

# Hazardous Ground

Cluster Munitions and UXO in the Lao PDR



# Foreword

More cluster munitions were used in the Lao PDR than in any other country in the world. Nearly a third of them failed to explode and are still on the ground across the country. These unexploded bombies, as they are called locally, constitute the majority of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) threat in our country. We in the Lao PDR know all too well the individual, community and national impact of these deadly remnants of war which is why the Government of Lao PDR has participated with enthusiasm in the process to ban cluster munitions. The Lao PDR was the second country to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December 2008, after the host country Norway, and ratified it four months later in March 2009.

The adoption of this Convention by the international community shows great commitment towards eradication of the cluster munitions legacy, and will help ensure such weapons are never used again. We do not want other countries and peoples to suffer as we have, and so we encourage all governments to consider signing and ratifying this very important treaty. To demonstrate our ongoing commitment, the Government of the Lao PDR has offered to host the first meeting of States Party to the Convention within one year of it entering into force.

I would like to acknowledge the generous support provided to the UXO Sector by many donor governments and organisations since 1995. I would also like to acknowledge the critical technical and coordination assistance of the United Nations. Without the support and commitment of the international community, the work undertaken would not be possible. Partnerships are invaluable to the continuing development of the Lao PDR as, together, we work to end the deadly legacy of cluster munitions and UXO.



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Chairman of the NRA  
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**Hidden within the beauty of the Lao landscape are deadly reminders of a war many decades past.**

People across the Lao PDR live every day with the ongoing threat of bombs that failed to explode during the Indochina conflict (1964-1973). Widespread aerial bombing combined with intense ground battles during that war left 14 of the country's 17 provinces affected by cluster munitions and unexploded ordnance.

Today, ten provinces in the Lao PDR are still severely contaminated by these weapons, which injure and kill an estimated three hundred people every year.

*BLU-3b bombs unexploded and caught in cluster munition canister*

# What are UXO and cluster munitions?

## UXO

Unexploded ordnance, or UXO, are explosive weapons that did not detonate when they were fired, dropped, launched or projected, and still pose the risk of exploding.<sup>1</sup> UXO contamination in the Lao PDR consists of large bombs, rockets, grenades, artillery munitions, mortars, landmines, and cluster munitions as well as cluster submunitions.

## Cluster Munitions

A cluster munition is a conventional weapon that consists of an outer canister that is designed to disperse or release smaller bombs (submunitions or bomblets) that weigh less than 20 kilograms each<sup>2</sup>. These submunitions are known throughout the Lao PDR as 'bombies'. The cluster munition is dropped from a plane or launched from the ground into the air, where it ejects the bombies over a wide area. Bombies have a high failure rate leaving about 30 percent unexploded and scattered across a wide area after deployment.

When disturbed, even decades later, bombies and other UXO can explode, injuring and killing innocent civilians as they carry out their daily activities.



*Unexploded BLU-26 bomblet*



<sup>1</sup> International Mine Action Standards 04.10, January 2008  
<sup>2</sup> The Convention on Cluster Munitions, Article 2.2



# The Lao People's Democratic Republic

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a small landlocked nation bordered by Vietnam, China, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia. Of the population of approximately six million, almost 80 percent live in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> There are 49 officially recognised ethnic groups, many with their own distinct cultures and languages or dialects.

The United Nations classifies the Lao PDR as a 'least developed country' or LDC. Approximately 40 percent of the population is malnourished and every second child living in rural areas is chronically malnourished.<sup>4</sup> Just under half of the population does not have access to clean water sources, 30 percent of people over the age of 15 are illiterate and the average life expectancy is 63 years.<sup>5</sup> The largest sector in the national economy is agriculture, primarily based on subsistence production which is adversely affected by the widespread UXO presence. As well as causing deaths and injuries, UXO continues to impact on the lives of Lao people across the country by contributing to food insecurity<sup>6</sup>, limiting access to markets and delaying development initiatives.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

<sup>4</sup> World Food Programme, Lao PDR Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, May 2008

<sup>5</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

<sup>6</sup> World Food Programme, Lao PDR Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, May 2008

# When the bombs fell



Mr Chansay Manivong  
Paek District, Xiengkhuang Province

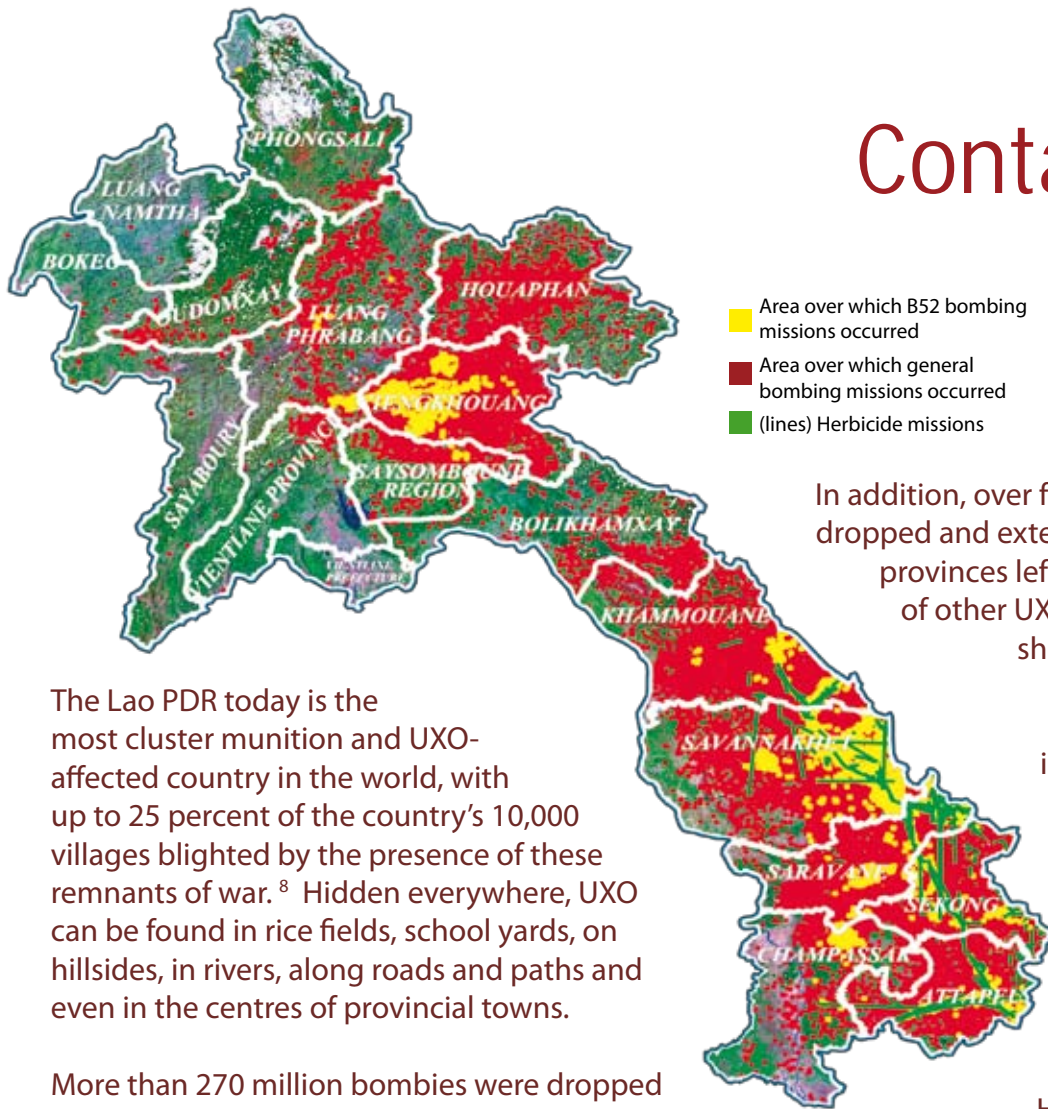
*"I remember when the bombs were dropped on this field. We watched the big bombs drop from the wings of the aeroplanes.*

*I became very poor because of the bomb contamination in my land. There were too many bombs left to count."*

During the Indochina conflict, Laos was the site of extensive aerial bombings and concentrated ground battles. Warfare primarily took place over the eastern side of the country bordering Vietnam, which hosted part of the wartime supply route between north and south Vietnam. Throughout the period 1964 to 1973 more than 500,000 bombing missions dropped over two million tons of ordnance on the country<sup>7</sup> making it, per capita, the most heavily bombed nation in the world.

