

Statement by Lao PDR

Victim Assistance

**Inter- sessional Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster
Munitions**

Geneva, 7-9 April, 2014

Co-chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by thanking Afghanistan and Mexico for their excellent work as co-ordinators of the working group on Victim Assistance.

Throughout the 1964 to 1973 Indochina war, Lao PDR suffered intensive aerial bombardment and heavy ground fighting. There have been an estimated 20,000 UXO casualties since the war ended forty years ago.

The vast majority of accidents that occur today are from sub-surface contamination and usually happen when people in rural areas are setting fires or digging.

As reported in our general statement, in recent years we have made great progress in reducing the number of new victims, from an average of 300 annually to 2008, to 41 in 2013.

However, we still have a long way to go to provide support to survivors and their families.

Beyond meeting their immediate emergency medical needs, very few survivors receive adequate physical, psychological or economic support to help them reintegrate into their communities as full productive members.

Over the past two years we have been gathering data on victims and have recently entered the profiles of 9,000 into the IMSMA data base in order to record their individual needs and to begin to systematically track their progress.

Once analysis of Survivor needs is complete, the data will be available to Ministries, local and international NGOs and donor countries. Over time, the Survivor Tracking System will provide Lao PDR with an accurate picture of survivor needs, an essential step in ensuring that the needs of cluster munition survivors are addressed in compliance with our UXO

Sector Strategy “Safe Path Forward II”, our MDG9 and Article 5 of this Convention.

To address the challenges of Cluster Munitions Victim Assistance in the context of the broader Disability sector, a comprehensive, inter-ministerial, and inter-sectoral approach is required.

On 14 February of this year, the Government approved a Victim Assistance Strategy for the National Regulatory Authority which authorizes the NRA to support the National Committee for Disabled and Elderly People (NCDE) to:

- (i) Develop a sector-wide strategy for the disabled including UXO survivors;**
- (ii) Cooperate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to ensure adequate vocational and other training is provided, and**
- (iii) Cooperate with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the physical and psychological needs of victims are more adequately met.**

Dear Colleagues, Lao PDR has a long way to go to meeting the needs of victims, in part, because we have so many. Still, we pledge to continue to improve our work in support of people who have suffered so much from UXO in our country.

Thank you for your kind attention.