

Concept Paper

1. Name of Agency: Mines Victims and Clearance Trust (MiVAC)
Name of Project: Poverty reduction and village development in Ban Xai / Hinmu Puen
Location/Country: Lao PDR
Duration: 12 months from October 2011 to September 2012
Budget: 100,000.00\$

2. DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

3. BACKGROUND:

The mivac trust is an initiative of Australian Vietnam veterans who cleared landmines in Vietnam during the Vietnam war and have seen firsthand the devastation caused by these indiscriminate weapons. Membership of the trust has broadened to include ex-service personnel from other conflicts, humanitarian aid workers, members of peacekeeping forces and many concerned civilians.

MiVAC has operated in SE Asia for 9 years to clear mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) and has embraced the need to marry mine clearance with development assistance to the communities affected by mines or UXO.

In Laos MiVAC has been working in the Xieng Khouang province of Lao PDR (amongst other provinces) for the last two years clearing minefields and liaising with village and provincial heads in an area located at the western end of the Plain of Jars, which was the site of much fighting during the Secret War of Laos from 1960 to 1975. Following the clearance of Khangpunhor 1 and Khangpunhor 2 minefields, paid by MiVAC, in October 2010, MiVAC carried out an extensive needs survey in the villages adjacent to these mine fields and MiVAC is determined to address the extreme poverty and development needs found at Ban Xai and its neighbouring village of Hinmu Pueng.

The 700 inhabitants of Ban Xai and Hinmu Pueng have no clean water sources, no sanitation, no power, a school with a dirt floor, and the villagers are facing gross food-insecurity most of the year. Most of the inhabitants are below the Laos government poverty measure of 50 cents per day and many families live on as little as \$30 per year with a food intake of less than 2100 calories per day. The problems are compounded by the inflow of Hmong relocated by the Lao government programmes. MiVAC proposes a one-year pilot project to start addressing these needs in these and similar villages along Route 7 in Xieng Khouang Province with the following Major Objectives:

4. MAJOR OBJECTIVES

- TO ENSURE CLEAN POTABLE WATER IN BOTH BAN XAI (500 INHABITANTS) AND HINMU PUENG (200 INHABITANTS)
To introduce proper sanitation methods to prevent disease
To construct five biodigesters to provide methane gas, develop market gardens & income from animals
To refurbish the school in Hinmu Pueng and provide assistance so all children can attend school
To introduce health programmes and train a village nurse/midwife to attend births.
To introduce a micro-credit scheme for impoverished women
To develop income generation schemes with District cooperation
To assist in implementing the government's agricultural extension programme
- TO CONSTRUCT A TRAINING FACILITY TO EXHIBIT BIODIGESTERS, TEACH UXO AWARENESS, PROVIDE A GAS FIRED KITCHEN, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, CLINIC, AGRICULTURAL AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY TRAINING, SANITATION EDUCATION, MEETING PLACE, AND ACCOMMODATION.

5. MAJOR ACTIVITY OUTPUTS & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

PROJECT MISSION: TO SECURE A SAFE AND HEALTHY LIVING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT TO ENABLE PEOPLE TO PROGRESS THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION, FARMING, INCOME GENERATION AND GENDER EQUALITY.

ACTIVITY OUTPUTS:	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:
POTABLE WATER SYSTEMS INCLUDING WELLS AND GRAVITY SYSTEMS WHERE APPROPRIATE)	ALL INHABITANTS HAVE ACCESS TO SAFE TESTED WATER WITHIN 20 MINUTES. RECENTLY A MiVAC MEMBER PASSING THROUGH BAN XAI REPORTED THAT BOTH WELLS AND RIVER WERE DRY. A ROTARIAN FUNDED HYDROLOGIST WILL VISIT THE SITE IN JUNE TO INVESTIGATE WATER TABLE LEVELS AND A RELIABLE YEAR-ROUND WATER SOURCE.
HEALTH, HYGIENE, AND SANITATION EDUCATION	DECREASE U5C MORTALITY FROM 6.1% TO 5.5%, PNEUMONIA PREVALENCE FROM 27% TO 25% AND DIARRHOEA PREVALENCE FROM 7% TO 6% To lift attendance at birth from 11% to 50% and of the poorest quintile from 3% to 50%. Source WHO.

