



A Peaceful Legacy Now:

Briefing & Discussion on Cluster Bomb Removal and Assistance in Laos

November 5, 2009 · Washington, D.C.



Legacies of War (www.legaciesofwar.org) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise awareness about the history of the Vietnam War-era bombing in Laos and advocate for the clearance of unexploded bombs, to provide space for healing the wounds of war, and to create greater hope for a future of peace.

Front cover images:

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1. School children from Lathsene Village in Xieng Khouang Province, Laos, home of a pre-school built through the generous donations of Legacies of War supporters.
2. Historic illustrations collected by Fred Branfman in Laos during the war and the inspiration for the Legacies of War National Traveling Exhibition.
3. Charles Stonecipher, U.S. Dept of State, and Madame Kanika Phommachanh, Lao PDR Mission to the UN, speak after their presentations.
4. Bomb casings are a common sight throughout villages in Laos.
5. Lao boy holding clay model of cluster bomb in “Bombies” documentary by Jack Silberman.
6. Historic illustrations collected from villagers in Xieng Khouang Province who survived the bombings.
7. Briefing participants Jackie Chagnon, Titus Peachey, and Bob Eaton.
8. Tae, Lao cluster bomb survivor and International Cluster Bomb Ban Advocate.

9. Signs warning villagers of the dangers of cluster bombs are a common sight in Laos today.
10. Children make up two-thirds of those injured or killed by cluster bombs in Laos.
11. Briefing participants from the governments of the Lao PDR and the U.S., NGOs and community members.
12. An estimated 78 million cluster bombs still litter one-third of Laos.
13. Lao children born four decades after the end of the bombing still live with the remnants of the war.
14. The Plain of Jars, home to one of the most heavily bombed areas in Laos.
15. Map based on declassified U.S. Air Force data regarding bombing in Laos.

Photo Credits: Boon Vong, Cynthia Nguyen, Jack Silberman, Yimeem Vu, Phil Borges, Stuart Westmoreland, and COPE.

Acknowledgements: Brett Dakin, Titus Peachey, Elaine Russell and Erin Shigaki (Purple Gate Design) for their assistance in the production of this Report. Board members Jack Rattanavong and Cynthia Nguyen, consultants and volunteers Sakuna Thongchanh, Nakhone Keodara, Brett Tolman, Helly Lee, Lora Lumpe, Susan Hammond and countless others for their support of the briefing. Special thanks to Cooley Godward Kronish LLP for the use of its facility.

Introduction

The impetus for this historic convening was our desire to bring together the many individuals, organizations and governments we have met over the last five years working on the issue of unexploded ordnance in Laos. The 15th anniversary of Laos' formal demining program was a timely occasion to host the first comprehensive briefing and discussion in the U.S. on cluster bomb removal and assistance in Laos.

We would like to thank the representatives of the governments of the Lao PDR and the United States for participating in this historic gathering. Their participation demonstrated their deep commitment to resolving this problem. We are especially appreciative of the participation of the National Regulatory Authority, whose staff joined us via video-feed from Vientiane. We are also grateful to participants from the NGO sector, who helped us to understand the challenges and opportunities for improving the UXO sector in Laos.

The enclosed report seeks to provide an overview of the current state of UXO clearance, victim assistance and risk education in Laos, as well as varying perspectives on the gaps in the current system. Also included are innovative solutions to addressing this four-decade-old problem.

It is our hope that there will be many more gatherings in the future to build upon the open dialogue among governments, NGOs and other parties intent on improving the UXO sector in Laos.

I would like to thank our supporters, especially our remarkable board members, staff and volunteers, who over the past five years have provided the resources, expertise and counsel necessary to achieve our goals. This historic convening marked the culmination of these efforts.

With much gratitude,



Channapha Khamvongsa
Executive Director

Executive Summary

Background

- **A Dark History:** Laos is the most heavily bombed country in history. Vietnam War-era bombings left nearly half of the country contaminated with vast quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Today, cluster bombs litter forests, rice fields, villages, school grounds, roads, and other populated areas. Tens of thousands of people have been killed or injured by UXO since the bombing ceased; each year there continue to be more than 300 new casualties, most of whom are children. Nearly 40 years on, only a fraction of these munitions have been destroyed.
- **An Historic Opportunity:** On November 5, 2009, Legacies of War convened a meeting to focus on the status of cluster bomb clearance, victim assistance and risk education in Laos today. Given growing international attention to the issue of cluster bombs and improved U.S.-Laos relations, this meeting was an historic opportunity to bring together representatives from governments and the non-profit sector to finally address the long-term problem of UXO in Laos. Participants discussed opportunities for raising awareness, clearing UXO and supporting victims in the country. Speakers from Laos and the U.S. shared their perspectives on the possibilities for greater collaboration between the public and private sectors to address this enduring problem.

