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## What Are Cluster Bombs?

Cluster bombs have killed and maimed thousands of civilians, who overwhelmingly make up the majority of this weapon's victims.

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A cluster munition or cluster bomb is a container filled with small explosive bombs called “sub-munitions.” This container may be a shell, rocket, missile, or other device. Dropped from an aircraft or fired from the ground, it opens in the air and releases the sub-munitions. This scatters a carpet of bombs over a large area without accuracy.

### Endangering Civilians

Up to 97% of recorded victims of cluster bombs are civilians - in other words, **almost all victims are civilians**. Cluster bombs kill, injure, and maim civilians following both immediate use and long-term contamination. **These indiscriminate weapons post generational risks to communities and cause serious psychological trauma.**

### Long-Term Hazard

**Up to 40% of sub-munitions do not explode on impact, leaving behind contamination as hazardous as landmines.** They can explode at any moment, triggered by even slight movements. They render whole areas uninhabitable, prevent social and economic life from returning to normal, and displace people from their homes.

These explosive weapons pose a threat to civilians long after a conflict has ended.

Laos is sadly an example of the long-term hazard posed by cluster bombs. Although Laos was bombed many years ago, between 1964 and 1973, the sub-munitions that did not explode on impact still cause casualties today.



## What Does the Convention on Cluster Munitions Say?

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention) entered into force in August 2010 and was signed by 119 States. The Convention bans the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of cluster bombs. It also requires States Parties to provide victim assistance and clear contaminated areas. The United States has not joined the Convention.



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## Fighting Against Cluster Munitions

Although cluster bombs have been banned since 2010, they are still used in various countries. The United States has recently transferred cluster munitions to Ukraine.

HI is a founding member of the Cluster Muniton Coalition. We actively support the Convention on Cluster Munitions and advocate against the transfer and use of these indiscriminate weapons.

Our armed violence reduction teams continue to clear contaminated land of explosive remnants of war, provide explosive ordnance risk education in impacted communities, and offer rehabilitation care to survivors injured by these weapons.

## Explosive Ordnance Mistaken for a Toy

It was December 2006 and residents of the Houay Hou village in eastern Laos were throwing the Hmong New Year festival. Chue Por (*pictured above*), who was 17, participated with other young people in a spinning top tournament, a traditional activity during these celebrations. His top was thrown off course during the match and landed in a nearby stream. While trying to retrieve it, he saw a metal object that he thought would make a perfect spinning top.

He picked it up and started shaping it with a knife, but the metal object was a cluster munition. It exploded, causing severe damage to his left hand. Chue Por was taken to the hospital unconscious.

He woke up to discover his hand had been amputated.

**"Before my accident, I really had no idea that there were explosive remnants of war around my village. This terrible accident could have been avoided."**

HI identified Chue Por in 2019 and referred him to a rehabilitation center, where he was fitted with an artificial limb.

**"Thanks to HI, I am receiving physical and psychological help. Today, I can see the positive changes in my life: I'm happy to be with my family and look after my livestock."**