

KEY DATA

CCM ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 AUGUST 2030

Not on track to meet deadline
(will require multiple extension requests, due to extent of CMR)

CMR CONTAMINATION:

Massive, but no reliable
estimate of extent

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS

Release of cluster munition-contaminated area	Release in 2025 (km ²)	Release in 2024 (km ²)
Clearance	*67.32	*71.70
Technical Survey**	0	0
Non-Technical Survey**	0	0

Destruction of submunitions during clearance, survey, and spot tasks	2025	2024
Submunitions destroyed	55,808 (incl. 15,206 during spot tasks and 7,443 during TS)	71,106 (incl. 34,485 destroyed during spot tasks and 11,709 during TS)

* Excludes commercial clearance of some areas where few or no submunitions were found and which Mine Action Review does not assess to be CMR clearance.

** NTS and TS are conducted in v PDR, but focus on finding evidence of contamination as part of a nationwide survey. The output of the cluster munition remnant survey (CMRS) in Lao PDR is creation of confirmed hazardous areas.

MAIN CMR SURVEY AND CLEARANCE OPERATORS IN 2025

- Centre 523 (humanitarian teams of the Lao People's Army)
- The HALO Trust (HALO)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Humanity & Inclusion (HI)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- UXO Lao

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Clearance fell 6% after a Stop Work order issued by the United States in January 2025 interrupted operations in dry season months that are normally the most productive but the United States subsequently resumed funding and maintained its status as much the biggest contributor to the UXO sector's humanitarian operations. The NRA approved and released 24 chapters of national mine action standards updated and aligned with international standards (IMAS). They included a land release standard with a prioritisation matrix and an information management standard rolled out to operators in 2026. The National Regulatory Authority (NRA), supported by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), prepared a five-year information management strategic plan (for 2026–30), which was due to be officially launched in 2026. Tetra Tech, funded by the United States and working with Mines Advisory Group (MAG), conducted field Phase 1 trials of a predictive survey tool demonstrating potential for accelerating land release.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Lao PDR authorities should follow up the improvement in streamlining procedures for negotiating MoUs and engage with operators on additional measures that promote efficiency.
- The NRA should facilitate exploration and testing of survey methods to increase the efficiency of release of areas with cluster munition remnants (CMR).

- The NRA should ensure consistent application by operators and authorities at provincial and district levels of the prioritisation matrix adopted in the updated national standard on land release.
- The NRA and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) should work with relevant ministries to enable use of drones for survey to improve operational efficiency.
- MoFA and the NRA should develop a resource mobilisation strategy to diversify funding for the UXO sector.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2025)	Score (2024)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	7	7	Lao PDR does not yet have a reliable estimate of CMR contamination but continuing survey increased the confirmed area of contamination by 8% in 2025 to 2,539km ² and village-to-village survey has been completed in five of the most contaminated provinces.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	8	8	There is strong national ownership from the NRA and transfer of oversight to MoFA has continued to invigorate cooperation and coordination with operators on issues ranging from streamlining complex MoU procedures to engagement on operational issues through the Sector Working Group and Technical Working Groups.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	8	8	Lao PDR has taken significant steps to mainstream gender and diversity in the UXO sector where MoFA has previously introduced a Gender Code of Conduct for the NRA and UXO Lao and appointed gender focal points for all four technical working groups. The proportion of women in the workforce has remained roughly the same at 37% and while UXO Lao, the biggest operator, trails the sector average it increased the number of female staff.
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION (10% of overall score)	7	6	The NRA approved and released an updated national standard on environmental management. While progress has been made, most operators lack formal environmental policies, assessments, or focal points for their country programmes, and stronger, coordinated environmental practices are still needed across the sector.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	8	7	The NRA and operators made significant progress in correcting historical data in IMSMA and continued to strengthen reporting procedures and build capacity at all levels in preparation for upgrading the system to IMSMA Core. The NRA released an updated national standard on information management (IM) and with NPA support prepared a strategic plan for IM in 2026–30.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	6	6	Lao PDR's Article 4 deadline extension request included a work plan for 2025 to 2030 with more realistic clearance targets. An updated standard on land release adopted at the end of 2025 included a comprehensive matrix for prioritising clearance, which is intended to facilitate planning and avoid abuse or conflicts of interest.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (10% of overall score)	8	8	After extensive consultation with operators, the NRA released 24 chapters of national standards updated and aligned with IMAS in December 2025. These were in the process of being translated to Lao in 2026. Tetra Tech and MAG prepared to trial "Layered Evidential Assessment and Prioritisation" (LEAP) – a predictive survey tool expected to help accelerate survey and clearance.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	8	8	Survey and clearance outputs dropped in 2025 due mainly to a Stop Work order from the United States, Lao PDR's major donor issued early in the year. This halted operations in the most productive months. The NRA said that in the weeks of full operations, productivity was higher in 2025 than 2024.
Average Score	7.5	7.3	Overall Programme Performance: GOOD

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- National Regulatory Authority (NRA) Board
- National Regulatory Authority (NRA) Office

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- UXO Lao
- Humanitarian teams of the Lao People's Army (Centre 523, formerly known as Unit 58)
- Commercial operators

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust (HALO)
- Humanity & Inclusion (HI)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- Commercial operators

OTHER ACTORS

- ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC)
- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Tetra Tech

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Lao PDR has the world's highest level of CMR contamination. Submunitions affect 15 of Lao PDR's 18 provinces¹ but contamination is so widespread it is still working to reach a reliable baseline estimate. To-date, village-to-village survey has been completed in five of the most contaminated provinces in the south (Attapeu, Champassak, Saravan, Savannakhet, and Xekong). In the most heavily contaminated province of Xiengkhouang, which is in the north of the country, systematic village-to-village CMRS (proactive survey phase) is still underway. CMRS is also being undertaken in other CMR-contaminated provinces, although

not systematically, as funding for TS/CMRS has been sporadic in these provinces and undertaken according to operator budget availability, rather than targeted for the completion of CMRS of all villages.

At the end of 2025, Laos had confirmed nearly 2,540km² in 12 provinces to-date (see Table 1), 60% of it concentrated in one province, Xiengkhouang.² Survey added 873 CHAs covering 189km² in 2025, a slower rate of growth compared with previous years reflecting greater programme emphasis on clearance.

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area confirmed through survey (end 2025)³

Province	No. of villages	of CHAs	Total area (km ²)
Attapeu	126	1,739	162.57
Bolikhamxai	49	88	9.74
Champassak	138	639	36.77
Houaphanh	122	540	54.65
Khammouane	128	953	214.29
Luang Prabang	64	377	34.95
Phongsaly	5	6	0.53
Saravan	332	2,758	146.21
Savannakhet	349	5,392	246.20
Vientiane	10	17	1.74
Xekong	139	1,464	106.85
Xiengkhouang	302	2,622	1,525.35
Totals	1,764	16,595	2,539.85

Lao PDR's CMR contamination is a legacy of the Indochina Wars of the 1960s and 1970s. The United States conducted one of the heaviest aerial bombardments in history, dropping more than two million tonnes of bombs between 1964 and 1973, including 29 types of cluster munition and more than 270 million submunitions (known locally as bombsies).⁴ The failure rate is not known, but Lao PDR reports it may have been as high as 30%,⁵ leaving an estimated 80 million unexploded submunitions at the end of the war.⁶

1 2024 CCM Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 4.

