



Mr Bounpheng Sisawath and Mr Eli Mechanic on August 30 sign an MOU to implement Freeman Foundation and Restoration Laos funding for UXO operations in Khammuan province.

## US foundations commit over US\$800,000 to MAG's UXO clearance in Khammuan

Times Reporters

The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) has been awarded more than US\$800,000 in funding from the Freeman Foundation and Michael Ambler's foundation, Restoration Laos, to continue the implementation of UXO clearance and explosive ordnance disposal in Khammuan province in 2024-2025.

UXO contamination remains a serious threat in Laos, especially in Khammuan province, which was heavily bombed during the Indochina War.

The region is still littered with the remnants of conflict, with significant numbers of unexploded bombs posing dangers to local communities. Many residents rely on agriculture for their livelihood, making the presence of UXO a critical barrier to safe land use and economic development.

On August 30, the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO Sector (NRA), under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and MAG signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Vientiane.

The ceremony was attended by the NRA Acting Director General, Mr Bounpheng Sisawath, MAG Country Director Mr Eli Mechanic, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and provincial and district authorities from Khammuan province.

With this new funding from the Freeman Foundation and Restoration Laos, MAG will clear more than 500,000 square metres of contaminated land in Boulapha district,

Khammuan province. The grant will also support an explosive ordnance disposal roving team to remove and destroy items of UXO found by local communities across the district.

MAG Country Director Mr Eli Mechanic said "As we celebrate three decades of work in Laos, MAG remains committed to creating a safer environment for communities. Our efforts allow people to farm, build homes and schools, and access essential resources without fear. Through both clearance activities and risk education, we're working towards a future where the people of Laos can live free from the threat of unexploded bombs."

As MAG marks its 30th year of operations in Laos, the organisation has cleared over 127 million square

metres of land, conducted more than 35,000 explosive ordnance disposal spot tasks, and removed and destroyed over 326,000 UXO items.

These efforts have directly benefited nearly 1,100,000 men, women, girls, and boys. Additionally, MAG has provided over 4,360 risk education sessions to local communities, reaching close to 150,000 individuals.

The generous funding provided by the Freeman Foundation and Restoration Laos will allow MAG to continue its vital work of UXO clearance and explosive ordnance risk education in rural areas of Khammuan province, enabling communities to use the land without fear of being harmed or killed by unexploded ordnance.

## Laos gets lessons in agricultural export marketing

Times Reporters

Agricultural producers and processors are looking to gain a foothold in more overseas markets and are learning about effective ways to export their products.

To boost their understanding of market requirements, a seminar titled "Pathways to non-traditional market frontiers and an agri-processing product export roadmap" was organised in Vientiane on Friday.

The talk was co-chaired by the Deputy Director General of the Trade Promotion and Handicraft Department, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Mr Dala Indavong, and Assistant Director of Research and Policy Advocacy at the ASEAN-Japan Centre, Mr Ishida Yasushi.

Attendees included lecturers and experts from the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; the Vietnam Trade Promotion Department (Vietrade); Thai Department of International Trade Promotion; staff from the National University of Laos; public sector representatives and business operators.

Speaking at the seminar, Mr Dala said the agri-processing product export roadmap opened up opportunities for Lao



Mr Dala Indavong (left) and Mr Yasushi Ishida co-chair a seminar on the marketing of processed agricultural produce.

farmers and businesses to access more regional and global markets.

The function of the roadmap is to increase product value and generate more income for businesses.

The seminar continued the work of the ASEAN-Japan Centre in collaboration with ASEAN countries which, in Laos, centres on increasing small- and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) export markets, including Japan. Speakers discussed their successful experiences in the field.

Mr Dala said "The knowledge gained here today will be used to improve policies that enable Lao businesses to maximise the benefits of their operations and make a strong contribution to socio-economic development."

"The seminar will address the challenges, as well as the country's preparedness and opportunities, when Laos graduates from Least Developed Country status in 2026. In addition, an agri-processing export programme developed by experienced experts will be discussed."

The agri-processing product export roadmap is another step in promoting Lao products and exports while providing more opportunities for Lao businesses to fully contribute to the development of various sectors and stimulate the economy.

It is expected to open up new markets, stimulate new ideas and innovations, and align with new policies on modern industrial production capacity for diversified exports and gradual economic transformation.

## Govt, private sector team up to prepare next NSEDP

Times Reporters

Government planners and members of the Lao Chamber of Commerce and Industry have held talks on the best course of action to be followed under the next National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for 2026-2030.

Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Mrs Phonevanh Outhavong and the Chamber's Vice President Dr Khamsen Sisavong chaired a meeting on Friday to gather insights and feedback from various stakeholders on a draft development plan.

Some 53 representatives



Mrs Phonevanh Outhavong and Dr Khamsen Sisavong co-chair the meeting on Friday.

of government bodies and the private sector attended the meeting.

Talks centred on the need for broad participation to ensure the plan aligns with

the country's current and projected circumstances and effectively promotes sustainable economic growth and social development.

Speaking at the meeting, Mrs Phonevanh said the participation of all parties, including the private sector, was very important to ensure a successful and realistic fifth NSEDP.

Investment by Laos' private sector and foreign direct investment accounted for the largest percentage of the four sources of funding for the implementation of the 2021-25 development plan, representing 50 to 60 percent of total funding.

The deputy minister urged all private sector entities to share in the next NSEDP, saying it is a major pillar in the success of the government's development

vision to 2030.

The government's main aim is to create an independent and self-reliant economy, in line with the resolution adopted by the 12th Party Congress to ensure that economic and financial circumstances, production and services, and state administration are sufficiently strong to form the foundations of a solid and successful economy.

During the meeting, participants contributed comments for the revision of the draft of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2026-2030.

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