



**LEGACIES
OF
WAR**
HISTORY-HEALING-HOPE

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in Laos: background and recommendation

At least \$250 Million in U.S. Funding necessary to support the UXO sector in Laos

PRESS BACKGROUNDER

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UXO

- Unexploded ordnance (UXO) are explosive weapons (bombs, bullets, shells, grenades, land mines, naval mines, etc.) that did not explode when they were deployed
- Many cluster munitions have a significantly high failure rate, especially older models (estimated to represent up to 30% of munitions dropped on Laos during the Vietnam War)
- Cluster munitions are large bombs containing hundreds of cluster bomblets, known among many Laotians as “bombies”



UXO IN LAOS

Laos is the most heavily bombed country, per capita, in history.

From 1964 to 1973, the U.S. dropped 2.2 million tons of ordnance over Laos in 580,344 bombing missions, the equivalent of one planeload every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years

Total number of cluster bomblets: 270 million bomblets or sub-munitions

Cluster bomblet failure rate: 25%-30%, i.e.: up to 80 million bomblets, are still lethal

Data from a survey completed in Laos in 2009 indicated that UXO have killed or maimed as many as 50,000 civilians in Laos since 1964 (and 20,000 since 1973, after the bombings ended)

About 60% of accidents since 1964 resulted in death (29,522 of 50,570)

Based on military strike data, it is estimated that about one third of Laos remains contaminated with UXO left behind from the Vietnam War era, including up to 80 million cluster munitions

40% of the victims in the last 10 years have been children, and almost 60% of victims in the last 3 years have been children

Lao PDR has estimated that there are 12,500 – 15,000 accident survivors alive today



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UXO BY THE NUMBERS

Bombing tonnage: 2.2 million tons

Percent of villages contaminated by UXO:

Casualties since the war ended: 20,000

Annual casualties from UXO: in 2008: 300; in 2014: 48

Victims of UXO needing continued assistance: 12,000

Employees in the UXO sector: 3,000+

Hectares cleared, 1996-2015: 59,000

UXO destroyed by UXO LAO, 1996-2015: 1.2 million

Average # of pieces of UXO destroyed/hectare:

2014: fewer than 7

2015: more than 22 (the result of new evidence-based survey method which concentrates clearance operations on most highly contaminated land)



HOW IS LEGACIES OF WAR HELPING?

Legacies of War is the only U.S.-based organization dedicated solely to raising awareness about the history of the U.S. Vietnam War-era bombing in Laos and advocating to clear unexploded bombs. Our mission is to:

Advocate for the clearance of unexploded bombs

Provide space for healing the wounds of war

Create greater hope for a future of peace

We advocate for greater U.S. funding for UXO clearance, risk education, and survivor assistance in Laos. We do this through education and by building relationships with representatives of the State Department, Congress, and the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane, in addition to the Government of the Lao PDR. Since we started our targeted awareness-raising work on Capitol Hill, annual funding for UXO programs in Laos has increased exponentially, from \$3 million in 2008 to \$19.5 million in 2016.



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MOST HEAVILY BOMBED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

Laos is the most heavily bombed country, per capita, in history. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. flew 580,000 bombing missions over Laos, the equivalent of one bombing mission every eight minutes, round the clock for nine years (1964-1973). Cluster bomblets make up roughly half of the UXO found and destroyed by clearance teams in Laos today. This UXO, in addition to being a threat to the life and well-being of villagers, is also an impediment to development in Laos, greatly increasing the cost of construction projects and agriculture expansion in affected areas.



U.S. SUPPORT

Since 1993, the U.S. has provided more than \$85 million in support for the UXO sector in Laos, with the bulk of the assistance going toward clearance activities, and a portion toward victim assistance. For fiscal year 2016, the U.S. has earmarked \$19.5 million in such support. The U.S. has worked with the Lao government and NGO operators to implement evidence-based survey methods, which show great promise in identifying priority areas for UXO clearance.

U.S. funding, through the Department of State, goes directly to the following organizations:

- Catholic Relief Services
- HALO
- Health Leadership International
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- Spirit of Soccer
- Sterling Global
- World Education



FUTURE NEEDS

Sustained funding is required to provide clearance operators and service providers the stability needed to meet development goals, reduce casualties and provide support to victims over the next 10 years. A new, comprehensive UXO survey will be completed by 2020, identifying the most highly contaminated areas in the country and giving UXO teams a list of prioritized land to clear over the next decade. Critically, many of the 12,000 UXO survivors will require medical, rehabilitative and psycho-social care for the rest of their lives. Continued financial support is thus a moral imperative for the United States.



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We are gratified that between 1995 and 2015, the U.S. contributed an average of \$4.2 million per year to the UXO sector. However, the U.S. spent \$13.6 million per day (in 2015 dollars) over nine years bombing Laos in the first place. That means that the U.S. spent more in one week (\$95 million) dropping the bombs on Laos than it has spent over the last forty years helping to clean them up. It is time for the U.S. to meet its responsibility to solve this problem once and for all.



U.S. FUNDING RECOMMENDATION

Legacies of War recommends that the U.S. provide at least \$25 million over 10 years for a total of \$250 million in support to the UXO sector in Laos. This sustained funding will maximize the gains already made and make a significant contribution toward creating a Laos free from the daily danger of lethal ordnance. It will also enable the U.S. to create a new and lasting legacy of peace in the aftermath of the war which ended more than 40 years ago.



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