2 Data from NRA national database, 21 May 2026.

3 Ibid.

4 2024 CCM Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 3.

5 Ibid.

6 2019 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 1; Article 7 Report (covering 2025), Form F.

OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

Lao PDR also has extensive contamination from other explosive remnants of war (ERW), including both air-dropped and ground-fired ordnance, though the extent of contamination is not known. An online reference manual compiled by Humanity & Inclusion (HI), documenting all types of explosive ordnance found in Lao PDR, has reported the presence of at least 214 types of munition.⁷ These range from 20lb fragmentation bombs to 3,000lb general-purpose bombs, as well as artillery shells, grenades, mortars, rockets,⁸ cluster munitions, air-dropped mines (such as

the BLU 42, 43, and 45), and other ordnance.⁹ In steep mountainous areas, items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) can easily roll downhill during clearance and detonation. Items of explosive ordnance with cocked strikers and time-delay or anti-withdrawal fuzes present a particular hazard and cannot be moved, so must be destroyed in situ.¹⁰

Lao PDR is also contaminated, but to a much lesser extent, by anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines (See Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Lao PDR).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The NRA, created by a 2004 government decree and active since 2006, has an inter-ministerial board composed of representatives from government ministries. A decision by the prime minister in September 2023 transferred chairmanship of the NRA from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) as part of measures by the Lao government to strengthen coordination systems among various agencies, including government and operators.¹¹

A 2018 decree, "On the Organisation and Operations of the National Regulatory Authority for UXO in Lao PDR" defines the position, role, duties, rights, organisational structure, and the working principles and methods of the NRA.¹² Government decree 166 issued on 4 March 2025 ratified the prime minister's decision transferring chairmanship of the NRA's 14-member inter-ministerial board to MoFA.¹³ The transfer of the NRA to MoFA provided an opportunity for a review of the NRA, commissioned by UNDP and MoFA, which in turn resulted in multiple positive changes across the sector.

The NRA acts as coordinator for national and international clearance operators and serves as the national focal point for the sector. This includes overall management and consideration of policy, planning, projects, accreditation, quality management (QM), and coordination of the implementation of the national strategy nationwide, as well as NRA planning and coordination functions at the provincial and district levels.¹⁴

During the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in 2016, Lao PDR launched sustainable development goal (SDG) 18, "Lives Safe from UXO", which focuses on freeing the country from UXO. The inclusion of UXO as a specific output in the National Socio-Economic Development

Plan (NSED) for 2021–2025, and inclusion in the forthcoming NSED for 2026–30 demonstrated Lao PDR's commitment to removing UXO as a barrier to development.¹⁵

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides considerable programmatic and technical support to the NRA, focusing on areas such as QM, policy, and support with national standards and treaty compliance. UNDP's targeted capacity-building support has helped strengthen the NRA's QA/QC processes over the past two years and has been an important driver of the revision of the NMAS, the development of prioritisation criteria, and a range of research and development initiatives, including depth analysis, technical assessment of submunitions, and causality analysis. These initiatives are helping to strengthen and further develop the government's approach to research and development. With funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), UNDP also provides capacity development support and operational funding to the Lao People's Army Centre demining teams in what was formerly known as Unit 58 but renamed Centre 523 in November 2025, as well as operational (deployment) funding to Centre 523. UNDP also provides capacity-development support to UXO Lao, with funding from Luxembourg and New Zealand.¹⁶ Tetra Tech, funded by the US, provides capacity development in information management (IM), QM, operations support, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) training is provided, primarily to UXO Lao, and to a lesser extent the NRA.¹⁷ The United States also supported the NRA delivering an 11-week Senior Explosive Ordnance Disposal (SEOD) Technicians course in 2025, as a result of which 14 technicians qualified, including four from Centre 523 at the highest EOD level available in Lao PDR. The United States planned to support two SEOD refresher courses in 2026 for technicians who qualified before 2024.¹⁸

7 Email from Yvon Le Chevanton, Technical Survey/Clearance Operations Manager, HI, 24 July 2024.

8 2024 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 4.

9 Email from Yvon Le Chevanton, HI, 13 July 2024.

10 Emails from Alexandra Letcher, HI, 6 April and 28 June 2023; and Yvon Le Chevanton, HI, 13 and 24 July 2024.

11 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form J.

12 Government Decree No. 67, dated 12 February 2018; 2019 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 17; and Statement of Lao PDR on National Implementation Efforts, CCM Eighth Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 3 September 2018.

13 Article 7 Report (covering 2025), Form A.

14 2019 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, pp. 14, 15, and 18.

15 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy Vientiane, 6 July 2021.

16 Emails from Rupert Leighton, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP, 14 August 2023 and 3 August 2026; and Viengdalat Somphet, Head of Planning and Cooperation Unit, NRA, 17 June 2025.

17 Email from Viengdalat Somphet, NRA, 17 June 2025; and "US Renews Partnership with Lao PDR to Build Capacity in UXO Sector", US Embassy in Lao PDR, 31 January 2020.

18 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy in Lao PDR, 13 July 2026.

Operators also supported development in the sector. NPA continued to provide extensive support through under an Information Management Capacity Development programme. MAG held jointly with the NRA an IM workshop.¹⁹ The HALO Trust, supported by Ireland, started drone pilot training for the NRA and handed over a number of drones to the NRA.²⁰

COORDINATION

Operators unanimously reported close cooperation and coordination with MoFA and the NRA, which was enhanced by MoFA's replacement of MoLSW as chair of the NRA Board and NRA Board's secretariat. Historically, MoU procedures have been lengthy, complex, and labour-intensive, posing a major challenge at all levels and causing significant delays to survey, clearance, and procurement and importation of equipment.²¹ Good support from NRA and MoFA at national and provincial levels contributed to smoother, more efficient implementation of the MoU's setting out their terms of operation and their work plans.²² In 2025, NRA office's director played a key role in helping operators affected by the US Stop Work order obtain short term funding.²³ Operators also reported quicker conclusion of MoUs, previously a process that took so long it deterred smaller donors.²⁴ MoFA said it remains open to suggestions on further steps to improve the process.²⁵

Coordination is strengthened by meetings of a Sector Working Group (SWG), co-chaired by the Minister or Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, UNDP and a donor country, most often the US. Meeting twice a year, the SWG aims to improve the efficiency, transparency, and funding of mine action in Lao PDR.²⁶ Although it has a different name, the SWG is the equivalent of a CCM Country Coalition. Sector coordination is also reinforced by quarterly Technical Working Groups (TWG) meetings covering five main thematic areas: survey and clearance, victim assistance, risk education, information management, and policy coordination and funding strategy.²⁷ Operators reported that TWGs were more effective in 2025, organising smaller group meetings that enabled participants to have more detailed discussions.²⁸

FUNDING FOR CMR SURVEY AND CLEARANCE

NRA reported the total budget for the UXO sector amounted to US\$51.7 million in 2025.²⁹ This exceeded the \$50 million or so a year Lao PDR says it needs for clearance and risk education (EORE).³⁰ It was a modest increase from US\$48.9 million received the previous year but the NRA saw the possibility of a downturn in 2026.³¹