<sup>7</sup> Based on records released by the US Air Force in 1999. Unrecorded ordnance drops and yet to be released documentation of further recorded missions over the country could increase the figures reported here.

# UXO Contamination Today



In addition, over four million large bombs were dropped and extensive ground battles in some provinces left behind substantial amounts of other UXO, including mortars, artillery shells, landmines and grenades.

The Lao PDR today is the most cluster munition and UXO-affected country in the world, with up to 25 percent of the country's 10,000 villages blighted by the presence of these remnants of war.<sup>8</sup> Hidden everywhere, UXO can be found in rice fields, school yards, on hillsides, in rivers, along roads and paths and even in the centres of provincial towns.

More than 270 million bombs were dropped over Laos during the nine years of conflict. With an average failure rate of 30 percent, it is estimated that as many as 80 million of them failed to explode, remaining scattered across the country until today.<sup>9</sup>

Defoliants and herbicides, including Agent Orange, were also used in large quantities during the conflict. Today, large areas of land remain unproductive, chemicals continue to pollute food and water bodies, and children are born with related disabilities. However, little is known about the full and on-going impact of the chemical warfare on civilian populations in the Lao PDR.

<sup>8</sup> Handicap International Belgium, Living with UXO: National Survey on the Socio-Economic Impact of UXO in Lao PDR (for the Government of Lao PDR, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and UXO LAO) 1997, <http://www.handicap-international.org.uk>

<sup>9</sup> Handicap International Belgium, Living with UXO: National Survey on the Socio-Economic Impact of UXO in Lao PDR (for the Government of Lao PDR, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and UXO LAO) 1997, <http://www.handicap-international.org.uk>

# Preventing Development

The presence of unexploded cluster munitions and UXO creates a vast and continuing burden which falls mainly on the rural population and the environment of the Lao PDR. Land is inaccessible, agricultural expansion is constrained, forest management is disrupted, livestock and wildlife are killed, and there is continual insecurity. The cost of implementing a development project in affected areas is increased when land needs to be cleared before the project can begin, and clearance can also create significant project delays. Potentially rich agricultural land is left unused in contaminated areas due to the risks of exploding a bombie or UXO, which reduces the potential prosperity of affected rural communities. Often, the pressure of dwindling food supplies and low cash incomes ends up forcing people to cultivate the land, putting them at risk of being injured by UXO.

As a result, economic opportunities in tourism, hydroelectric power, mining, forestry and many other areas of activity considered to be main engines of growth for the Lao PDR, are restricted, complicated and made more expensive. For example, in addition to almost one hundred million dollars contributed in overseas development assistance to addressing the UXO problems since 1996, the mining company Lane Xang Minerals Limited has been spending up to 3 million dollars per year, over more than a decade, clearing UXO to gain safe access to minerals.

The effects of UXO and cluster munitions impede the Government of the Lao PDR's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, Lao PDR Sector Memorandum: Priorities for Rural Infrastructure Development, Agriculture and Environment Operations Division, Washington DC, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> The National Regulatory Authority has identified approximately \$91,000,000 contributed to the UXO sector since 1996 but as donations have often been in-kind or records have not been held centrally it is impossible to obtain exact overall figures.



# Deadly Ground

*"My oldest child, my 12 year old boy, was killed by the explosion. Two of my other children were also injured. They couldn't have known the bombie was there hiding in the ground. There were nine children involved in the accident. Two died immediately, one soon after and the fourth while in hospital. The five others all have scars from the flying pieces of metal."*

Mrs Keolamon, Sepone District, Savannakhet Province.

One afternoon in January 2008, nine children went to play in the fields close to their village in Savannakhet Province. The area was pockmarked with bomb craters, a legacy of the aerial bombing that took place over their village during the Indochina war. Four of the boys decided to hunt for crabs, using a shovel to dig them out of the ground. They didn't know that a BLU-26 bombie was hidden beneath the ground. When the shovel hit the bombie it exploded, and all four boys were killed.



BLU-26 bombie

Mrs Keolamon,  
Savannakhet Province

# New Victims of an Old War

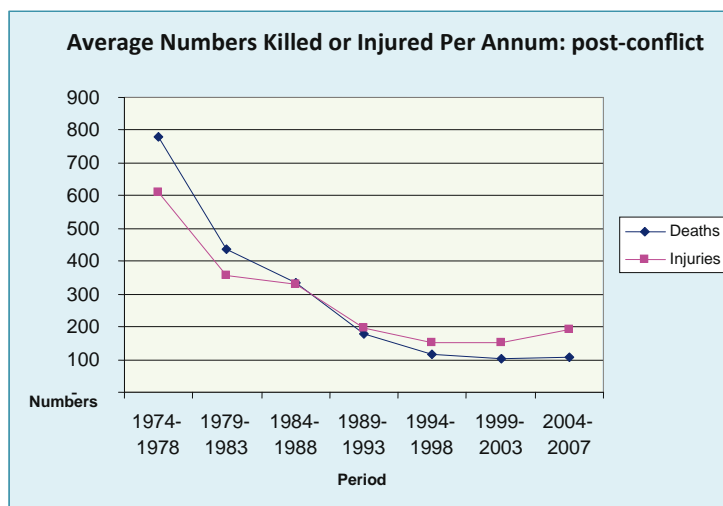
Since the end of the Indochina conflict, more than 22,000 people in the Lao PDR have fallen victim to UXO and bombies, almost half of whom died. Even now, one person is killed or injured almost every day. The Lao PDR accounts for the highest proportion of all confirmed cluster munitions casualties in the world.

During 2008, the National Regulatory Authority conducted the Lao National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents. This has yielded details of more than 50,000 UXO casualties to have occurred between 1964 and 2007. Results from the ongoing data collection and analysis are expected to reveal that, of these, more than 30,000 people were killed or injured during the conflict and 20,000 since the conflict ended. The survey also highlights that the proportion of children involved in accidents has markedly increased over time. During the war, just over 20% of casualties were children. Now, that figure has risen to 40%. Those innocents born decades after the conflict ended are increasingly becoming its victims.

Over the years, the number of people killed or injured has dropped to about 300 annually. Alarmingly though, in recent times there has been a marked increase in the annual casualty figures, probably attributable to a scrap metal industry that encourages people to gather UXO. Positively, the ratio of those killed to injured has improved, with fewer people now dying after a UXO accident.

The survey results show a great prevalence of early, wartime victims in the overall totals. It also reveals that half of all victims were in a very passive relationship to the accident; that is they were bystanders, spectators, or passersby at the time of the explosion.

The legacy of the war requires provision of a range of support services including emergency medical care, physical, psychological and vocational rehabilitation and support for small business start-ups. In the



Lao PDR, this is often not available. Treatment of survivors places a heavy burden on the country's overtaxed medical facilities, and on the families and communities of survivors. Those injured can no longer work at their old jobs: they and their families – as well as the families of those who died – need help long after the accident occurred. At the village level, injury and death place a burden on the whole community.

### Loss of life and limb

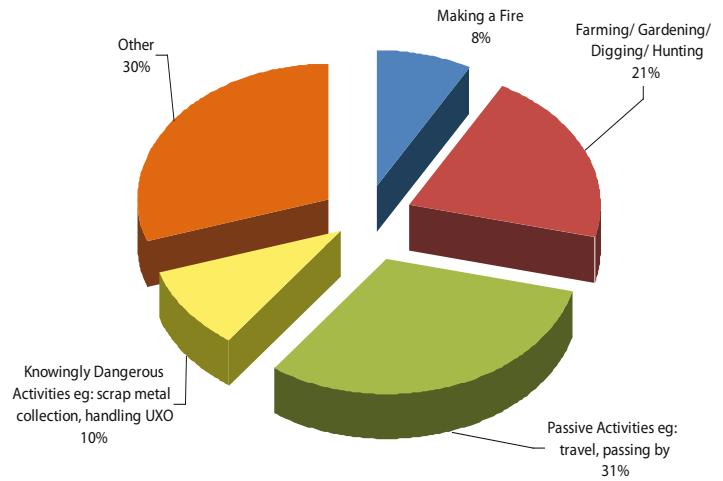
The most common injuries victims sustain from a UXO explosion include loss of a limb, blindness, hearing loss, shrapnel wounds, and internal shockwave injuries.

