



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN HA GIANG PROVINCE

KNOWLEDGE ATTITUDE PRACTICE

**A MULTIDISCIPLINARY SURVEY ON LIVING
WITH EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR**

**THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VIET NAM RED CROSS**

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ICRC

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INTRODUCTION

This Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) Survey was conducted by the Weapon Contamination (WEC) unit of the ICRC in partnership with the Viet Nam Red Cross Society (VNRC). The survey was designed to better understand community resilience and the gaps in risk awareness in relation to explosive remnants of war (ERW) in northern Viet Nam. The pilot survey was conducted in June/July 2021 and sought to gain insights into how communities in highly contaminated areas with little infrastructure live and deal with this issue. The communes in question are Thanh Duc, Thanh Thuy and Phuong Tien in Vi Xuyen district, which were chosen because of their exposure to high level of contamination. Vi Xuyen district in Ha Giang Province was one of the main areas of border hostilities and subsequent tensions, which officially ended only in the late 1980s early 1990s.

The overall insights that we have from the data tell an inspiring story. These are communities that have built up their resilience over the years to live with these deadly threats and have developed their own education regarding such risks. Despite these efforts, there is still a high accident rate in these communities, mainly because economic necessity forces people to go into unsafe areas. There are also demonstrated gaps in people's knowledge and recognition of explosive ordnance (EO).

This report will go through the methodology of the survey, the socio-economic condition of these communities and discuss various aspects that relate to how individuals in these communities stay safe and the level of knowledge they have about explosive remnants of war (ERW). The report will conclude with recommendations for the future of risk awareness programming and clearance operations in Ha Giang Province.

The conclusions and recommendations are drawn from analysis of over 1,000 samples collected in three different communes, known for their high contamination and low-income rates.

Thanks to the Viet Nam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) and Ha Giang local authorities for facilitating the survey. A special thanks to Social Works Department at the Viet Nam Red Cross headquarters, director and staff of Ha Giang's Red Cross chapter, and volunteers for making this pilot survey happen in a safe manner and for ensuring it was a success despite the many complications posed by COVID-19.

ACRONYMS LIST

DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EO	Explosive Ordnance
EORE	Explosive Ordnance Risk Education/Risk Awareness
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HA	Hectares
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VNMAC	Viet Nam National Mine Action Centre
VNRC	Viet Nam Red Cross
VNRC HQ	Viet Nam Red Cross Headquarters
WEC	Weapon Contamination

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Giang Tran/CFC

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ha Giang is a mountainous border province in the north of Viet Nam, sharing 277,557 km of borderline with Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces of China. The geographical landscape is predominantly mountainous and rugged and has been particularly vulnerable to landslides and flash floods, in recent years. There are ten districts and one city in the province, including seven districts along the border with China. The total population is 846,531 consisting of 19 ethnicities, of which the H'mong ethnicity represents 34.25% of the population.¹

Ha Giang is among the provinces that were most affected by past conflicts. The total area of the province is 7.9 km², including 85,944 hectares (HA) or 11% of the total area identified as contaminated by explosive ordnance (EO). High density of unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination has caused difficulties in the daily life of the people, such as casualties from EO incidents while farming, damage to tools and loss of livestock. There have been 359 casualties caused by ERWs recorded, including 165 survivors recorded up until 2019. Since the end of the border conflict, the authorities of Ha Giang coordinated with other government bodies to mitigate the impact of UXO on the socio-economic development of the province. From 1988 to 2018, the total cleared area is recorded at 5,443 HA.³

Vi Xuyen District is located along the borderline, with two border gates to China. As of August 2020, the district has a total population of around 25,000, with the Tay as the dominant ethnicity. Approximately 23% of the district's population are poor with average income per capita of 24.2 million Viet Nam Dong, equivalent to USD 1,040 per year⁴. Apart from hostilities with Western powers, Ha Giang, particularly Vi Xuyen District, was part of the land that was directly impacted by hostilities and border conflicts, especially in the 1980s until the end of 1988. As a result, the district is heavily contaminated with ERW, especially in Thanh Thuy, Thanh Duc, Xin Chai and Minh Tan communes. One hundred and twenty one casualties caused by ERWs have been recorded in Vi Xuyen District so far.⁵

¹ "Completed Results of the 2019 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census", Statistical Publishing House (Viet Nam) (2020), available at: TỔNG CỤC THỐNG KÊ VIỆT NAM (gso.gov.vn)

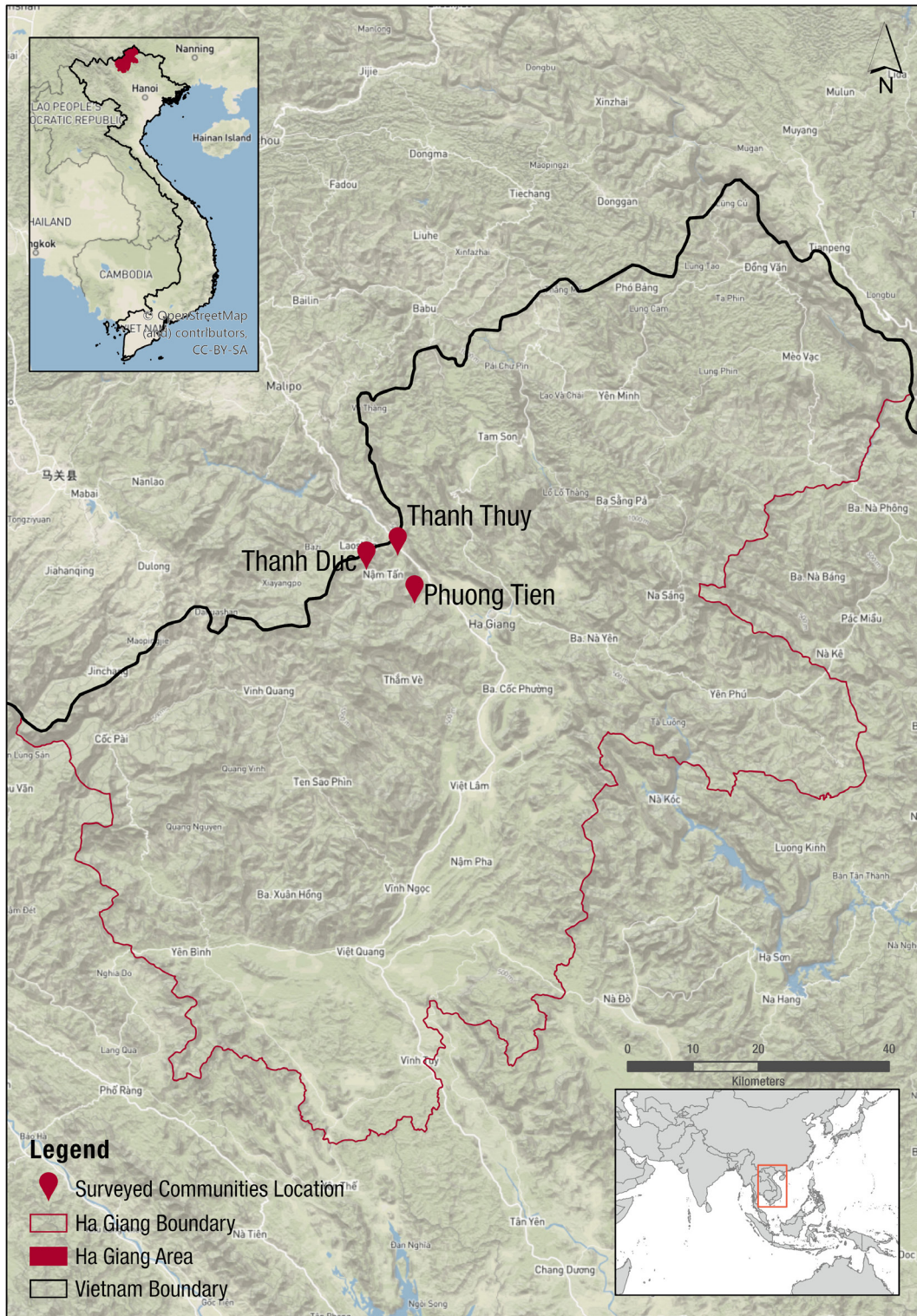
² 1 June 2017, Ha Giang: Efforts in clearing explosive remnants of war <https://dangcongsan.vn/xa-hoi/ha-giang-no-luc-trong-thuc-hien-ra-pha-bom-min-khac-phuc-vat-lieu-no-sau-chien-tranh-440165.html>