The Lao PDR government pays the salaries of the NRA staff (at provincial and district level) and the Army's Centre 523's deminers as well as providing administrative support and infrastructure in collaboration with funding from KOICA and coordination by UNDP.³² Salaries of NRA personnel in Vientiane are paid by international donors, with funding channelled through UNDP.³³ The government also provides in-kind contributions such as UXO Lao facilities, and through tax exemptions for equipment for humanitarian operators.³⁴

Clearance operators are, however, required to pay visa fees for expatriates and the previous tax exemption for international experts was removed from all MoUs after 2018.³⁵ In addition, changes to the law mean that international NGO staff have paid income tax since 2021.³⁶

The US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) led a list of about a dozen State donors supporting Lao PDR in 2025, estimating it provided 71% of the funding for humanitarian clearance in 2025. This was down from 79% the previous year.³⁷ Other States and international donors supporting the sector in 2025 included Canada, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, The Netherlands, The Philippines, United Kingdom, Republic of Korea, UNDP, and UNICEF.³⁸

19 Email from Isabelle Urumath, Grants & Communications Manager, MAG, 27 April 2026.

20 Email from Craig Guwuriro, Programme Manager, HALO, 9 May 2026; and interview, Vientiane, 26 May 2026.

21 Emails from Aubrey Sutherland, NPA, 18 May 2024; William Hunter, HALO, 30 May 2024; and Katherine Harrison, MAG, 8 May 2024.

22 Emails from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, Country Manager, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Nguyen Linh, Deputy Country Director, NPA, 4 May 2026; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, Head of Planning and Cooperation, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

23 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy Vientiane, 4 August 2025.

24 Emails from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

25 Interview with Venephet Philathong, Director of the Division of the UN Political and Security Affairs, Department of International Organizations (NRA Chair Secretariat), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Soudachanh Darounphanh, Deputy Director, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, Deputy Head of Planning and Cooperation Unit, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026.

26 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form J; and email from Viengdalat Somphet, NRA, 17 June 2025.

27 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2025), Form D.

28 Email from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026.

29 Email from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, Deputy Head of Explosive Ordnance Risk Education & Victim Assistance NRA, 24 June 2026.

30 Article 7 Report (covering 2025), Form I.

31 Email from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, NRA, 24 June 2026; CCW Protocol V Article 10 Reports (covering 2024 and 2025), Forms A and E.

32 2024 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 13; CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form I; and email from Chanmy Keodara, NRA, 13 July 2024.

33 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy Vientiane, 24 July 2024.

34 2024 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 13; CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form I; and email from Chanmy Keodara, NRA, 13 July 2024.

35 Emails from Katherine Harrison, NPA, 9 September 2020; Cameron Imber, Programme Manager, HALO, 11 June 2021; Julien Kempeneers, HI, 16 June 2021; and Rebecca Letven, MAG, 19 June 2021.

36 Emails from Cameron Imber, HALO, 11 June 2021; and Katherine Harrison, NPA, 19 June 2021.

37 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy Vientiane, 4 June 2026.

38 Article 7 Report (covering 2025), Form I.

HALO, MAG, NPA, and UXO Lao all received significant funding from the United States. HALO also received support from Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK)'s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) in 2025 and continuing into 2026, although FCDO funding ended in April 2026. MAG's other donors included Norway, the United Kingdom, and a US charity, Restoration Laos. Another charity, author Angel Pilato's "No More UXO in Laos" Campaign, funded a clearance team for a short project in 2025 and planned to support another project in 2026.

The PM/WRA funded most of NPA operational teams but Norway's Agency for Cooperation & Development (NORAD) funded two teams and a technical field manager for quality management. NORAD funding ended in 2026 and NPA covered the cost of the TFM/QM from its own funds. NPA also received funding from Canada in 2026 to support organisation of the CCM Third Review Conference, which

was taking place in Vientiane in September 2026. UXO Lao, in addition to the PM/WRA, received support for survey and clearance from Japan, Luxembourg, and New Zealand. HI received funding from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) in 2025 but that stopped at the end of the year, though in 2026 it also received support from Luxembourg.³⁹

As part of a drive to strengthen national ownership MoFA and the NRA are exploring the creation of a funding mechanism to receive financial contributions whether from major donors, international organisations, corporate entities, or private individuals. It was also looking into possible new fund-raising measures. MoFA planned to recruit a consultant in 2026 to examine requirements for establishing the mechanism.⁴⁰

For more information on funding, please see the country profile on Lao PDR on the *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* website.⁴¹

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The NRA has integrated gender into all core policy and strategy documents for the UXO sector. The Safe Path Forward III's 10-year strategy for 2021–30 says that gender mainstreaming is important for the national programme and that women must be involved in both work planning and project implementation.⁴² MoFA appointed a gender coordination committee for the sector in 2024 and the NRA appointed gender focal points for each of the sector's four technical working groups (addressing Survey and Clearance, Risk Education, Victim Assistance and Information Management).⁴³

MoFA also approved a Gender and Inclusion Code of Conduct for the NRA and UXO Lao in 2024, establishing overall standards of professional behaviour with core principles such as respect, safeguarding, and gender equality. A supporting Human Resources Policy Supplement was also approved, providing practical guidance for integrating gender and inclusion into HR systems, including recruitment, team composition, and staff development.⁴⁴

International operators have all reported having gender and diversity policies in place. HALO, exceptionally, has exceeded gender parity across all levels of the operation with an unusually high figure of 53% employment in its operations. It identified ensuring employment that reflected the ethnic composition of provincial communities as a key driver of its recruitment policy.⁴⁵ MAG and NPA provided extensive refresher training on gender policy and practice. MAG said 38 training sessions in 2025 reached over 1,100 staff considering the evolving roles of men and women, and barriers and avenues to their participation in leadership roles.⁴⁶ NPA's training addressed equality and diversity issues, whistleblowing mechanisms, and preventing sexual harassment.⁴⁷

Among national operators, UXO Lao acknowledged it had not yet established its approach to gender mainstreaming but had increased the number of female employees in absolute and percentage terms in 2025 and said it continued to encourage women's participation in operations.⁴⁸ Centre 523 said each of its 10 clearance teams included two women in their complement of 13 personnel.⁴⁹

Table 2: Gender composition of operators in 2025⁵⁰

Operator	Total staff	Women staff	Total managerial or supervisory staff	Women managerial or supervisory staff	Total operational staff	Women operational staff
NRA	51	17(33%)	7	3 (43%)	0	0
HALO	1,160	596 (51%)	130	69 (53%)	1,072	567 (53%)

39 Emails from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

40 Interview with Venephet Philathong, MoFA, Soudachanh Darounphanh, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026.

41 <https://the-monitor.org>.

