



MANDATE

Handicap International aims to build the capacities of, and collaboration between, institutions in Laos and civil society to tackle the leading causes of disability. This entails promoting and advancing the rights of people with disabilities. The organisation also works to reduce the threat from explosive remnants of war¹, including cluster munitions, which continue to pollute the country after more than 40 years.

SITUATION

Lao PDR continues to be among the ‘Least Developed Countries’. The country faces significant challenges to reduce the high level of malnutrition and food insecurity. Access to health facilities in rural areas remains weak and limited and health personnel is sorely lacking in training. There is still a lack of accurate data about the estimated total number of people with disabilities.

Lao PDR is known as the world's most heavily contaminated nation from cluster munitions per capita.

During the Vietnam War, between 1964 and 1973, the United States dropped more than 270 million cluster munitions over Laos, even though the country was not part of the conflict. An estimated 80 million cluster munitions did not explode on impact, and currently lie dormant in rice fields, waterways and on roads, posing a daily threat to the lives of civilians in 15 of the country's 17 provinces.

Although the Vietnam War ended nearly 40 years ago, the conflict continues to maim and kill innocent people to this day. This is the daily reality shared by thousands of communities, who very often live in remote areas of Laos.

Since 1964, more than 50,000 people have been killed or injured in accidents caused by explosive remnants of war, around half of whom died in peace time. Despite a reduction of number of victims per year in the last 5 years, these weapons still claim in average 40-50 persons each year. This is made all the more unacceptable by the fact that the main victims of these weapons are children.

INITIAL ACTIONS

Handicap International has been active in Laos since 1983, with a few interruptions. Initially, the organisation's teams helped the victims of cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war by setting up orthopaedic-fitting workshops to produce and fit prostheses. Over the years, the organisation has also worked in the fields of rehabilitation, rural development, HIV/AIDS prevention, and the economic and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

It has now expanded the scope of its actions to include other activities, including the prevention and early detection of disability in children, road safety, and support for disabled people's organisations, and continues to conduct projects to promote the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities.

Since 1996, Handicap International has placed a particular emphasis on the fight against cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war by clearing contaminated land², destroying these weapons and helping to prevent accidents involving civilians. The international Ban Advocates Network initiated by Handicap International in 2007, a network of victims' spokespersons, including a Lao group formed in 2010, was closed in March 2015.

KEY DATA

Human development index (HDI)*	139 /187
GNI per capita*	4 351 \$ per annum
Surface area**	236 800 sq.km
Population**	6,8 million inhabitants
Life expectancy*	68,3 years

Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD)	Ratified: 25/09/2009
Convention on cluster munitions (Oslo)	Ratified : 18/03/2009
Mine ban treaty (Ottawa)	State not party

*UNDP: 2014 human development report

** World Bank 2013

STAFF

- National staff: 198 (64 DAD + 134 DAM)
- Expatriate staff: 14 (8 DAD + 6 DAM)

¹ The term “explosive remnants of war” refers to various types of munitions equipped with explosive charges used during a conflict, such as grenades, shells, rockets or cluster munitions, which may still be active and present a danger to people's lives after a conflict has ended. Civilians are the main victims of this type of weapon.

² Clearance consists in identifying and destroying mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war.



Road Safety

OBJECTIVE

The project aims to make an active contribution to prevent road traffic fatalities, disabilities and injuries and to improve the safe environment for road users in Lao PDR.

METHOD

- Support for key stakeholders in road safety in Laos (national and provincial committees for road safety, Police Committee)
- Public awareness related to different risk factors: helmet wearing, drunk driving, mobile phone use and speeding
- Road Safety Education with the development of a road safety curriculum for primary and secondary schools
- Community Based Road Safety (CBRS)
- Data collection and research
- Support to the Road Crash Prevention Team, a group of volunteers affected by road crashes.

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : No	Distribution : Yes ³	Technical support : Yes	Donation of equipment : Yes	Financial support : Yes

BENEFICIARIES

All road users, but especially young motorcyclists and school students

PARTNERS

Ministries of Public Works and Transport, Public Security, and Education

LOCATION

Vientiane Capital, two districts in Savannakhet Province. Public awareness actions cover all of Laos.

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	31/12/2016
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes



Early Childhood Development

GOAL

Promoting continuum prevention-intervention-inclusion in order to reduce impairments in infants and young children and to improve the physical or social environment enabling their full participation.

