



Restoring the Environment and
Neutralizing the Effects of the War

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Project RENEW

Mine Action Strategy 2010-2015

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1. Introduction

In an effort to help address the consequence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) - cluster munitions, bombs, mines and other explosive ordnance - in Quang Tri Province, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DoFA) and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) launched Project RENEW in August 2001. Project RENEW was tasked with developing a comprehensive, integrated management model to deal with ERW issues and the humanitarian impact of this problem. Under authorization from the Prime Minister and the Provincial People's Committee, Project RENEW is currently operating in three districts: Hai Lang, Trieu Phong and Cam Lo.

Project RENEW has been considered one of the most successful mine action models since international NGOs first became involved in addressing the ERW problem in 1996. Staffed with Vietnamese personnel who live in Quang Tri, this approach has created local, professional capacity to respond to the challenges of ERW over the long term. In the context of the global economic recession, this approach has proven to be cost-effective and sustainable. It is based on "leveraging" existing resources, using institutions that are part of the community and already fully engaged with local people. Since its beginnings, Project RENEW has developed these strong working partnerships with central and local authorities and community residents to carry out its mission. The local involvement in project implementation and management is a driving force behind the effectiveness of project activities, and has been crucial to the project's success.

In the early stages, Project RENEW focused much effort toward providing mine risk education (MRE) to children and adults through a partnership with the Youth Union in two districts, Hai Lang and Trieu Phong. These grassroots MRE safety programs contributed to a measurable reduction in ERW incidents in these two districts, from 45 accidents in the period 1996-2001 to only seven in the period 2002-2008. According to a survey conducted by Project RENEW and UNICEF in 2006, there was widespread recognition among local people of the warning signs which indicate dangerous areas of contamination.

In parallel with the MRE program, Project RENEW began providing assistance to families injured by ERW accidents - emergency medical treatment, prosthetic limbs and rehabilitation, and opportunities for ERW survivors to earn independent incomes and become economically independent. Over 1,000 ERW survivors have been supported through these initiatives.

In the 2007-2008 period, Project RENEW expanded operations into a third district, Cam Lo. This was in response to increasing demands from local residents and government officials for clearance of dangerous ERW. To assist in meeting these challenges, Project RENEW established partnerships with international mine action organizations including Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and Golden West Humanitarian Foundation (GWHF). These organizations have been providing technical assistance and training, and supporting deployment of additional teams, to meet the needs of mobile EOD response and ERW clearance in contaminated areas.

During this period, over 15 hectares of land were cleaned up and handed over to Trieu Phong District authorities for development activities. The UXO Bin system established at 26 scrap metal dealers in Quang Tri Town, Trieu Phong and Hai Lang Districts, is a public safety initiative maintained to help reduce the potential contact of children and adults to ERW. Since establishment of the system, over 2,500 ERW have been collected and destroyed from scrap metal yards. While it is impossible to prohibit the collection and trade of wartime scrap metal, scrap dealers have improved their awareness and shifted toward safer behaviors thanks to warnings and safety instructions provided to them as well as availability of the UXO Bins and prompt response from Project RENEW. In Cam Lo District, the EOD Quick Response Team has conducted over 1,000 EOD responses, destroying 3,000 items of ERW, of which one third were cluster munitions.

After eight years of operation, the Project's activities have contributed to a measurable reduction in accidents and casualties, and to improvements in the lives of survivors. Currently, under a single management structure within the Project RENEW Coordination Office, mine action efforts are comprised of the following components:

- Mine Risk Education;
- Victim Assistance;
- Clearance; and
- Advocacy.

Recently released was a final report of ERW and landmine contamination based on results of an impact assessment and rapid technical response project known as the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS), conducted by the Technology Centre for Bomb and Mine Disposal (BOMICEN) of the Ministry of Defense, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF). The survey results indicated that out of six provinces in central Vietnam, Quang Tri Province has the highest levels of ERW contamination: approximately 83.8% of the total land area is affected by ERW. These and many other findings indicate that more than three decades after the war ended, ERW still remain a major threat to the safety of local people in their daily activities, and an obstacle to socio-economic development.