³ 27 February 2021, Ha Giang clears explosive ordnance to green the land <https://vtv.vn/xa-hoi/ha-giang-ra-pha-bom-min-de-tra-lai-mau-xanh-cho-dat-20210227184729518.htm>

⁴ 18 August 2020, Changes in Vi Xuyen <https://baodantoc.vn/doi-thay-o-vi-xuyen-1597720616123.htm>

⁵ 27 February 2021, Ha Giang clears explosive ordnance to green the land, VTV News <https://vtv.vn/xa-hoi/ha-giang-ra-pha-bom-min-de-tra-lai-mau-xanh-cho-dat-20210227184729518.htm>

MAP OF SURVEYED COMMUNES IN HA GIANG



METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY

The KAP survey was a pilot study, which intended to use individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), as well as consultative rounds with local authorities concerned. The objective of the survey was to gain in-depth, multidisciplinary insight into how communities deal with ERW, their practices and their knowledge of the issue. A preliminary assessment conducted in 2019 provided an overview of the contamination in the province, as well as the willingness and capacity of the authorities to address the issue.

The timeline of the survey was jointly finalized with the VNRC headquarters and Ha Giang Red Cross chapter. The individual interviews were conducted in a four-week period from June to July 2021 by trained staff and volunteers of Ha Giang Red Cross. Unfortunately, the FGD module had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in compliance with the preventive measures imposed by the government. This is important to note as the survey is therefore limited to the analysis of individual responses only. The data entry stage was also impacted by a COVID-19 surge in Viet Nam and took longer than expected. An overview of the whole process can be found below in Table 1.

TIMELINE (MONTHS) – 2021 – 2022					
JANUARY – APRIL 2021	MAY 2021	JUNE – JULY 2021	JULY-NOVEMBER 2021	DECEMBER 2021	JUNE 2022
Planning, questionnaire design, community and sample selection	Training survey team	Data collection	Data entry and analysis of results	Writing and reviewing of report	Publishing of report

Table 1: Timeline of the whole survey process

1.1. COMMUNITY AND SAMPLE SELECTION, QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to be selected for the survey, communities had to fulfil certain criteria – they had to be rural or semi-rural areas which were geographically accessible, with reported low average incomes and rumoured or known to be affected by ERW.

Ha Giang Province is known for its widespread UXO contamination but the issue is particularly severe in Vi Xuyen district, including Thanh Thuy, Thanh Duc, Xin Chai and Minh Tan Communes.⁶ Based on the above-mentioned criteria, the communities selected by the Viet Nam Red Cross (VNRC) in Ha Giang Province were Thanh Duc, Thanh Thuy and Phuong Tien Communes. It was initially calculated that the total number of samples would account for a minimum of 10% of the total population of the surveyed sites. The sites had to be chosen randomly to ensure proper representation because of the high number (19) of different ethnicities registered in the province. Considering human resources, time frame and accessibility to the sites of the survey, it was agreed that the size of each chosen commune should not exceed 3,000 people, making the desired quantity of achieved samples around approximately 900. Although low average income was a criterion in selecting target communities, enumerators were encouraged to interview households of all sizes of income to better capture the KAP of the general population. At the time of the survey, the total population of the three communes as of 2020 is estimated to be approximately 6,900, consisting of around 12 ethnicities.^{7,8,9} A total of 1,001 valid individual samples were collected in the four weeks of the survey. For a concrete overview, please refer to Table 2.

⁶ 4 April 2021, Ha Giang on its way to completely recover from impact of explosive ordnance <https://baotintuc.vn/thoi-su/ha-giang-tien-toi-khac-phuc-hoan-toan-anh-huong-cua-bom-min-vat-lieu-no-20210404220349297.htm>

⁷ 30 October 2017, Overview on Thanh Thuy commune, Official portal of Thanh Thuy commune – Vi Xuyen district *SƠ LƯỢC VỀ ĐIỀU KIỆN TỰ NHIÊN VÀ XÃ HỘI - XATHANHTHUY - HaGiang*

⁸ 24 June 2019, Overview on Phuong Tien commune, Official portal of Phuong Tien commune official portal *Giới thiệu chung về xã Phương Tiến - XAPHUONGTIEN - HaGiang*

⁹ 29 July 2016, Introduction, Official portal of Thanh Duc commune *Giới thiệu chung - XATHANH DUC - HaGiang*

COMMUNE	NO. OF MINE/UXO VICTIMS	TOTAL POPULATION	NO. OF HOUSEHOLD (HH)	DISTANCE FROM CENTRE OF VI XUYEN DISTRICT (KM)	NO. OF INDIVIDUAL SAMPLES COLLECTED	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION INTERVIEWED
Thanh Duc	8	925	190	49	161	17.4%
Thanh Thuy	40	2'694	613	41	419	15.5%
Phuong Tien	35	3'313	687	32	421	12.7%