42 Lao PDR, "Safe Path Forward III", p. 17.

43 Email from Chanmy Keodara, NRA, 13 July 2024.

44 Emails from Eli Mechanic, Country Director, MAG, 10 July 2025; and Viengdalat Somphet, NRA, 17 June 2025.

45 Email from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026.

46 Email from Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026.

47 Email from Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026.

48 Email from Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

49 Interview with Lt. Col. Phetsamay Kommasit, Political and Policy Chief, Centre 523, in Vientiane, 29 May 2026.

50 Emails from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, Deputy Head of Explosive Ordnance Risk Education & Victim Assistance, NRA, 24 June 2026; Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

Table 2 continued

Operator	Total staff	Women staff	Total managerial or supervisory staff	Women managerial or supervisory staff	Total operational staff	Women operational staff
HI	35	15 (43%)	5	1 (20%)	21	0 (0%)
MAG	1,107	463 (42%)	174	73 (42%)	1,026	428 (42%)
NPA*	1,031	323 (31%)	6	3 (50%)	949	298 (31%)
UXO Lao	1,699	489 (29%)	361	144 (40%)	1,338	345 (26%)
Totals	5,083	1,903 (37%)	683	293 (43%)	4,406	1,638 (37%)

* Staff from the IM Capacity Development Project are not included. Data correct as of 31 April 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

The Safe Path Forward III strategy identifies climate change as a challenge to addressing UXO and reiterates that mine action activities have to comply with national standards and relevant laws, which include an Environmental Protection Law introduced in August 2024.⁵¹

The NRA released a new IMAS-compliant standard on the environment in December 2025 as part of a wider upgrade of national standards. It calls for environmental screening and assessments of proposed projects with a view to establishing an environmental baseline that makes it possible to evaluate project impacts and develop appropriate mitigation measures. It encourages operators to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause global warming and climate change by reviewing energy use and supply, transport and travel, waste, procurement and supply chains.

Camp sites are to be chosen with environmental and community input to avoid disrupting economic activities or social and cultural values, and to ensure compliance with national and local regulations. Waste disposal sites are to be selected to avoid harm to property, infrastructure, or cultural areas, must consider shocks and noise, and are to be refurbished according to community needs. Vehicle maintenance must occur in designated areas with soak pits to prevent water pollution; oil dumping is prohibited; and waste must be properly contained. Disposal sites are to be selected to avoid harm to property, infrastructure, or cultural areas, must consider shocks and noise, and are to be refurbished according to community needs.⁵²

International operators applied environmental policies and SOPs to keep their programmes aligned with the policies and practice of their global organisations. NPA's Policy and Environment Advisor provided training at NPA's head office for a dozen Lao staff on using NPA's Green Field Tool used by teams to identify environmental risks and mitigation

measures.⁵³ UXO Lao did not have a policy on environmental management in 2026 but was developing an SOP on the issue to be issued later in the year as part of a wider update of its programme SOPs.⁵⁴

MAG introduced a Climate and Environment Policy in September 2025 and MAG Laos followed up by developing an Environmental Aspects Register to assess the impact of all organizational activities and operations and identify significant risks. These were subsequently documented in an Environmental Management Plan setting out mitigation measures to be implemented in 2026. An audit by MAG Laos of its carbon emissions in 2024 found charcoal used by its teams to cook was a major contributor to the programme's total emissions prompting a three-month trial by five teams in Khammouane exploring use of electric cookers as an alternative. The teams rated electric cookers a big improvement in terms of time saving, convenience, and health and despite challenges with electricity supply in some locations the programme has rolled out electric cookers to all field teams. MAG also provides training to improve waste management and avoiding plastic pollution.⁵⁵

Mine action faced increasing impacts of climate change and extreme weather in 2025, when the rainy season, which normally runs from June to October, started in May and continued well into November. Heavy rains and severe flooding caused big mudslides and soil erosion which can move UXO into areas already cleared. Operators mostly reported being able to plan around climate factors but some found productivity affected.⁵⁶ The government, with support from UNDP, is in discussion with the University of Queensland about a possible study of the environmental impact of mine action in Lao PDR.⁵⁷

51 Lao PDR, "Safe Path Forward III", pp. 12 and 17.

52 National Standard 07.13, Environmental Management.

53 Emails from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; and Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026.

54 Email from Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

55 Email from Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026.

56 Emails from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, NRA, 24 June 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; and Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026.

57 Interview with Venephet Philathong, MoFA, Soudachanh Darounphanh, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026.

Table 3: Environmental policies, assessments and focal points⁵⁸

Operator	Environmental policy in place for country programme	Environmental assessments conducted to support survey and clearance	Environmental focal point at country-programme level
HALO	No	No	Yes
HI	No – SOP	No	Yes
MAG	Yes	Yes, but limited	Yes, since September 2024
NPA	No – SOP	Yes	Yes
UXO Lao	No	No	No

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Lao PDR is implementing a major overhaul and upgrade of its information management, building on a sustained effort by the NRA and operators in recent years to tackle data quality challenges and a three-year IM Capacity Development Project funded by the US PM/WRA and implemented jointly by the NRA and NPA from mid-2023 to August 2026. A second phase of the project is under consideration.⁵⁹

The NRA, supported by NPA, has also drawn up an Information Management Strategic Plan 2026–2030, prepared with extensive consultation with stakeholders in technical working group meetings and with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The plan, due to be released in 2026, aims to provide the sector with modern, sustainable, user-oriented systems that will strengthen evidence-based planning, prioritisation, survey and clearance. The plan is presented as the “operational engine for Safe Path Forward III”.⁶⁰

The NRA manages an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) national database which was made accessible to all operators in 2023 via a dedicated virtual private network (VPN), enhancing data entry and verification. It introduced real-time data collection using ArcGIS Online and supports an operations dashboard displaying data on CHAs, survey, clearance and victim assistance. The database now functions inefficiently due to the volume of data and technical limitations and the NRA is preparing to upgrade it to IMSMA Core.⁶¹ Data migration to the new system was expected in 2026–27 and installation to be completed in 2028.⁶² The NRA and the GICHD held a workshop in Vientiane in June 2025 to discuss arrangements for the upgrade.

The NRA and operators have prioritised tackling a long-standing challenge posed by inaccurate and incomplete historical data, particularly from UXO Lao between 2004 and 2010. Errors included incorrect coordinates, use of wrong GPS formats or map datums, and misfiled reports. Many records were stored only as hard copies and were never fully digitised leaving gaps during the migration to the IMSMA database.⁶³ These continue to pose challenges for operators on tasks overlapping with UXO Lao's past activities.⁶⁴ Data analysis in 2003 estimated more than 11,000 task records required action and by May 2026 operators had corrected more than 10,000 records. Most of the remaining task records, will require field verification requiring a significant commitment of time and resources.

The NRA planned to establish a Task Force in July 2026, involving management, operations, and IM staff from the NRA, HALO, MAG, NPA, Tetra Tech, and other operators, to develop criteria, requirements, and a methodology for a comprehensive assessment of the scope of data correction issues, as well as to define the data-correction and reporting process. The Task Force will also determine which tasks require field verification and which records are not correctable.⁶⁵

Among other steps to strengthen information management and prepare for the upgrade to IMSMA Core, the NRA adopted a revised and updated national standard in late December 2025 which includes the latest amendments to international standards in IMAS 05.10 and provides the binding regulatory framework for IM. The NRA also introduced adjustments to reporting procedures in 2025 that were intended to improve data quality and consistency, including standardised reporting formats, clearer submission timelines, and stronger requirements for data completeness and validation prior to entry into the national database.⁶⁶

58 Emails from William Hunter, HALO, 22 June 2025; Reinier Carabain, HI, 22 May 2025; Eli Mechanic, MAG, 12 June 2025; Per Håkon Breivik, Country Director, NPA, 23 May 2025; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 May 2025.