Key Findings

- **Global Role of Laos:** The government of Laos is committed to eliminating the terrible human and economic costs of UXO contamination. Toward this goal, Laos was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Laos is set to host the First Meeting of the State Parties to the CCM sometime in 2010 once 30 countries have ratified the treaty.
- **UXO Effect on Development in Laos:** The United Nations has designated Laos as one of the Least Developed Countries in the world. Progress on UXO issues in Laos is essential for making Laos a safe place to live and lifting the economy out of poverty in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- **Effective UXO Sector in Laos:** The UXO clearance sector in Laos has evolved into a highly efficient and effective sector, featuring effective government oversight and increasing capacity among government agencies, NGOs, and commercial operators working in the country. A representative of the U.S. State Department's Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA) program called Laos the "gold standard" in the UXO clearance sector.
- **Clear Plan for Future:** The National Regulatory Authority (NRA), the agency within the government of Laos responsible for UXO issues, has outlined its UXO clearance goals in *Safe Path Forward Strategic Plan (2010-2020)*. However, successful implementation of this



plan will require substantial additional funding. The NRA currently receives about \$14 million a year, but estimates it will need around \$24 million a year to meet its ten-year goals.

- **Victim Assistance Needs:** At present, victim assistance programs in Laos receive only half the necessary funding needed to adequately help victims and their families. Funding through NGOs and UNICEF is \$2.5 million annually, which pays for data collection, medical care, physical and psychosocial rehabilitation, economic rehabilitation and vocational training, and advocacy.
- **Alarming Decline in Funding:** Despite the efficiency and effectiveness of UXO clearance in Laos, unfortunately there is a downward trend in funding. International funding for UXO in Laos declined by 22% from 2007 to 2008. Despite the continuing and clear needs in Laos, this follows the overall international trend of decreased funding for demining activities.

Key Recommendations

- **Increase in U.S. Funding:** During the Vietnam War, the U.S. spent an average of \$2 million per day for nine years bombing Laos. In recent years, the U.S. has spent approximately \$2.7 million per year on UXO clearance in Laos; in 2009 Laos will receive a total of \$3.5 million through different NGOs. This level of funding is not only inadequate, it is not commensurate with the moral responsibility of the U.S. for this issue. We recommend an immediate doubling of U.S. funding for UXO clearance in Laos, to \$7 million per year, and substantial increases over the next ten years.
- **Increase in International Funding:** The Lao PDR has assumed a leadership role in garnering international support for the Convention on Cluster Munitions, further expanding its commitment to this effort by hosting the First Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention in 2010. The international community should support the Lao PDR with increased funding and other resources to help the country meet its Convention obligations.
- **Expand Open Dialogue and Collaboration:** The extent of the UXO problem in Laos requires the coordinated efforts of governments, NGOs and private sector representatives. The Lao PDR's Convention obligations to expedite clearance and increase victim assistance will likely escalate current activities, requiring even greater coordination and collaboration. It will be important for all stakeholders, including donor countries, to share information on the challenges and opportunities over the next decade for the UXO sector in Laos.

Full Report

On November 5, 2009 in Washington, D.C., Legacies of War convened a meeting to focus on the status of cluster bomb clearance, victim assistance and risk education in Laos today. Given growing international attention to the issue of cluster bombs and improved U.S.-Laos relations, this meeting was an historic opportunity to bring together representatives from governments and the non-profit sector to finally address the long-term problem of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Laos. Participants discussed opportunities for raising awareness, clearing UXO, and supporting victims in the country. Speakers from Laos and the U.S. shared their perspectives on the possibilities for greater collaboration between the public and private sectors to address this enduring problem.

Welcome and Introductions

Following introductory remarks from **Brett Dakin**, Chair, Board of Directors, Legacies of War, and **Channapha Khamvongsa**, Executive Director, Legacies of War, participants were addressed by **H.E. Phiane Philakone**, the Ambassador of the Lao PDR to the United States, Canada and Mexico.



Ambassador Philakone provided background on the United States' involvement in Laos during the Vietnam War, including the extent of U.S. bombings. From 1964 to 1973, the U.S. dropped more than 2 million tons of ordnance on Laos during 580,000 bombing missions. This equals a planeload of bombs every eight minutes, 24 hours a day, for nine years. Laos has the unfortunate distinction of being the most heavily bombed country in the history of the world.