Table 2: Quantity and percentage of population interviewed by location

ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENT

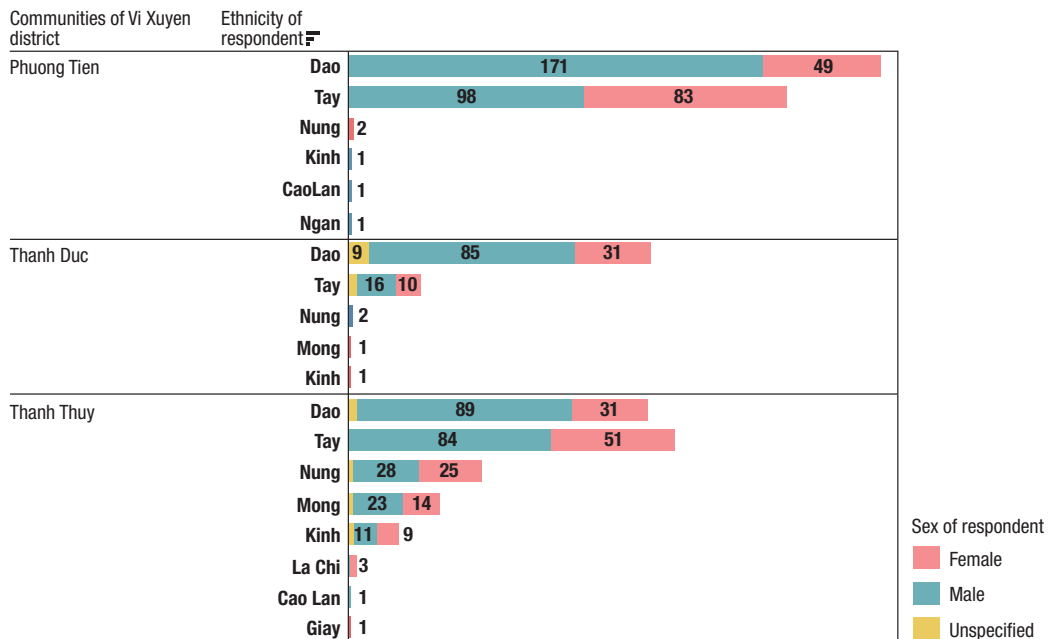


Figure 1: Disaggregated population sample ethnicity overview

DISAGGREGATED POPULATION SAMPLE AGE OVERVIEW

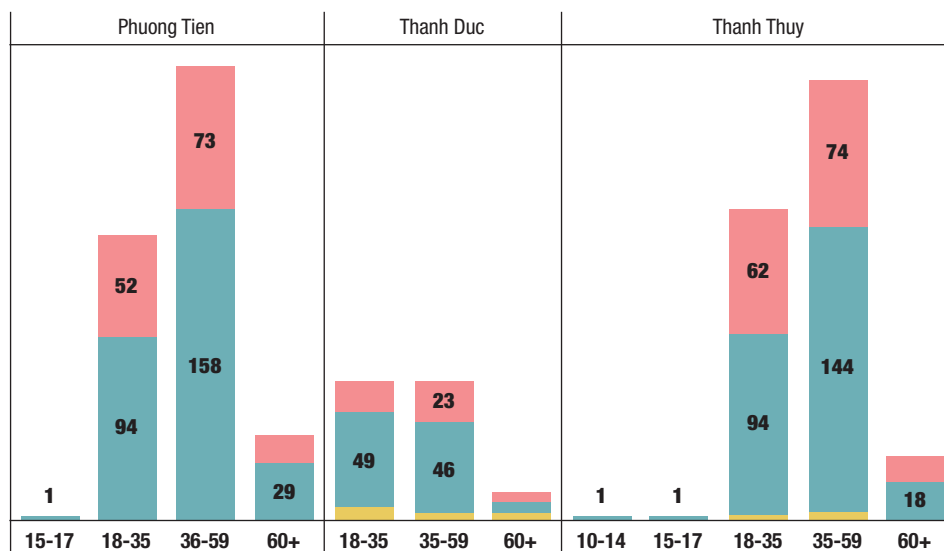


Figure 2: Disaggregated population sample age overview

DISAGGREGATED POPULATION SAMPLE GENDER OVERVIEW

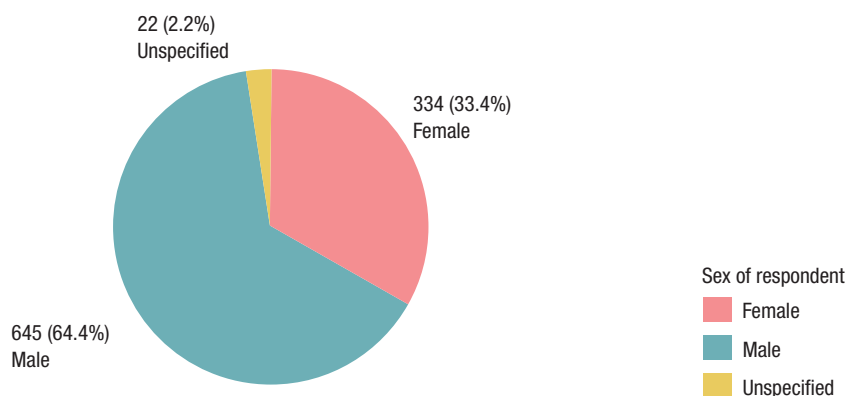


Figure 3: Disaggregated population sample Gender overview

The questionnaire was drafted by the ICRC and reviewed by the VNRC, Viet Nam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) and Ha Giang local authorities. Images used in the survey were provided by VNMAC. The questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative questions to reflect in-depth the correlation between the communities and the surveyed problems, including:

- socio-economic condition, such as income, access to water and community services, sanitation practices
- knowledge, attitude and practice of the selected communities with regards EO-related issues
- communication and information sharing channels.

While focusing on communities' knowledge and resilience to EO hazards, questions on mapping or location were minimized and formulated as generically as possible in the questionnaire. Therefore, the survey results do not include information on exact locations, coordinates or estimations of distance to suspected contaminated areas.

1.2. TRAINING AND MENTORING OF SURVEY TEAMS

It was required for the survey team to be of diverse age groups and genders and including staff from all levels of the Viet Nam Red Cross. Being able to communicate according to the local culture, in local dialects and ethnic languages was an advantage when working in areas like Ha Giang. At least three enumerators came from the dominant ethnicities of the province, including H'Mong, Dao, Tay and Nung ethnicities.

Twelve enumerators from Ha Giang, together with three volunteers and two staff of VNRC headquarters, underwent five days of intensive training on the basic understanding of explosive ordnance recognition, safety messaging, representative sampling, surveying ethics and techniques and communication skills. The training was designed based on a learner-centred approach, which maximized opportunities for participants to learn by practising and to familiarize themselves with the questionnaire. It also offered space for local staff and volunteers from Ha Giang to brief the ICRC and headquarters team on cultural attributes of the province. A one-day refresher training was also conducted before deploying the Ha Giang team to the field.

A system of reporting on a daily and weekly basis was arranged among a focal contact person of Ha Giang survey team, representatives of VNRC headquarters and the ICRC. A plenary meeting was also held at the end of the survey to collect observations and lessons learnt.

1.3. LESSONS LEARNT

OPERATIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

ERW contamination was a new field for the Ha Giang RC chapter; therefore, it was the first time that the branch's directors undertook such heavy responsibility in managing security in their operations. The survey was conducted during a surge in COVID-19 in mountainous areas, therefore, operational risk management and safety messaging were repeated and practised throughout the training. Timeline planning was critical in the context of unusual weather patterns and disasters as a result of climate change in the northern areas of Viet Nam in recent years. It was decided to have the survey rolled out in June–July to minimize potential risks to safety of the survey team because of torrential rains and landslides in rainy season.

ACCESSIBILITY

Adaptability was a highlight of the survey since geographic accessibility was sometimes a challenge. Enumerators walked or used motorbikes of local guides because the roads to some villages were in bad condition and inaccessible for cars, for example in Thanh Duc commune. Furthermore, the daily schedule was adjusted based on the farming time of the community. The teams often set out early in the morning before farming time and returned late in the afternoon to meet as many people as possible in the selected communities.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It was mentioned that respondents were often reluctant to provide information because of distrust towards strangers, especially when the questions required detailed explanations. It often took time to make them comfortable with the enumerators. Local authorities, village guides and village chiefs played an important role in connecting the enumerators with the community and overcoming the differences in customs, language barriers and unfamiliarity of the Red Cross staff and volunteers with the surveyed areas. Red Cross staff at community level who were part of the team also facilitated effective communication and helped gain access to the selected communities.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Although enumerators had been given time to familiarize themselves with the questionnaire, they still required more explanations and time to practice. This was especially important to help the team understand the logic behind question formulation, so as to provide relevant explanations to interviewees or facilitate group discussions. It was also necessary to learn which topics were uncommon or considered as sensitive or taboos by the communities (e.g. forensics) in order to better prepare the enumerators for tricky conversations.

A summary of key learning points of the training and a refresher course is required to strengthen and sustain enumerators' capacity, especially if there is the possibility of a gap between the time of the training and the deployment.

COORDINATION

Coordination among key stakeholders, i.e. the VNRC, local authorities, VNMAC and the ICRC, played an important role in facilitating the survey, especially in the beginning phase of the pilot. Having everyone's input in the design of the questionnaire and their coordination on data collection and feedback from the field was instrumental in making the pilot survey a success.

QUESTIONNAIRE, DATA COLLECTION AND ENTRY

The diversity of selected communities was considered in the design of the questionnaire. However, some questions could have been better formulated to facilitate data collection, entry and analysis, for instance, questions on ethnicity and languages or sanitary habits. On the other hand, the questionnaire was tested and revised by a survey designing team, which had good flexibility and resulted in conducive feedback to optimize its structure. Extension of the testing phase and diversification of testers should be taken into account if the survey is to be replicated.

Using printed copies of the questionnaire in data collection, instead of tablets, was not environmentally friendly, but helped to maximize interaction with respondents in individual interviews and speed up data entry.

All data were collected in Vietnamese, hence, required to be translated into English at the data entry stage. Apart from closely monitoring, it was important to provide training, or context briefing and an overview of the questionnaire to the data entry team to ensure accuracy of translation and data protection.

REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION

It is worth mentioning that remote reporting and monitoring was inevitable throughout the survey period because of travel restriction measures related to COVID-19. Hence, regular communication was arranged to closely monitor and adapt the survey process. The time gap between data collection and entry was five working days to ensure timely follow-up with the survey team. Thanks to clear reporting lines and regular communication between Ha Giang survey team, VNRC headquarters and the ICRC helped to ensure that logistical enquiries, safety reminders and clarifications on the questionnaires were shared and resolved promptly.

LIMITATIONS TO THE SURVEY TO THE SURVEY

Though the survey yielded a lot of results, certain limitations should be kept in mind when analysing the data:

- Results are based on individual samples only. The inability to carry out FGDs means there is no collective perspective from these communities. This somewhat limits the findings of the collective sentiment on community resilience, such as coping mechanisms of the community to life crisis events or fear of UXO accidents.
- It was not possible for ICRC staff to join the enumerators. Data collection was done remotely through local enumerators from the VNRC, which limited our opportunity to collect qualitative and more nuanced information, or revisit any of the data collection in real time.
- Those who participated in the survey were predominantly adults. There were very few respondents under the age of 18, which has been displayed in the disaggregated graph, but is worth mentioning as a limitation to getting the perspective of all age groups.
- It should be mentioned that, though not so much a limitation, there is a lack of disaggregation in the findings. This is because, comparatively, analysis between age ranges, genders and ethnicities remained relatively constant throughout the survey. Thus, disaggregation will be mentioned where it is worth noting, but will otherwise remain absent in the findings.

OVERALL FINDINGS

This section describes the main findings from the information collected through the questionnaire and the observations of the enumerators in Thanh Duc, Thanh Thuy and Phuong Tien communes of the Vi Xuyen district. As reflected by the survey team, information was collected unevenly among the communes because of different contamination levels, meaning more information was collected from villages where armed conflicts had occurred or UXOs were found. In some villages, respondents who were former militants were more open than others.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Thanh Duc, Thanh Thuy and Phuong Tien communes are all located in Ha Giang Province, in the north of Viet Nam. Ha Giang had experienced heavy shelling and subsequent fighting in various past conflicts of the 20th Century. There has been no official casualty toll, but experts estimate that there were hundreds of thousands of casualties from different nationalities. For Ha Giang Province, and in particular Vi Xuyen district, the most intense fighting happened in 1984 and the local population suffered from sporadic shelling until the end of 1988.¹⁰

Despite these setbacks, population growth has increased over the decades and the province of Ha Giang now has over 800,000 residents. As many other places in South-East Asia, most people now live in urban areas, because of the lack of economic potential, poor infrastructure and living conditions in rural areas. This leaves rural communities thinned out and isolated, surviving off the land they have been left with.¹¹

The communities in Thanh Duc, Thanh Thuy and Phuong Tien are no exception to this trend. Respondents stated to have an average of 4,826,254 Viet Nam Dong (VND) (equivalent to 209 US dollars) of income per month for their household. This is substantially lower than the Average Income Per Capita (i.e. per person) in Viet Nam, which was recorded as 4.2 million VND (equivalent to 178 US dollars) per person in 2020 according to the Vietnamese General Office of Statistics.¹² Taking the average size of a household as having five members, we can conclude that the average size of income is five times smaller than that of the national average most recently measured. Yet surprisingly, over 80% of respondents stated this was sufficient income to live off, indicating low living costs and/or a high resilience in living. Moreover, most of the respondents stated that their homes were not connected to an electricity grid or water grid, meaning they fetch water themselves from nearby water sources and live off the limited capacity of alternative electricity sources (i.e. solar panels and generators).

More specifically, when it comes to water sources, most of the respondents (over 60%) said they walk between 500 metres to three kilometres to fetch water. Most common water sources used are streams, rivers and ponds. This points to limited housing infrastructure

¹⁰ Various information sources were consulted on this topic which hold numerous references to other sources, most notably:

1. the Sino-Vietnamese War on Wikipedia: Sino-Vietnamese War - Wikipedia;
2. HistoryNet on the Sino-Vietnamese War: Sino-Vietnamese War, 1979 (historynet.com);
3. The Diplomat "The Bitter Legacy of the 1979 China-Viet Nam War". The Bitter Legacy of the 1979 China-Vietnam War – The Diplomat.
4. Vietnamnet '40th anniversary of northern border defense fight: Vi Xuyen epic'. 40th anniversary of northern border defense fight: Vi Xuyen epic
5. VnExpress 'In Viet Nam, pain and memories linger on decades after China border war'. In Viet Nam, pain and memories linger on decades after China border war

All accessed on 16/11/2021.

¹¹ Dahiya, Bharat. "Southeast Asia and sustainable urbanization." *Global Asia* 9, no. 3 (2014): 84–91. Available at: "Southeast Asia and Sustainable Urbanization > Articles | (globalasia.org). Accessed on 16/11/2021.

¹² Thu nhập bình quân của Việt Nam khoảng 4,2 triệu đồng/người/tháng (baotainguyenmoitruong.vn), For the website of the General Office of Statistics in English, please visit <https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/homepage/>. Both accessed on 15 November 2021.

and a large dependency on the land they live on and the surrounding environment. Yet, only a small portion of respondents (3%) claimed they do not have or use a latrine. Most of them can get access to water sources within the range of 500 m – 1 km.

When looking at the occupation and sources of income, farming, livestock or animal husbandry, seasonal work (meaning temporary labour in construction, transportation or scrap metal collection, guarding duties, etc.) or forestry were among the most common sources of income.

WHAT IS THE HOUSEHOLD'S PRIMARY SOURCES OF INCOME?

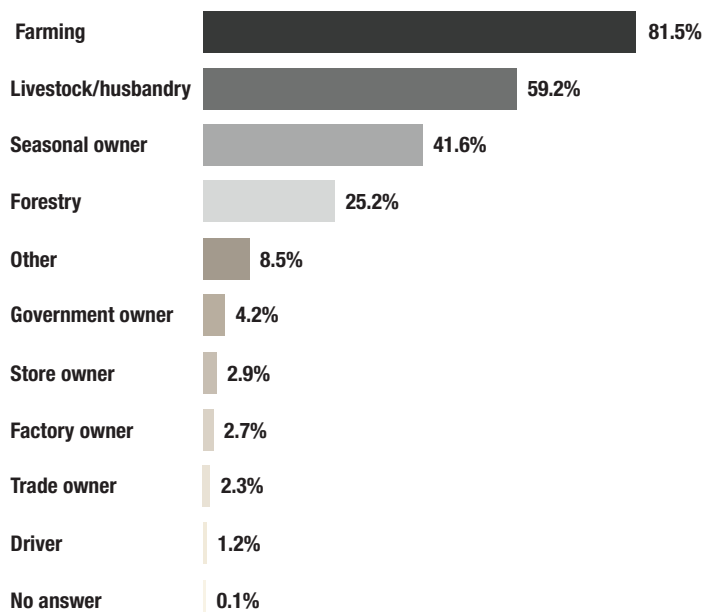


Figure 4: Primary source of income

The surveyors also asked respondents about the type of “shocks” they had experienced previously. A “shock” is a life experience that impacts someone and their household negatively either physically, emotionally, economically and/or sociologically.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOCKS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN YOUR LIFE

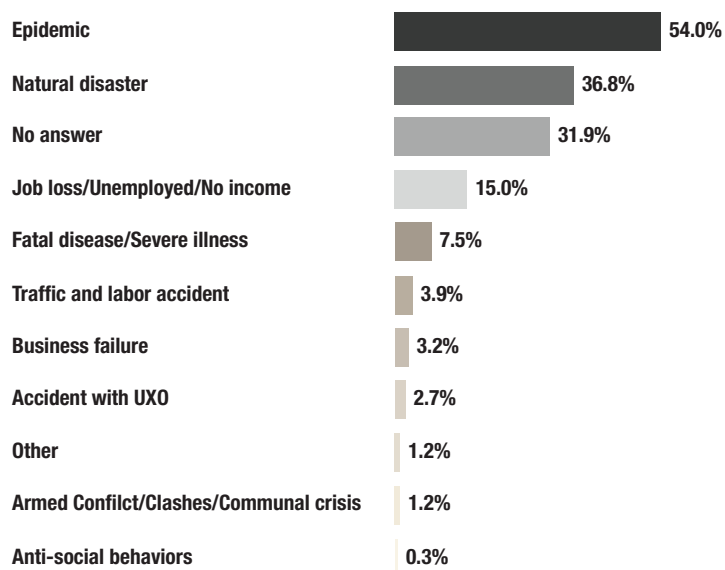


Figure 5: “Shocks” that the respondents (and their families) have experienced

Since the survey focused on ERW contamination, it is worth pointing out that 2.7% of respondents mentioned “Accidents with UXO” as a “shock”, meaning that around 27 out of the 1,001 sampled households are families of UXO victims or have witnessed/known the victims and/or accidents.

