



Norwegian People's Aid
Vietnam

Annual Report 2021



Friends and supporters,

In 2021, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) Vietnam is proud to have supported the government of Vietnam and other national partners in reducing the impact of explosive ordnance to levels where people can live safely and development is not constrained.

The programme continued its high turnover – NOK 68 million or over USD 7.5 million – and the activities implemented by our 367 staff members are the most diverse and productive they have ever been.

Through the year, our teams found and destroyed over 11,000 explosive items, nearly one quarter of all items found by NPA globally. Our mine action activities directly supported 7,145 people (including 2,106 women, 1,477 girls, 2,056 men and 1,506 boys). NPA teams identified more than 71 square kilometres of contaminated land through CMRS and cleared more than seven square kilometres of contaminated area.

Some of our greatest achievements in 2021 include playing an integral role in

the development of national technical standards and information management regulations, and supporting the establishment of a provincial database unit in Thua Thien Hue province.

Operational improvements continued with advanced explosive ordnance disposal training for senior personnel (IMAS EOD Level III), and with further methodology trials to improve the efficiency of technical survey. We were able to further promote the important role of women in mine action on an international stage at the United Nations Security Council, and we made significant improvements in the integration of environmental protection in mine action.

NPA Vietnam was granted permission to work in Kon Tum province, a new area of operation for international mine action organisations and likely the most highly contaminated province in Vietnam. We look forward to working closely with Kon Tum provincial authorities in 2022 to jointly establish new activities to make the province safer.

Despite the continuing economic and social impacts of the COVID-19

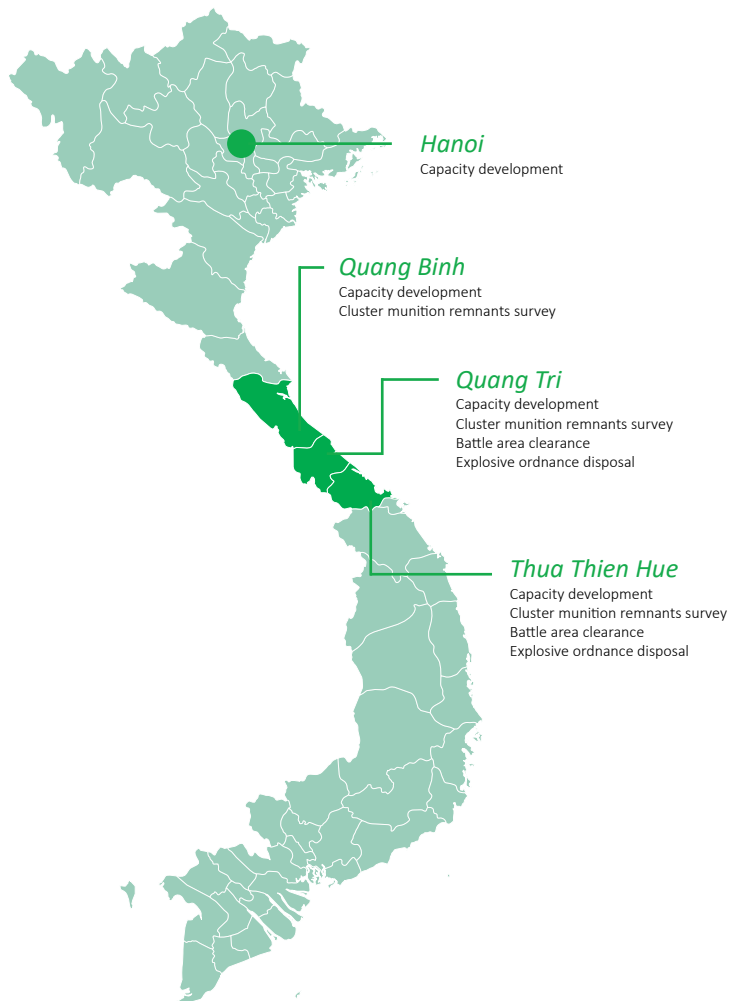
pandemic, we managed to deliver great results, and in many cases delivered more than anyone expected. Our staff's dedication to making Vietnam safe from the threat of explosive ordnance is what made NPA Vietnam's results in 2021 possible, and I'm very proud to present these results to you in this Annual Report.

These results were only possible with support from the United States Department of State, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United States Department of Defense and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office - and I thank them for their continued support for NPA Vietnam.

Jan Erik Støa
Country Director, NPA Vietnam



Left: An NTS team member shares information on the risks of explosive ordnance with children. *Above:* A technical survey operator works on agricultural land. *Cover (clockwise from top left):* Technical survey personnel use a large loop detector close to local homes. NTS personnel collect valuable information from community members. NPA Provincial Programme Manager in Quang Tri addressing the United Nations Security Council during an open debate on mine action. A large cache of items found during clearance in Quang Tri province. Operational briefings for a clearance team ahead of deployment.



Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has worked in Vietnam since 2007, and implements four key activities:

Cluster munition remnants survey (CMRS)

CMRS is the use of non-technical (NTS) and technical survey (TS) to identify a confirmed hazardous area (CHA) from cluster munition remnants.

Battle area clearance (BAC)

BAC is the systematic and controlled clearance of confirmed hazardous areas defined through CMRS.

Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)

EOD is the identification and demolition of explosive ordnance outside of a CHA, usually in response to an item reported by the community.

Capacity development (CD)

CD is a long-term cooperative partnership to strengthen the ability of national and provincial partners to monitor, manage, regulate and coordinate the mine action sector.

In 2021, NPA Vietnam achieved the following results:



150

villages covered
by NTS



71

CHAs created, totalling over
71 square kilometres



7.3

square kilometres of CHA
cleared



1000+

EOD spot tasks
responded to



11,000+

items of explosive
ordnance destroyed



30%

of NPA staff are female
(112 of 367)



Quang Tri

Capacity development • Cluster munition remnants survey
Battle area clearance • Explosive ordnance disposal

In support of the Provincial Mine Action Program, NPA continued its partnership with the Quang Tri Mine Action Centre, and increased the number of survey teams to enable the faster completion of CMRS.

“We know the land has been cleared of wartime bombs, so we have peace of mind to expand our acacia plantation.”

Nguyen Van The feels happy and safe when tending to his seedlings in Vinh Linh district, following clearance of this area by NPA’s BAC teams.



Support to the Quang Tri Mine Action Centre

NPA continued its long-term partnership with the Quang Tri Mine Action Centre (QTMAC) and the provincial Mine Action Steering Committee, to support Quang Tri province in achieving its goal of becoming the first province to be free from the impacts of explosive ordnance by 2025. Funding from the United States government significantly increased during 2021, to support the day to day operational and information management activities of QTMAC as well as enabling the sharing of lessons learned from so many years of mine action in Quang Tri province. Continuing support for QTMAC ensures that all mine action activities in Quang Tri are well-coordinated between government, military and non-government stakeholders in the province.



Left: Members of the QTMAC Operations Unit conduct a site evaluation to learn about its planned use post-clearance, ahead of tasking clearance operators. *Right (top):* NPA team leader Pham Huu Hoan safely marks ordnance. *Right (bottom):* An NPA TS team deploys in Huong Ha district.

Continually improving CMRS

NPA is nearing the conclusion of CMRS in Quang Tri province, to ensure all CHAs are identified for follow-on clearance. To this end, additional support from the United States government enabled NPA to increase its CMRS capacity, with the goal of completing NTS in 2022 and TS in 2023.

To ensure the most efficient implementation of the CMRS methodology, NPA conducted trials to compare the efficiency of different team structures and also conducted desktop assessments of operational data to identify if technical survey could be implemented more rapidly but with the same high quality results. These initial trials have demonstrated a 30% increase in efficiency, and will be continued through 2022 to ensure the survey is completed efficiently.

Additionally, NPA's BAC teams continued to clear contaminated areas, while EOD teams responded to individual items found by community members in Quang Tri.



Quang Binh

Capacity development
Cluster munition remnants survey

NPA deployed its first technical survey teams in Quang Binh in 2021, and expanded operational areas through close cooperation with the Database and Coordination Unit and Provincial Military Command.



Capacity development

Following its establishment in 2020, NPA continued to support the Database and Coordination Unit (DBCUC) in its role as coordinator of mine action in Quang Binh province. Through formal workshops, on-the-job training and sharing of experience with other mine action partners in Vietnam, particular emphasis was placed on increasing the information management capacity of this unit, thereby ensuring mine action data is collected, stored and shared in line with national requirements. Additionally, NPA supported the transfer of the provincial EOD reporting hotline to the DBCUC, to enable the DBCUC to coordinate a swift response to communities that report explosive items they find.

Valuable partnerships

In January, NPA deployed its technical survey capacity and now conducts full CMRS in Quang Binh province.

The importance of the CMRS process in enabling more efficient clearance and planning has been recognised by the extension of funding from the United States government until 2024.

NPA has also developed a close operational partnership with the Provincial Military Command, who provide enormous support to NTS and TS teams through liaison with local authorities and affected communities.

This relationship also enabled the expansion of operations into 27 new communes in Quang Binh province.

