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## LANDMINE SURVIVORS PUSH VIETNAM TO ADOPT CLUSTER BOMB BAN



Quang Binh, Vietnam: Thirty-three years after the end of the Vietnam war, landmine survivors in Vietnam are pressing the government of Vietnam to sign a groundbreaking treaty banning the use of cluster bombs.

Over 100,000 Vietnamese have been maimed or killed by unexploded munitions since 1975. But the government has been slow to draw on Vietnam's harrowing experience and take a strong stand against cluster bombs.

As a result, the Landmine Survivors Network-Vietnam (LSN-Vietnam) has launched a campaign to convince the government to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was adopted by 107 nations in May at a meeting in Dublin, Ireland. The treaty will be formally signed in December in Oslo, Norway.

Countries that ratify the convention pledge to never use cluster bombs, to stop developing and producing the weapons, and to never transfer the weapons to anyone else. Signatories will have six years to destroy existing stockpiles of the weapons. The treaty also calls for international cooperation to help those, and to clear unexploded bombs within five years.

“The signing of the cluster munitions treaty will be beneficial for our country, especially our people, because they've been most affected by cluster munitions,” said Kim-Hoa Nguyen, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at LSN-Vietnam. “Hopefully we will be able to obtain international cooperation for victim assistance and mine clearance, which will be very helpful for our survivors, their families, and our communities.”

LSN-Vietnam is a branch of Survivor Corps (the former Landmine Survivors Network), and was an influential advocate for victim assistance at the Dublin meeting. Survivor Corps is a partner of The Advocacy Project (AP), and AP recruited Peace Fellow Chi Vu to volunteer with LSN-Vietnam this summer.

Cluster bombs are air-dropped or ground-launched weapons that eject a number of smaller “bomblets.” Because the bombs release many bomblets over a wide area, they can kill or maim civilians long after a conflict has ended. Unexploded bomblets are costly to locate and remove.

Vietnam has never produced, stockpiled, or used cluster munitions, but has itself been devastated by the scourge. According to the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial Fund, about 104,000 Vietnamese have been killed or injured by leftover wartime explosives since 1975. Thirty percent of the casualties were caused by cluster bombs. In the past two years in Quang Tri province alone, 38 percent of accidents were caused by cluster bombs, with at least 11 people killed or injured.

Given this, some are surprised that the government has not taken a more active position on the issue. Vietnam was barely involved in the process leading up to Dublin and attended just one conference in Vienna, Austria in December 2007. For now, the government is remaining neutral, and studying the treaty.

The LSN-Vietnam campaign is being supported by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH). Between now and November, the campaign will hold two workshops to distribute information about the treaty to survivors, diplomats, government officials, and the media. Ms Vu helped the group secure \$3,000 in funding for the workshops.

The campaign plans to produce a short film documenting the effects of cluster bombs in Vietnam, and will drive a “Ban Bus” through the country in November to raise awareness.

Some of the world’s main producers and stockpilers of cluster bombs, including the United States, Russia and China, have so far refused to sign the treaty.

- Learn more about the [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#).
- Read the blog of [AP Peace Fellow Chi Vu](#).
- Learn more about [LSN-Vietnam](#).