

### Indiscriminate Weapons

Cluster bombs are designed as anti-personnel, anti-armor weapons, but the primary victims have been innocent civilians. More than 95% of known cluster bomb victims are civilians and up to 40% are children, who are drawn to the small, toy-like metal objects.



Cluster bomb casings release hundreds of bomblets—the size of a soup can or orange—over wide areas, frequently missing intended military targets and killing nearby civilians.

Commonly-used cluster bombs are designed to explode into hundreds of pieces of razor-sharp shrapnel that rip through bodies. They are deadlier than landmines.

Anywhere from 2% to 20% of modern cluster munitions do not detonate upon impact (this rate rises to 10% - 30% for older bombs in Southeast Asia), leaving a deadly hazard for years to come.

### The Legacy of Cluster Bombs in Laos

Laos has suffered more than half of the confirmed cluster munitions casualties in the world.

Over the past four decades, only about half of 1% of the bomblets that failed to detonate have been cleared. All 17 provinces of Laos are burdened with unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination, and 41 of 46 of the poorest districts in Laos are also contaminated with UXO.

### Consider the Following:

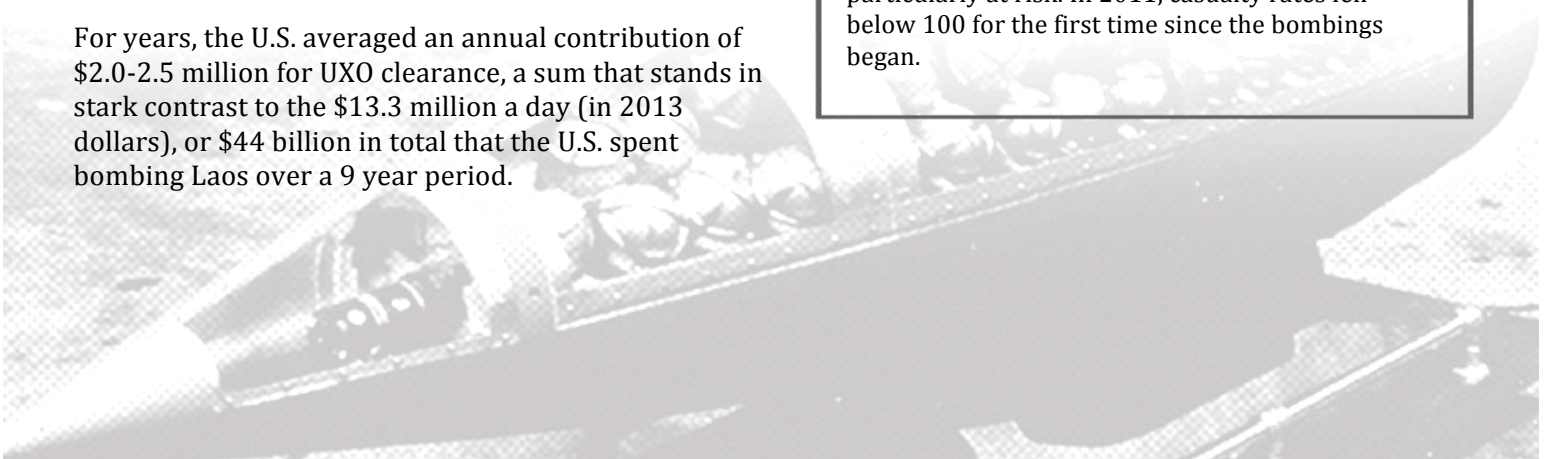
At least one third of Laos is contaminated with UXO, based on surveys and U.S. military strike data. The Lao government is targeting populated areas and agricultural land for clearance. Even with substantial increases in funding, the effort will take at least 15 years and most likely much longer to clear high priority land.

For years, the U.S. averaged an annual contribution of \$2.0-2.5 million for UXO clearance, a sum that stands in stark contrast to the \$13.3 million a day (in 2013 dollars), or \$44 billion in total that the U.S. spent bombing Laos over a 9 year period.

### Lao'd Facts

- From 1964 to 1973, the U.S. dropped more than two million tons of ordnance over Laos.
- The U.S. conducted 580,000 bombing missions, the equivalent of one planeload every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years.
- At least 270 million cluster bomblets were dropped as part of the bombing campaign.
- Approximately 80 million failed to detonate.

Data from a survey completed in Laos (2009) indicated that UXO, primarily cluster bombs, have killed or maimed as many as 50,000 civilians in Laos since 1964 (20,000 since the end of war in 1973). About 60% of accidents in Laos have resulted in death, and in the past few years, almost 60% of the victims have been children. Boys are particularly at risk. In 2011, casualty rates fell below 100 for the first time since the bombings began.



## Recent Use of Cluster Bombs

2013	Syrian government forces used cluster munitions against rebels
2011	Government forces loyal to Gaddafi dropped cluster bombs on rebels in Misrata, Libya
2011	Thailand dropped cluster bombs on Cambodia
2008	Both Russia and Georgia dropped cluster bombs during the South Ossetia conflict
2006	Israel dropped up to four million cluster bombs on Lebanon; the Hezbollah organization fired 4,407 cluster bombs into Israel
2003	The U.S. dropped 1.8 million cluster bombs on Iraq
2001-2002	The U.S. dropped 248,056 cluster bombs on Afghanistan

## Hopeful Steps

*The Convention on Cluster Munitions* prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions. The international agreement, signed by 111 nations and ratified by 79 nations to date, entered into force on August 1, 2010. The U.S. has not signed the treaty. The first Meeting of States Parties took place from November 9-12, 2010, in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

### *Efforts in Congress and Beyond*

- 2013 Budget: Senate Appropriations language for FY2013 called for \$10 million for UXO programs in Laos, the largest annual amount ever allocated.
- House/Senate Bill: The Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act of 2013 (S. 419, H.R. 881) awaits passage in Congress. This bill would restrict the production and use of cluster munitions by the U.S. A permanent ban on cluster bomb exports from the U.S. was passed in the Senate in March 2009.
- Secretary Hillary Clinton visited Laos in July 2012 -- the first time a U.S. Secretary of State had visited the country since 1955 -- and made the UXO issue a primary focus of her trip. Legacies joined six former U.S. ambassadors to Laos in 2011 to call on Clinton to visit the country and to increase funding to the UXO sector.
- A House Appropriations Subcommittee held the first ever hearing on the issue of UXO in Laos in April 2010, helping to educate members of Congress on the issue and increase support for additional funding for UXO clearance in Laos.

## What Can You Do?

- Urge your Congressional representative to ensure that at least \$10 million is allocated for UXO clearance in Laos for FY2014 with sustained funding over the next ten years. \$10 million would provide continuity to organizations providing bomb clearance, survivor assistance, and risk education programs in Laos, and sustained funding would allow them to bring already effective programs up to scale.
- Encourage your Congressional representative and the U.S. State Department to attend future meetings related to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Encourage the U.S. to join this convention and to make a long-term commitment to clearance and victim assistance in Laos.

**Full list of references available online at [www.legaciesofwar.org](http://www.legaciesofwar.org)**

*Updated July 26, 2013*