At least nine respondents confirmed that they were EO survivors or families of EO survivors. Six said they were amputated or disabled because of accidents, resulting in mobility difficulties and unemployment. As stated by these respondents, all accidents happened while working, i.e. while ploughing their farm, collecting scrap metal or trying to harvest explosives from UXOs for fishing. Although this figure is low compared to the total sample size collected, it suggests there is a larger possibility of encountering EO while working.

The average income of these households is 3,437,500 VND per month (equivalent to 148 USD), which is lower than the national average monthly income. Only two out of these eight respondents thought that their average income was sufficient to meet their basic needs and unavoidable expenditure in a sustainable manner. Notably, the impact of “shock” factors, including UXO accidents, increased over time as stated by five EO survivors, revealing (increasing) insecurity and vulnerability of EO victims and their families in times of uncertainty and crisis.

One last point to note is that, bearing in mind that the survey was conducted during a surge in COVID-19 cases, it is likely that the shock factors “Job lost/No income/Unemployment/Business failure” may result from the “Epidemic” answer, which was the most cited answer. Among nine households with EO victims mentioned in this section, only one family experienced job loss in relation to epidemic.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS SECTION:

- The average income is far below the Vietnamese average, but respondents are generally satisfied with this. The main occupations are farming, seasonal work or forestry, indicating a rural existence.
- The main factor for shocks in people’s lives are epidemics and natural disasters. The first is not surprising since the survey was conducted during an ongoing pandemic. People in these communities feel these shocks have increased over the years and cited more extreme weather, rain and climate change in general as the most common reasons for the increase.

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

Over 60% of respondents said they felt that explosive remnants of war (ERW) impact their household directly. This percentage varies across the communes, with Phuong Tien commune having a negative response rate of 20%, while in certain communities in Thanh Duc and Thanh Thuy the negative response rate was less than 5%. There was also a higher response rate from those who did not reply to the question or did not know.

DO YOU THINK UXO/ERW IMPACTS YOUR HOUSCHOLD DIRECTLY

Communities of Vi Xuyen district	Yes	No	Unknown	No answer
Phuong Tien	22.7%	8.9%	7.8%	2.7%
Thanh Duc	11.2%	1.9%	2.5%	0.5%
Thanh Thuy	29.4%	4.1%	6.6%	1.8%
GRAND TOTAL	63.2%	14.9%	16.9%	5.0%

Table 3: Impact of UXO/ERWs overall results

Communities of Vi Xuyen district	Yes	No	Unknown	No answer
Phuong Tien	53.9%	21.1%	18.5%	6.4%
Thanh Duc	69.6%	11.8%	15.5%	3.1%
Thanh Thuy	70.2%	9.8%	15.8%	4.3%

Table 4: Impact of UXO/ERWs per commune

This also correlates to positive response rates on having seen UXO/ERW items; those in the most isolated areas had a much higher positive response rate and were better at correctly identifying the items than those closer to urban settings. This is also the case for knowing the location of UXO/ERW items – the positive response rate varied widely from village to village, with certain villages not being able to respond at all about the location of items within walking distance and other villages having an overwhelming 89% responding positively to this question. It should also be stated that no notable trends were found regarding age or sex of the respondents; all groups had similar response rates.

Furthermore, when asked about awareness of any mines/ERW within walking distance of their villages, there was a 33% average response rate of people who said yes. When asked about knowing the exact place of these items, 71% of the respondents who answered positively to the previous question said they knew with certain confidence the exact location. This is important for future Non-Technical Survey and subsequent clearance. A large minority of these communities know where these items are and their local knowledge will be crucial in productive clearance.

About UXO/ERW, respondents demonstrated an overall high standard of know-how of what to do when encountering items. Many respondents know not to touch such items, mark them with locally-recognized markings and to stay away from them. That being said, there was a large variety of marking signs that respondents indicated to warn others from danger – indicating an absence in agreement on what warning signs are used.

To illustrate this point further, certain respondents stated that there have been no marking signs that were commonly known among their communities. Therefore, unintentionally, the signs might have drawn attention and triggered curiosity among onlookers, including children. Another common way of marking that was cited was by assigning a person to stay in a safe area nearby to warn others while another person goes to report the matter to the local authority. Other comments worth noting concerning markings were that the marked contaminated locations were sometimes far away from inhabited areas, whereas the ones which were known to the community were left unmarked.

“... I once saw mines five years ago, while grazing goats. I hung a shirt on the nearby branch of a tree as a warning sign so that people could see and stay away.”
 - a respondent in Lung Dooc village, Thanh Thuy

“I put a tree branch to mark the area [where I saw UXO]...”
 - a respondent in Giang Nam village, Thanh Thuy

There are more demonstrated gaps in knowledge and attitudes. Respondents were shown pictures of ERW and asked if they knew what the items were. Overall, a small majority knew the items and named subsequent safe actions in case they encounter such items.

Yet the large minority who did not know what the items were could not correctly identify them as ERW – with substantially more people incorrectly identifying them, or not being able to respond to the question.

“I often go to different places looking for scrap metal, no matter how far the place may be. But I also do farming because that is my priority. One day, [on my way to collecting scrap metal] I found a big white box and three red round-shaped things. It was only 9 AM, but I thought I could call it a day. An old man saw what I brought back and said that those things were deadly and would explode if I threw them. I was scared and threw it away by a bamboo bush nearby. Now I know that I have to stay away and warn others if I see those things.”
 - a respondent in Thanh Son village, Thanh Thuy commune

IF AN ITEM WAS SEEN

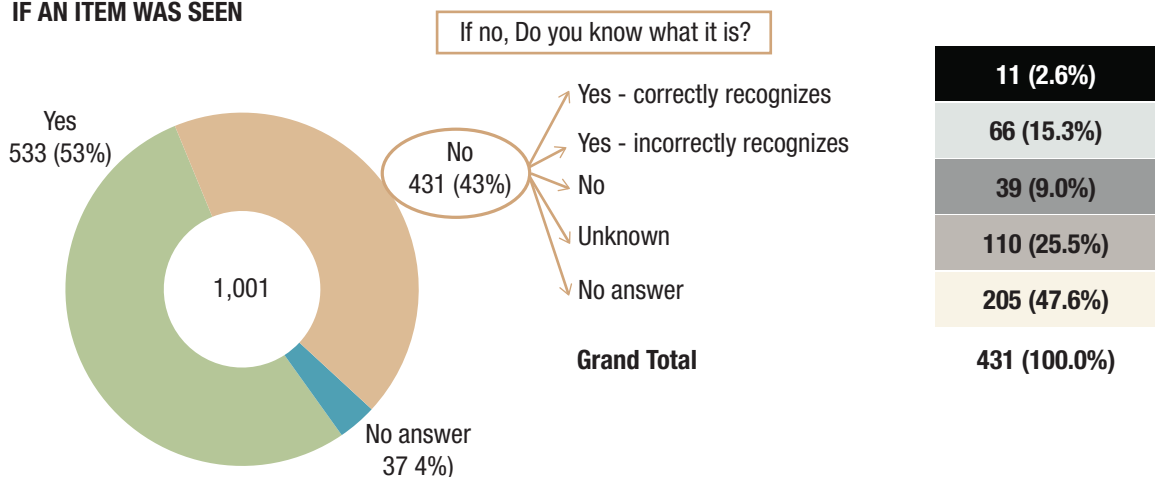


Figure 6: Respondent’s recognition of EOs by showing pictures

Additionally, there was an average response rate of “unknown” and “no answer” of 32% to questions regarding knowledge of ERW contamination. This substantially increased to over 50% on questions regarding marking of ERW.

