



Australian Government  
Aid Program



## Making a Difference: Australia's Support for the UXO Sector in Laos



© Commonwealth of Australia 2010. This work is copyright.

For further information about the Australian overseas aid program go to [www.aisaid.gov.au](http://www.aisaid.gov.au)

For further information relating to this publication, contact AusAID, Australian Embassy, Vientiane, Laos

Phone +856 21 353 800

Designed by BlueGrass Design Group Co., Ltd., Vientiane  
Printed by Kao Yord Image Printing, Vientiane

Cover photo: Young boys checking out a stack of UXO in Saravan Province.

Photo: UXO Lao

# Contents



Introduction	1
Australian Support to UXO Action in Laos	3
Project Snapshots	5



Mr Phoukhieo Chanthasomboune is the Director of the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/ Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR.

Photo: National Regulatory Authority (NRA)

## Message from Director, National Regulatory Authority

*Australia is one of the key sponsors of the First Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are extremely grateful to the Australian Government for this, as well as for its longstanding support to the UXO Sector in the Lao PDR.*

*Australian aid to key actors of the UXO Sector has enabled the development of qualitative and innovative initiatives in terms of clearance, risk education, victim assistance and advocacy. We believe that these initiatives are essential to help the Lao PDR to implement its new obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions.*

# Introduction

More than 580 000 bombing missions were carried out over Laos between 1964 and 1973. Over two million tons of bombs were dropped, making Laos the most heavily bombed country in the world. It is estimated that up to 30 per cent of these munitions failed to explode. Even today, they continue to threaten the lives and well-being of Lao people.

580 000 bombing missions were carried out over Laos between 1964 and 1973

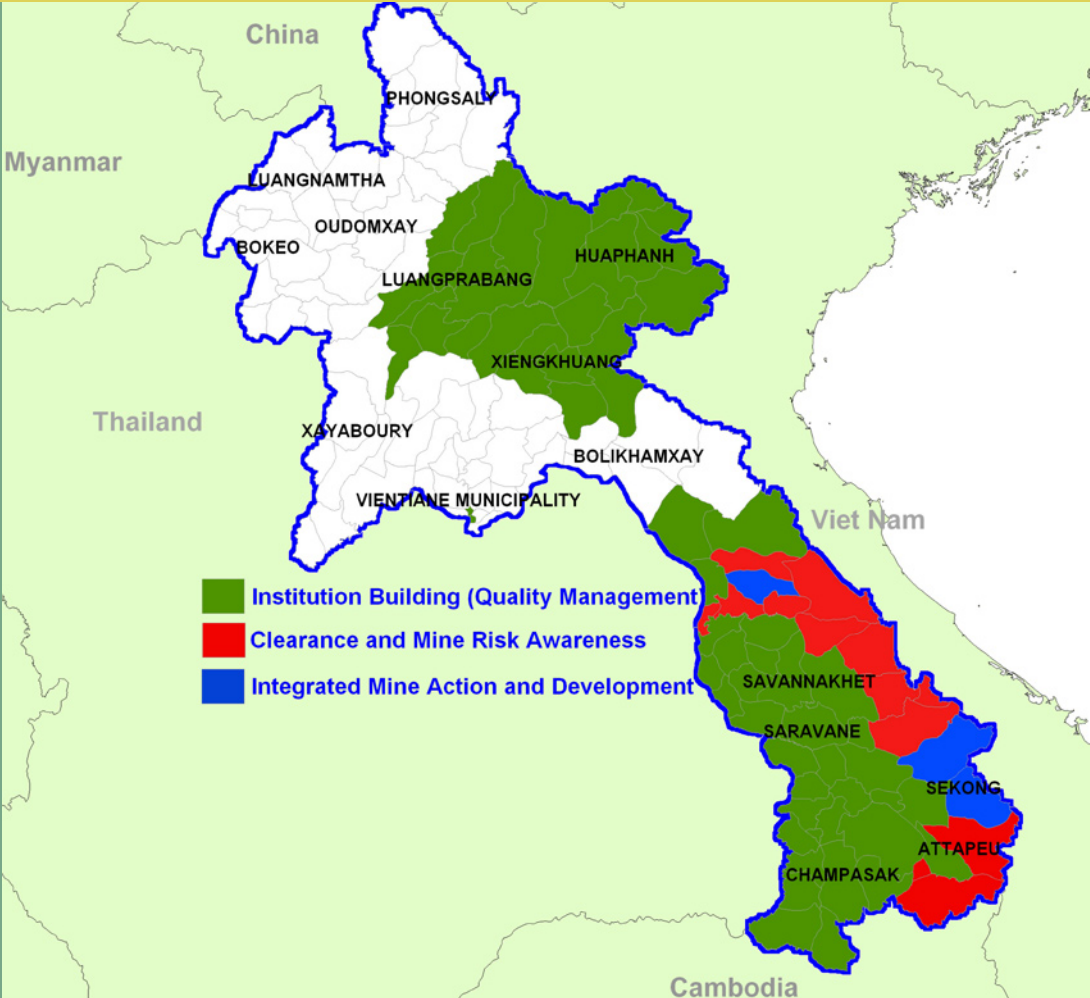
Cluster sub-munitions or 'bombies' are the most common form of unexploded ordnance (UXO) remaining. Over 50 000 people have been killed or injured since 1964. There are at least 300 new casualties each year, and 40 per cent of these are children.

