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Unsung Hero: NOIMANY PIALEUXAY

Noimany Pialeuxay, the first woman driver to be hired by MAG Lao PDR (People’s Democratic Republic), has worked with an all-female unexploded ordnance clearance team to clear landmines in remote areas of Lao PDR. Her story has been an inspiration to many other women who wish to join the demining effort.

A woman driver is a very rare thing to find in the Laos People’s Democratic Republic, as is an all-female unexploded ordnance clearance team. Working with such a team in Laos represents for women from the Xong Khouang province in Laos to receive a driver’s license. When she applied to a MAG advertisement for a driver’s license to drive a vehicle, she then began receiving the process of testing and training for the field, and soon became the first woman driver to be employed by MAG Lao PDR, joining an all-female UXO-clearance team. Pialeuxay recognizes the effort and is happy about this accomplishment.

Pialeuxay is now a member of one of MAG’s two all-female UXO-clearance teams in Lao PDR, an initiative to provide employment for women in the rural regions of Lao PDR and improve the social status of women in the rural regions of Lao PDR. The team comprises of female operators that are trained in UXO-clearance techniques. MAG finds that women are key players in the recovery of mine- and UXO-affected communities even though these communities themselves suffer greatly from UXO-affected conditions. In its programs throughout the world, MAG works to incorporate women into the demining and UXO-clearance process by analyzing the different needs and perspectives of female operators.

Pialeuxay’s responsibilities include navigating the mountainous roads on which she must drive to and from work sites. Noimany Pialeuxay is excellent at driving and enjoys her role as a driver. "I love being in the team," she says. "I work with many different people and we are like family."

In the last five years, Noimany Pialeuxay has been involved in many UXO-clearance projects in Laos. During this time, she has driven over 10,000 miles and has completed over 100 mine-clearance missions. She has found her role as a driver to be very important, as she is able to help provide employment for women in the rural regions of Laos. Her success has encouraged other women to pursue careers in UXO-clearance and has opened many economic opportunities for impoverished women in the region.

Pialeuxay says, "I feel proud because I am one of a team that is helping people to be safe from UXO contamination. I am proud because we are undertaking dangerous work that directly benefits communities.”

She believes that her female UXO-clearance team shows women the importance of women’s roles in UXO-clearance. "Many women ask me if MAG is still recruiting," Pialeuxay says. "I encourage women to get involved in UXO-clearance projects and to work to change the world’s views on women."

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