In many remote and often mountainous rural areas, with poor roads and little access to transportation, fast access to health care is impossible. Many health facilities are unable to provide saline drips, let alone blood transfusions: as a result, blood loss is often the cause of severe injury and death following a UXO accident. In the vast majority of cases, whatever the injury sustained, survivors and their families face a long, painful and costly recovery.

### Lao National UXO Victim and Accident Survey

Numbers of UXO casualties are decreasing, decade-on-decade, as a result of greater understanding amongst the rural population, UXO clearance in highly affected areas, some emergency health-care provision, and improved health-care services.

Early survey analysis is offering these and other insights. The survey is a crucial tool in creating a better understanding of UXO impact, defining places where clearance is vital, directing awareness activities to villages most at risk, and identifying those in need of a wide range of assistance. The full benefits of the survey will start to be available in 2009, as necessary actions to meet the needs of survivors, their families and communities are more clearly defined.



Activities undertaken at time of UXO accident

# Hidden Since the War

In April 2008, Mr Viengkeo Kavongsone's wife Van and their three children were clearing a rainwater ditch around their house. As she shovelled a pile of earth, Ms Van struck a BLU-26 bombie, which detonated. She and her nine year old daughter Phetsida were both peppered with deep shrapnel wounds to the upper torso, face and legs. Her eldest son, Soulideth, received shrapnel wounds to his body and face and he may yet lose his sight. Her youngest son, six year old Bounma, was closest to the bombie when it exploded. He was killed instantly, his body thrown six meters from the ditch.

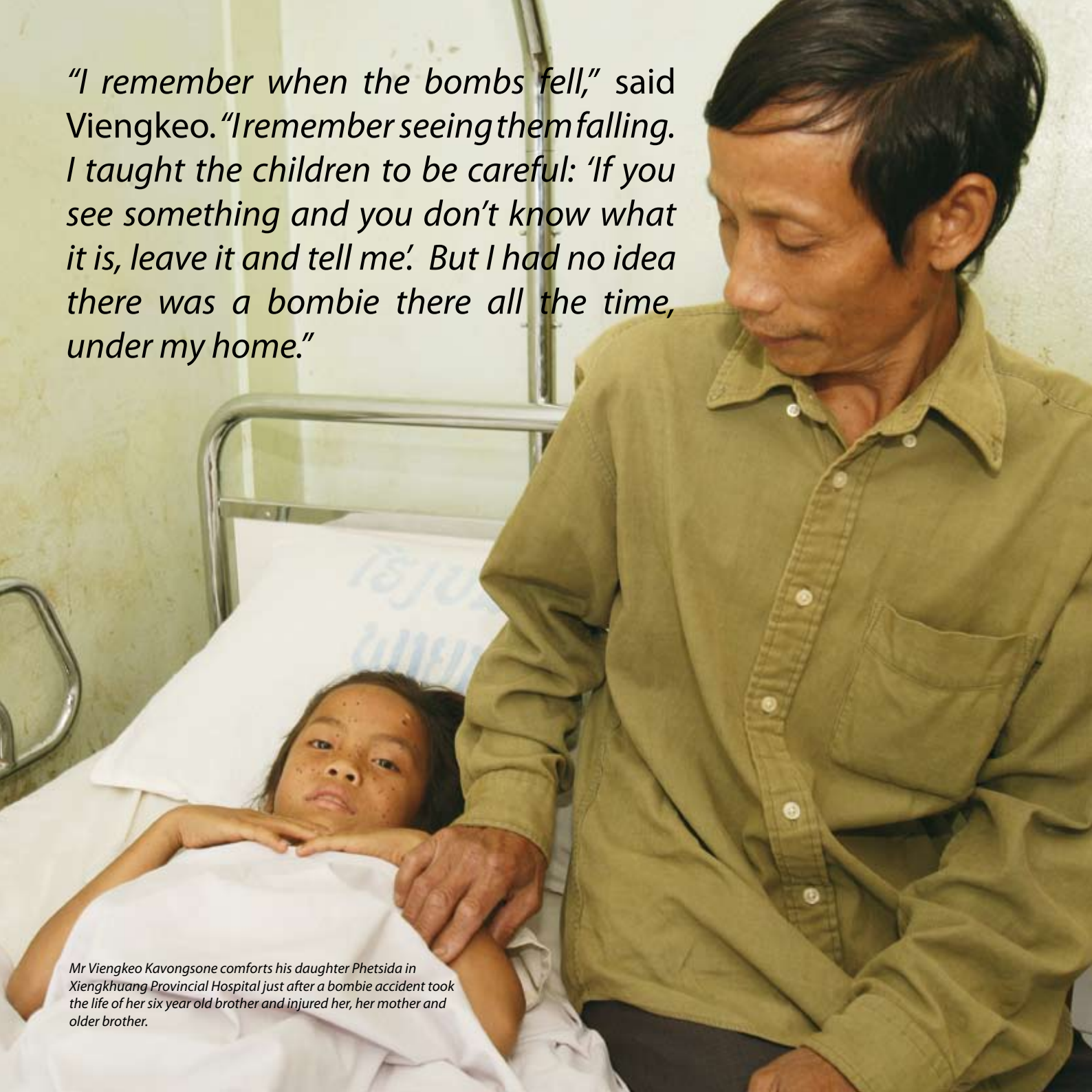
Mr Viengkeo was not at home at the time of the explosion and the village head and other neighbours rushed to get him. According to Lao custom, Bounma's funeral had to take place quickly. The village split into two groups, with one attending the little boy's funeral and another group accompanying Mr Viengkeo to Xiengkhuang Provincial Hospital, 50 kilometres away, to look after his wife and surviving children.

While comforting his daughter in hospital, Mr Viengkeo said, *"I was very shocked when I was told about what happened to my family. I never thought there were any bombs around the house because I have lived there for so long, since 1976, and I've never seen any there."*



*"I remember when the bombs fell," said Viengkeo. "I remember seeing them falling. I taught the children to be careful: 'If you see something and you don't know what it is, leave it and tell me'. But I had no idea there was a bombie there all the time, under my home."*

*Mr Viengkeo Kavongsone comforts his daughter Phetsida in Xiengkhuang Provincial Hospital just after a bombie accident took the life of her six year old brother and injured her, her mother and older brother.*



# A National Approach

**There are a number of operators working across a range of areas throughout the Lao PDR to reduce the impact of cluster munitions and UXO on communities and individuals, and to enable infrastructure and economic development to take place. They include government institutions, international non-government and local organisations, as well as commercial clearance companies.**

## National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action sector

The National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action sector in the Lao PDR (NRA) is a public institution of the Government of the Lao PDR. It is responsible for the coordination of all operators in the country working on the impact of UXO. Established in 2004 and operational since April 2006, the NRA now plays a pivotal role in the overall management and coordination of the UXO/mine action sector. The NRA was established by the Government of the Lao PDR in partnership with UNDP and is governed by a board made up of representatives from nine ministries of the Government of the Lao PDR.





JMAS advisor to UXO Lao

## UXO LAO

UXO Lao is the national clearance operator of the Lao PDR. Established by the Government in 1996 with the support of UNDP, UNICEF and other partners, UXO Lao works in the nine most affected provinces of the country.

UXO Lao responds to villagers' reports of UXO; it marks and destroys the items, clears sections of land for communities and development projects and conducts educational sessions on the dangers of UXO and cluster munitions. It has also established a network of village volunteers to whom it provides training and support. Village volunteers visit villagers in remote areas to discuss the UXO problems faced by their respective communities and to spread UXO awareness and safety messages.

UXO Lao also supports the work of a number of development agencies by clearing land for their projects at no cost to them. Land cleared for development agencies since 2007 has been utilised for new schools, roads, irrigation systems and agricultural land.

Since beginning operations, UXO Lao has: reached more than 1.7 million people through over 7,000 visits to affected villages to educate about the dangers of UXO and how people can protect themselves; cleared more than 13,700 hectares of land; performed over 16,000 roving tasks, and cleared more than 840,000 items of UXO including some 395,000 bombies.

UNDP provides quality assurance and administrative, technical and financial support to UXO Lao and the NRA. Technical advisors are attached to both institutions, to build national capacities for critical functions.



# Working to End the Suffering

Through the generosity of numerous donors, international humanitarian UXO/mine action operators conduct a range of activities to reduce the impacts of UXO on affected communities throughout the Lao PDR.