POWER TO VILLAGES	Completion of 5 working biodigesters, each with a capacity of 20 to 25 cubic metres, in collaboration with SNV. A cattle Pass-On scheme will be introduced and income generation from market gardens. These will serve as a model to encourage other villages and villagers to be involved.
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EDUCATION	All children in Hinmu Pueng attending primary school with access to adequate water and sanitation facilities in accordance with Lao PDR government standards.
INCOME GENERATION	Implementation of new enterprises – building of biodigesters, animal husbandry, brick making, masonry business, vegetable gardens and marketing of farm produce.
MICRO CREDIT SCHEME	Micro-credit to single mothers marginalised by poverty to assist in establishing textile weaving, small scale farm production and trading enterprises. Repayment and relending of all loans within twelve months.
AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK EXTENSION	LIAISE WITH DISTRICT OFFICIALS TO IMPLEMENT PROGRESSIVE FARMING TECHNIQUES THAT WILL DIVERSIFY CROPS, IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY, INCREASE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION AND BROADEN MARKETING CHANNELS.
COMMUNAL TRAINING FACILITY	CONSTRUCTION OF EXHIBITION BUILDING ON VILLAGE LAND. THIS BUILDING WILL BE A FACILITY FOR BRIEFING, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, HEALTH PROGRAMMES AND TOURISM. THIS FACILITY WILL REVERT TO A VILLAGE COMMITTEE ON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT.

6. BENEFICIARIES

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES WILL BE 500 VILLAGERS WHO INHABIT BAN XAI AND 200 VILLAGERS WHO INHABIT HINMU PUENG. ALL VILLAGERS WILL BENEFIT DIRECTLY FROM ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT, BUT THE INCOME GENERATION AND MICRO-CREDIT ELEMENTS WILL BE TARGETED AT SINGLE WOMEN WITH CHILDREN.

Additionally, it is envisaged that some income generation projects such as brick making or market gardens or micro-credit programs will generate funds to assist villagers to help each other with the production of pigs and cattle with a Pass-On scheme. This will enable other villagers to benefit from and participate in successful breeding programmes and assist in providing the raw material for further biodigesters and market gardens. Furthermore, from our previous experience at Kohai, more people will be attracted to live at both villages and to give up inefficient and environmentally unsustainable swidden cultivation for more diverse and productive farming methods.

This project is intended as a model project and it is anticipated that lessons will be learned in its implementation that will be evaluated, analysed and reviewed for incorporation into further projects either along Route 7 in Xieng Khouang province or south in Saysomboun and Thatom Districts. These latter regions are the home of Hmong who is the most disadvantaged minority group in Laos for historical reasons.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

IN THE PAST MiVAC HAS FOCUSED ON UXO CLEARANCE. HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE TO HAVING SECURITY VILLAGERS HAVE SOUGHT FURTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THEREFORE WE ARE SEEKING TO INTEGRATE CLEARANCE WITH DEVELOPMENT THAT EMPOWERS VILLAGERS IN THE LONG TERM THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING SO THAT PEOPLE CAN IMPROVE THEIR FOOD SECURITY, INCOMES, HEALTH, EDUCATION, SAFETY, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT.

Projects elements involving construction such as biodigesters will utilise materials purchased locally. The building and education project involving biodigesters will be done in liaison with the NGO SNV Netherlands Development Agency. SNV will employ locals and have the guidance of MiVAC volunteers to ensure skills transference. As villagers learn the skills to construct and others express the need for biodigesters it is planned that a local industry be set up. With this development there will be an increase in animals and market gardens, clean water and consequently increased health and a decrease in swidden agriculture.

MiVAC will employ a local manager and one local at each of the two villages to be the on-site representative who will ensure ongoing intensive development assistance and monitoring. MiVAC volunteers, approximately twelve over the duration of the project, will pay their own transport and accommodation costs. MiVAC has identified two ex patriot ex military personnel who live in Vientiane. They will be joining MiVAC and have volunteered their services free of charge.

MiVAC has made an application to form a representative NGO in Laos which will be its operating entity. In the shorter term MiVAC will have a representative NFP company. MiVAC will partner with indigenous NGO's where possible, approved foreign NGO's that have specialised expertise (and accreditation) or directly with locals where possible. Initially the MOUs sought will be with Village and District level. Concurrently there will be MOUs done with Province and the MoFA for the intention is to serve the villages along Route 7 in Xieng Khouang in the coming years.