Turning to risky behaviours, enumerators noted that some respondents demonstrate risky behaviour in handling the UXOs they found. On insisting that there was no explosive left inside the shell or UXOs would not explode, some said to have tried to neutralize UXOs by themselves or took them home to harvest explosives for fishing or for selling them as scrap metal, while some others kept them as souvenirs.



Lastly, 70% of the respondents stated they knew which authority to contact when they encounter mines/ERW, yet only 27% of the respondents could name the authority. In addition to this, 70% of respondents stated they have never contacted the authorities for a problem relating to UXOs. Contrasting this to over half of the respondents having seen mines/ERW, we can conclude that there is a discrepancy in the local reporting mechanism. One respondent explicitly stated that they would not call the authorities if they found EOs “because the authorities are too far from those locations” and he believed that the community could neutralize the items themselves.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS SECTION:

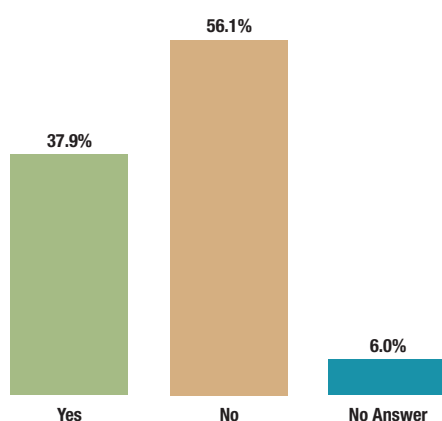
- Trying to understand how people perceived different shocks in their lives, we can conclude that ERW are considered as a constant, not an acute “shock” to be dealt with.
- Those living closer to urbanized settings feel less affected by ERW – there seems to be an increased positive response in villages further away and an increase in negative response closer to urban centres.
- A small group of individuals in communities know with certain confidence where ERW can be found, indicating that a strong community-based focus is needed in the non-technical survey process of clearance.
- Though there is a high level of knowledge, there are some notable gaps in terms of education, from basic recognition of items to knowing the ways items are marked.
- There is no real consensus in the different communities as to what marking to use.
- There was a high response rate concerning actions and respondents in these communities have a clear idea what to do and who to go to when encountering ERW.
- Therefore, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) in this region should focus on recognizing and marking items and setting up effective local reporting mechanisms.

DEALING WITH DECEASED PEOPLE LINKED TO THE CONFLICT AND SURVIVORS OF EO ACCIDENTS

When asked whether they knew anyone who had been killed or injured by mines/ERW, the response rate was overall 37% positive, with higher response rates in smaller communities. It should be noted that official statistics do not correlate to this higher response rate, which has recorded lower accident rates than the 37% positive response rate, with the smallest communities recording a one out of 125 statistic. A possible explanation for this is because smaller communities are more intertwined, i.e. more random samplers know the same person who had an accident.

There was a strong response on follow-up of survivors of EO accidents, with 91% responding they believed the survivor received medical treatment and continued support from others. The most named supporters were the authorities or state support, signalling a strong presence and responsibility of the state. The most cited form of support was cash or gifts, followed by support for medical expenses. Respondents stated that monthly support to EO survivors with disabilities by the government, particularly the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA), was 4,80,000 VND (equivalent to 20 USD) which is almost ten times lower than the average monthly income per capita of the country. Also notable is that psychosocial support and social inclusion was the least cited (by only 6% of respondents).

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN KILLED/INJURED BY A MINE/ERW?



SUPPORT PROVIDED TO KILLED/INJURED BY A MINE/ERW

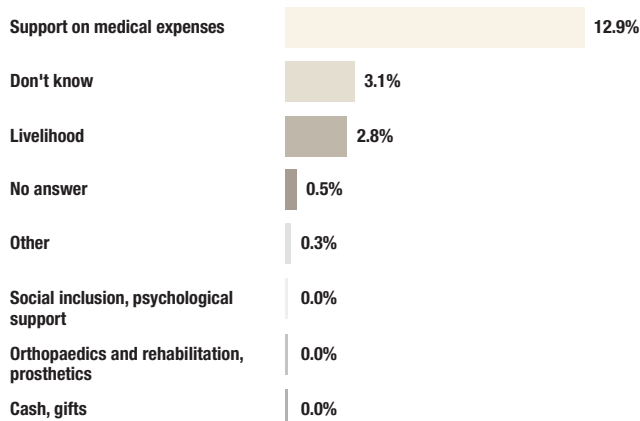


Figure 7 & 8: EO victims in the community and types of received assistance

TWO CONTRASTING CASES OF EO SURVIVORS, LIVING IN THE SAME COMMUNE

Let's take a closer look at two individual respondents. One respondent mentioned that apart from the monthly income, her husband, an EO survivor, received a prosthetic leg after the accident, which helped her family to overcome and reduce the difficulties that the "shock" of "Accident with UXO" had caused. Average monthly income of the family is 8,000,000 VND (or 347 USD) and all four members of the family are of working age.

Another respondent, whose husband is also an EO survivor and was amputated, said that the difficulties caused by UXO accidents had increased recently because her spouse could not work. The family has six members, four of working age (18 – 59 years old) including the husband, with an average monthly income of 2,500,00 VND (equivalent to 108 USD). The contrast of these two cases demonstrates the pivotal role that physical rehabilitation and social inclusion can play in strengthening EO survivors and their families.

Most respondents also stated that the person they knew were adults at the time of the accident, with only 11 out of 379 respondents stating that the person who got injured or killed by ERW was a child at the time of the incident. They also almost unanimously responded that they were farming or cultivating crops at the time of the incident and that they thought the person was in a dangerous area.

On the issue of those killed during conflicts, there was a very low response rate about knowing any of the places where the deceased were buried. Most responses were negative and a large majority stated not to know, with few people not willing to answer the question. Furthermore, there was an even higher negative response rate on asking if they had seen any human remains on their land or in their community, with almost 69% responding “no”. However, there was a high response rate to the question of what the community and authorities do with artefacts at the areas where unclaimed human remains are found – with most respondents stating that a specialized unit deals with this. Very few respondents stated nothing gets done, again indicating a strong state presence.

I have not encountered the remains of missing in action. In the past, remains of missing in action were all recovered by the military and their families... Even if I find any remains, I must inform the local authority of the commune to recover them to a designated location like the designated cemetery of Vi Xuyen district. It is brotherhood, I cannot leave them there if I find them.

- a respondent in Giang Nam, Thanh Thuy

MAIN CONCLUSIONS IN THIS SECTION:

- The state response is seemingly strong towards survivors of EO accidents and their medical needs in particular.
- The areas of support that may need strengthening in these communities are support for livelihoods, physical rehabilitation and social inclusion and psychosocial support.
- There is indeed a presence of people deceased from the conflicts in these communities, but a low response rate of sightings of them or willingness to answer this question. It remains a sensitive subject to these communities.

THEMES

This section highlights analysis on particular themes that were chosen based on the results of the data with the aim of showing certain trends.

LIVING WITH ERW CONTAMINATION

As mentioned previously, most of the respondents think their household is directly impacted by ERW and the survey also highlighted a deeper psychosocial impact. The survey also asked respondents if they feared accidents like this occurring to themselves or loved ones, with 90% responding “yes”, and 80% stating this fear is still present today. Fears were expressed more deeply by families with members who are UXO/mine victims. The elderly were afraid that younger generations would be unaware of the risks because they had never seen or been cautioned about the dangers. The survey, however, did not go into details of the coping mechanisms of these respondents to overcome their fear.