Left: Hung Van Phan, NPA Information Management Advisor, supports the Quang Binh DBCU in conducting an assessment of a CHA ahead of prioritisation and tasking for clearance. *Right (top):* Military liaison officer Bui Huu Phuoc and NTS surveyor Tran Minh Duc check information on explosive ordnance shared by community members in Bo Trach district. *Right (bottom):* NTS surveyors Tran Minh Duc and Bui Thi Thong work together to approach key informants and collect information on the location of explosive ordnance during NTS in Bo Trach district.



Thua Thien Hue

Capacity development • Non-technical survey
Battle area clearance • Explosive ordnance disposal

NPA supported Thua Thien Hue province to establish a mine action Database and Coordination Unit, and continued important survey and clearance activities.



“Our parents warned us not to play in this area, but we are excited to have more land to play on soon.”

Fourth grade students in Ka Cu village, coming home from Hong Van Pri School, had chat with NPA Medic Le Ly during non-technical survey activities.

Establishment of the DBU

With close coordination from the provincial Department of Foreign Affairs, NPA supported the establishment of the Thua Thien Hue Database Unit (DBU) in 2021.

The establishment of this unit will enable the collection of historic mine action data, including data from international organisations previously working in the province as well as data from completed and ongoing military operations.

Right (top): NTS surveyor Le Bac interviews female farmers during their work break, to collect information on the presence of explosive ordnance in their village. *Right (bottom, left to right)* Huong Phong Commune Military Command, A Dot security border staff, Military Liaison Officer and NPA personnel ahead of the demolition of an air-dropped bomb; Nguyen Ngoc conducts excavation at a BAC task in A Luoi district.

Continuation of operations

NPA continued conducting NTS, EOD and BAC activities in Thua Thien Hue province. With support from local authorities, focus was placed on supporting the most at-risk communities in A Luoi and Phong Dien districts, where there has previously been only a limited amount of mine action activities. NPA's work in Thua Thien Hue also included the management of a provincial explosive ordnance reporting hotline, to enable reporting of dangerous items by community members.



Supporting National Capacity

NPA's long-term partnership with the Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) continued to support increases in Vietnam's national mine action capacity, and additional funding was secured to see this important partnership and further improvements continue until 2025.



Support until 2025

NPA and VNMAC renewed their commitment to improving mine action in Vietnam by signing a new Memorandum of Understanding on continued assistance and cooperation from 2021 until 2025. The event marked another milestone for both NPA and VNMAC to manifest the effectiveness of previous cooperation, as well as to show commitment to further joint efforts in addressing legacy of the wars in Vietnam, and increase socio-economic development opportunities for Vietnamese people.

Left: Tran Trung Hoa, Director General of VNMAC, and Jan Erik Støa, Country Director of NPA Vietnam, sign a new Memorandum of Understanding. *Right:* Representatives of the US Embassy, NPA and VNMAC celebrate the handing over of equipment necessary for reporting mine action information.

Implementing a national information management system

Promoting a robust national information management system was a priority for both VNMAC and NPA in 2021, as good information management practices and high-quality data are critical to all other mine action coordination activities.

NPA supported the development of a national regulation on information management that details how mine action data should be reported from each province into the national mine action database owned by VNMAC. This included the development of standard reporting forms, to ensure consistency in how data is reported.

Training on the use of these regulations and forms for members of provincial military commands in all 63 provinces began in 2021 and will conclude in 2022. These trainings provide the skills and equipment each province needs to help make sure mine action data is formally reported and centrally stored.



Women in Mine Action

NPA Vietnam put the important role of women in mine action on a global stage at the United Nations Security Council, while also continuing internal achievements.

In April 2021, Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, Provincial Programme Manager in Quang Tri province, was invited to become the first Vietnamese citizen to address the United Nations Security Council during an open debate on 'Mine action and sustaining peace: Stronger partnerships for better delivery'.

Linh made several recommendations for more effective and efficient implementation of mine action based on her 12 years of experience in NPA field operations, including increasing national capacity and national ownership; close coordination by national and international stakeholders at operational, management and policy levels; and that the international community

should learn from the expertise of countries with long-term impacts from explosive ordnance.

Linh spoke at length about the importance of promoting and increasing the involvement of women in all aspects of mine action. Particular reference was made to the diverse positions that Vietnamese women hold in mine action, the progressive increase in the number of women participating in mine action since it began in Vietnam, and to Vietnam's first all-female BAC team established by NPA in 2018.

Linh's speech was well-received by the Security Council, and highlighted the necessary and important role that women play in mine action, and in the larger peace and security agenda.



Promoting gender and diversity

In 2021, 34% of newly-recruited personnel and 30% of all programme personnel were women- including 50% of the Senior Management Team. Gender and diversity remains a priority when working with national partners, and NPA Vietnam makes every effort to share best practice on positive gender and diversity mainstreaming whenever possible.