Ambassador Philakone also stated that up to 30% of the cluster bombs dropped by the United States in Laos – or 78 million bomblets – had failed to detonate, leaving extensive contamination from UXO in the countryside. Over one-third of the land in Laos is contaminated by UXO. More than 34,000 people have been maimed or killed since the war's end, and more innocent victims are claimed every day. About 40% of accidents result in death, and 60% of the victims are children. UXO remains a major barrier to the safety, health, livelihood, and food security of the people of Laos.

Ambassador Philakone expressed the optimism he felt due to warming relations between the U.S. and Lao governments since the end of the war. He hopes this will continue with the U.S. continuing to fund and increase support for UXO clearance, victim assistance and risk education in Laos.

UXO Sector: Strategy, Research & Coordination

The first panel of the day was dedicated to a discussion of the UXO clearance sector in Laos, which has evolved into a highly efficient and effective sector, featuring effective government oversight and increasing capacity among government agencies, NGOs, and commercial operators working in the country.

Safe Path Forward Strategic Plan



First, **Dr. Maligna Saignavongs**, Director, National Regulatory Authority (NRA), along with **Tim Horner**, United Nations Development Program advisor to the NRA, spoke in detail about the Lao government's *Safe Path Forward Strategic Plan*. Dr. Saignavongs detailed the extent of UXO contamination in Laos, the history of UXO clearance, and the role of the NRA in formulating a new plan for clearance.

The Safe Path Forward Strategic Plan II (2010 – 2020) was completed in September 2009 to update the national strategy for the entire UXO clearance sector (which includes seven non-profit operators and four commercial operators). Dr. Saignavongs stated that the goal of the Plan is for “The Lao PDR to be free from the threat of UXO, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment contributing to development and where UXO victims are fully integrated into their societies and their needs are met.” One specific goal of the plan is to reduce casualties to 75 people per year within 10 years. In recent years the amount of UXO cleared has increased dramatically with new equipment and greater efficiency. On the other hand, donor contributions to humanitarian clearance have been declining.

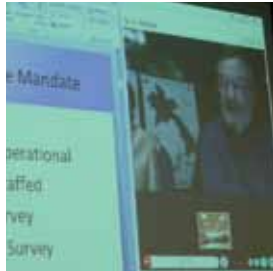
Dr. Saignavongs concluded that the UXO sector under the NRA strategic plan is well structured to make significant progress with increased efficiency and effectiveness. However, the need for long-term financial support remains a significant problem.

“Our goal is for the Lao PDR to be free from the threat of UXO, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment contributing to development and where UXO victims are fully integrated into their societies and their needs are met.”

— Dr. Maligna Saignavongs

Victim Assistance & Rehabilitation

Dr. Saignavongs was followed by **Mike Boddington**, Technical Advisor, Victim Assistance, NRA and Executive Consultant, Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), who discussed the results of the NRA's comprehensive Victim Assistance & Rehabilitation – National Survey, conducted in 2008.



Boddington began by noting that the NRA's mandate for victim assistance is "to establish a national database of UXO victims, update it regularly, and factor the physical and socio-economic rehabilitation needs of survivors into all national and local public health initiatives." To this end, in 2008 the NRA completed a national survey in 17 of the 19 Lao provinces covering 9,066 villages (95% of total), and collected data on all casualties from 1964 through 2008.

The survey showed that casualties during and immediately after the war were very high, but gradually declined and have held steady at about 300 per year since the early 1990s. During the war cluster submunitions were responsible for 13% of the casualties, but since 1999 they have caused 29% of casualties along with close to another 5% from small and large bombs. There have been over 34,000 casualties since the end of the war in 1973. Presently, there are two people killed or injured every three days.

According to Boddington, the NRA is building on the survey information to develop papers on data collection and medical/rehabilitation service needs and advocacy in conjunction with government ministries and NGOs working to help victims. Of course, the biggest challenge is the lack of adequate funding for victim assistance. Currently, only about \$2.5 million is available annually for data collection, medical care, physical and psychosocial rehabilitation, economic rehabilitation and vocational training, and advocacy. This funding comes through various NGOs and UNICEF. To meet the objectives of the *Safe Path Forward Strategic Plan* at least \$4.85 million annually is needed.

U.S. Assistance to Laos

Charles Stonecipher, program officer for Asia and the Pacific at the State Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA), presented an overview of U.S. demining assistance and the history and future of funding in Laos.

Stonecipher began by providing an overview of U.S. demining assistance globally. Over the past 12 years, the U.S. has dispersed funds to about 50 countries for UXO clearance. In 2008, \$78 million was spent, with half going to Iraq and Afghanistan. From the remaining funds, ten percent went to Laos. In 2009, Laos will receive a total of \$3.5 million, dispersed through NGOs.

Stonecipher stated that it is difficult to strike a balance among funding for clearance, victim assistance, and risk education. Currently, most of the funding from WRA is for clearance-related work, with some small amounts of funding for victim assistance and risk education.