METHOD

HI supports Children's Hospital in Vientiane to launch a pilot programme including early diagnosis, referral to specialist services provided by the Centre of Medical Rehabilitation (CMR) and the setting up of a child development clinic. Our operations consist in:

- Setting up and piloting a child disability early detection system in partnership with the children's hospital in Vientiane
- Providing support to a child development unit and basic rehabilitation care to children with disabilities
- Developing and piloting systems for referral to paediatric rehabilitation services
- Including disability in health awareness messages for a target group of women and young people based on the inclusion of disability issues in existing mother and child health and early childhood development programmes
- Initiation of a participatory approach to disability prevention

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : No	Distribution : No	Technical support : Yes	Donation of equipment : Yes	Financial support : Yes

BENEFICIARIES

Children and adults with disabilities and their families, communities and health workers.

³ Education and awareness actions for populations

PARTNERS

- Children's Hospital in Vientiane
- The Centre of Medical Rehabilitation
- The Ministry of Health
- Active NGOs in the field of maternal and child health

LOCATION

Vientiane Capital and provinces according to partnerships

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	31/12/2016
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes



Functional rehabilitation

GOAL

Improving the functional rehabilitation sector in Laos to better meet the needs of people with disabilities by implementing clear policies, developing a more effective training programme, and setting up a management system.

METHOD

The project will focus on three key elements of the rehabilitation system: implementing a clear national framework by developing a national rehabilitation strategic action plan and corresponding guidelines; providing the rehabilitation sector with trained and recognised professionals; enhancing service management to ensure people are able to access quality and sustainable services. The combination of these three elements will more effectively meet the needs of people with disabilities. Our operations consist in:

- Initiating a functional rehabilitation working group
- Helping the ministry of health draw up a strategic action plan on rehabilitation and inclusive health
- Collect lessons learnt and good practices from past experiences to help identifying a community-based rehabilitation model for Laos
- Helping the Medical Technologies Faculty to train physiotherapists
- Supporting the establishment of rehabilitation professionals
- Implementing a rehabilitation management system in the country's five rehabilitation services

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : No	Distribution : No	Technical support : Yes	Donation of equipment : Yes	Financial support : Yes

BENEFICIARIES

People with disabilities receiving rehabilitation services

PARTNERS

- The Centre of Medical Rehabilitation
- The Faculty of Medical Technology
- The Ministry of Health

LOCATION

Capital Vientiane and Savannakhet, Xieng Khouang, Luang Prabang and Champassak provinces

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	31/12/2017
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes



Support to disabled people's organisations

GOAL

Building the capacities of Laotian disabled people's organisations, the government and development operators to promote an inclusive society.

METHOD

The programme will provide support to key government and civil society operators in the field of disability and development to build their capacities and improve coordination. The operation will also support actions designed to assess the situation of people with disabilities and to promote policy development recommendations. Lastly, the programme will continue to conduct general awareness-raising actions on the situation and rights of people with disabilities in Laos. Our operations consist in:

- Providing support to the national authorities to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴ in Laos and to coordinate the disability sector in Laos
- Providing support to the National Committee for Disabled People and Elderly to draw up a national disability action plan
- Enhancing the organisational skills of disabled people’s organisations and support their engagement in policy dialogue
- Support the Lao Disabled People Association to provide quality training on the rights of people with disabilities and equality at every level of society
- Support disabled people organisations to implement projects to promote inclusive development through a small grant mechanism
- Developing awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of people with disabilities in the media
- Assisting village authorities and community based organisations to promote the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in community life
- Helping development operators take an inclusive approach to their programmes
- Gathering good practices for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the use of these good practices to influence national policies.

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : No	Distribution : Yes	Technical support : Yes	Donation of equipment : Yes	Financial support : Yes

BENEFICIARIES

Associations of disabled persons and persons with disabilities

PARTNERS:

The Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA), main implementing partner.
The National Committee for the Disabled People and the Elderly (NCDE), official partner of the government.

LOCATION :

Capital Vientiane, provinces of Savannakhet and Champassak

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	31/12/2016
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes



Economic Inclusion

OBJECTIVE

The project aims to break down the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing an income.

METHOD

The project is supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment. It is designed to support people with disabilities wishing to set up their own business. They are given personalised assistance to get their business up and running, including basic training on running a microbusiness, and access to technical training and/or credit. They also benefit from a start-up pack to buy the equipment they need for their business. Since July 2012, the project was extended to two district of Savannakhet Province as part of an UXO victim assistance project.

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : yes	Distribution : Yes	Technical support : No	Donation of equipment : No	Financial support : No

BENEFICIARIES

Persons with disabilities, work networks, communities

PARTNERS

The Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

⁴ The Convention is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

LOCATION

Vientiane capital and the provinces of Champassak and Savannakhet

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	30/06/2016
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes



Weapons clearance

GOAL

Reduce the number of victims of cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war (ERW) and increase opportunities of development in communities and families.

METHOD

In 1996, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, Handicap International conducted an initial national study on the socio-economic impact of unexploded devices, which cover more than two thirds of Laotian territory.

The exact extent of contamination in the country is unknown, but a study by Handicap International in 1997 estimated that about 87 000 km² of land were contaminated in the country (about 37% of Laotian territory).

