UXO Lao on the quality and effectiveness of NPA technical assistance to the organisation based on written documents and individual interviews.
 - Assess other NPA contributions to capacity building during the period that have benefited UXO Lao
 - Assessment of value added in the use of the UNDP Trust Fund as a funding mechanism.

Expected key outputs

- Estimate the extent to which NPA has contributed in the capacity building of national managerial and technical competencies.
- Capitalize past experience to reflect on the evolution and needs of the technical assistance provided.
- Assess opportunities and constraints.
- Make recommendation for future punctual assistance if needed.
- Identify the expectations of the UXO Lao HQ and provincial operations in terms of future technical assistance
- Make recommendations to NPA & UXO Lao in regard to monitoring methods of Technical Advisors

Target location

- Data collection will be undertaken from the UXO Lao Headquarters in Vientiane, the NPA representative in Vientiane, and from the two provinces in which NPA was based (Attapeu and Sekong province).

Timeframe

- The assessment will be conducted during a period of 24 working days (4 weeks), Sundays being considered as non working days.

Reporting

The assessors will debrief the UNDP and NPA Representative in Vientiane before departure from Lao.

The assessors will progressively develop their report during the time of the assessment. An extensive draft will be provided in English during a final debriefing to UXO Lao management, NPA Representative at UXO Lao Headquarters, and UNDP at the end of the mission.

The final report will be sent no later than two weeks after the final debriefing in both hard and electronic versions. The distribution list will consist of UXO Lao, NPA and UNDP. UNDP will provide a copy of the report to the donor.

The final draft report will also be submitted to the Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi and the NPA Head Office for comments before publication.

Team composition:

The assessment will be conducted by a two-persons team (plus an interpreter). The Team Leader and the Co-Evaluator will work jointly to produce a document capitalising all the technical assistance provided by NPA to UXO Lao for the proposed period.

Brief description of major responsibilities and relationships:

Team Leader

The Team Leader is responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of the assessment, the selection of assessment tools, the support to the Co-Evaluator in literature review, data collection and analysis, the review of the quality of the technical assistance on a case by case basis, the comments on the transfer of technical and managerial skills, the identification of present needs and the formulation of recommendations for the future of the partnership.

The Team Leader shall have:

- At least 8 years experience in the management of mine action at high level, including socio-economic, planning, operations, mine awareness.
- A good knowledge of IMAS Standards
- Data Gathering and Auditing skills
- Ability to communicate and report in English
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- Be computer literate
- Be willing to travel to the relevant provinces
- Knowledge of Lao language or the Lao/ South East Asian cultural environment an advantage

Co-Evaluator

The Co-Evaluator is responsible for literature search and desk review of the documentation, research/ design of assessment tools, logistic organization and scheduling for data search and interviews, liaison with the relevant UXO Lao departments and units, support to the Team Leader with the review and evaluation of the transfer of knowledge and the formulation of final recommendations.

The Co-Evaluator shall have:

- At least three years experience in human resources management, recruitment, training and staff appraisal
- A proven experience in conducting evaluation
- A good grasp of the evaluation methods and tools
- Data Gathering and Auditing skills
- An experience and/ or interest in Mine Action
- An ability to communicate and report in English
- An ability to communicate in Lao would be an advantage
- Be computer literate

- Be willing to travel to the relevant provinces

Reference Documentation

- NPA annual plans
- NPA quarter reports
- TA plans and reports
- UXO Lao annual reports
- UXO annual workplans
- Various UXO Lao documentation on TAs
- UNDP evaluation September 2002
- National Strategic Plan for the UXO Programme in the Lao People's Democratic Republic 2003 – 2013 "The Safe Path Forward"

Annex 2 Review Mission Itinerary

Monday 6.12.04	Vientiane	Travel from Bangkok Meeting Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen, UNDP Resident Representative Meeting Mr. Eric Gagnon, CTA UXO LAO Meeting Mr. Bounpone Sayasenh, National Programme Director, UXO LAO Meeting NPA TAs Olivier Bauduin, Ski & Avi Sarkar
Tuesday 7.12.04	Vientiane	Document Review Meeting Ms.Setsuko Yamazaki, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
Wednesday 8.12.04	Vientiane	Meeting Mr. Eric Gagnon, CTA UXO LAO Meeting Mr. Olivier Bauduin, NPA Financial TA Meeting Mr. Bounpone Sayasenh, National Programme Director, UXO LAO
Thursday 9.12.04	Vientiane	Document Review Meeting Mr. Phommachan Khammanichan, Chief of Operations, UXO LAO Visit to UXO LAO National Training Centre
Friday 10.12.04		Document Review Report Drafting
Saturday 11.12.04		Document Review Report Drafting
Sunday 12.12.04		Travel to Pakse and Attapeu
Monday 13.12.04		Meetings with UXOLAO staff Attapeu Site Visit Travel to Sekong