## International Humanitarian UXO/Mine Action Operators

- Association for Aid and Relief, Japan: operates as an implementing partner of the NRC in victim assistance
- ArmorGroup North America
- Cooperative Prosthetic and Orthotic Enterprise (COPE): operates as an implementing partner of the NRC in victim assistance
- Handicap International Belgium (HIB): victim assistance, clearance and risk education
- Japanese Mine Action Service (JMAS): operates as an implementing partner of UXO Lao in clearance
- Lao Disabled Peoples Association (LDPA): victim assistance
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG): risk education and clearance, and implementing partner of UXO Lao and the NRA
- National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC)/Ministry of Health
- Norwegian People's Aid: implementing partner of UXO Lao in clearance
- Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD): clearance
- World Education: victim assistance and risk education

## Commercial clearance operators

- BACTEC
- Milsearch
- Phoenix Clearance Limited

A number of governments and donor organisations continue to support the work of the Government of the Lao PDR and international non-government organisations to combat the effects of UXO. The Lao Government is committed to reducing the impact of UXO as part of its aim by 2020 to no longer be listed as a 'least developed country', and the continuing support of donors is fundamental to the achievement of this goal.



# UNDP and Cluster Munitions

Through its work in twenty-four of the twenty-nine cluster munition affected countries and territories around the world, UNDP has first-hand experience of both the short-term humanitarian impacts and longer term development effects that cluster munitions have on populations and communities. UNDP has played an active role in the international campaign to ban cluster munitions and address their consequences on civilians, as part of its global mandate to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In 1995, jointly with UNICEF, UNDP helped the Government of the Lao PDR to establish and develop a national programme to clear the country of its cluster munitions and UXO and protect the affected populations. This initiative was taken in recognition of the strong correlation that exists in Laos between poverty and the presence of UXO. Thanks to the support of many other development partners, this has resulted in the creation of two national institutions: UXO Lao, which is the operational arm of the Government of the Lao PDR for UXO action, and the National Regulatory Authority (NRA), which is the entity responsible for coordinating and regulating the entire UXO sector and its various operators.

The role of UNDP is to assist in the mobilization and coordination of international assistance to the programme, help ensure that donor resources are used in an efficient and effective manner, and provide technical support and advice, based on its experience in many other countries that face similar problems. As co-chair of the UXO sector Working Group, UNDP advocates for a programme-based approach to the UXO problem in line with the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness so that national ownership is promoted and national capacities are strengthened.

## Volunteering with UXO

United Nations Volunteer (UNV) support to the UXO sector in the Lao PDR provides expertise, support for programme activities and capacity building of Lao national staff. International UNV Myint Kyaw works as the Finance and Administration Management Specialist in the Crisis Prevention, Recovery and UXO Unit at UNDP Lao PDR. *"It was very touching", he says, "when I met a family, with five children, whose household head was disabled by a UXO accident. But he was still determined and able to contribute to his family's income. To me, this was a reminder of how UXO clearance and victim assistance activities play a large role in poverty reduction in Lao PDR."*

# Working with Survivors

Victims of UXO accidents – which includes dependents of those who are injured or killed – require support to rebuild their lives. That support starts with emergency services at the site of the accident. However people injured by UXO often live far from medical care, and often one full day's travel must be endured to access even the most basic medical services. Training of village-based first aid providers and the provision of emergency medical packs to every village in contaminated areas are required, so that victims receive immediate, and potentially life-saving, treatment.

Once on the road to recovery, survivors frequently need physical rehabilitation. This includes the provision of custom-made devices to support damaged limbs or replaced missing ones. These services are supplied through five rehabilitation centres that are provided through a partnership between international NGOs and the Government of the Lao PDR National Rehabilitation Centre – Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), established in 1997. The rehabilitation centres cover the whole country, and, as such, provide the most comprehensive service of any available to UXO victims. For rural UXO victims, who are often poor and with no resources to spare, travel and all other costs during their attendance at the centres are met by COPE.

Over half of COPE's clients receiving artificial limbs are UXO victims.

Other organisations work to bring assistance in vocational training and support to victims in their communities. However at present these activities do not cover the entire country and cannot meet survivors' needs.



*Patients at the National Rehabilitation Centre assisted by COPE. As word of these facilities spreads, more people who previously used home-made prosthetic limbs seek treatment at the centre.*



*A prosthesis being made at the National Rehabilitation Centre, Vientiane.*

A photograph of an elderly man, Mr Singin, sitting on a wooden bench. He is wearing a green t-shirt and shorts. His right leg is visible, and his left leg is replaced by a home-made prosthetic made of wood and metal. The background shows a rustic wooden structure.

# Swapping Legs with COPE

With the assistance of COPE, Mr Singin was fitted with his new prosthesis, 36 years after he lost his left leg in a BLU-26 explosion. It was the first properly fitting prosthetic limb he had ever had. Injured during the Indochina war and without access to long term medical care, he had made his own prosthesis.

*Mr Singin carved his own replacement leg from a solid piece of wood and made a metal rim at the end of the limb from a BLU-24 bombie casing.*

*Mr Singin wearing his original, home-made prosthesis. Today, the homemade limb is on display at the COPE Visitor Centre in Vientiane.  
Photo: copyright COPE*

*"I am proud to be part of this work. I am able to help these children through education, motivation, and encouragement - allowing them to reintegrate fully into community, family and school life."*

*Ms Soutchay Luangvija,  
Nurse, World Education War  
Victims Assistance Project*



*Ms Soutchay Luangvija (centre), the project coordinator for the UXO Survivors Assistance Program in Xiengkhuang and Huaphanh Provinces, with two young UXO survivors.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Photo used with permission from World Education

# Supporting Survivors to Return Home

Ms Soutchay Luangvija is a trained nurse who works with a UXO survivor assistance programme that is jointly implemented through the National Rehabilitation Centre, the Ministry of Health and World Education. As many injured children have trouble fitting back into their communities and families, and often do not return to school, the programme assists UXO and cluster munitions survivors return home and reintegrate into their families and communities after their accident.

Within six months, depending on the type of injury and need, Ms Soutchay visits the village and meets the village head to see what assistance the community can offer to the survivor. She meets the family to learn what effect the injury is having on the family income - does a family member have to stay at home with the survivor, causing a loss of income? Then she spends time with survivors, talking with them about their needs and quality of life. The project's War Victim's Medical Fund can provide small grants to make housing accessible for the disabled, or to buy a water buffalo, for example, in order to reduce negative impacts on their livelihood. Ms Soutchay also provides vocational training for surviving adults who can no longer work in their old jobs.

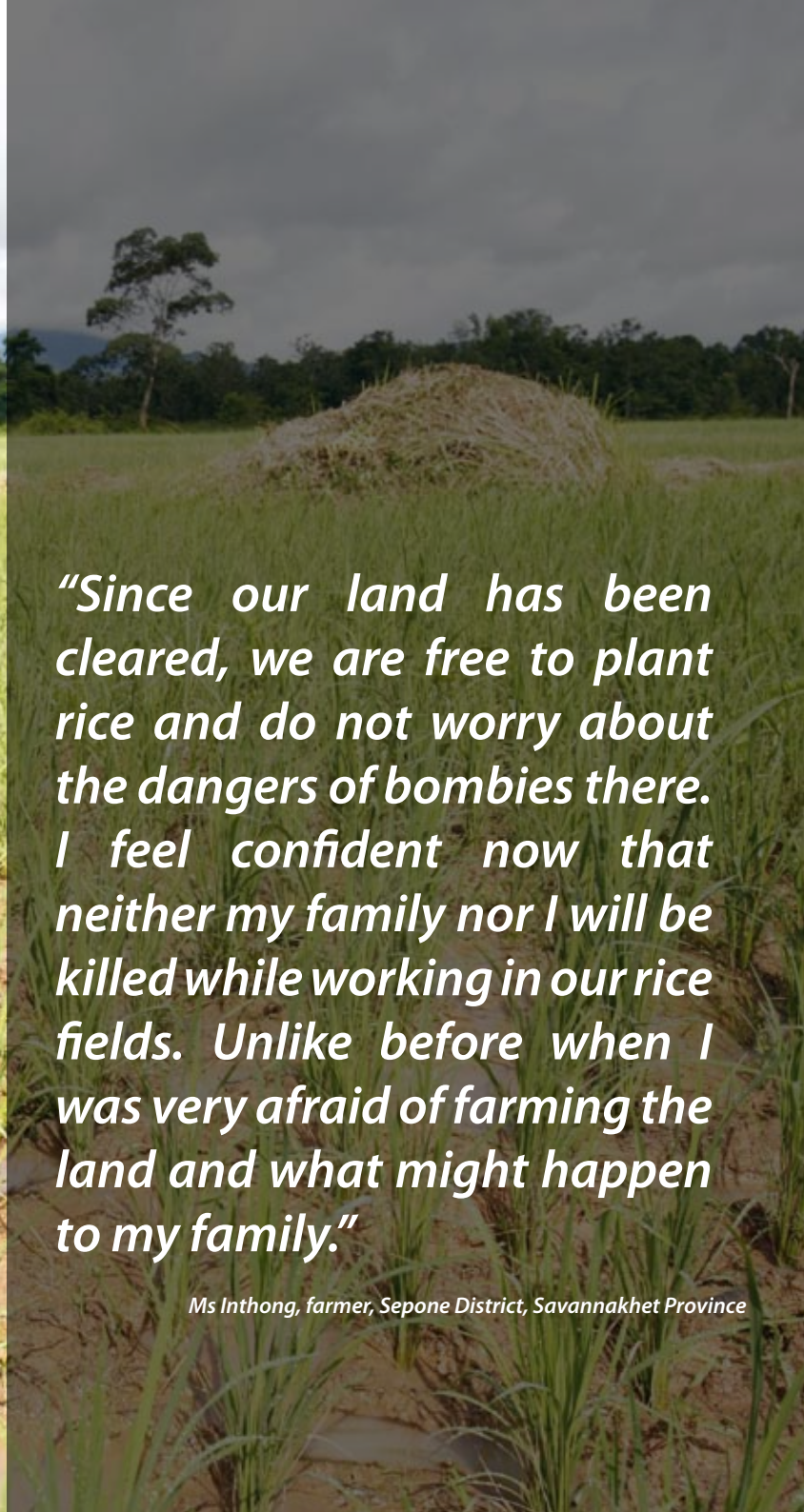
One of the most critical issues for young UXO survivors is the trauma they experience, yet there is little psycho-social support available in the Lao PDR for those who have experienced such trauma. Small discussion groups have been initiated to bring these children together and support each other. The groups decrease isolation and help the children feel that the differences that set them apart from others outside the group are not a major issue.