Since then, Handicap International has conducted actions in Laos to reduce the threat from these weapons and their effects. The organisation deploys every day nearly 140 people (surveyors, deminers, community outreach team) include 6 expatriates, for the implementation of clearance actions and risk education (prevention) in the three most affected districts of Savannakhet province: Sepon, Nong and Villabully.

These three districts are considered to be poor and are given high priority in the national socio-economic development plan.

Handicap International initially sends a Non-Technical Survey Team, consisting of a community liaison officer and a trained Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operator to talk to the civilian population about the possible presence of cluster munitions or explosive remnants of war, as well as to assess the priority development projects in communities and for local authorities or development organisations (location of new school or extension of a rice field, for example). At the same time, a risk education officer also visits the village to deliver a risk awareness session, to highlight the risks posed by the presence of ERW in the community. To reduce the threat, an emergency response team immediately destroys all unexploded ordnance found during the surveys.

The organisation’s teams ensure information is continuously shared between communities and local authorities. These workers gather, compile and analyse testimonies from people living in the hazardous areas in order to prioritize the areas to clear. Three community safety and risk management teams, a roving team and nine deminers teams from Handicap International act to delineate areas of research, and to destroy explosive remnants of war identified in a development project area.

These teams work closely with the National Regulatory Authority for UXO and mines (NRA), part of the Ministry of Defense of Laos, with additional coordination with provincial and district authorities in Savannakhet.

The organisation conducts its clearance operations in partnership with development projects run by different partners: district authorities, the Poverty Reduction Fund and the German NGO Welt Hunger Hilfe, also livelihood activities section of victim assistance project implemented by the organisation.

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : yes	Distribution :No	Technical support : No	Donation of equipment : No	Financial support :Yes

BENEFICIARIES

Rural populations in the districts of Sepon, Nong and Villabully (108,000 people) along with various ethnic groups (Mungkhong, Ta Oi and Phu Tai) who live in the mountains.

RESULTS

Since 2006, Handicap International’s demining teams have cleared more than 3,100,000 sq.m. of land and destroyed some 19,400 explosive remnants of war. Some 2,500 REG were destroyed in 2014.

PARTNERS

Collaboration with the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) and other stakeholders also involved in clearance in Laos:

- International NGOs such as MAG, NPA, SODI, HALO TRUST, AWorld Education
- National stakeholders, such as the Army, COPE LDPA
- Commercial actors, a dozen of which Milsearch, BACTEC
- The Poverty Reduction Fund
- The German NGO Welt Hunger Hilfe

LOCATION

The three districts worst affected by unexploded devices: Sepon, Nong and Villabully in the province of Savannakhet.

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	30/06/2016
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes



Mines and ERW risk education

OBJECTIVE

Reducing the number of accidents caused by mines and explosive remnants of war and their victims in Laos.

METHOD

In parallel to its weapons clearance activities, Handicap International also helps reduce risky behaviour and reduce the number of accidents by holding prevention sessions in villages to raise the awareness of communities on the threats posed by UXO. The organisation’s messages are clear and straightforward and teach people what to do when they come across unknown objects that could be explosive remnants of war (ERW). When the head of the village alerts Handicap International to the presence of a suspicious object, its teams travel to the area to neutralise it.

Messages and means of delivering risk education are adapted to different population groups (men, women, children) and repeated over time to improve the knowledge of people at risk, and reactions to have. These activities may be focus groups, interventions in schools and screenings of educational films.

After raising the population’s awareness of the risk from explosive remnants of war, Handicap International has noted positive changes in the attitudes and practices of communities, leading to a reduction in the number of fatal accidents. This prevention activity benefits from the support of national and local government initiatives.

In addition to clearance and risk education, Handicap International teams travel to villages to obtain information on suspicious objects and possibly accidents in the area. These activities help to achieve a more accurate estimate of the actual contamination of the territory.

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Directly with populations :		Through partners :		
Service or care : yes	Distribution :No	Technical support : No	Donation of equipment : No	Financial support :No

BENEFICIARIES

People exposed to explosive remnants of war, local authorities and development operators.

PARTNERS

- The National Regulatory Authority (NRA)
- Local authorities in districts
- Government authorities

LOCATION

The three districts worst affected by unexploded devices: Sepon, Nong and Villabully in the province of Savannakhet.

FINANCING

Financing secured until :	30/06/2016
Extension (subject to funding) for another year at least :	Yes

MAIN FUNDING BODIES

<p>French Development Agency</p> 	<p>State Department of United States</p> 	<p>Development General Direction of Belgian government</p> 
<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg</p> 	<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands</p> 	<p>The European Union</p> 
<p>TEAM project</p> 	<p>The State Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</p>  <p>Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</p>	<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway</p> 