59 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy Vientiane, 4 June 2026.

60 Draft IM Strategic Plan 2026–30, pp. 7 and 9.

61 Interview with Venephet Philathong, MoFA, Soudachanh Darounphanh, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026.

62 Interviews with Venephet Philathong, MoFA, Soudachanh Darounphanh, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026; and with Abdulkarim Main, Senior Technical Adviser, NPA, 25 and 29 May 2026; Information Management Strategic Plan 2026 – 2030 (Draft), pp. 16, 33.

63 Emails from Bouala Thongsavanh, NRA, on behalf of Phoukhieo Chanthasomboune, NRA, 30 April 2018; Aubrey Sutherland, NPA, 25 March 2019; and Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026. Also “Data errors on IMSMA”, Nigel Orr, Technical Adviser, Sterling International, 26 April 2017.

64 Email from Craig Guwuro, HALO, 9 May 2026.

65 Interview with Abdulkarim Main, Senior Technical Adviser, NPA, 25 and 29 May 2026.

66 Emails from Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; and Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026.

Limited IM capacity at the provincial and district level and the high turnover of staff in some areas is also a challenge. Under the capacity development project, NPA delivered IM equipment in 14 provinces/89 districts and provided IM training to staff in nine provinces/62 districts. UNDP is supporting IM capacity development in five other provinces and 27 districts.⁶⁷

PLANNING AND TASKING

The National Strategy for the UXO Sector (2021–30), “Safe Path Forward III”, developed under the leadership of the NRA and adopted in 2023,⁶⁸ set a target of identifying 2,500km² of CHA and releasing 1,000km² of land for agricultural and development purposes by 2030.⁶⁹ This ambitious target was more than double existing clearance output. In 2025, the NRA decided to scale that back to what was considered the more realistic target of releasing 750km².⁷⁰

The 2024 CCM Article 4 deadline extension request set out a five-year work plan for survey and clearance (see Table 4), stating that its fulfilment depended on maintaining current

funding levels. Clearance is taking place simultaneously with survey to identify CHAs that contain CMR.⁷¹ Lao PDR plans to clear a total of 325km² of cluster munition-contaminated area between 1 August 2025 and 31 July 2030 (i.e. 65km² per annum), with predicted destruction of a total of 375,000 submunitions (75,000 per annum). Lao PDR also plans to conduct CMRS over a total of area of 1,000km². These outputs are based on a total cost of US\$225 million (US\$45 million per annum) from international funding, in addition to in-kind national support.⁷²

Table 4: Planned survey and clearance in August 2025–August 2030 (2024 Article 4 extension request)⁷³

Year	Clearance (km ²)	Submunitions to be destroyed	Total area to be surveyed through CMRS (km ²)	NTS (no. of villages)	External funding (US\$)
2025 (Aug to Dec)	27.08	31,250	83	62.5	18.75
2026	65	75,000	200	150	45
2027	65	75,000	200	150	45
2028	65	75,000	200	150	45
2029	65	75,000	200	150	45
2030 (Jan to end July)	37.92	43,750	117	87.5	26.25
Totals	325	375,000	1,000	750	225

In its 2024 Article 4 deadline extension request, Lao PDR expected to increase productivity in UXO clearance year on year through good practice, adjustment of national standards to respond to evidence and best practice in-country, and better use of data.⁷⁴ If achieved, this may result in increased clearance output compared to the extension request work plan.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

The NRA has reviewed and updated 24 chapters of national mine action standards, including standards for environmental management and information management, aligning them with IMAS. After consultations with operators, it formally adopted the revised NMAS at a UXO sector working group meeting in December 2025. The 24 chapters were undergoing translation into Lao in 2026, a process slowed by the need to develop the official Lao vocabulary of technical terms.

The new NMAS for land release (NS 07.11) includes an annex, “CHA Prioritization Criteria”, providing a standardised approach to prioritisation.⁷⁵ It sets out to harmonise the criteria of individual operators and align them with Lao PDR’s rural development priorities. The annex sets out five criteria⁷⁶ and calls for each to be scored between zero and 20 points, giving priority to CHAs with the highest score. It is designed to be easily understood by all stakeholders from national,

⁶⁷ Email from Per Håkon Breivik, NPA, 18 July 2025.

⁶⁸ Statement of Lao PDR on National Implementation Measures, Second CCM Review Conference (Part 1, virtual meeting), 25–27 November 2020; email from Chomyaeng Phengthongsawat, NRA, 21 June 2021; and Lao PDR, “Safe Path Forward III”, p. 2; Statement of Lao PDR on victim assistance, CCM Tenth Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 30 August–2 September 2022; and Lao PDR, “Safe Path Forward III”, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Lao PDR, “Safe Path Forward III”, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Interview with Venephet Philathong, MoFA, Soudachanh Darounphanh, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026.

⁷¹ 2019 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Executive Summary.

⁷² 2024 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part A, Executive Summary; and Part B, Detailed Narrative, Annex 1.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ 2024 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, pp. 24 and 25.

⁷⁵ NMAS 07.11, Annex B.

⁷⁶ 1) proximity to hazard; 2) Number of beneficiaries; 3) village poverty ranking; 4) use of land post-clearance; 5) whether there is designated funding for development of the land post-clearance.

provincial, and district authorities down to the individual villager and to accelerate the often lengthy discussions between operators and local authorities on annual work plans by removing the need to negotiate which tasks are the priority. The system was currently being developed in collaboration with the Information Management Unit and was due to be piloted with operators by the end of 2026. The NRA noted that the system must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the actual conditions of Lao PDR.⁷⁷ The annex states that operators may undertake NTS and TS, if necessary, to determine whether the land qualifies as a CHA and needs full clearance or if "the land can be released through NTS or TS".

To date, in Lao PDR, survey has been used primarily to confirm contamination and, under current standards, operators can only conduct clearance on CHAs identified through CMRS, except where special agreements, commercial clearance, or donor-funded development projects require otherwise.⁷⁸ There is significant potential for the rural development sector to benefit from increased application of evidence-based land release methodology, using NTS and TS to release land found not to be contaminated, while requiring costly and time-intensive clearance only where land identified for development is confirmed as contaminated.