*"The groups are a lot of fun. I learn a lot from the children as they learn from each other,"* Ms Soutchay said. *"This is a huge confidence-builder for them."* Nearly all of the children have returned to school since the discussion groups began.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Edited with permission from: World Education, 'Reaching UXO Survivors in their Communities in Laos', [http://www.worlded.org/WElInternet/features/laos\\_reaching\\_uxo\\_survivors.cfm](http://www.worlded.org/WElInternet/features/laos_reaching_uxo_survivors.cfm). Photo left used with permission from world Education



**Ms Inthong can now safely work her land since it was cleared by UXO Lao in 2006.**



*“Since our land has been cleared, we are free to plant rice and do not worry about the dangers of bombies there. I feel confident now that neither my family nor I will be killed while working in our rice fields. Unlike before when I was very afraid of farming the land and what might happen to my family.”*

*Ms Inthong, farmer, Sepone District, Savannakhet Province*

# Enough Rice

Ms Inthong is a rice farmer in Sepone District, Savannakhet Province. She is the mother of three and grandmother of four. Feeding more mouths means producing more food, and that requires larger rice paddies. But hard manual labour is not the only difficulty Ms Inthong faces when clearing surrounding land for new farm land: "When I was clearing land to expand my fields I came across two bombies," she explained.

To enable Ms Inthong to continue clearing her land safely, a UXO Lao clearance team searched the area in December 2006 for further cluster munitions and UXO. In the one and half hectares that was cleared, 30 bombies - a mixture of BLU-24 and BLU-26 - were found and destroyed.

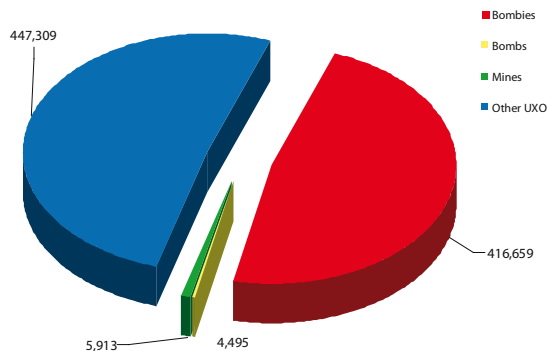
*"Now we can grow  
enough rice for my  
whole family as long as  
it rains!"*



Clearance teams can find access to sites challenging, particularly during the monsoon season.

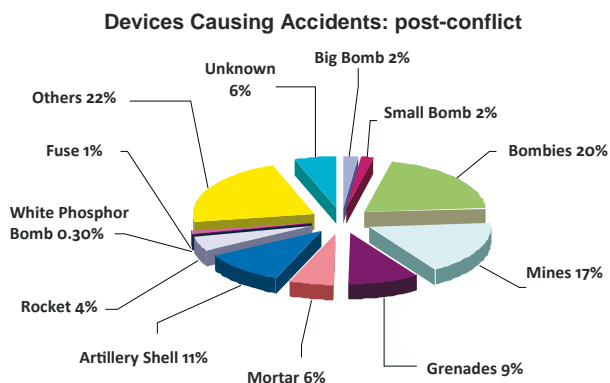
# Making the Land Safe

A fundamental aspect of the work undertaken to reduce the impact of cluster munitions and UXO on communities throughout the Lao PDR is the marking and removing of the remnants of war themselves. It ensures that people can work their land without the threat of death or injury. Over the past 12 years, operators in the Lao PDR have cleared a combined total of around 16,000 hectares and destroyed more than 416,000 bombies, 4,400 big bombs, 447,000 pieces of other UXO, and several thousand landmines.



UXO Cleared in the Lao PDR

In addition to saving lives, the clearance of bombies and UXO aims to increase the socio-economic opportunities of those in the poorest districts of affected areas. UXO clearance provides impacted villagers with improved access to land, markets, and also opens up access to natural resources. It ultimately leads to enhanced livelihoods of poor, vulnerable, and food insecure populations through sustained improvements to their living conditions.



High proportion of 'Mine' and 'Other' categories could be attributable to miscategorisation when responding to survey questions about the type of UXO that caused the victim's accident, i.e. respondents might have said 'Other' when not knowing really what type it was. Thus a proportion of those replying 'Mine', 'Other' and 'Unknown' were likely bombie accidents.

*A Handicap International Belgium roving team overcomes some of the many challenges they face when removing big bombs from villages for demolition. Photo copyright Handicap International Belgium*





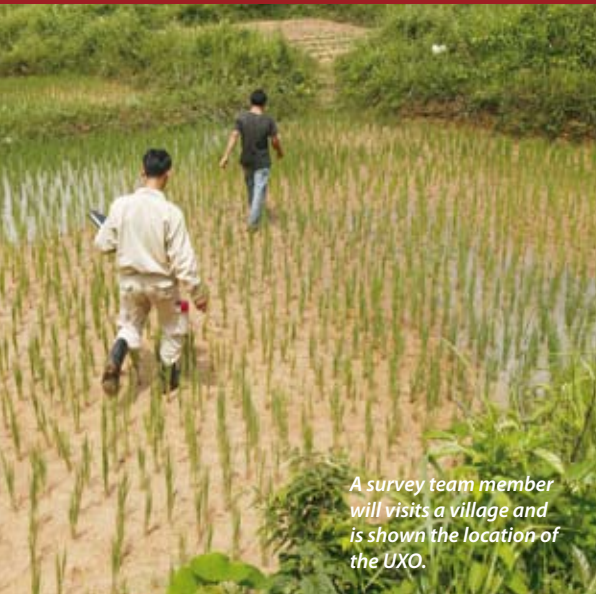
*Members of survey and roving clearance teams regularly visit villages in their region to get details of newly discovered UXO and cluster munitions.*



*When a bombie or item of UXO is located the local people report it to one of the operators working in their area.*

# Survey and Roving Clearance

One of the greatest demands on not-for-profit clearance operators is for the clearance of individual items found by communities during their daily activities. The process to mark, record and destroy these items is known as survey and roving clearance.



*A survey team member will visit a village and is shown the location of the UXO.*



*The location of the UXO or bombie is marked to notify others of the danger.*



*The location is measured precisely and recorded for the roving team to come and clear it.*

*"I hope all our land will be cleared one day so my son will be completely safe from bombies."*

*Mr. Por, Sepone District,  
Savannakhet Province*



## Surveying Discovered Bombies

Mr Por Saiasong, pictured with his wife and six month old son, assisted a UXO Lao survey team member to mark and record the location of a BLU-3b bombie he found when working on his land.

