

**Presentation by Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith,
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On Victim Assistance

Madame Coordinator,

Since the end of the Second Indochina conflict more than 4,000 people in the Lao PDR have fallen victim to the scourge of bombs. This accounts for the majority of all confirmed cluster submunitions casualties in the world. Overall more than 22,000 in Laos have been injured by some type of UXO. Tragically, the country still experiences approximately one new casualty every day as a result of that conflict.

During 2008, the National Regulatory Authority conducted the Lao National Survey of UXO Victims and Accidents. Almost all 9,583 villages in the country were visited and this has yielded details of more than 50,000 UXO casualties to have occurred between 1964 and 2007. A subsequent verification exercise that visited 204 villages throughout the country suggests that the original survey under-recorded UXO victims, perhaps by as much as 21%. The data collection and analysis is still ongoing, however results are expected to reveal that more than 30,000 people were killed and injured from the conflict period, and that 20,000 plus occurred subsequent to the conflict's end. The survey also highlights that the proportion of children involved in accidents has considerably increased over time. During the war, just over 20% of casualties were children. Now, that figure has risen to 40%. Those innocents born decades after the conflict has ended are increasingly becoming its victims.

Over the years, the annual number of people killed or injured has dropped to about 300. Alarming though in recent times, there has been an increase in the annual casualty figures, likely attributable to a scrap metal industry that encourages UXO scrounging. Positively, the ratio of those killed to injured has improved, with less people dying now after a UXO accident.

In the past the development of victim assistance has been somewhat unplanned and ad hoc. Only with the establishment of National Regulatory Authority for the UXO/Mine Action Sector in 2004, a nationwide survey of UXO victims and accidents is being undertaken. According to 2008 nation-wide survey of all victims and accidents from 1964 to date (*Phase 1 Lao National UXO Victim and Accident Survey*).

The information from the 50,136 casualties is being entered into the Lao Victim Information System (LVIS) and we currently have about 44,000 entered. The final analysis of the results will not be undertaken until all of the forms are entered, but it is possible, on the basis of the information on the database at present, to make predictions about the likely final results.

The NRA is charged with the task of collecting information about all ongoing accidents and this is the job of the *Phase 2 Lao National UXO Victim and Accident Survey*. The methodology requires all provincial and district governments to appoint a focal point within their staff. Village Chiefs will be charged with reporting any accident (since the start of 2008 and ongoing) to the district focal point, whose function will be to pass the information on to the provincial focal point, who will then report to the NRA. The NRA will send a data collection person to the village to gather details on a form for each victim and one for the accident. These arrangements should have been put into operation in January, but they are awaiting approval from the Minister for Labour and Social Welfare before proceeding.

Rehabilitation Service

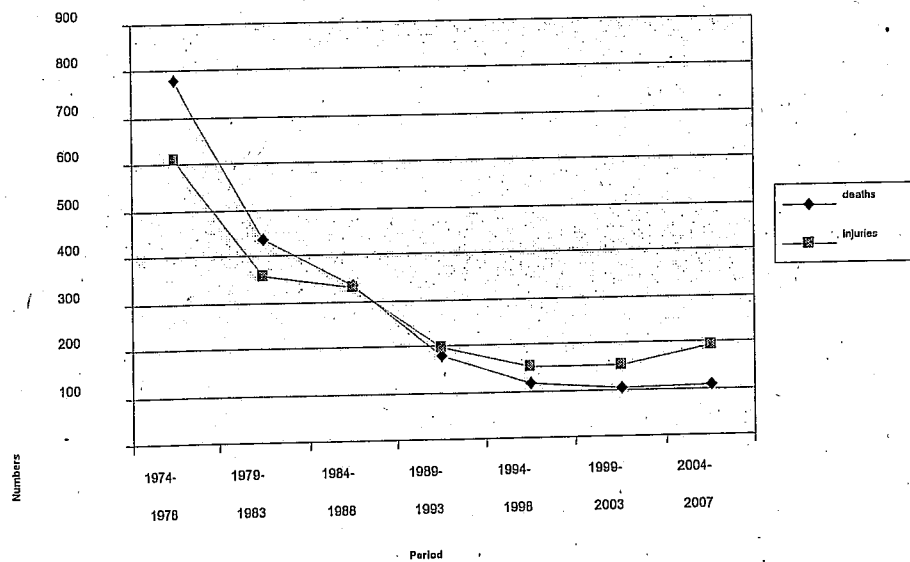
The most common injuries victims sustain from UXO explosion include loss of limb, blindness, hearing loss, shrapnel wounds and internal shockwave injuries.

With regard to physical rehabilitation services for UXO victims, the MOH currently operates five rehabilitation facilities throughout the country. The MOH has direct responsibility for the main facility, the NRC in Vientiane, and the other four centres located in Luang Phrabang, Xieng Khouang, Savannakhet and Champasak are managed by the provincial Departments of Health where they are located. These centres provide services to all trauma victims, including the fitting and provision of prosthetics and orthotics and physiotherapy. UXO injuries are not the only reason that people require mobility devices or rehabilitation. Other issues prevalent in Lao PDR are leprosy, effects of polio, CVA (stroke), club foot, cerebral palsy and other congenital problems. Road traffic accident injuries are rising and the new helmet law has meant individuals survive accidents which in the past would have been fatal creating an increase in complex permanent orthopaedic injuries and amputations.

Thank you

Victim Assistance in the Lao PDR

Average Numbers Killed or Injured Per Annum: Post-conflict



Average percentage of casualties during and post-war

	War time	Post war	
Adult	60	40	
Children	20	40	