Stonecipher touched on progress related to the release of classified U.S. bombing data. Based on a request from the Lao government, the U.S. will be signing an agreement to provide

**Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement
Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
U.S. Department of State**

Congress provided \$1,900,000 in the U.S.-Laos "bilateral line" of the Fiscal Year 2009 Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining (NADR) budget. PM/WRA was able to add an additional \$1,798,000 from other parts of the NADR budget, which raised the total amount of FY-09 money spent in Laos of \$3,498,000.

Mine/UXO Action assistance to Laos in Fiscal Year 2009:

Armor Group (assistance to UXO Lao and the NRA) \$1,700,000
World Education (risk education and victims' assistance) 700,000
Mines Advisory Group (clearance) 650,000
Norwegian People's Aid (clearance) 400,000
Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) (capacity building, EOD training) 348,000

TOTAL \$3,498,000

Source: Charles A. Stonecipher, PM/WRA, 202-663-0085, 5 November 2009

additional maps of strike data recently released from the Navy and Marines, where previous data was mostly from the Air Force. This will help to further identify contaminated lands.

The highlight of Mr. Stonecipher's presentation was his statement that "The NRA's UXO program in Laos has accomplished a great deal. It is one of the best programs in the world – the gold standard." He stressed that the program has improved efficiency significantly in recent years, stating that, "It spends money wisely and is a good partner."

Mr. Stonecipher went on to talk about the funding process and answered related questions. He spoke about the various levels of input that go into determining funding allocations, including the U.S. Embassy in Laos, WRA, and other offices within the State Department. He emphasized that WRA can make recommendations on funding, but ultimately Congress must allocate the money.

**"The NRA's UXO program in Laos has accomplished a great deal. It is one of the best programs in the world – the gold standard."
— Charles Stonecipher**

Generally, funding for UXO clearance is on a downward trend. In many countries UXO funding is being mainstreamed into general development rather than being maintained separately. One of the factors contributing to declining funding is the falling number of casualties, particularly in Vietnam and Cambodia. However, he stressed the exception of Laos, where cluster munitions have a longer life than land mines. Annual casualties in Laos have held steady through the 1990s and 2000s, while big declines have occurred in Cambodia and Vietnam.

WRA requested \$3 to \$3.5 million for Laos in FY2010. When asked to comment on the special \$6 million allocation for the UXO sector in Laos proposed in the FY2010 Senate appropriation bill Stonecipher said in an ideal world, he would like to allocate \$5 million a year to Laos – an amount he thinks can be spent wisely now, while more capacity for additional funding is developed. (Note: In December 2009 Congress passed the FY 2010 budget with a \$5 million allocation for the UXO sector in Laos.)

Stonecipher presented the key challenge for Laos: how to adapt its program for the long term – possibly training the army or local villagers in UXO clearance and medical trauma. Stonecipher concluded by underscoring the need for the UXO sector in Laos to start planning for ways to sustain its UXO clearance program once international funding ceases.

Luncheon Speaker



H.E. Kanika Phommachanh, Permanent Representative of the Lao PDR to the United Nations, delivered the luncheon speech, which emphasized UXO clearance as essential to the ability of Laos to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for lifting the country out of poverty and its Least Developed Country status by 2020. Her talk highlighted the fact that UXO creates a terrible burden not only in human casualties but also for economic development.

Madame Phommachanh started her speech by acknowledging the significance of this gathering of key parties involved in addressing the problem of UXO in Laos. She went on to discuss the strong link between UXO contamination and rural areas with the highest levels of poverty. UXO contaminates 50% of the arable land, creating poverty and food insecurity in these regions. Farmers and related occupations represent 50% of the casualties, while 35% of casualties are children. She stated, "When a main breadwinner is killed or seriously injured, the entire family and community suffer."

At the same time, she stressed that UXO clearance and victim assistance programs have contributed to meeting the MDGs by opening access to schools, transportation routes and improved health services. Victim assistance also provides opportunities for women and training in non-traditional work sectors.

Madame Phommachanh also discussed the leadership role of Laos in the international effort to ban cluster munitions. As a result of its serious UXO problems, Laos was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Laos has a strong commitment to implementing the treaty obligations. Once 30 countries have ratified the treaty, Laos will likely host the First Meeting of the States Parties. The government is actively planning for this event in cooperation with other participants in the treaty.

Madame Phommachanh concluded her talk by underscoring the commitment of Laos to work with all parties in ending the legacy of UXO to allow the citizens of the Lao PDR to live safely on the land and to have access to farmland, schools, villages and homes.