All 17 provinces in Lao PDR are still affected by UXO. Twenty-five per cent of all villages in Lao are reported to be contaminated with UXO and over a third of all agricultural land remains affected. Many villagers are forced to take risks every day as they walk in uncleared areas or work in dangerous fields. As a result, many people live in acute poverty and suffer chronic malnutrition.



Approximately 80 million unexploded bombs and 'bombies' remained in Lao after the war.  
Photo: UXO Lao

# Australian Support to UXO Action in Laos



# Australian Support to UXO Action in Laos

Australia is a longstanding supporter of UXO action in Laos. Since 1996 Australian assistance has benefited over 17 000 people in UXO-contaminated provinces. Australia has provided almost A\$20 million through a comprehensive approach involving clearance and risk awareness, victim assistance, and better planning.

## Clearance and awareness

Humanitarian mine action operators have cleared UXO from productive land and delivered risk awareness activities. These activities give rural communities safer access to natural resources, supporting improved food security and livelihoods.

We work in partnership with Australian Non Government Organisations to combine UXO clearance and risk awareness with community development initiatives. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining has described the Australian approach as best practice.

## UXO Victim Assistance

Since 1998, Australian-funded victim assistance projects have helped 12 000 vulnerable people living in poverty in remote communities. This funding has increased access to rehabilitation services and helped people with disabilities participate in community activities. An on-going National Victims Survey will lead to better UXO information system management and improved coordination of responses.

## Support for UXO sector planning, coordination and management

To meet its development targets, Laos must have strong national capacity in UXO sector planning, coordination and management. Since 1996 Australia has supported the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) to oversee and regulate the UXO sector. Funding has also been provided to assist the Lao Government to meet its obligations under international treaties and to host the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2010.

Since 1996 Australian assistance has benefited over 17 000 people in UXO-contaminated provinces



There are at least 300 new UXO casualties each year, and 40 per cent of these are children.  
Photo: Tracie Williams

## Clearance of UXO



Ms Xayphone Seankhambou is a member of a UXO Lao clearance team working in Sekong Province.

