Frequently Asked Questions

What is Legacies of War?
Legacies of War is the only U.S.-based organization dedicated to raising awareness about the history of the U.S. Vietnam War-era bombing in Laos. Our mission is to:
- advocate for the clearance of unexploded bombs,
- provide space for healing the wounds of war, and
- create greater hope for a future of peace.

What are UXO in Laos?
During the Vietnam War era, more than two million tons of ordnance were dropped on Laos. An estimated 30 percent of the ordnance did not explode on impact, leaving at least one third of the land across all 17 provinces in the country contaminated. The Lao Government has determined that UXO contaminates 41 out of the 46 poorest districts in Laos and remains an obstacle for carrying out its national development plans. The threat of deadly unexploded ordinance (UXO) limits Laotian people’s ability to cultivate enough land for food and to maintain secure livelihoods, exacerbating the nation’s extreme poverty.

What is Legacies of War’s strategy to address UXO in Laos?
Legacies is not a direct service or aid organization. We educate and mobilize the U.S. public to help us advocate for increased U.S. funding for clearance, education and awareness, and victim assistance in Laos. Legacies also advocates for increased funding by educating and 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. With this strategy, we leverage our small budget for the greatest impact.

How much has the U.S. historically spent on the UXO sector in Laos?
U.S. assistance to the UXO sector in Laos began in 1993 via the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Leahy War Victims Fund. The State Department began a larger program in 1996-97. According to the State Department, between 1993 and 2009, the U.S. has provided a total of more than $51 million in UXO-related assistance to Laos. As a result of targeted advocacy by Legacies of War in Washington, funding began to increase dramatically in 2010, when the U.S. Congress allocated $5 million for UXO clearance. This was almost double the amount previously allocated. A year later, Congress signaled that UXO removal in Laos should be a major priority, recommending that no less that $9 million be spent to address the issue in fiscal year 2012, the largest dollar amount ever.

What is Legacies' annual budget?
Our annual budget is about $150,000. All of our funding comes from individuals or small and large foundations; we do not receive any money from any government. On this small budget, we have managed to help triple U.S. funding for the UXO sector in Laos through advocacy and education. None of the funding that Congress allocates ($9 million in 2012) goes to Legacies – ALL of it goes to groups working in Laos. We rely strictly on the support of our generous donors.

Where can I learn more about Legacies of War?
Please visit our website, www.legaciesofwar.org. Our Executive Director is Channapha Khamvongsa, and the Chair of our Board of Directors is Brett Dakin.