

**Forum:** Disarmament Commission

**Issue:** Eradication of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war

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## Introduction

After a conflict ends there may be explosive remnants of war (ERW). These are unexploded military weapons such as grenades and bombs that have not deteriorated or set off. In places where cluster munitions and landmines exist, it is a threat to civilian life and slows down the economic and social development. ERW consists of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO). Landmine technology was developed in world war two where hundreds of millions of mines were buried across Europe, hence started the massive burial of mines.

UXO are essentially explosive devices which have failed to detonate. Failure rates for UXO can range from one percent to forty percent depending on the quality of its manufacture, the age of the product, the way it was stored, the method it was used and environmental conditions. AXO are explosives that have been left deserted since it was not used in an armed conflict but is no longer in the control of the party that has buried it.

Mines are not under the legal definition of ERW but the munitions that have been placed close to the surface of the ground and will explode if anything comes into contact with it. Cluster munitions are bombs that, when launched, split into smaller interjections of bombs these can end up becoming landmines if they fail to explode.

In 2015 there was over 6400 deaths caused by ERW, mines and cluster munitions and 60 countries currently have to face the issue of these explosive devices. Landmines cause humanitarian problems as it risks exploding, it affects agriculture as farmers are unable to grow crops and refugees cannot return to their countries because of these risks even when the conflict has ended. There is also a development impact since people in a country such as Cambodia where 22% are already affected from poverty, the existence of landmines may hinder employment as it makes working conditions difficult and limits the results of reconstruction and restoration programs in post conflict areas.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Land mines

An explosive device hidden either under or on the surface of the ground. Its use being destroying or disabling enemy targets, which may include foot soldiers, vehicles and tanks.

### Cluster munitions

Cluster munitions are weapons which consist of a container that opens mid air and disperses large numbers of explosive submunitions or “bomblets” over a specific circumference. The number of submunitions can change, depending on the model, with some being several dozen while others can be more than 600. The method of delivery for cluster munitions is by aircraft, artillery and missiles.

### Demining

The practice in which landmines are removed from the area using various methods such as using combat engineers. The two categories are humanitarian and military. Humanitarian being conducted after a conflict by humanitarian organisations. Military concerning demining during the conflict, carried out by trained military personnel.

### Minesweeping

Describes the method of detecting landmines, usually by using dogs to sniff explosives out or using a metal detector.

### Anti-personnel mines

A mine designed to detonate by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and is designed to execute or incapacitate one or more persons. An APM detonates when a pressure of 0.5kg to 50kg is applied. Mines designed to explode by the presence or contact of a vehicle specifically are not classified as “anti-personnel mines” as they are too complex to be labeled as such pertaining to the fact that they are equipped with anti-handling devices which prevent tampering, however, anti-personnel mines can also work to damage vehicles although they may not be specifically designed to do so.

### Anti-handling device

A device meant to protect the mine from being tampered with which is attached to, a part of, placed under or beside, or linked to the mine itself. Once handling or an attempt to intentionally disturb the mine is detected the anti-handling device is activated and the mine detonates.

## Background Information

Throughout the course of human history, armed conflict has become a seemingly constant occurrence; an occurrence which all previous generations have observed. As new wars and civil unrest seem to be unfolding at a frequency not seen before, it really is no surprise, given recent developments such as the events following the Arab Spring, which has left some countries with power vacuums which have led to a struggle for power in the region, to see that, as of 2011, only 11 countries were free of conflict in any form, according to The Institute for Economics and Peace. Furthermore, the trend of armed conflicts seems to be increasing ever since 2007, and hence with the increased number of armed conflicts spanning the globe, the issue of eradicating landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, is becoming an ever pressing issue.

### The scope of the problem

Unfortunately, the major group affected by these explosives, surprisingly are not the combatants themselves, but the civilians who reside in the area. Even after the conflict has ended, civilians are killed or injured due to munitions and explosive devices which have been left behind after the conflict. Often these civilians are found in LEDC countries where there is little infrastructure in place for them to deal with the explosives and more importantly, to aid those affected by it. According to ReliefWeb International's landmine monitor fact sheet, who are renowned for being a reliable source of information on humanitarian issues, Afghanistan has over 724 million square meters of land contaminated by anti-personnel landmines (APMs), landmines and other UXO which threatens civilian life on a day to day basis. Along with Afghanistan - Colombia, Egypt, Iraq and Pakistan are heavily mined countries who have the same threat posed to their civilian life. Cluster munitions and landmines are particularly favoured as opposed to other forms of weaponry as they require no human action to be activated or detonated and furthermore, they are extremely cheap to manufacture. Landmines in particular have been placed randomly and are often forgotten, with no official record, hence civilians are usually in severe danger when in proximity to the mine, whilst not actually knowing they are in danger. The inhabitants of the area are usually only made aware of the presence after an explosion, leaving the area unusable, and the locals unsure of whether there is only a single landmine or a field full of mines.