Photo: UXO Lao

*“The most dangerous part of the job is when I find a very old bomb and I cannot identify what it is. Another dangerous part is when we are doing a demolition on site and we don’t have a big tree to hide behind as the bombs go off. Being a deminer is very dangerous. I believe my work is very important as it helps the Lao people. It also helps the country have more land safe from UXO for farming and other development activities.”*

## Project snapshots



### Integrated UXO Clearance

*Reducing UXO Risk and Improving Livelihoods of Ethnic Communities in Sekong*

Implementing Partner: CARE

Total Amount: \$3.02 million

Project period: 2007 – 2012

This program is addressing the vulnerability of 20 disadvantaged ethnic villages affected by large-scale UXO contamination in two districts of Sekong Province. It incorporates UXO clearance, community-based planning and land use allocation, mine risk education, and small scale rural development initiatives to enhance livelihood security. To date, 26 hectares of land have been cleared, benefitting 257 households. Participating villages have also benefited from livelihood enhancement activities such as peanut planting, seed collection and coffee nurseries.

### Sector Management

*Support to the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) for the UXO Sector*

Implementing Partner: United Nations Development Programme

Total Amount: \$300 000

Project period: 2008 – 2010

Australia supported the establishment of the NRA and its work on the National UXO/Mine Action Standards. The standards set out the parameters within which UXO/ Mine Action should be carried out and set out the quality management requirements of accreditation, monitoring and inspection.





### *Support to Quality Management of the UXO Sector*

Implementing Partner: United Nations Development Programme

Total Amount: \$2.79 million

Project period: 2009 – 2011

This assistance is supporting the Lao PDR to take a leadership role on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, including hosting the First Meeting of States Parties in November 2010 in Vientiane. It is also providing direct support to the NRA and UXO Lao to improve sector planning, priority-setting and quality assurance related to clearance work undertaken in Laos.

### **Victim Assistance**

#### *Partnership in Rehabilitation*

Implementing Partner: Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE)

Total Amount: \$350 000

Project period: 2008 – 2011

Australia is supporting the Prosthetics and Orthotics Program of the NRC and COPE to ensure that people with disability have free access to a quality, nationally managed and locally delivered rehabilitation service. Australian-supported work also includes an outreach program in three provinces providing professional and technical resources and rehabilitation for people with disabilities, including UXO victims. The program helps people become aware of their right to access services. In 2009, COPE reported an increase in people seeking assessments, with 1293 orthotic/prosthetic devices provided to patients.

### **Risk Education and Clearance**

#### *Integrated UXO Threat Reduction Program in Savannakhet Province*

Implementing Partner: Handicap International Belgium (HIB)

Total Amount: \$500 000

Project period: 2008 – 2009

Australia provided assistance to HIB to address the threat of UXO through risk education and clearance in Savannakhet Province. As a result of our support, 4767 villagers benefited from the clearance of 430 882 square metres of land. Based on community discussions, 36 villages reflected changes in attitude which made villagers less likely to collect scrap metal, a high risk activity. District Authorities also reported that scrap metal detection activities significantly decreased after the risk education initiatives.



Mr. Norvaly has received a prosthetic limb and is receiving help from Mr. Sommai at the National Rehabilitation Centre, Lao PDR.

Photo: Jim Holmes

## Victim Assistance

*Naovanglee Norvaly can't stop smiling. For the first time in 18 years he is wearing a pair of shoes, thanks to a professionally-made prosthetic leg provided by the COPE Centre, which is supported by the Australian Government aid program. Each year COPE makes and fits more than a thousand orthotic/prosthetic devices and 400 wheelchairs, provides ongoing rehabilitation support.*

*The easygoing Naovanglee lost his leg below the knee after stepping on a cluster bomb, known as a bomble, whilst scouting for areas to plant a rice crop. For almost two decades, the 36-year-old had been hobbling around on a wooden leg hand made by craftsmen in his remote village in Laos. "They would last only six months to two years, depending on the quality of the wood." Naovanglee had given up wearing shoes as he didn't want to waste his hard-earned money on a pair of shoes. "It would have been wasteful to buy two and only wear one," he said.*



Children participate in a role play on the risks related to scrap metal collection.

Photo: UXO Lao