The period from 2006 until the end of 2008 saw dramatic changes in global action leading toward a comprehensive prohibition on the use of cluster munitions. The most significant achievement was the signing by nearly 100 countries of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo. Vietnam, one of the world's most heavily affected countries, is expected to make a decision soon about its participation in the Convention. As a signatory to the treaty, Vietnam would become eligible for significantly more resources and international support to help the country clean up contaminated areas and to assist ERW survivors.

In this context, it is important for Project RENEW to define a strategy for its mine action efforts to address the ERW problem and its humanitarian impact over the long term, to remove humanitarian obstacles to the safety of people's livelihood and local development caused by ERW, and to make better use of scarce global resources in support of mine action.

2. Mission Statement

Long-term objective: *That cluster munitions, other ERW and landmines pose no identifiable risk to people and are no longer an obstacle to development in Vietnam.*

Immediate objective: *That Project RENEW seeks to reduce and eventually eliminate accidents, injuries and deaths caused by ERW in Quang Tri Province.*

Project RENEW will, in collaboration with its partners, concentrate available resources on the following:

- Removing the physical risk and thus reducing the possibility of harm caused by ERW/cluster munitions;
- Releasing more safe land for humanitarian development purposes.
- Saving lives of victims and simultaneously creating sustainable recovery opportunities for survivors.
- Supporting national and provincial efforts to better coordinate domestic resources and international support; and
- Collaborating with relevant stakeholders, when appropriate, in promoting Vietnam's participation in the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

3. Strategic goals

Strategic Goal 1 – Remove the risk of death or injury facing the local population through safe removal and destruction of ERW

To be achieved by:

- Continued deployment and logistical support of two EOD mobile quick response teams, trained to IMAS Level II standards.
- Continued deployment of 01 team for BAC¹ and Clearance tasks
- Continued support and technical assistance provided by NPA and GWHF and other international organizations when appropriate.
- Accessing data from BOMICEN LIS to set priorities and determine areas to be scheduled for cleanup.

Project RENEW now has developed complementary and technically compatible teams of qualified and capable EOD operators, trained and fully equipped to undertake ERW clearance tasks in response to public safety needs and development programs initiated by local authorities.

This capacity has been demonstrated during the past two years through static clearance and mobile EOD quick response activities conducted in Trieu Phong and Cam Lo Districts, with partners GWHF and NPA. Project RENEW will continue EOD and clearance operations in response to urgent calls to address the immediate threat from ERW in contaminated areas already surveyed and marked by the LIS from BOMICEN/VBMAC (Vietnam Bomb and Mine Action Center) when requested and provided with information. Such continuation will not only ensure that there will be no interruption to the Project's humanitarian demining mission but also that timely removal of ERW will bring relief from the threat facing children and adults in affected communities, releasing more land for development and agricultural production.

Strategic Goal 2 – Reduce the risk of ERW accidents among children and adults through education, information, and public awareness in support of EOD quick response

To be achieved by:

- Disseminating safety information through education and public advocacy using media, schools, community associations, and youth organizations.
- Integrating community reporting networks with EOD team capacity to assure timely identification and removal of ERW from around people's homes, gardens, and neighborhoods.
- Maintaining high degree of knowledge, training, and professionalism among Youth Union volunteers who work at the grassroots level and support the community-based ERW information reporting network.

¹ BAC or "Battle Area Clearance" is a term used to describe conventional operations in which an ordnance team clears ERW from a defined and marked area of ground, such as a former battle site or location of a former military base – as opposed to mobile response team, which is an urgent and flexible deployment to a site when ordnance is found and reported near someone's house or garden, for example.

