

Philanthropy for Land Mines

A Brief Guide

Prepared by CARE

Landmines wreak indiscriminate destruction. Each day, up to 70 people die or are maimed as a result of landmines. Millions more are held hostage to these hidden killers, afraid to venture out into land they fear has been mined. Although landmines are laid in times of war, the vast majority of their victims are innocent civilians – mostly women and children who are maimed or killed as they go about their daily lives after the war has ended. Landmines have far-reaching social and economic consequences. Because they are concealed and indiscriminate, landmines have a paralyzing effect on poor communities. Not only do they terrorize, they also obstruct development by cutting off access to farmland, water, markets, and schools, and they prevent refugees from returning home after the fighting stops.

Because landmines are so numerous and so long-lived, they present an enormously complex and expensive problem. These statistics illustrate the magnitude of the problem:

- Ninety percent of landmine victims are women and children, not soldiers.
- Today, it is estimated that more than 70 million anti-personnel mines are in the ground and nearly 240 million are stockpiled in the arsenals of about 100 countries.
- Landmines are a daily threat in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia, Chechnya, Croatia, Iraq, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Somalia, and dozens of other countries.
- Even if no more landmines are ever laid, the ones already in the ground will continue to maim and kill for years to come.
- Demining is dangerous, time-consuming, and costly, and demining technology has not caught up with advances in mine manufacturing technology. Moreover, those who need these technologies the most – the rural poor in countries in conflict or emerging from conflict – can afford it least.

What Is a Landmine?

There are two categories of landmines: anti-personnel and anti-tank. The anti-personnel landmine is a small container of explosive material with a detonating system triggered by less than a

pound of pressure from a person or a vehicle. They are generally plastic, waterproof, weigh less than one pound, and cost less than \$3 each. They come in more than 600 varieties and can remain active for decades. Landmines are usually buried a few inches beneath the surface of the earth and are designed to maim and incapacitate. In December 1997, the Mine Ban Treaty was declared in Ottawa, Canada. This treaty has been signed by 152 nations, 144 of which have also ratified the treaty; it is now binding international law. The United States is among the few countries that have not yet signed this treaty.

What Can You Do To Help?

There are many organizations around the world that address the landmine problem in various ways – from mine clearance to advocacy, and from victim assistance to integrated mine action. Some areas for support are:

- **Mine clearance:** Demining (or mine clearance) makes it possible for communities to safely regain use of their land after conflict. This includes surveying, mapping, and minefield marking, along with the actual removal of mines from the ground. Although very expensive, demining is crucial to rehabilitation and sustainable development.
- **Mine awareness:** These programs reduce the number of deaths and injuries due to landmines by changing behavior and promoting viable alternative solutions. They often involve mass media campaigns to disseminate accurate landmine information, and school- and community-level education programs to help those at risk minimize the danger to themselves and their livelihoods.
- **Stockpile destruction:** These efforts urge the immediate destruction of any accumulated landmines. Signatories to the Mine Ban Treaty are required to destroy their stockpiles within four years of enforcing the treaty.
- **Victim assistance:** Thousands of people have survived landmine explosions, but almost always with serious injuries, particularly the loss of limbs. Activities to assist victims range from medical care (emergency care, procurement of crutches and wheelchairs, and physical rehabilitation) to social and economic reintegration into their communities (psychological counseling, vocational training, and economic development assistance).

- **Integrated mine action:** This holistic approach combines landmine activities (community education, mine clearance, victim assistance) with development efforts (resettlement of refugees, agriculture, health, land tenure, water supply, education, and infrastructure reconstruction) in communities that are paralyzed by the threat of landmines.

- **Engage in advocacy to ban landmines:** Even though the Mine Ban Treaty has strong international support and stockpile destruction has been significant, the goal of totally eliminating anti-personnel landmines is distant. The fact that countries like the United States, China, India, and Israel have not signed the treaty undermines the chances that this goal will be met in the near future. With recent developments in the world, there is a danger that the U.S. government will reverse its commitment to ban anti-personnel landmines as soon as possible. Through advocacy groups like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, individuals can urge policymakers to support the Mine Ban Treaty and can commit financial and technological resources to mine action in affected countries.

Where Can You Go to Learn More?

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)

This network of more than 1,400 groups in over 90 countries works internationally to ban anti-personnel landmines. It is a global movement seeking the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In 1997, the ICBL and its founder, Jody Williams, received the Nobel Peace Prize.
www.icbl.org

Electronic Mine Information Network (E-MINE)

The website for this UN-sponsored network includes country profiles and information on victim assistance, mine clearance, and advocacy.
www.mineaction.org

Landmine Survivors' Network

This organization was created by American landmine survivors to help the hundreds of thousands of civilian landmine victims and to prevent new ones from joining their ranks.
www.landminesurvivors.org

The HALO Trust

This organization specializes in the removal of debris of war. The HALO Trust has almost 5,500 mine clearers in nine countries and is conducting ongoing surveys in others.
www.halotrust.org

CARE

CARE works with poor communities in many countries that are plagued by landmines. CARE engages in integrated mine action, confronting the problem from the perspective of how it impedes people's ability to have secure livelihoods. CARE's Landmine Safety Handbook – a field guide for aid workers – has been reprinted by the United Nations for its staff.
www.careusa.org/newsroom/specialreports/land_mines

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

ICRC's mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence. ICRC became involved in the landmine issue in the early 1990s and takes an integrated, community-based approach to mine awareness.
www.icrc.org

Adopt-A-Minefield

This program engages individuals, community groups, and businesses in addressing the global landmine crisis. The Adopt-A-Minefield Campaign allows sponsors to adopt entire minefields or contribute smaller amounts that are pooled with other contributions.
www.landmines.org