In addition to this, respondents were also asked if they thought they could become a victim of a mine/ERW incident in the future, with 66% responding they thought it was

likely or possible and only 16% stating it was impossible or unlikely. Another 15% declined to answer or did not know. This result also demonstrates that respondents were reluctant to answer questions on the perception on being EO victims themselves. Combined with the knowledge these communities have on ERW, it can be assumed that even decades after hostilities have ceased, fear still impacts the everyday lives of people in these communities.

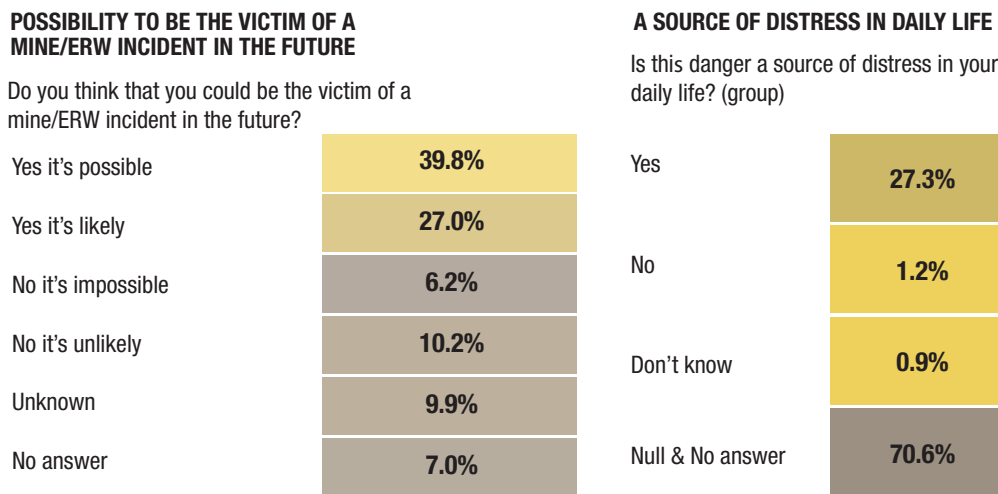


Figure 9 & 10: Fear of being EO victims

In terms of who they feel is most at risk in their communities, most of the respondents stated men and farmers or shepherds are at highest risk of mines/ERW. A few stated that fetching water or working on rice fields were also unsafe behaviours. They also stated overwhelmingly that people go into areas that are suspected of UXO because of economic necessity. Another finding worth noting is that most respondents feel that others are not demonstrating safe behaviour towards mines/ERW – with a 79% response rate.

To illustrate this point, there was a respondent who stated to have gone for scrap metal collection because of difficult living conditions, and then had a UXO accident. Survey results do not reflect the likelihood of increase in risk-taking behaviours when looking for alternative sources of income as a coping mechanism. However, there is a correlation between this anecdotal data and respondents' indication of the motivation behind risk-taking behaviour. Furthermore, looking at previous qualitative evidence from those who have had EO accidents while working, the target population for EORE in this sample is abundantly clear.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS SECTION:

- The psychological impact of mines/ERW is still felt acutely in these communities, with most people continuing to live in fear. This goes to show that clearance not only has a physical and socio-economic impact but will also have a significant psychological impact.
- Corresponding to statistics mentioned earlier, communities feel that men, especially farmers and shepherds, are predominantly at risk of getting into an accident with mines/ERW. Thus, risk awareness efforts should focus on targeting this population group.

CLIMATE CHANGE

As stated previously, respondents stated “natural disasters” as their second highest concern for a crisis event or “shock”, after an epidemic. Respondents also mentioned they feel increase in extreme weather, more rain, landslides and flooding. In fact, “climate

change” was mentioned by several respondents even though the surveyors did not mention this in their question. Furthermore, 16% of respondents stated they sometimes find ERW after flooding or landslides, with a small number stating this happens on an annual basis.

DO YOU FIND ERW AFTER FLOODING SEASON/LANDSLIDE?

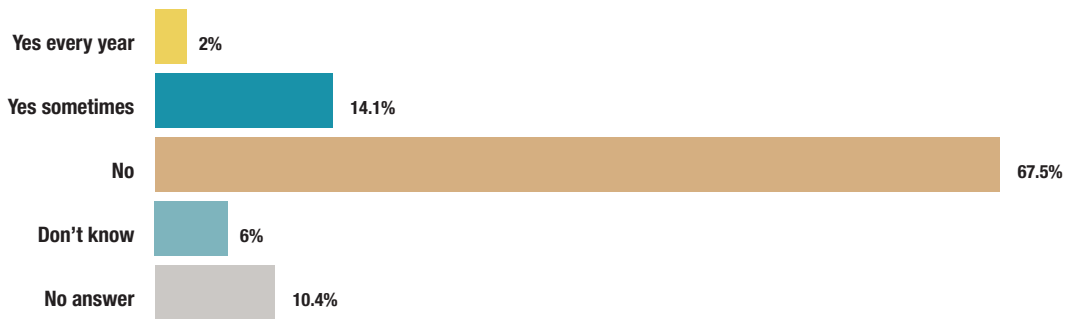


Figure 11: Finding ERW after flooding

More importantly, we can anticipate an increase in risky behaviour and accidents because of the impact of climate change. This is based on the response to the causes of risky behaviour being predominantly an economic necessity, with farmers and agricultural workers most at risk of ERW contamination. With the changing climate conditions, such as an increase in flooding or landslides in the region as compared to previous years, agricultural land and infrastructure was destroyed. It can be assumed that this will have an impact in pushing people towards more unsafe behaviours regarding UXO in the future, feeling the increasing economic need because of loss of safe lands. Additionally, as seen in the socio-economic section of the report, there is a large dependency upon safe routes and paths to fetch water, which can become UXO contaminated because of flooding and landslides, thus increasing the risk of accidents.

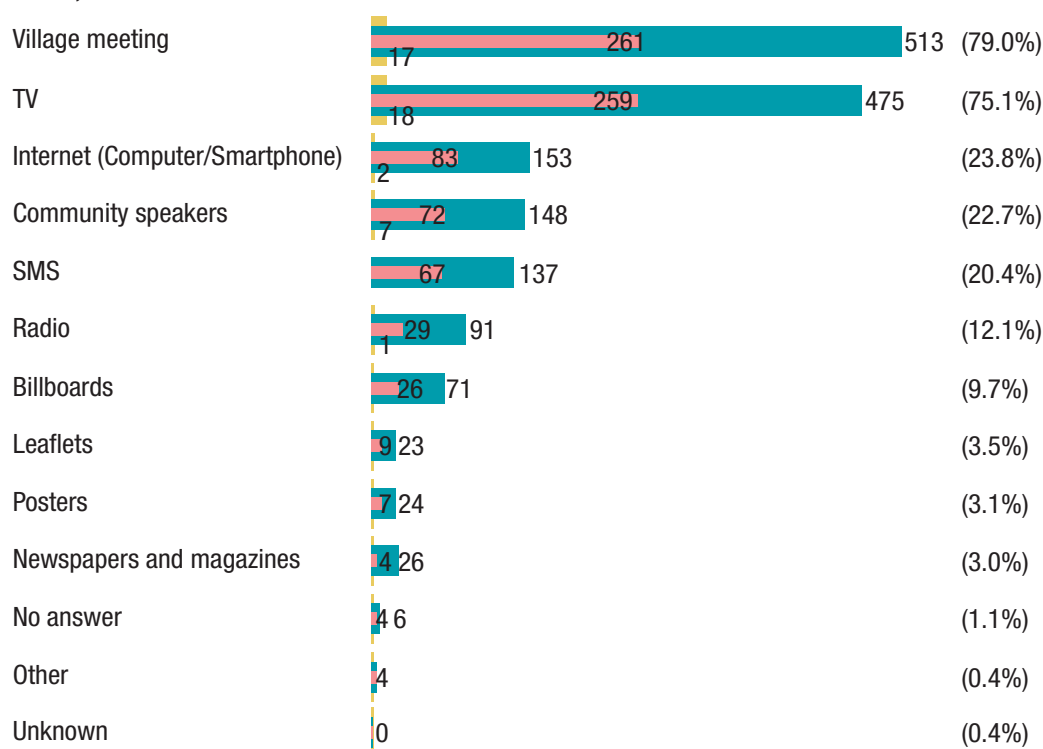
MAIN CONCLUSION FROM THIS SECTION:

- An increase in unsafe behaviour and possible accidents because of climate change impacts can be anticipated in these communes based on the survey results.
- The effects of climate change are now also felt by these communities, which in turn impacts their resilience and ability to handle crises. This is at the forefront of their worries and efforts for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and sustainable agriculture and forestry should be taken more seriously for these communities to survive and thrive in the future.