The effectiveness of CMRS in different contamination environments has also come under increasing scrutiny prompting exploration of other approaches. Lao PDR's Article 4 deadline extension request states that "in order to hasten clearance, innovative methods must be trialled."⁷⁹ MoFA and the NRA accordingly are supporting efforts to identify a methodology that can accelerate land release without use of CMRS.⁸⁰ Particular attention is focused on the US-funded trial of Layered Evidential Assessment and Prioritisation (LEAP), a predictive tool developed by Tetra Tech which combines

US bombing data and evidence points of CMR established by operators' roving EOD tasks. The tool is intended to help operators map contamination and allocate assets to achieve more efficient land release. Phase 1 field trials were conducted by ten MAG teams in Xiengkhouang province's Kham district between 3 January and 11 April 2026. Most contamination—95.5% of the submunitions found by the teams—was in areas predicted by LEAP when combining bombing data and roving tasks operational data. No cluster munitions were found in areas indicated as contaminated only by historical roving task data.⁸¹

The outcome demonstrated the tool's potential to provide accurate predictions of CMR and in some locations a fast lane to clearance, but the scope of the trial, conducted in only 14 villages of Xiengkhouang's Kham district and involving search of 1.2km² was too limited to allow its adoption by the sector. A Phase II trial is planned and expected to cover a wider area of Xiengkhouang and possibly Savannakhet with participation of more operators. In the meantime, the United States is interested in exploring with other operators the possibility of testing other predictive models and approaches.⁸²

National mine action standards set a minimum clearance depth of 25cm, which is intended to capture all surface and shallow CMR.⁸³ A study on ordnance depth distribution in Lao PDR, commissioned by the NRA with UNDP support and conducted by FENIX Insight, found that the current default clearance depth of 25cm captures 97% of UXO finds.⁸⁴ Some operators challenge suggestions the default clearance depth can be safely reduced to expedite faster clearance.⁸⁵ Discussions between the NRA continue but have reached no conclusion so far.⁸⁶

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Land release in Lao PDR is mainly conducted by humanitarian mine action organisations including national operators UXO Lao and Centre 523, the Lao People's Army organisation formerly known as Unit 58, and international NGOs HALO, HI, MAG, and NPA. They operated with 2,142 clearance personnel in 259 teams (see Table 5), almost identical to the previous

year. In addition, 33 accredited clearance companies support commercial activities,⁸⁷ such as infrastructure development and extractive industries. As the pace of survey identifying CHAs has far exceeded the rate of area clearance, the main operators in recent years have shifted capacity from survey to clearance.

Table 5: Operational survey and clearance capacities deployed in 2025⁸⁸

Operator	NTS teams/personnel	TS teams/personnel	Clearance Teams/personnel	Machines
Centre 523*	0/0	5/25	10/130	0
HALO*	0/0	5/40	82/656	0
HI**	1/2	0/0	1/14	0

77 Email from Viengdalat Somphet, NRA, 13 August 2026.
78 Interviews with Phoukhieo Chanthasomboun, NRA, Vientiane, 2 May 2018 and 7 February 2019, Geneva.
79 A4ER detailed narrative, p. 20.
80 Email from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, NRA, 24 June 2026.
81 "Final Report – Layered Evidential Assessment and Prioritization, Field Trial, Phase 1," Tetra Tech, June 2026, p. 5.
82 Email from Olivier Bauduin, US Embassy Vientiane, 29 June 2026.
83 2019 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 17.
84 FENIX Insight, "A study on ordnance depth distribution in Lao PDR", July 2023, pp. 8 and 12.
85 Interview with Anousak Phongsa, UXO Lao, and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, in Vientiane, 25 May 2026.
86 Interview with Venephet Philathong, MoFA, Soudachanh Darounphanh, NRA, and Chanmy Keodara, NRA, in Vientiane, 28 May 2026.
87 Email from Viengdalat Somphet, NRA, 13 August 2026.
88 Interview with Lt. Col. Phetsamay Kommasit, Centre 523, in Vientiane, 29 May 2026; emails from Craig Guruwiro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Linh Thi Dieu Nguyen, Deputy Country Director, NPA, 4 May 2026; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, Chief of Programme Office and Public Information, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

Table 5 continued

Operator	NTS teams/personnel	TS teams/personnel	Clearance Teams/personnel	Machines
MAG	6/14	17/137	43/342	2
NPA*	0/0	8/32	42/502	0
UXO Lao	9/36	15/105	81/498	8
Totals	16/52	50/339	259/2,142	10

* TS personnel also conduct NTS ** Clearance personnel also conduct TS

HALO, working in Savannakhet province, stood down around 1,400 staff after receiving a Stop Work order from the United States at the end of January 2025 which halted operations for the next two months. It resumed operations with 1,200 staff, in the process losing some highly trained staff. Operational capacity included the same number of five TS teams but with 40 staff compared with 55 in 2024, and worked with an average of 82 clearance teams with 656 staff, a reduction of seven teams but a loss of 288 personnel from its 2024 operation. It also repurposed two mechanical teams to work on landmine clearance. HALO said that support from PM/ WRA helped it to minimise the impact of the funding freeze that came with the Stop Work order and that with efficiency gains teams' average clearance rates remained the same.⁸⁹

Despite some operational disruption resulting from the Stop Work order (see *Clearance in 2025* below), MAG, and NPA have continued working with much the same capacity as in 2024. HI operates multi-task teams in Houaphanh that conduct TS, clearance or roving EOD tasks. Despite funding uncertainties, it expected to maintain capacity at the same level in 2026 and to bring in underwater survey expertise.⁹⁰ MAG, focused mainly on Xiengkhouang, worked closely with Tetra Tech on the LEAP project which started field trials of a predictive survey methodology in January 2026.⁹¹

A review by NPA Lao PDR of its operations in four southern provinces, Attapeu, Champassak, Saravan and Xekong, led to adoption of a new structure in 2025 giving the international operations manager direct control of provincial offices to which it appointed international technical field managers. It also added a technical field manager position to lead Quality Management and rolled out a comprehensive training package that was developed to strengthen the capacities of operations' supervisors and team leaders. NPA reported the measures that had improved productivity and planned further training in 2026 on risk assessments and other operational methods, such as the effective use of the clearance toolbox, including large loop detectors, and vegetation removal methods.⁹²

UXO Lao is fully operational in six provinces (Attapeu, Houaphanh, Khammouane, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, and Xiengkhouang) but also conducts intermittent operations in Champassak, Saravan, and Xekong. Overall staff numbers

remained largely the same in 2025 but with additional funding from the US UXO Lao deployed seven multi-task teams focused on EOD tasks and 16 vegetation cutting teams, relieving multi-task teams of that task and enabling faster clearance.⁹³

Under a Ministry of Defence decree in 2024, the Army's humanitarian demining Unit 58 merged with the Lao People's Army emergency response capacity to create Centre 523 and embarked on a programme of expansion as part of a strategy to strengthen national ownership and develop core national capacity to address long term needs for management of residual contamination. Centre 523 currently conducts UXO survey and humanitarian clearance in two provinces, Vientiane and Bolikhamxai, with funding provided by KOICA through UNDP. Current capacity includes five 7-person NTS teams, five 5-person EORE teams, and 10 13-person clearance teams which include EOD personnel. It plans to add five more teams, depending on the outcome of discussions with KOICA on a multi-year, \$12 million programme starting in 2027. In the long term Centre 523 aims to have at least 50 teams conducting NTS, TS, EORE, and humanitarian clearance and to have a presence in all 18 provinces. Centre 523 operates its own database from which it uploads operating results to the NRA's IMSMA database.⁹⁴

Completely separate from Centre 523, the Lao People's Army also receives assistance from Russia's International Mine Action Centre which sends 20–30 personnel each year to conduct clearance in Houaphanh province in dry-season months and to provide training to Army engineers. Clearance conducted by the Lao People's Army engineers together with the Russian military personnel is recorded separately from humanitarian clearance conducted to by international NGOs, UXO Lao, and Centre 523 in accordance with national standards. Lao and Russian military personnel reportedly cleared nearly 0.16km² of land between November 2024 and February 2025, destroying 285 items of UXO in Viengxay district of Houaphanh Province.⁹⁵ Army Battalion 579 planned to send 50 personnel to Russia for several weeks' training in 2027.⁹⁶

89 Email from Craig Guwuriro, HALO, 9 May 2026, and interview in Vientiane, 26 May 2026.

90 Email from Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026.

91 Email from Isabelle Urmath, MAG, 27 April 2026.

92 Email from Linh Thi Dieu Nguyen, NPA, 4 May 2026.

93 Email from Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, Chief of Programme Office and Public Information, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026; and interview with Anousak Phongsa, National Programme Director, UXO Lao, and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, in Vientiane, 25 May 2026.