"UXO clearance and victim assistance programs have contributed to meeting the MDGs by opening access to schools, transportation routes and improved health services."

—H.E. Kanika Phommachanh

In the Village: UXO Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Development

The afternoon session focused on NGOs working in the UXO sector in Laos. These groups receive various sources of private and public funding, including from the U.S. State Department, Leahy War Victims Fund and Department of Agriculture. The experience and knowledge of these organizations provided invaluable insights on future program and funding needs.

Formal and Unregulated UXO Clearance

The session began with a presentation by **Steve Wilson** of Mines Advisory Group (MAG). MAG was the first NGO to begin UXO clearance in Laos, starting in 1994. Wilson explained that formal clearance is regulated by the NRA and conducted using international standard practices. The work includes roving teams that respond to reports of UXO from villagers as well as teams that clear large tracts of land for farming and development. A great deal more funding is needed for formal clearance, but MAG feels it must be integrated with economic development to be effective.



One of the biggest challenges, and a major cause of accidents, is the extensive practice of informal UXO clearance by the general population, primarily collection of UXO to sell as scrap metal. Even though it is illegal to tamper with or take UXO, MAG found 86,000 pieces of live munitions in the Xieng Khouang foundry this year. Villagers are willing to risk collecting, transporting, and sometimes defusing bombs to earn additional income. Risk education only works to a certain extent in this situation. To substantially reduce the problem there must be economic alternatives.

When asked if MAG is considering other models for UXO clearance given the massive levels of contamination in Laos, Wilson said MAG is evaluating the possibility of training local residents to clear UXO found in the immediate area. Another model being considered is legalizing and regulating scrap collection, in turn providing training on handling UXO.

Awareness & Education



Next, **Sarah Bruinooge** of World Education/Consortium spoke of the organization's work providing UXO prevention and survivor assistance services in Laos since 1996. The group has trained medical emergency personnel in trauma treatment for UXO victims in four provinces, and provided job training for UXO victims, while working to get injured children back to school. The recipients of their services often help design new programs for other victims.

The group also provides risk education in the schools. World Education is currently meeting with the NRA and Lao Ministry of Education to incorporate their program into the National Education Program.



UXO Development Issues

This section of the panel began with a presentation by **Wendy Batson** of Handicap International, USA (HI). Batson stated that most UXO accidents in Laos are caused by economic problems in remote, ethnic villages where people are extremely poor. The recent NRA survey of victims revealed that 84% of UXO casualties are males with the highest rates for boys ages 6-15 and then young men 16-21. Many accidents occur because families have no choice but to farm fields contaminated with UXO or collect scrap metal to sell. As a result, HI's overall objective is to contribute to poverty reduction.



HI works in 30 villages, using a team approach to combine formal clearance with community economic development and the provision of other basic services. This involves post-clearance assessments to evaluate the socio-economic impact of clearance and further development needs. HI also provides risk education, distributing posters, books, and other materials to teach adults and children of the risks. Like MAG, HI is providing input to the National Regulatory Authority regarding the possibility of legalizing and regulating scrap metal collection.



Next, **Steve Ginther** of Humpty Dumpty Institute (HDI) discussed HDI's work linking mine action with agricultural development and food security in Khammoune Province. Land has been cleared to dig wells for irrigation and clean water and to build sanitation systems. Roads and land around schools also have been cleared to make them safe for children to attend. The HDI program has the first all-female demining team in Khammoune Province. They cleared 3 million square meters of land, destroying 7,000 pieces of UXO.

Children in 85 schools are now growing gardens. In addition, HDI provides 13,000 children in 109 schools with a midday snack of high protein soy and 58,000 take home rations for students and teachers. School enrollment is up significantly at these schools with attendance at 98%. They are running a pilot program to provide families with chickens and pigs and training on how to care for them.

Wrap Up and Summary

Titus Peachey of the Mennonite Central Committee led a final session to discuss what the participants had learned during the day and to develop a strategy to move forward. There was general agreement among participants about the value of the convening. It provided an opportunity to learn more about each other's work and strategies, especially among NGOs that receive U.S. funding. The overall decline in demining funding was of concern to participants, and there was discussion about how to raise awareness among representatives of the U.S. government and the American public about the continuing needs in Laos. The State Department presentation and discussion was integral to this effort, and the group expressed the desire for more such engagements in the future.