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Tuesday 14.12.04		Meetings with UXOLAO staff Sekong Travel to Pakse
Wednesday 15.12.04		Travel to Vientiane Personnel issues, UNDP
Thursday 16.12.04		Travel to Bangkok
Friday 7.01.05		Travel to Vientiane Document Review
Saturday 8.01.05		Document Review Report Drafting
Sunday 9.01.05		Document Review Report Drafting
Monday 10.01.05		Meeting Mr. Justin Shone, UNDP Trust Fund Manager Report Drafting
Tuesday 11.01.05		Report Drafting Meeting with Mr Mick Hayes, Technical Operations Manager
Wednesday 12.01.05		Report Drafting
Thursday 13.01.05		Report Drafting
Friday 14.01.05		Report Presentation Debriefing with UNDP Resident Representative Debriefing with UXOLAO National Programme Director

Saturday 15.01.05		Travel to Bangkok
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Annex 3 Documents Reviewed

UXO LAO Work Plan 1996

UXO LAO Annual Report 1996

UXO LAO Annual Report 1997

UXO LAO Annual Report 1998

UXO LAO Work Plan 2000

UXO LAO Annual Report 2001

UXO LAO Annual Report 2002

UXO LAO Work Plan 2002

UXO LAO Work Plan 2003

UXO LAO Annual Report 2003

UXO LAO Work Plan 2004

NPA Framework Agreement Reports 1997-2002

Travel Reports Harald Smedsrud NPA 1997-2001

Correspondence with Harald Smedsrud NPA

NPA Laos Quarterly Reports 1997-2002

NPA TA& STA Final Reports (6 out of total of 9)

NPA Laos Resident Representative Final Reports (2 out of 2)

NPA Annual Report 2003

Living With UXO – Socio-Economic Impact Survey 1997, Handicap International

External Evaluation Mission 1998, UNDP & Government of Lao PDR

Mission Report: Future Sustainable Options of the LAO UXO Trust fund and the UXO LAO Mine Action Programme September 2002

Capacity Building Support to UXO LAO Programme Review September 2002,
NPA

EOD Technicians Handbook, NPA/UXO LAO

Feasibility Study into a National Network for UXO Accidents in Lao PDR
February 2004, UNDP & Handicap International

“The Safe Path Forward” National Strategic Plan for the UXO Programme in
Lao PDR April 2004

UXO Clearance Operations in Attapeu and Sekong – Review Report, Leonard
Kaminski NPA STA March 2004

UNDP Trust Fund Files

Annex 4 NPA International Staff in Laos

Year	Function	Name	Start	End
1997	Resident Representative	Harald Smedsrud	15.09.97	
	STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen	10.09.97	
	STA EOD	Michael Hayes	1.11.97	
	TA EOD	Peter Gammon	19.11.97	
1998	Resident Representative	Harald Smedsrud		
	STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
	STA EOD	Michael Hayes		
	TA EOD	Peter Gammon		
	STA EOD	Stefan de Coninck	01.01.98	
	TA EOD	Phil Holroyd	01.01.98	31.12.98
	STA Mine Awareness	Dalma Foldes	01.01.98	31.12.98
1999	Resident Representative	Harald Smedsrud Audun Holm	22.01.99	15.02.99
	STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
	STA EOD	Michael Hayes		
	TA EOD	Peter Gammon		
	STA EOD	Stefan de Coninck		31.05.99
	Field Manager	Erik Tollefsen	01.01.99	
	STA	Tony Fish	21.01.99	
	TA EOD	Robert G. Rae	31.12.99	
2000	Resident Representative	Audun Holm		
	STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
	STA EOD	Michael Hayes		31.10.00
	TA EOD	Peter Gammon		
	Field Manager	Erik Tollefsen		30.06.00
	STA	Tony Fish		31.12.00
	TA EOD	Robert G. Rae		31.12.00
2001	Resident Representative	Audun Holm		08.03.01
	STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		
	TA EOD	Peter Gammon		31.12.01
	Field Manager	Tony Fish	01.01.01	30.06.01
	STA EOD	Robert G. Rae	01.01.01	
2002	STA Admin/Finance	Roy Vilhelmsen		May 2003
	STA EOD	Robert G. Rae		March 03

Total TAs	= 9	Longest stay = 64 months
Total TA months	= 275	Shortest stay = 12 months
Average TA stay	= 30 months	Total Project months = 64