

# UXO kills two children and injures two more

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Two boys were killed instantly and a further two were badly injured in Savannakhet province after an old Indochina War shell they were playing with detonated.

According to preliminary information from the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) on Monday, the unexploded ordnance (UXO) went off in Naheuang village of Xayboury district.

The precise time of detonation has not yet been identified because staff of the Lao National UXO Programme branches in Savannakhet were only sent to the village to collect information on Monday after they were alerted to the tragic event via Facebook.

A staff member of NRA told *Vientiane Times* that an 11-year-old boy named Ter was killed along with his friend Tou, and another two boys were injured.

Almost every month, UXO from the Indochina War is accidentally detonated in

Laos especially by children in remote areas who mistakenly play with them.

Many inquisitive children when seeing UXO on the ground will play with them and some have even tried to cut into the deadly devices with a knife.

According to the NRA, there are around 20,000 survivors of UXO accidents that have occurred between 1964 and 2008.

The NRA will soon create a project providing treatment and occupational training and it will then seek funds from international donors to support.

Many of the victims have lost legs or arms and some have lost their eyesight as well. What's worse, many of these unfortunate people were injured 20 years ago, some even longer, and they still haven't received any real assistance yet.

Many UXO victims in Laos are left abandoned in villages suffering from severe injuries and are unable to be of any help to their families.

Unfortunately, it seems

that international agencies don't provide funds to assist these disabled people directly, focusing more on vocational training.

In 2012, international donors contributed around US\$41.2 million to the UXO sector in Laos.

A total of 6040 hectares of land in Laos was released for cultivation and development in 2012. UXO has been destroyed on over 44,000 hectares of land since 1996. About 87,000 square kilometres may still be contaminated by various types of UXO.

The area of land contaminated by cluster munitions is estimated at about 8,470 square kilometres, based on bombing data records.

Laos was bombarded by enemy aircraft during the Indochina war from 1964 to 1973. Over two million tonnes of ordnance was dropped, including about 288 million cluster munitions. Some 80 million unexploded bombs were left after the war finally ended.