Participant List

Wendy Batson
Executive Director
Handicap International-USA

Mike Boddington
Victims Assistance Advisor
UXO Lao

Fred Branfman
Writer
Voices from the Plain of Jars

Sarah Bruinooge
Program Officer
World Education/Consortium

Jacqui Chagnon

Somxay Chaisone
EmiAna, Inc & Lanxang Contracting, LLC

Brett Dakin
Chair, Board of Directors
Legacies of War

Kae Dakin
Development Consultant
Kae Dakin Consulting

Catherin Dalpino
Visiting Professor of Asian Studies
Georgetown University

Matt Durden
Associate
Cooley Godward Kronish LLP

Bob Eaton
Director
E-Mine: Electronic Mine Information
Network

Steve Ginther
Program Manager for Mine Action
Humpty Dumpty Institute

Susan Hammond
Director
War Legacies

Tim Horner
Senior UXO Technical Advisor
United Nations Development Program
(UNDP)-Laos

Zach Hudson
U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmine and
Cluster Munitions
Handicap International-USA

Ed Kenney
Senior Program Officer
Handicap International-USA

Nakhone Keodara
Campaign Coordinator
Legacies of War

Channapha Khamvongsa
Executive Director
Legacies of War

Bonnie Kwon
Coordinator
Restaurant Opportunities Center of
Washington DC (ROC-DC)

Teddy Ky-Nam Miller
National Community Reinvestment
Coalition

Helly Lee
Member, Advisory Committee
Legacies of War



Lora Lumpe
Consultant
Open Society Institute

Titus Peachey
Director of Peace Education
Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

Kanika Phommachanh
Ambassador of the Lao PDR to the UN
Lao PDR UN Mission

Mali Phonpadith
Artist
Lao Heritage Foundation (collaborator)

Jack Rattanavong
Member, Board of Directors
Legacies of War

Elaine Russell
Member, Board of Directors
Legacies of War, Advocacy Committee

Alex San Dinero
Community Member/Artist

Mai Sayavongs
Minister Counselor
Lao PDR Embassy Washington, D.C.

Viengkham Senbouttalath
Third Secretary
Lao PDR Embassy Washington, D.C.

Dori Shimoda
President
Give Children A Choice

Barbara Shimoda
Vice President/Healthcare Projects Director
Give Children A Choice

Bruce Shoemaker
Program Consultant - SE Asia
McKnight Foundation

Jack Silberman
Documentary Film Director
Bombies

Charles Stonecipher
Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement
U.S. Department of State

Sakuna Thongchanh
Community Consultant
Legacies of War

Brett Tolman
Advocacy Intern
Legacies of War

Bounmivieng Viengnhouthasath
Assistant Defense and Military Attache
Lao PDR Embassy Washington, D.C.

Steve Wilson
Director, North America
Mines Advisory Group (MAG)



Speakers' Biographies

Speaker information in speaking order.

Brett Dakin *Chair, Board of Directors, Legacies of War*

Brett Dakin, a New York attorney, is the Charles Evans Gerber Transactional Studies Research Fellow at Columbia Law School. Brett is also the author of *Another Quiet American: Stories of Life in Laos* (Asia Books), which Rough Guides calls “a must for anyone looking to understand Laos today.” Prior to joining Columbia, Brett was an associate at the law firm of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, where his practice focused on international corporate and financial transactions, with particular emphasis on intellectual property matters. Brett received a J.D. degree, cum laude, from Harvard Law School in 2003, where he served as Editor-in-Chief of the Harvard Human Rights Journal, and an undergraduate degree, summa cum laude, from Princeton University in 1998. Brett is also a member of the Advisory Councils of the Princeton University East Asian Studies Department and the Public International Law & Policy Group.

Channapha Khamvongsa *Executive Director, Legacies of War*

Channapha Khamvongsa is executive director of Legacies of War, an organization which seeks to address the problem of unexploded cluster bombs in Laos, to provide space for healing the wounds of war and to create greater hope for a future of peace. The organization uses art, culture, education, and community organizing to bring people together and create healing and transformation out of the wreckage of war. Previously, she worked at the Ford Foundation and Public Interest Projects, focusing on immigrant and refugee rights, global civil society, civic engagement, capacity building and transformational leadership. She was previously appointed to the Seattle Women’s Commission and served on the boards of the Refugee Women’s Alliance and Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL). She is currently Interim-Board Chair of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) – USA. Channapha’s father is from Luang Prabang and her mother is from Thakhek. She was born in Vientiane and came to the U.S. at the age of seven. Ms. Khamvongsa has studied at George Mason University and Oxford University. She received her Master’s Degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University.

H.E. Phiane Philakone *Ambassador, Embassy of the Lao PDR to the United States*

Ambassador Phiane Philakone received his bachelor degree in Law and Administration in 1969 from the Institut Royal de et d’Administration in Vientiane Laos and received his diploma in 1971 from Institut International d’Administration in Publique (IIAP) Paris, France. He worked as Director of Administration at the Lao Development Bank, Director of the Research Bank in Lao PDR, President of “Joint Development Bank”, a joint venture commercial Bank in Lao PDR, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Lao PDR and as



the Ambassador of Lao PDR to the republic of the Philippines from 2001-2007 before he accepted the Job of Ambassador of the Lao PDR to the United States, Canada and Mexico in 2007.