Project RENEW launched conventional Mine Risk Education programs in Quang Tri Province beginning in 2001. An urgent need to reduce accidents, deaths and injuries resulting from careless behavior or lack of knowledge of the dangers of ERW prompted the introduction of a number of initiatives that had been carried out successfully in other countries. These included public media campaigns – television, radio, newspapers, billboards – as well as community meetings, parades, poster art contests for school children, music and stage performances, and classroom instruction using trained volunteers from the Youth Union. Although it is impossible to measure precisely the impact of these efforts apart from other mine action efforts, the number of accidents, deaths, and injuries in the project areas served by RENEW has been reduced significantly since the work began in 2001.

Project RENEW has established a new Community Reporting Network (CRN) with the partnership of grassroots Youth Union officers as its core. The CRN is an integrated collaboration model that combines community participation in ERW safety at the grassroots level with a strong mechanism for reporting findings of ERW that constitute a danger to local residents. Launched as a pilot project in Cam Lo District in 2009 and managed by the Youth Union, the Community Reporting Network has raised the level of public safety awareness while actively gathering and reporting ERW information quickly and accurately to EOD Quick Response Teams which have been trained and organized by NPA. These teams then respond on a priority basis to the sites where ERW have been reported, with appropriate and safe interventions, to neutralize live threats to the community.

The benefits are three-fold: (1) local residents are actively engaged in their own community safety initiative, protecting their families and neighbors from harm; (2) ordnance which might otherwise remain unidentified or unreported is made known to the EOD teams on a timely basis so they can respond according to the level of urgency; and (3) the danger to the community is quickly, safely, and permanently removed, so it no longer is a threat to the lives and safety of local people.

Project RENEW will continue to collaborate closely with local partners, donors and technical partners to evaluate this model of safety intervention. If results and conclusions continue to be encouraging, action plans will be developed for expansion of MRE/ERW integrated activities into other contaminated areas.

Finally, Project RENEW will continue with collection and disposal of ERW from UXO Bins (“UXO” from the often used term for “unexploded ordnance”) established at 26 scrap dealers in three districts of Hai Lang, Trieu Phong and Quang Tri Town. This effort will be evaluated in terms of public safety impact, and the positive or negative aspects of participation by scrap metal collectors and dealers in the handling of ERW. Results of the study of scrap metal collectors conducted in 2008 by Project RENEW, NPA, and UNICEF will also be reviewed for lessons learned and policy guidance. Our goal is to reduce accidents by 50% among scrap metal collectors in the RENEW project area.

Strategic Goal 3 – Restore lives and livelihoods of ERW victims through assistance programs for disabled families and individuals in Quang Tri Province.

To be achieved by:

- Maintaining the mobile Prosthetics and Orthotics outreach unit to provide rehabilitation services for victims residing in rural and isolated areas.
- Seeking more resources to expand the micro-credit program for women from ERW-affected families
- Expanding the mushroom production model for ERW survivors to bring greater employment opportunities and increased revenues in support of clearance operations.

Despite over 1,000 ERW victims and people with disabilities having been provided with medical, economic, and awareness assistance, the number of ERW survivors in need of assistance, upwards of 3,000 people, has been beyond the support capacity of Project RENEW to serve adequately because of insufficient financial resources. Thus, in the period of this strategic plan, in addition to seeking more resources to sustain current and ongoing survivor assistance activities, Project RENEW

will cooperate with the Humpty Dumpty Institute of New York and other donors to expand an existing mushroom production program which provides stable livelihoods to victim families. The expansion plan will introduce better farming methods, marketing support, processing, and management training to enhance revenues and incomes for beneficiary families – and hopefully with adequate profits to fund Project RENEW clearance activities.

Strategic Goal 4 – Support post-clearance reconstruction, recovery, and development opportunities

To be achieved by:

- Raising funds to support public works projects such as clinics, community centers, and schools in areas where ERW have been cleaned up.

For a poor province like Quang Tri, there is a pressing demand for support to post-clearance development, which Project RENEW defines as one of its key action priorities. Depending on the availability of funding and other resources, Project RENEW will help local government build public welfare works in response to the most immediate community needs.