*"I found the bombie while clearing my land to grow food. I marked it and told the village chief, who reported it to UXO Lao. I am very happy UXO Lao can come to clear the bombie from my land,"* said Mr Por. *"I hope all our land will be cleared one day so my son will be completely safe from bombies."*



Once the bombie or UXO item has been marked and the location recorded, a roving clearance team will return and destroy it.

# A Roving Team at Work



*A BLU-26 bombie awaiting demolition*



*Mr Laikhum Sayasone, the FSD roving team leader, prepares the charge and ...*



*... a fuse to destroy the BLU 26 bombie found by the villagers in Sepone District, Savannakhet Province.*



*The firing box to destroy the BLU-26 is prepared.*



*Mr Viliaphan Viliaseng, a FSD roving team member, warns villagers to stay away as the bombie is about to be destroyed.*



*Mr Somwang, a local farmer, who has found eight bombies on his land, watches as the team prepares to destroy one of the BLU-26 bombies he discovered.*

# Clearing Land

The prioritisation of areas of land for systematic UXO clearance allows local development without the fear of exploding UXO. Areas are cleared for specific purposes including agricultural use, schools, hospitals and roads, as well as for community development projects.



*Small items of UXO found by the clearance team, identified as safe, and removed from the site.*



*UXO Lao clearance team members heading to work.*



*The team use metal detectors to scan the land for bombs and other UXO items.*



*Ms Phetdavon Tanbounkong, a UXO Lao clearance team member, prepares to detonate the bombs found in the field.*

*"I found a bombie on top of the ground when I was clearing trees and other plants from my land. I've found bombies in other parts of my land before too. I've been afraid of using the land because of all the bombies, but we've had no choice. We have to plant the rice for my family to eat."*

Mr Sawatdy, rice farmer, Sepone District, Savannakhet Province

# My Land Becoming Safe

Mr Sawatdy watched a UXO Lao clearance team as they performed their clearance task on his land. *"I am very happy that UXO Lao has come here to clear my land. It will make it safe for me and my family to grow rice on this land. Now we can feel the land is safe for us,"* he said.

*Mr Sawatdy and his eight year old son Lamsmay watched as UXO Lao clear part of their land, making it safe to farm.*



***“After my mother’s accident, life became very hard for us all. We became very poor. There was no one to help us.”***

***Mrs. Ngai, UXO Lao Clearance Team member***



*Ms Ngai marks the location of a bombie as part of her work with a UXO clearance team.*



# No More Injuries


*"When I was 15 years old my mother was working in our rice field and her hoe hit a bombie. The explosion severely hurt her leg and she had to have it amputated. I am the oldest child in my family. After my mother's accident, life became very hard for us all. We became very poor. There was no one to help us. My mother continues to work, but now in the house looking after my children when I work. She has not been able to work in the rice fields ever since the accident. What happened to her is why I work with UXO Lao."*

Ms Ngai has been working as a UXO Lao clearance team member in Sepone District, Savannakhet Province since 1998.



*Ms Ngai (second from right) joined UXO Lao help to prevent further UXO accidents occurring, such as the one that injured her mother.*

# A Job For **The Girls**



The clearance of UXO and landmines has traditionally been a male profession, largely due to the role the military has played in these activities. However, today more and more women are being given the opportunity to work as deminers and explosive ordnance disposal personnel.

In the Lao PDR, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Handicap International Belgium (HIB) and UXO Lao all have female members of staff working in clearance operations. Employing women as deminers not only challenges social norms restricting women's employment in many affected communities around the world, but it also enables women to make their own communities safe, and earn a good salary to be able to support their entire family. As Ms Manisia Torthongyer, member of a MAG all-female clearance team, commented, *"Our team shows that women can do anything! I want people to know that Lao women are as strong as women from other countries."* Establishing a gender balance within the workforce of all UXO operators is also fundamental to ensuring that gender considerations are incorporated throughout the entire UXO action process in Lao PDR.

Clearance activities also have a gendered impact, with men and women benefitting differently depending on what land is cleared and for what purpose. Clearing land of UXO for agricultural expansion appears to benefit the whole family in terms of allowing for the production of more rice. When deciding what land to clear and who to educate about the risk of UXO, it is important for UXO action personnel to consider the impact on men and women, boys and girls.

# UXO Traded as Scrap Metal

Since 2004, throughout the Lao PDR, the localised scrap metal trade has escalated on the back of an increasing demand nationally and regionally for steel used in construction and a rise in the price of scrap metal. Along with an increase in the numbers of people hunting for scrap metal, the number of mini-smelting mills and foundries has expanded, particularly in the areas along the Lao-Vietnam border where the heaviest bombing occurred during the Indochina war.

Local economies are becoming more cash-driven as more goods become available. However, many rural communities have limited access to cash, and hunting for scrap metal is one of the only options that gives a quick financial return to enable individuals and families to access the goods and services that contribute to an improvement in their subsistence lifestyle. The collection of scrap metal has also become an activity that all members of the family participate in; frequently drawing children into the hunt. Children who collect scrap metal report spending the money they make on clothing and school materials or on sweets and other food. Adults generally spend the cash on food, clothes for the family and household items.

However, this additional cash can come at a very high price, as a large proportion of scrap metal collected and traded throughout the country is derived from UXO. Using a metal detector, digging to investigate metal detector signals, and carrying/transporting scrap are high risk activities in a land contaminated with UXO. The dismantling of UXO to sell the metal components as scrap is also a potentially life threatening activity. Scrap metal dealers will often not purchase recognisable UXO and so the poorest people in the trade take the greatest risks by attempting to dismantle the items.



*A bag of scrap metal that could contain UXO items is weighed at a scrap metal dealer.*



*A scrap dealer weighs a bag of scrap metal which might contain UXO. Potentially live UXO lie on the background.*



*A metal detector is a regular household tool.*

The majority of people injured or killed by UXO today are aware of the risk but, due to poverty and pressing socio-economic needs, knowingly undertake these high risk and potentially life-threatening activities.

# Safer Scrap in Xiengkhuang



*A member of the MAG clearance team points out some of the many UXO found at the foundry in Xiengkhuang Province.*



*UXO items sit amongst other scrap metal at the foundry in Xiengkhuang. MAG clearance teams have the difficult task of identifying and separating the UXO items before safely destroying them.*



The northern province of Xiengkhuang hosts one of the the largest scrap metal trades in the Lao PDR. The province is also the second most UXO- and cluster munitions-affected province in the country. As a result, numerous UXO and bombies are collected and sold throughout the province.

Just outside the provincial capital, Phonsavanh, is a foundry that is the final destination of much of the scrap metal collected in Xiengkhuang. Villagers collect scrap and sell it to local dealers, who in turn sell it to the foundry, and here the metal is melted down and made into steel rods used in construction. The scrap collected often includes UXO, much of which is live. If a single item in one of the piles of UXO exploded, it could set off a series of detonations throughout the foundry, where around 45 people work. If a major accident were to occur, it could result in many casualties.

*“After there were accidents at the foundry, the owners stopped melting down UXO and just let it pile up,”* said Mr Soth Phommalin, MAG Provincial Programme Manager in Xiengkhuang.

MAG is currently running a project to clear UXO from the foundry and provincial scrap dealers’ yards. The aim is also to reduce the acceptance of UXO as scrap metal, and to provide scrap dealers with safety briefings and a reporting system for UXO. So far over 30,000 items of UXO have been cleared from the foundry grounds including live bombies, grenades and white phosphorus rockets.

As part of the approach to reducing the amount of UXO in the scrap metal trade, the community liaison teams are conducting a series of risk education sessions with the foundry staff and scrap dealers in the province. The project is also working with local authorities, scrap dealers and local communities on establishing reporting mechanisms to enable foundry and scrap dealers to report items of UXO, and on preventing the unsafe storage of UXO in the future.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Edited with permission from: Mines Advisory Group, ‘Safer Scrap – Foundry project to clear 20,000 items of UXO’, MAGazine, No. 5, May 2008. Photos used with permission from MAG.

# Teaching about the Risks

Educating people about the dangers of UXO remains an important part of the ongoing efforts in the Lao PDR to reduce the negative impacts of unexploded bombs and bombs. While clearance teams work to remove the threat, the risk reduction education activities help to equip people living in affected areas with the knowledge and practices required to manage the risk on a day-to-day basis. Risk-reduction education has been conducted in the Lao PDR for over 10 years. There are currently five operators involved in the work in the Lao PDR: HIB, MAG, the Ministry of Education, World Education, and UXO Lao.