All-female clearance team

NPA's all female clearance team- the first of its kind in Vietnam- continued to work to clear CHAs throughout 2021. These women cleared 799,000 sqm of land and safely destroyed 362 items in 2021. This is an enormous achievement for the mine action sector, and the team continue to prove that women are a strong and capable force in mine action.

Left (top): Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, NPA's Provincial Programme Manager in Quang Tri province, provided recommendations to the United Nations Security Council at an open debate on 'Mine action and sustaining peace: Stronger partnerships for better delivery' (Photo: Nguyen A). *Left (bottom):* Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh with Grete Løchen, Norwegian Ambassador to Vietnam, following the United Nations Security Council open debate (Photo: Nguyen A). *Below:* NPA's all-female battle area clearance team, the first of its kind in Vietnam, continued to work in Quang Tri province.



Environmental Protection

Further integration of environmental protection with mine action activities was a key area of focus in 2021. NPA trialled research techniques, improved internal performance on environmental protection.

Investigation soil pollution

In a pilot project conducted in Thua Thien Hue province in Central Vietnam, NPA has trained six experienced NTS team members to collect soil samples from areas with known contamination from explosive ordnance, and are working with the Institute of Resources and Environment (IREN) at Hue University to test these samples for potential heavy metal residue from unexploded

ordnance. The team identified sample locations using NPA information management tools used during NTS, and collected soil samples taken from different depths at a given GPS location. The methodology is quick to learn and implement, and while the results from the initial trial are inconclusive due to small sampling size, NPA seeks to replicate and expand this study further in 2022 based on lessons learned during 2021.



Top: Nguyen Thanh Tuan and Tran Hong Phuong use a GPS and iPad to identify pre-determined locations to collect soil samples from, under the guidance of an IREN technician. *Bottom (left):* Tran Hong Phuong and Nguyen Thanh Tuan collect a soil sample from an area with known contamination from explosive ordnance. *Bottom (right):* IREN technicians conduct analysis of soil samples at the laboratory in Hue city. (Photo courtesy of IREN, Hue University) *Right:* Le Thai Anh and Le Trung Hieu complete training on the collection of soil samples under the guidance of an IREN technician.

Improving environmental performance

To measure and reduce the environmental impacts of operations, NPA designed and trialled a digital reporting system and monitoring dashboard to track fuel and electricity usage and subsequent carbon emissions. This monitoring dashboard will also be used for waste management in future.

All NPA personnel in Hanoi received environmental protection training, to enable to better integration of environment into mine action activities. All other staff will benefit from similar training in 2022. This important training will underpin all future environment activities.

NPA also sought to influence the global mine action sector towards environmental mainstreaming by participating as a panellist in a side event on 'Mitigating the environmental impacts of explosive ordnance and land release' at the 19th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.



Expanding and Improving

Continual improvement of operational performance is key to NPA's success in Vietnam, and in 2021 this continued with advanced International Mine Action Standards EOD Level III training, and continued trials of new tools. NPA's long-term commitment to improving mine action in Vietnam was recognised by our national partners.



Recognition of long-term contributions

NPA Vietnam was recognised by key national partners, the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations (VUFO) and the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) for positive contributions to sustainable development in Vietnam. The programme also received a Certificate of Merit from the Ministry of National Defence in recognition of its outstanding achievements in supporting the implementation of the National Mine Action Program in the period 2010 to 2020.

NPA is proud to support these partners in achieving their national mine action and development goals.

Continuing research and development

Long-term trials of new detection and ground preparation tools continued in Quang Tri province, to support the revision of standard operating procedures and inform discussions on the revision of national technical standards. The Bearcat multi-tool has continued to prove itself as a reliable ground preparation method to increase the efficiency of clearance on tasks with dense vegetation, while the Scorpion deep search detection tool tested positively for use as a primary detector.

A new project to trial a mobile bomb cutting system was also approved for implementation in 2022.

Advanced IMAS EOD training

Eight senior national staff members were offered an intensive course on International Mine Action Standards Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Level III, which will see them become some of the highest-trained EOD technicians in Vietnam. The course seeks to replicate challenging scenarios that the technicians may encounter in their work in central Vietnam – including explosive ordnance in populated areas, or near important infrastructure like power stations and fuel stations. All trainees

will be observed, mentored and assessed in field for many months before receiving their certification in 2022. Continually improving the skills of national staff is an important investment in Vietnam's mine action capacity, and ensures the country has qualified personnel capable of dealing with the explosive ordnance in the long term.

Left: The Scorpion system being calibrated ahead of continuing field trials in Quang Tri province. *Right:* EOD Level III trainees laying protective works ahead of a demolition during training. *Below:* EOD Level III trainers and course participants.



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