94 Interviews with Lt. Col. Phetsamay Kommasit, Centre 523, in Vientiane, 29 May 2026; and Rupert Leighton, UNDP, in Geneva, 11 March 2026.

95 "Russia, Laos Clear Over 285 Unexploded Ordnance in Past Three Months", *The Lao Times*, 20 February 2025, <http://bit.ly/4np5wv8>.

96 Interview with Lt. Col. Phetsamay Kommasit, Centre 523, in Vientiane, 29 May 2026.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

NRA data showed a total of more than 68km² released in 2025, all of it through clearance.⁹⁷ The total included 65.12km² of agricultural area and 3.45km² of so-called development clearance, slightly higher than the totals in Lao PDR's Article 7 report.⁹⁸ All operations resulted in destruction of a total of 55,808 submunitions. The outcomes represented a 6% drop in the area released and a 22% drop in the number of submunitions destroyed compared with the previous year. More than 60% of the development area clearance was by commercial companies, and Mine Action Review has excluded 1,463,916m² cleared by Milsearch and OUMMA which did not

find any submunitions, leaving a total of **67.32km²** included in Mine Action Review's estimate of 2025 CMR clearance.

All areas of operations show a downturn from the previous year primarily as a result of the stop work order issued in January 2025 by the United States, much the biggest donor to the sector, curtailing work in dry season months which are the UXO sector's most productive part of the year. The NRA reported that in the weeks of full operation productivity increased from clearance of 1.37km² a week in 2024 to 1.44km² a week in 2025.⁹⁹

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2025

Table 6: Land release outputs in 2025 (based on NRA data)¹⁰⁰

Release of cluster munition-contaminated area	Release in 2025 (km ²)	Comments
Clearance	*67.32	NRA data excluding some commercial clearance not assessed as clearance of cluster munition-contaminated area.
Non-Technical Survey	0	NTS and TS focus on creation of CHAs as part of CMRS.
Technical Survey	0	
Destruction of submunitions during clearance, survey, and spot tasks		Comments
Submunitions destroyed	55,808	NRA data. Includes 15,206 submunitions destroyed during spot tasks and 7,443 during TS.

* Mine Action Review estimate which excludes commercial clearance in areas with few or no submunitions.

SURVEY IN 2025

Survey continued across 12 provinces¹⁰¹ of Lao PDR in 2025, and NRA data provided to Mine Action Review showed it confirmed 178km² (see Table 7). Of this, nearly 60% was by MAG in Xiengkhouang.¹⁰² The area confirmed as CMR contaminated in 2025 was little over half that confirmed in 2024, a downturn only partly due to the stop work order. The NRA attributed the downturn particularly to deliberate winding down of CMRS in six of the most contaminated

provinces. These include five southern provinces¹⁰³ where proactive village-to-village survey has been completed and operators are conducting survey on a reactive basis, and the northern province of Xiengkhouang with the highest density contamination, where MAG has found CMRS less effective in defining CHAs. HALO, however, noted that better application of survey methodologies saw area confirmed as contaminated rise from 27% in 2024 to 67% in 2025.

Table 7: Technical survey of cluster munition-contaminated area in 2025 (based on NRA data)¹⁰⁴

Operator	Area surveyed (m ²)	Area confirmed (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed	Mines destroyed
Centre 523	8,290,000	3,843,810	240	14	1
HALO	3,295,000	2,990,587	574	60	0
HI	780,000	612,500	114	23	0
MAG	107,247,857	106,001,824	556	25	1
NPA	5,313,500	2,213,857	227	16	0
UXO Lao	82,928,000	62,167,296	5,732	1,014	1
Totals	207,854,357	177,829,874	7,443	1,152	2

97 Clearance in 2025, NRA national database, 21 May 2026.
98 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2025), Form F, shows total clearance of 66,431,920m², including 65,307,204m² of agricultural area and 1,124,716m² of development area.
99 Email from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, NRA, 24 June 2026.
100 Data from NRA national database, 21 May 2026.
101 Xiengkhouang, Houaphanh, Luang Prabang, Bolikhamxai, Khammouane, Savannakhet, Champasak, Saravan, Xekong, Attapeu, Phongsaly, and Vientiane Province.
102 See also CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2025), Form A.
103 Attapeu, Champasak, Savannakhet, Saravan, and Sekong.
104 Data from NRA national database, 21 May 2026.

CLEARANCE IN 2025

The NRA data shows total clearance of 68.79km² in 2025 included 3.45km² of clearance of development area, often involving land requiring verification as uncontaminated for construction and development projects and with few or no submunitions or other items of UXO. More than 60% of the

development area clearance was by commercial companies, and Mine Action Review has excluded 1,463,916m² cleared by Milsearch and OUMMA which did not find any submunitions, leaving a total of 67.32km² included in Mine Action Review's estimate of 2025 CMR clearance.

Table 8: CMR clearance by province 2025, including all clearance (agricultural, development, and commercial tasks) (NRA data)¹⁰⁵

Province	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Submunitions destroyed in spot tasks	Other UXO destroyed	AP mines destroyed
Attapeu	7,337,573	4,201	1,077	55	0
Bolikhamxai	2,101,688	964	325	447	0
Champasak	2,875,583	1,926	900	217	0
Houaphanh	2,166,080	1,485	721	950	0
Khammouane	4,799,400	1,825	2,400	578	0
Luangprabang	989,402	753	791	151	0
Oudomxay	395,441	0	0	3	0
Saravan	6,281,545	4,571	1,242	685	0
Savannakhet	19,787,590	5,699	2,470	8,111	1
Vientiane	477,360	168	93	113	0
Vientiane capital	26,047	0	0	9	0
Xekong	4,529,283	3,864	823	360	0
Xaysomboun	1,051,081	0	27	0	0
Xiengkhouang	15,967,630	7,703	4,337	4,015	0
Totals	68,785,703	33,159	15,206	15,694	1

Clearance results reflect the effects of the US stop-work order but had different impacts on different operators. HALO and NPA, which lost some two months of work, both cleared 18% less area. HALO noted it returned to full capacity only in the second half of the year.¹⁰⁶ MAG, working predominantly in Xiengkhouang, Lao PDR's most contaminated province, cleared 38% less area in 2025. After suspending the work of 37 clearance teams, MAG had to issue redundancy notices to some 900 staff and when work resumed it had to hire, train and deploy replacements for some 200 mainly field staff who took redundancy. It only returned to full operational capacity in August.¹⁰⁷