Strategic Goal 5 – Improve provincial Information Management Systems

To be achieved by:

- Maintaining and upgrading an existing database in the Project RENEW Coordination Office to meet international standards for tracking and analyzing inputs from existing mine action components.
- Serving as a model to facilitate implementation of a national system for Information Management supported by NPA, BOMICEN, and VBMAC.

With the newly-established VBMAC, coordination of mine action at the central level should be significantly and rapidly improved. To make better use of increasingly scarce resources available for mine action work, Project RENEW advocates the establishment of a “mine action coordination centre” at the provincial level. To successfully manage mine action programs and allocate resources for most productive and effective mine action results, an accurate and accessible database of information related to the ERW situation in the province is essential. Project RENEW is committed to completing construction of its existing database, finalizing standard operational procedures and readying the system to share with and support development of the province’s mine action management capacity, to be used as a tool for effective strategy and resource utilization being constructed under the facilitation of DoFA, as authorized by the Province People’s Committee.

Strategic Goal 6 – Promote participation in the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

To be achieved by:

- Continuing to participate in international and national events related to cluster munitions.
- Exploring partnerships with mine action organizations and Vietnamese government agencies when appropriate, to disseminate information, discuss and educate, and build public awareness leading to implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

4. Capacity Building and Management

Project RENEW will seek to improve its own management capacity and staff capabilities, focusing on the following:

Institutional organization and human resources development

The highest levels of staff competence and professionalism, experience, and judgment among Project staff are key to ensuring proactive, flexible, creative and sustainable management and implementation of mine action programs. Therefore, Project RENEW strongly advocates continuation and expansion of the operational model we have developed: Vietnamese staff take the initiative in policy making and management; receiving international standard technical assistance from project partners when requested.

Management training will be provided to improve capacity of the staff with strong emphasis on enhanced project management skills. EOD team capacity will continue to be upgraded and enhanced through Project RENEW's technical cooperation with these and other international mine action organizations. EOD operators/BAC searchers will be certified by international partners to work independently, to provide both mobile and static clearance focused on tasks of small and medium scale, with large-scale clearance operations considered only in limited, appropriate situations. The Project reaffirms our pledge to continue creating equal employment and promotion opportunities to motivate highest standards of career development among the women and men of our staff.

Inter-agency cooperation

Project RENEW will strive to ensure broader participation of relevant agencies including DOFA, Provincial Military Headquarters (PMH), Department of Planning and Investment, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and other stakeholders at the grassroots level to help implement this strategy.

Continuation of strong support and guidance from directives issued by the Project RENEW Steering Committee, DOFA and PMH, important tools and assets in ensuring the Project's success.

Financial resources

The Project will continue to appeal for support from its traditional donors, working always to earn that support and funding through our achievements, full financial accountability, and program transparency. At the same time we will seek other donors to contribute to multi-year, expanded funding. All of types of assistance, no matter how big or small, will be highly appreciated and utilized properly and efficiently.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation

Action plans, concrete activities and specific tasks, and operational targets will be developed annually based on this strategic framework. Project progress reports will be compiled and distributed every six months to keep donors and partners updated, with an annual summary and performance review prepared at the end of the year highlighting each major field of work and achievements. A review of this strategy and suggestions for changes or modifications will be undertaken at the beginning of 2012/2013.

Communication

Communication during this strategy period will be focused on broadly disseminating information about the impact of post-war ERW in Vietnam; the need for and efforts of the government, individual residents, and the international community, and especially Project RENEW, in neutralizing the consequences of bombs and mines in Vietnam in order to create safer and better livelihoods for the people living in contaminated areas. Such information will be made easily accessible to key audiences, including institutional and individual donors, technical partners and mine action organizations, Vietnamese and American veterans, government policy makers, international institutions, and the general public in Vietnam and other countries. Communication will incorporate all relevant tools such as websites, publications (quarterly newsletters, annual reports), broadcast and other media, events management, and public relations.

Project RENEW