### The Danger of Landmines

According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), in 2016 alone, landmines resulted in over 8605 casualties, equating to a total of 23 casualties per day. In addition, landmines can still be found in 58 countries and 4 states, thus despite the fact that production has decreased in the past decade, countless lives are still in danger. On top of the physical implications that landmines pose, they

often also pose as barriers for the advancement of communities who occupy the same area as the landmine as they despoil land which they could put to productive use. Because landmines are often found in farmland or irrigation systems, utilisation of these resources becomes extremely difficult and dangerous for the local inhabitants, hence the removal of these landmines is imperative as without it, a sense of insecurity long after conflicts end will be observed, it would delay peace processes, and lastly it would impede a country's development for years.

## **Mine clearance**

The removal of landmines offers jobs for people and provides a return to economic freedom. Not only that, but mine clearances offer renewed hope to families affected by the conflict, whilst also directly targeting peace building efforts and a sustainable future. By clearing landmines from schools, water sources, hospitals, housing and farmland, future generations and communities have the resources and opportunities to rise out of poverty. However, on the other hand, the costs of mine removals are exorbitantly high and very time consuming. According to the Halo Trust, in 2012 alone, the total cost in mine clearances was estimated to be around \$681 million. As a result, seeing as the affected nations are oftentimes LEDCs, their governments are unwilling or unable to come up with the financial resources to fully eradicate them from the land.

As previously stated mine clearance can be a painstakingly long and arduous process that also requires significant financial resources. However on top of that, the process of mine clearances can more often than not appear to be trial and error, due to the lack of sufficient information and official documentation of the whereabouts of the mines. As such, due to the lack of accurate and updated recordings, mine clearance officials may sometimes have to cover large areas of land.

Equally important is the safety of the workers, or the lack thereof. While workers are provided with the personal protective equipment (PPE), which include visors, gloves and such, when workers are dealing with explosives which were designed to damage tanks and vehicles, it seems that the protection equipment can do very little, especially if the worker were to make a mistake, or trigger an anti-handling device. According to an minesweeping organization called Landmine Free, a deminer is killed and two are injured for every 5000 successfully removed mines.

### ***Manual and animal aided methods***

An example of a manual method would be to use a metal detector to locate mines in the area, whereas animals such as dogs and rats can be used to sniff out TNT (trinitrotoluene) explosives. When it comes to effectiveness, both methods are more centred on identification and hence neither of them have the capabilities to remove the mines directly. In terms of cost and efficiency,

both the metal detectors and animals require maintenance, although animal maintenance may be more costly. Another concern may be the safety of personnel. When using the metal detector, a person will have to go into the field, thus placing themselves in immediate danger.

### ***Mechanical Clearance methods***

These methods acquire the help of machinery and vehicles. Examples being, mine rollers and mine ploughs, which roll over the ground either excavating, detonating or turning the mines over which will decrease the severity of the explosion. As previously mentioned, mine clearance can be placed into two categories - Military and Humanitarian. Military demining is when the process is done in a combat zone during the conflict. It is conducted by combat engineers who are trained professionals. The goal is to create a safe route for the troops to pass through. This process is done more swiftly in comparison to humanitarian mine clearances, however the risks of casualties are therefore higher. The majority of methods used are mechanical. On the other hand, humanitarian mine clearance is done after the conflict. This process is known to take a long time in order to ensure the area is safe for habitation. The clearances are conducted by governments or international organisations such as Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

### **The dangers of cluster munitions**

Many reports have shown that large numbers of submunitions fail to explode on impact as intended. In the most recent conflicts the failure rates of the submunitions to explode on impact has varied between 10% to 40%. Due to the large-scale use of these cluster munitions it has resulted in countries and regions being populated with tens of thousands of unexploded and highly unstable submunitions.

Because they are "area weapons" which can disperse vast numbers of submunitions over an area of up to tens of thousands of square metres, the danger cluster munitions pose on civilians during conflicts is also very concerning, in particular when they are used in populated areas. In November 2017, Amnesty International issued a report implicating the Syrian government of using banned Soviet made cluster bombs, on a rebel held suburb. Nonetheless, the attack led to the death of at least 10 civilians. This is not an isolated incident, as according to the Cluster munitions Coalition, there were 971 casualties due to cluster munitions alone in 2016. As a result, cluster munitions can be identified as indiscriminate weapons, meaning it requires no human action to be activated/detonated and which makes no distinction between combatant and non-combatant.

## Assistance, treatment and care of victims

### *Short term*

The loss of limbs or death are the two most common outcomes when it comes to landmines, cluster munition and explosive remnants of war. And seeing as the majority of victims reside in LEDCs, the treatment and infrastructures put in place to aid the victims are in dire need of replacement.

Firstly, as the victim resides in an LEDC, access to top quality medical care is not an option, and even if it was, due to the low GDP per capita of LEDCs, the victim will be unable to pay for the treatment. In addition to all this, authorities must also factor in the severity of the injury, and alongside the lack of sufficient medical treatment, it is therefore evident to see that treating such victims can be extremely difficult, with the most viable solution being, the amputation of a limb. This becomes highly complicated later on, when the victim is seeking to reintegrate into society. As an amputee, it can be increasingly difficult to find work. Not only that, but there can be a lot of psychological strain on both the victim and the family, especially if the victim was the provider of the family.