UXO Lao, working in nine provinces, was able to clear 11% more land in 2025 than the previous year after adding capacity funded by the US, although it destroyed 11% fewer submunitions in clearance operations and 7% less overall. Two provinces, Xiengkhouang and Savannakhet, accounted for more than 40% of the area cleared. UXO Lao attributed higher area clearance to adding dedicated vegetation cutting teams, which accelerated the work of multi-task teams. In 2026, free of funding interruptions, UXO Lao expected to clear more than 32km².¹⁰⁸

Table 9: CMR clearance reported by operator in 2025 (operator data)¹⁰⁹

Operator	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Submunitions destroyed in spot tasks	UXO destroyed	AP mines destroyed
HALO	10,907,915	3,026	2,134	5,153	53
HI	780,000	612,500	114	23	0
MAG	10,471,115	1,610	2,679	501	0
NPA	9,191,711	6,419	747	74	0
UXO Lao	29,700,151	19,090	9,490	6,736	0
Totals	61,050,892	642,645	15,164	12,487	53

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Email from Nguyen Linh, NPA, 4 May 2026; and interview with Per Håkon Breivik and Nguyen Linh, NPA, in Vientiane, 25 May 2026.

¹⁰⁷ Email from Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; interview with Eli Mechanic and Isabelle Urumath, in Vientiane, 26 May 2026.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Anousak Phongsa, UXO Lao, and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, in Vientiane, 25 May 2026.

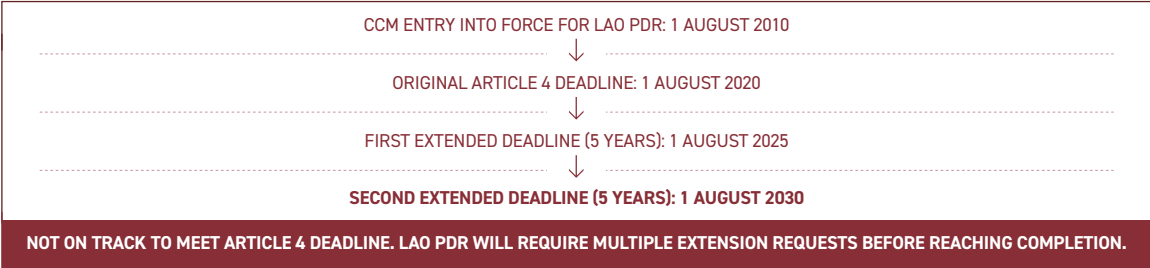
¹⁰⁹ Emails from Craig Guruwiro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Reinier Carabain, HI, 27 April 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Linh Thi Dieu Nguyen, NPA, 4 May 2026; and Vilaivanh Thongmanivong, UXO Lao, 27 April 2026.

Operators also reported that 146 tasks covering 9.5km² contained no submunitions (see Table 10), 43% more than in 2024 and representing more than 15% of the total area cleared in 2025. This raises questions about the continuing accuracy of data from years-old survey. HALO noted, though, that other UXO were cleared from every task.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, CHAs can sit in the database for years before clearance, during which time land use can change and local inhabitants may remove items. MAG also speculated that submunitions were cleared in the course of intensive TS on tasks in Xiengkhouang leaving no additional submunitions, only other UXO items, for subsequent clearance.¹¹¹

Table 10: Area cleared in 2025 in which no submunitions were found (operator data)¹¹²

Operator	No. of tasks	Area cleared (m ²)
HALO	119	4,596,401
MAG	144	4,313,355
NPA	13	558,953
Totals	276	9,468,709

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 4 of the CCM, Lao PDR is required to destroy all CMR in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 August 2030. Due to the massive extent of CMR contamination, and based on current capacity and output, Lao PDR will require multiple extensions to fulfil its Article 4 obligations.

After a 27% rise in 2024, achieved with the help of increased capacity and US funding, clearance slipped back 6% in 2025, partly because of interruptions in US support. The clearance result, however, still surpassed the annual 65km² clearance target set by Lao PDR’s Article 4 extension request. NRA data shows clearance totalling around 28.4km² in the first five months of 2026, higher than in the same period of 2025, suggesting it is on track to meet or surpass the target this year.¹¹³

Lao PDR’s results also underscore some of the challenges and policy choices faced as it seeks to maximise the impact of limited resources on its massive CMR contamination. These include balancing the dual needs for survey and area clearance. The pace of survey has slowed. In 2025 it produced additional CHAs covering just under 178km², the lowest figure in the last five years and little more than half the area found in 2024, but that was still nearly three times the area cleared.¹¹⁴

Since MoFA took over chairmanship of the NRA’s interministerial board in 2023 it has moved, with the support of UNDP initiatives, to proactively strengthen UXO sector performance, streamlining a previously cumbersome MoU process, overhauling and comprehensively upgrading information management, releasing national standards aligned with IMAS, including a long-awaited prioritisation

matrix, and supporting the expansion of humanitarian mine action by the Lao Armed Forces’ Centre 523. Lao PDR’s Article 4 extension request explicitly affirms “a willingness to experiment with new ideas and technologies which may accelerate both the rate and ease of clearance, but also developmental outcomes.”¹¹⁵

Key among these is the search for a more flexible approach to land release. CMRS has helped to target clearance and meet concerns on liability but restricting clearance to CHA’s identified through NTS and TS does not exploit the potential of all available data sources. Initial results from US-funded testing of a Tetra Tech-developed predictive mapping tool (LEAP) show its potential in Xiengkhouang for safe but also faster and more cost-efficient clearance although requiring more extensive trials. Tetra Tech observes it can help Lao PDR accurately determine the extent of contamination and support its CCM reporting.¹¹⁶

Table 11: Five-year summary of CMR clearance*

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2025	67.32
2024	71.70
2023	56.67
2022	50.72
2021	46.68
Total	293.09

* Excluding most commercial clearance.

110 Interview with Craig Guruwiro, HALO, 26 May 2026.
111 Interviews with Eli Mechanic and Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 26 May 2026.
112 Emails from Craig Guruwiro, HALO, 9 May 2026; Isabelle Urumath, MAG, 27 April 2026; Linh Thi Dieu Nguyen, NPA, 4 May 2026.
113 Data from NRA database, 30 June 2026.
114 Email from Chanjaleurn Rasphone, NRA, 24 June 2026 and NRA data reported by Mine Action Review in *Clearing Cluster Munitions Remnants* reports for 2021–25.
115 2024 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Part B, Detailed Narrative, p. 23.
116 “Final Report – Layered Evidential Assessment and Prioritization, Field Trial, Phase 1,” Tetra Tech, June 2026, p. 3.

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

The massive extent of Lao PDR's cluster munition and other UXO contamination ensures completion of its Article 4 obligations and the need for residual contamination management are still a distant requirement. The 2024 Article 4 deadline extension request, however, states the government is committed to working with national capacities to develop long-term solutions to residual contamination and it is already working on expanding the Army's Centre 523, formerly known as Unit 58, with the explicit purpose of building core national capacity with a mandate to address long-term residual contamination and national disaster risk management. The government has identified a site and is looking for funding to build a training centre.¹¹⁷

117 Interview with Lt. Col. Phetsamay Kommasit, Centre 523, in Vientiane, 29 May 2026.