Dr. Maligna Saignavongs *Director, National Regulatory Agency*

Dr. Saignavongs is currently the director of the National Regulatory Agency of the Lao PDR. Prior to assuming this position, he served in the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs in various capacities, including as Director General of the Department of Europe and Americas; Ambassador of the Lao PDR to the Federal Republic of Germany; Director-General of the International Organizations Department; and Head of the Economic and Social Division, International Organizations Department.

He has also served as a National Short-term Consultant on a number of projects in Laos, including the Nam Ngum River Basin Development Sector Project; Lao National Commission for Mother and Child; International Legislation; National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper; and Strengthening of Legal Education and Training in the Lao PDR.

Dr. Saignavongs was educated at the Lycee Pavie in Vientiane, Laos; the Lycee Mignet in Aix-en-Provence, France; the Faculty of Law, Lausanne University, Switzerland; and the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland.

Tim Horner *Senior Technical Advisor, National Regulatory Agency*

Tim has been involved with military explosives in one way or another since joining the British Royal Navy in 1976 as a Mine Clearance Diver. Having then worked for demining projects in Somalia, Angola, and Bosnia, Tim decided in 2000 to go back to the UK to study for a Masters Degree in Disaster Management at Cranfield University. After receiving his degree, Tim accepted a job in Afghanistan for the UN working for the biggest demining programme in the world at the time.

In Afghanistan, Tim moved from implementing clearance projects to coordinating different clearance organizations and trying to combine them with risk education and victim assistance.

After arriving in Laos in September 2006, Tim found that unexploded ordnance from 2,000,000 tons of bombs dropped more than 35 years ago was still claiming lives and limbs in Lao rural communities.

Based in Vientiane, he currently works for UNDP as the Senior Technical Advisor to the National Regulatory Authority for the UXO Sector. This is the Lao government body responsible for monitoring, regulating and coordinating 10 clearance operators, 5 risk education organizations and several different victim assistance agencies. He has also been deeply involved with the government and the UN on the Oslo Process that produced the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Mike Boddington *Technical Advisor-Victim Assistance, National Regulatory Agency and Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise*

Mike Boddington worked for five years as an academic at London University, following qualifications in agriculture and agricultural economics. From there, he established a rural development and environment consultancy practice, working in UK and the low-income world, eventually leading him to work in Cambodia in 1991 where, purely by accident, he became involved in the landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) issue.

Coming to understand that the problem of victims of these mines and UXO spread beyond the borders of Cambodia, Mike founded a British NGO, POWER International, to help the innocent victims of explosive remnants of war.

In 1994, Mike visited Laos to see whether a programme was needed for UXO accident survivors and, in 1995, set up a Lao prosthetics and orthotics development programme. In 1997, he established the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), a local partnership involving international NGOs and the Lao Ministry of Health. COPE's purpose is to assist the Ministry of Health in physical rehabilitation throughout Lao PDR. In 2002, Mike moved permanently to Laos to steer COPE through difficult times.

At that time, too, COPE had a policy to develop a Lao self-help organisation for disabled people, with a view to having their voices heard on the Board of COPE. Mike worked with the Lao Disabled People's Association to build such an organisation.

In 2006, he was invited to join the newly-formed Lao UXO National Regulatory Authority, a joint Lao Government/UNDP operation, as its Technical Advisor in Victim Assistance, in which guise he has undertaken a nationwide survey of all victims of UXO accidents and is developing a six-pronged strategy to meet survivors' needs.

Maintaining funding for organisations such as COPE is an ongoing problem: as a step in its resolution, he initiated the COPE Visitor Centre, to explain the UXO issue in Lao PDR and to seek long-run funding. The operation now yields net about \$8,000 per month.

Charles Stonecipher *Program Manager-Asia and the Pacific, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, U.S. Department of State*

Charles A. Stonecipher is a Foreign Service Officer serving as program manager for Asia and the Pacific in the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, located within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs of the U.S. Department of State.

Mr. Stonecipher entered the Foreign Service in 1989 as a Political Affairs Officer, and has served in a variety of domestic and overseas assignments. He oversaw U.S. participation in UN peace operations in Africa while in the Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Operations, and served abroad in Guinea-Bissau, Canada, Albania, Macedonia, Switzerland, and Botswana. In his current position he manages U.S. support for mine/UXO action in Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Papua New Guinea.