In the past, risk-reduction education in the Lao PDR focused on raising awareness about the danger of UXO and teaching people to avoid dangerous activities. Today, risk education operators are increasingly focusing efforts on specific groups in society that intentionally take risks by interacting with bombs and UXO.

One primary group of people at high risk of injury from UXO are farmers, particularly when they are opening up new land to expand their fields. Commonly the UXO reported to survey and roving teams have been found by farmers when they are clearing forest to expand their fields to produce more food. Specialised clearing, digging, and planting techniques have been developed and are taught throughout affected areas to minimise the risk for those working the land.

Another group of concern that commonly encounter UXO are those who collect scrap metal. This includes a large number of children who collect scrap metal to earn extra pocket money or to assist the family finances. In order to make the trade safer, risk-reduction education messages are designed to encourage people to keep UXO out of the trade, thus reducing the risk and potential injury.

To address these challenges the Risk Education Unit of the NRA is working together with UNICEF and risk-reduction education organizations to better target their work towards groups of people who intentionally undertake or support high-risk activities. With the understanding that it is not practical to provide messages prohibiting the involvement of people in the scrap metal trade, risk educators are beginning to employ approaches to promote behavior change, safer practice and community responsibility to regulate high-risk activities. As children are particularly vulnerable to UXO risk, educators are working with parents and community leaders to take responsibility for keeping children out of the scrap metal trade. These targeted, realistic approaches should contribute to a safer trade and an overall reduction in accidents caused by bombs and UXO.



*Mouol identifies a bombie during a lesson at school about the dangers of UXO.*

# Risk Education in the Classroom

*"Never touch a bombie," seven year old Mouol explained. "My teachers tell us not to touch them as they could kill us. I would never touch one if I found it."*

Mouol, along with her classmates, has regular sessions during their school hours to learn about the dangers of UXO and how to avoid being injured by them. Children, particularly boys, are disproportionately represented in the figures of those who are injured and killed each year by UXO and bombies. The Lao Ministry of Education, with technical support from World Education, has been working to integrate risk education messages into the curriculum of schools in UXO-affected areas. Teachers receive training and support to help them use more child-centered approaches to learning that involve group activities, role play, creative arts, and problem solving. Today, over 4,900 teachers and more than 147,000 students from nine UXO-affected provinces participate directly in the UXO Education and Awareness Programme.

*“Community awareness is very important. We try to educate and advise the villagers and children in affected villages...*

# Building Awareness

*... about how to avoid UXO to reduce the number of victims. We work with the entire village to teach them how to report UXO and request UXO operators to clear their land.”*

Mr Bountian Manivong, Community Awareness Team Leader with UXO Lao since 1996

Mr Bountian Manivong and his UXO Lao community awareness team spend three consecutive days in an affected village at one time and travel to many throughout the year in Savannakhet, the most UXO- and cluster munition-affected province in the Lao PDR. Whether it is setting up community discussions, sessions with school-aged children, or whole community gatherings with games and prizes, the underlying message of the activities remains the same: no UXO is safe. During their time in each village, the team also work to build local understanding of the systems for reporting UXO finds, and/or requesting area clearance.

*Quizzes and games are commonly included in awareness raising events to teach people about the bombing history of the Lao PDR, including the different types of bombs deployed, and the dangers of UXO remaining in the soil today.*



*Mr Bountian leading a community awareness session with villagers in Savannakhet Province*



*Children enjoy a community awareness session in Xieng Khouang Province*

*UXO Lao community awareness puppet show teaching children about the dangers of UXO and bombs.*



*Ms Oudai talks to children from her village about the dangers of UXO.*

# A Network of Villager Volunteers

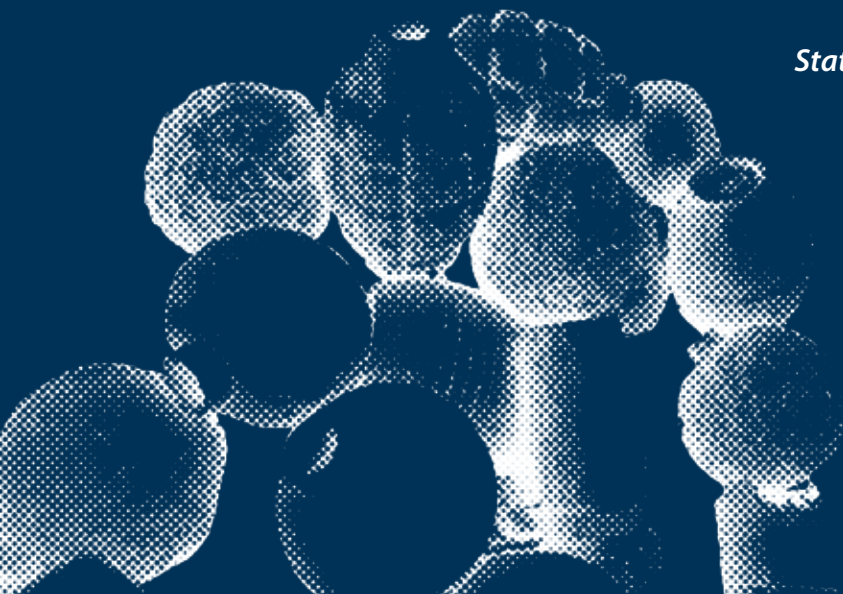
For the people living in UXO- and cluster munitions-affected areas of the Lao PDR these remnants of war are a part of their daily lives. Both HIB and UXO Lao are establishing and supporting a network of members from affected villages with the skills, knowledge and materials to teach those in their communities of the dangers. As a HIB village volunteer, Mr Bounpanh, explained: *"I became a village volunteer in December 2007 because I wanted to help prevent accidents here in my village. When I see the number of UXO and bombies in this village and the many accidents, I want to make the children safe from the bombs. I also want to learn how we can be safe in our land and teach this to the rest of the village."*

Since being trained as a Village Volunteer, Mr Bounpanh has taught parents in his community to teach their children how to live safely in their UXO-contaminated land. Ms Oudai, a mother of three, is one such parent. *"I agreed to be trained to teach my own and other's children about the dangers of bombies and UXO because I have seen the poverty that comes after a person is injured by bombies. I want to learn how to teach the children to stop it happening to them."*

HIB is establishing a network of village volunteers in UXO affected areas as part of their integrated approach to dealing with UXO-related issues. This risk education component focuses on creating behavioural change within affected communities, in order to alter the way people interact with UXO, with increasing focus on those who collect scrap metal and regularly come in contact with UXO as a result. This includes ensuring that people's understanding of what is, and what is not UXO, is correct. Village volunteer programs focus on building into the community ways of ensuring on-going risk education that reach those who are most exposed to becoming victims of UXO.

*“Laos has attached enormous importance, great interest and strong hope to the banning of cluster munitions: Great interest because Laos is the most heavily bombed country on Earth with more than two million tons of bombs dropped on its land and we do not want other peoples to experience the same pain and suffering as the Lao people have and continue to endure. Strong hope because Laos has a commitment for a full ban on cluster munitions that makes cluster munitions an illegal weapon so civilians will be protected and safe in the future.”*

*Statement by H.E. Mr. Bounkeut Sangsomsak  
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR  
speaking at the  
Conference on Cluster Munitions,  
Dublin, 19-30 May 2008*



# Banning Cluster Munitions

The use of cluster munitions across the world has proven to cause unacceptable human suffering during and long after a conflict. In every conflict where cluster munitions have been used they have created the same devastating impacts: the death and injury of innocent civilians both during the war and long after the conflict ended. Today, all 29 countries and territories in which cluster munitions have been used, and the majority of them developing countries, remain contaminated by unexploded munitions.

In response, a group of concerned governments met in February 2007 in Oslo, Norway, to determine a way forward to address the negative humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of cluster munitions on civilian populations. At the conclusion of this meeting 46 states agreed to the "Oslo Declaration", committing to conclude a new international treaty to effectively address the unacceptable harm caused by cluster munitions on civilian populations by the end of 2008. This began what is known as the Oslo Process.

Throughout 2007 and 2008, four further international meetings of government representatives to discuss and develop the text of a convention were organised as part of the Oslo Process, hosted in Peru, Austria, New Zealand and Ireland. The final international meeting, held in Dublin, Ireland in May 2008, concluded with one hundred and seven states supporting the text of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

A number of regional meetings were also organised to discuss specific regional issues in more depth, including the Southeast Asia Regional Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Xiengkhuang, Lao PDR, in October 2008.