INFORMATION SHARING AND TARGETING

The survey also looked at how people consume information and the sources they gather their news and information from. The results are somewhat surprising, and it should be mentioned that these remain constant across different age groups, genders or ethnicities. Firstly, television and village meetings were among the highest mentioned sources of news, updates and information, with a 75% and 79% response rate. This is followed by a much lower mention of internet, community speakers and radio. Posters, leaflets and magazines and newspapers were the least mentioned, with an average 3% mention.

NEWS, UPDATES AND INFORMATION SOURCES



Sex of respondent

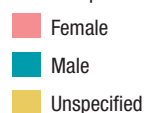


Figure 12: Ways of receiving news, updates and information

Furthermore, the survey also asked who is the most influential person in the respondents' life. Spouses, children and parents were the most popular answer. This was followed by the village chief, neighbours, other respected individuals in the community and peers or friends. What is notable is that teachers got a very low response rate, this may be because the age groups predominantly interviewed were 18 years and above.

MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON

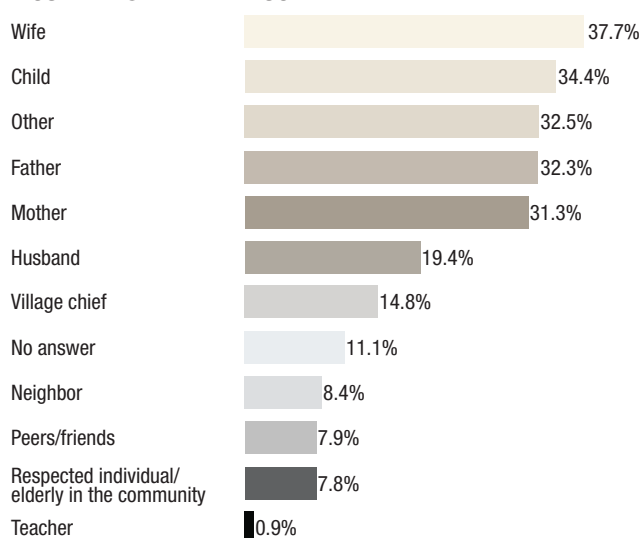


Figure 13: Most influential person

When looking at sharing information about COVID-19, 99% stated they have received information on protective measures, but 96% also stated they would like to receive more information. This percentage is a lot lower when it comes to information about mines/ERW, with 63% stating they had received information about mines/ERW and the dangers of these items. The most mentioned actors to have told them are the local authorities, community leaders and friends.

In terms of internet access and smartphone use, over half of the respondents stated they had internet access, with 60% using their smartphone. In terms of frequency of using social media, less than half of the respondents stated they use it every day, while about 37% stated they did not use this at all. Facebook and Zalo¹³ were among the most popular social media platforms mentioned. A possible explanation for this comparatively low usage could be the availability of telecommunications network, but also the way respondents use smartphones or internet information, which can be assumed is primarily personal and for leisure. Thus, when it comes to vital public information, people in these communities prefer to hear this through traditional means and official sources.

Tied to this statement, the survey also continued to ask if respondents would like to receive risk awareness information about mines/ERW, with an overall 91% positive response rate. When asked whom they would like to receive this from, responses varied, yet overall preference was the village chief (64% mention). This was followed by the Red Cross, military officials and other organizations, largely tied to official authorities.

PERFERABLE SOURCE TO RECEIVE RISK AWARENESS INFORMATION ABOUT UXO/ERW

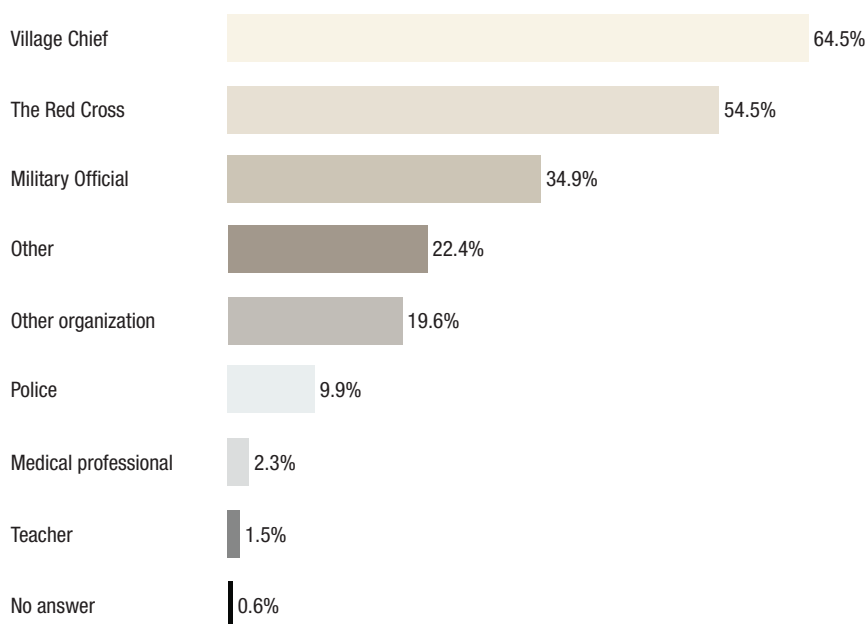


Figure 14: Preferred source person of information on risk awareness

MAIN CONCLUSION FROM THIS SECTION:

- Though social media is active and present in these communities, it is not the most popular way to receive news and information.
- Risk awareness efforts in this region should focus on sharing information through more traditional means, such as community leaders and village meetings or via television. Posters, leaflets and magazine articles should also be avoided as a primary means of sharing information.

¹³ A widely used social media platform in Viet Nam.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This comprehensive survey covers many different aspects of how communities in Ha Giang Province deal with ERW contamination. From the analysis above, a picture emerges of communities that have lived alongside mines/ERW for decades and have built a certain resilience towards them. That being said, people still face a constant fear that an incident might occur to them or their loved ones, which is not necessarily acute but does play into their decision-making and how they view others in the community. Further support is needed in risk awareness efforts to address issues such as basic recognition, marking items and local reporting mechanisms in order to improve people's knowledge and attitude towards mines/ERW.

The following recommendations can be made to improve life for people in the Ha Giang region:

- These communities' primary sources of income are almost entirely rural and agricultural, and efforts for sustainable agriculture and forestry and DRR need to be increased if community resilience is going to endure the growing effects of climate change. If no response geared towards DRR and incorporating risk awareness methodologies is to take place, climate change will inevitably lead to an increase in unsafe behaviours.
- Risk awareness efforts on mines/ERW should target men, in particular farmers and shepherds, using community-based methods of sharing information such as village meetings and gatherings. Involvement of influential people in the community, such as village chiefs and influential groups, such as family members, should be considered.
- Social media can be considered a useful tool for sharing information, but should not be its primary source as a large minority of people still do not use it effectively.
- As the presence of (known and unknown) human remains continues to be an issue that is largely unspoken of in these communities, more efforts need to be put into uncovering the extent, impact and response of the those who died as a result of the conflicts in this region.
- Support for survivors of EO incidents can be expanded in the areas of social inclusion and psychosocial support, livelihoods, prosthetics/orthotics and mobility devices as well as longer-term physical rehabilitation.

The conclusions and recommendations above are made based on the available data, with its prescribed limitations

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