Prior to entering the Foreign Service, Mr. Stonecipher had a career as a military and civilian



helicopter pilot and aviation manager. He served as a U.S. Army medical evacuation helicopter pilot in Vietnam, and as a civilian pilot in Iran and Alaska.

Mr. Stonecipher holds aviation-related undergraduate degrees from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Northrop University, and a master of international public administration degree from the University of Texas.

Kanika Phommachanh *Ambassador of the Lao PDR to the UN, Lao PDR UN Mission*

Ms. Phommachanh is currently the Permanent Representative of the Lao PDR to the United Nations. Prior to assuming this position, she served as Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Minister Counsellor and Charge d’Affaires at the Lao PDR’s Permanent Mission in New York.

Beginning her diplomatic career in October 1975, Ms. Phommachanh was appointed Private Secretary to the Chief of Cabinet in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In April 1976, she became a Desk Officer in the Ministry’s Eastern Europe Division, Department of Political Affairs 1 (Socialist Countries), winning promotion in January 1980 to Director of the North America Division, Department of Political Affairs 2 (Non-Socialist Countries), and rising to Deputy Director-General (1982) and then Director-General (1990).

Ms. Phommachanh holds a Bachelor of Arts in English studies from the Université de Montréal (1975) and a Master of Arts in international public policy (1994) from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Steve Wilson *Director, North America, Mines Advisory Group*

Steve Wilson’s involvement in mine and UXO clearance started when he served with the British Army, Royal Engineers, specializing in Explosive Ordnance Disposal. On leaving the Army, Steve began work on a commercial contract to clear the explosive remnants of war that remained after the first Gulf War. In 1994 he joined the humanitarian sector with MAG (Mines Advisory Group) as a technical field manager in Lao PDR. During the last 14 years Steve has worked in many of MAG’s conflict recovery programmes in various roles. He currently works with MAG’s US partner, MAG America, to profile the issue of conflict recovery and raise funds in North America.

Sarah Bruinooge *Program Officer, World Education/Constortium*

Sarah Bruinooge is the Program Officer for World Education’s programs in Laos and Thailand, and has been with World Education for two years. She is also involved in designing curriculum and facilitating trainings within the organization. Previously, she taught at an international school in Bangkok for four years, then completed a Master’s degree in intercultural relations and worked as adjunct faculty at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. She speaks Thai and some Lao, and appreciates the best part of her job: traveling to Laos and Thailand a few times a year.



Wendy Batson *Executive Director, Handicap International*

Ms. Batson is a development specialist with extensive experience planning and managing rehabilitation and reconstruction programs in war-devastated countries for major voluntary organizations and the United Nations. She has designed and implemented programs for refugees and persons with disabilities in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Angola, among other countries. She and her husband and four children lived in Laos from 1981 to 1984 overseeing war reconstruction projects in Laos and Vietnam and in Pakistan from 1989 through 1994 where she worked for UNHCR supporting programs for Afghan refugees. From 1996 until 2003 she served as Director for Humanitarian Affairs of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. She is now Director of Handicap International (HI) – USA. The HI federation has international offices in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Luxemburg, Great Britain, Canada and the United States that collectively support 240 programs in some sixty countries.

Steve Ginther *Program Manager, Mine Action, The Humpty Dumpty Institute*

Steve Ginther joined the Humpty Dumpty Institute as the Program Manager for Mine Action in February 2008. As a Program Manager, Steve provides overall programmatic, operational and logistic support to HDI's programs in Sri Lanka, Laos and Vietnam. He is also responsible for research and development of new grant opportunities in mine action and food security. He joined HDI after working in international development program management with various NGO's such as the Global Fund for Children, International Rescue Committee, CARE, and Partners of the Americas, in Latin America and Central Asia. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala and received an MSc. from the London School of Economics and Political Science in Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries, in 1993 and a BA in International Relations from the University of Colorado in 1989.

Titus Peachey *Director of Peace Education, Mennonite Central Committee*

Titus Peachey and his wife Linda served as Mennonite Central Committee representatives in Laos from 1980-1985. In this capacity they administered various aid projects and searched for ways to respond to the devastating impact of unexploded ordnance in Lao villages. In 1994, Titus returned to Laos for six months to help administer the country's first humanitarian bomb removal project in collaboration with the Lao Ministry of Social Welfare & Veterans Affairs, and the Mines Advisory Group. In the year 2000, Titus returned to Laos with film producer Jack Silberman to assist in the production of *Bombies*. Titus is the Director of Peace Education for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and has a keen interest in the ongoing debate about the use of cluster munitions in warfare. He is a participant in the Cluster Munitions Coalition, and attended the international conference in Oslo, Norway, in February of 2007, which called for a ban on the production and use of cluster bombs.