The Convention was opened for governments to sign in Oslo on 3 December 2008. It was signed by 95 states, and the Lao PDR was the second signatory to the Convention after the host country, Norway.

Four months later, in March 2009, the Government of the Lao PDR ratified the Convention.

# The Convention on Cluster Munitions

The Convention on Cluster Munitions comprehensively bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions.

The Convention requires governments that are a party to the agreement:

- **Never to use, produce, stockpile or transfer cluster munitions.**
- **To destroy stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years of the Convention entering into force.**
- **To clear all contaminated areas under their jurisdiction or control within ten years. In the case of countries like the Lao PDR which are unable to meet this timeline due to the severity of contamination, extensions of up to 5 years at a time may be requested.**
- **To conduct risk reduction education to ensure awareness among civilians living in or around areas contaminated by cluster munitions of the risks posed by such remnants of war.**
- **To collect reliable relevant data with respect to cluster munition victims, and provide assistance to victims, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, as well as provide for their social and economic inclusion.**

The Convention also provides each affected State Party with the right to seek and receive international assistance to enable them to be able to fulfill the obligations, and requires each State Party in the position to do so to provide technical, material and financial assistance to the States Parties affected by cluster munitions.

# International Assistance

## Financial contributions to the overall UXO Sector, UXO Lao, and the NRA (US\$)\*

### Financial Contributions to the UXO sector 2008

	NRA	AAR	COPE	Handicap International	LDPA (Lao Disabled Peoples Association)	UXO Lao	MAG	Milsearch	Oz Lang Xang Minerals Limited	BACTEC	PCL Phoenix Clearance Ltd	FSD Swiss Foundation for Mine Action	World Education Consortium	Total given per donor
Armor Group	49,890						124,931							174,821
Australia	313,081		319,414	441,462	70,365	179,151	333,097					1,004,535		2,661,105
European Commission	115,832					186,050								301,882
Germany			49,811			640,000								689,811
Ireland						616,881	605,000							1,221,881
Japan						1,423,343								1,423,343
Luxembourg						348,189								348,189
MAG	135,288													135,288
Switzerland	300,000		36,640			249,975								586,615
UNDP	278,000					531,145								809,145
UNICEF	34,877			10,000										44,877
United Kingdom					71,933		709,733							781,666
USA						1,142,922						304,630	91,292	1,538,844
Other		125,218	302,254		45,135	448,814	964,388	2,128,198	3,283,688*	4,150,000	1,500,000	236,254	12,850	11,096,799
Lao Government*						175,026**								175,026
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,226,968</b>	<b>125,218</b>	<b>708,119</b>	<b>451,462</b>	<b>187,433</b>	<b>5,941,496</b>	<b>2,737,149</b>	<b>2,128,198</b>	<b>3,283,688</b>	<b>4,150,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,545,419</b>	<b>104,142</b>	<b>21,989,292</b>

\* Of the total LXML reported figure, \$2.1 million was contracted out to BACTEC, hence this figure will not be included in the sector expenditure total as it is already reflected in the BACTEC total

\*\* The Lao Government annually supports UXO Lao through in-kind expenses. The figure above represents a first attempt to monetize these contributions. It is a best approximation and solely for 2008.

### Financial Contributions to UXO Lao through the multi-donor programme administered by UNDP (US\$)\*

Donor	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 **	Total
Australia	470,595	369,173	198,675					302,750				254,237	-6,303	1,589,127
Belgium			394,737						160,997					555,734
Canada	182,482			135,762	100,833	95,074	93,831	95,877	152,684	153,610	167,084			1,177,237
Denmark		400,000		2,739,833		396,224	943,841	1,039,423	-6,938					5,512,383
European Commission							161,464					11,000		172,464
Finland		290,135			290,957		294,986	345,623	367,647					1,589,348
Germany									200,000	238,091	462,857	623,426	640,000	2,164,374
Ireland											628,141	720,426		1,348,567
Japan***			242,924			200,000			194,001	259,350	1,359,641	2,354,374	1,423,343	6,033,633
Korea (Rep. of)						48,584	40,000		50,000					138,584
Luxembourg			34,747	440,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	200,000		300,000	318,878	340,599	348,189	2,732,413
Netherlands	200,000	100,000	500,000		471,220	500,000	500,000		390,000	240,000				2,901,220
New Zealand	156,400	279,164	81,624	90,736	74,309	181,206	345,300	4,338						1,213,077
Norway	865,399	424,553	398,406	380,228	276,395	279,230	249,990							2,874,201
Sweden	394,176													394,176
Switzerland											900,000	1,059,975	249,975	2,209,950
United Kingdom	138,020						200,000	357,143	232,270		163,921	206,612		1,297,966
USA			850,000	360,000		882,000	1,011,086							3,103,086
UNDP (Regular Sources)	623,021	292,247	1,204,732				200,000	260,000	642,000	828,210	500,000	377,000	531,145	5,458,355
Lao Government****													175,026	175,026
Other			391,640			153,601		112,849	220,057					878,147
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,030,093</b>	<b>2,155,272</b>	<b>4,054,561</b>	<b>4,389,483</b>	<b>1,463,714</b>	<b>2,737,335</b>	<b>4,337,618</b>	<b>2,919,467</b>	<b>2,602,718</b>	<b>2,019,261</b>	<b>4,500,522</b>	<b>5,947,649</b>	<b>3,361,375</b>	<b>43,519,068</b>

\* Up until 2007 UXO Lao received approximately \$8.2 million additional funding provided outside the UNDP multi-donor programme. This includes \$650,000 provided through UNICEF

\*\* In 2008 UXO Lao received \$2,580,121 additional funding provided outside the UNDP multi-donor programme from USA, Australia, Ireland, EC, NPA, World Without Mines, and other contributors

\*\*\* This includes JAIF and JMAS

\*\*\*\* The Lao Government annually supports UXO Lao through in-kind expenses. The figure above represents a first attempt to monetize these contributions. It is a best approximation and solely for 2008.

### Financial Contributions to the NRA through the multi-donor programme administered by UNDP (US\$)\*

Donor	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Australia						313,081	542,088
New Zealand			114,640		211,267		450,907
Switzerland	125,000			99,980	500,000	300,000	899,980
UNDP			152,149	430,000	270,000	278,000	1,130,149
USA					95,238		95,238
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>266,789</b>	<b>758,987</b>	<b>1,076,505</b>	<b>891,081</b>	<b>3,118,362</b>

\* The NRA received \$0.52 million additional funding provided outside the UNDP multi-donor programme.

# Ongoing Need

With millions of bombies and other items of UXO still contaminating thousands of hectares of land, up to 25 percent of villages throughout the Lao PDR still affected, and on average 300 people becoming UXO victims each year, there is still much work that needs to be done to combat the impact of bombies and UXO in the Lao PDR. The Government of the Lao PDR and UNDP both recognise that addressing UXO contamination must be a part of the overall approach to reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Lao PDR.

The Government of the Lao PDR and UNDP would like to acknowledge and thank the many donors who have supported and who continue to support the work undertaken to reduce the impacts of cluster munitions and UXO in the Lao PDR.

# Looking to the Future

I would like to express my great appreciation to the Government of the Lao PDR for their outspoken support for the development of an international ban on the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This treaty gives great hope to a cluster munition affected country like the Lao PDR: hope that the numbers of those killed and injured by cluster submunitions annually will reduce and that those already injured will receive the assistance they require; hope that land will no longer be held hostage by unexploded submunitions and that the people of the Lao PDR will be able to grow enough rice for their family; and hope that no other country will ever suffer as the Lao PDR has as a result of the use of cluster munitions during wars.

However, it is only through the continued commitment and financial support of donors that the hope invested in this treaty can be realised for cluster munition affected communities and countries. It is projected that if the current level of funding to the Lao PDR for the clearance of cluster munitions and unexploded ordnance is maintained it will still take more than 16 years to clear the highest priority lands of the country. To realise the hope invested in the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the world must scale up its support to the programmes working to combat the impacts of cluster munitions in affected countries.

The development of the Convention on Cluster Munitions was driven by the urgent need to end the human suffering caused by these weapons. The imperative now is to see the full implementation of the obligations of the Convention.



Sonam Yangchen Rana  
UNDP Resident Representative, Lao PDR  
Co-Chair of UXO Sector Working Group



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