Furthermore, since explosives can at times be found in rural areas of the country, and in those cases, it can be hours after the victim has sustained the injury that they receive any sort of treatment. In addition, the nearest emergency centre or hospital could be far away or inaccessible. In the meantime, victims are at risk of blood loss and infections, both of which can be fatal, if not treated quickly.

### *Long term*

After the victim receives adequate care, the next step is the reintegration of the victim back into society. Rehabilitation of both the mental and physical kind must be provided. For example, regular physiotherapy sessions in order to relearn how to walk or use a wheelchair. On the other hand, further awareness must be created regarding the issue as to help the victims avoid any discrimination.

## Major Countries and Organizations

### **PAX**

Pax Labs is an organisation that works to protect civilians in times of war and conflict. Additionally, PAX aims to hinder the trade, manufacturing and use of weapons of all kinds. PAX is also

the co-founder of the Cluster Munition Coalition. The Cluster Munition Coalition is an international civil society campaign that aims to eradicate cluster munitions in order to prevent further damage and casualties caused by them. More specifically, PAX has a campaign dedicated to the prevention and eradication of explosive investments alongside the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC). It calls upon states to place national legislation that proscribes investment in companies that produce cluster munitions. Furthermore, PAX encourages states to join the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) and calls upon those who are not a part of it to join the MBT.

## Mozambique

During the civil war in Mozambique between 1977 and 1992, landmines were one of the most used weapons throughout this time. Despite this, as of the 17th of September 2015, the African nation has declared itself free of all landmines as the last one was removed on this date. This major event inspired many other nations significantly affected by the remnants of war in terms of landmines to take steps towards ridding their country of them. The representative of the Philippines even stated that 'Mozambique serves as an example to other mine-affected countries'.

## China

China is one of the countries that continues to resist against the eradication of landmines as it is known as the world's biggest manufacturer and exporter of antipersonnel landmines. China has also failed to sign the Mine Ban Treaty that has been signed by 164 countries. It did not participate even as an observer to any of the preparatory meetings of the Ottawa Process or the ban treaty organisations. The Ottawa Process was the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Moreover the People's Republic of China (PRC) was one of only ten countries that abstained on a resolution that passed in the United Nations General Assembly that urged states to vigorously pursue an international agreement banning antipersonnel landmines on the 10th of December in 1996.

## The United States of America

The United States is yet to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) which is a treaty that limits cluster munitions. In previous years, the US has recognised humanitarian concerns over cluster munitions. However, it has also stated that by manufacturing and utilising "smart" cluster munitions that possess advanced targeting and guidance systems in each submunition, it would eradicate the problematic munitions and many of the humanitarian concerns that accompany them. In the past, leaders of the United States have made an effort to change this stance. In 2006 Barack Obama voted to support a legislative measure that curbs the utilisation of cluster munitions while John McCain, his general election opponent, and Hillary Clinton, his primary opponent, voted against it.

## The United Kingdom

Prior to the meeting in Dublin dedicated to the implementation of this treaty, many thought that the United Kingdom would be one of the nations that could ‘make or break’ the treaty. However, in May of 2008, unexpectedly, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown announced that the UK would remove all of its cluster bombs from service soon after. This was done despite the United States’ attempt to influence the United Kingdom’s decision in addition to a number of government officials seeing use in the cluster munitions.

## United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) is responsible for the Convention on Cluster Munitions which bans the use, transfer and stockpiling of cluster bombs. They also hold regular meetings about the implementation of this convention with the States Parties. In these meetings decisions are made on the status of the convention and the development of technologies used to eradicate remnants of cluster munitions.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
March, 1995	Belgium passes a national law banning landmines, making it the first country to pass a law banning anti personnel landmines.
18th September, 1997	The Mine Ban Treaty was adopted.
1st March, 1999	The Mine Ban Treaty was brought to force.
18th September, 1997	The Ottawa Treaty (Mine Ban Treaty) is signed by Member States. 15 countries including the United States, the People’s Republic of China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea do not sign the treaty.
2006	Obama voted for a legislative measure that curbs the use of cluster munitions, His general election and primary opponents, John McCain and Hillary Clinton voted against the legislation.
30th May, 2008	The Convention on Cluster Munitions Treaty was adopted in Dublin, Ireland.



30th May, 2008	The prime minister of the United Kingdom declares that it will remove its cluster bombs from service.
3rd December, 2008	The Convention on Cluster Munitions is signed.
15th September, 2015	Mozambique declares itself free of landmines and remnants of its civil war in 1992.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Convention on Cluster Munitions, 2 December 2008 (**A/RES/63/71**)
- **mentioned in the major organization: UNGA** international agreement banning anti personnel landmines on the 10th of December in 1996
- Eradication of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, (**document A/68/63**)
- Eradication of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, (**document A/68/305**)
- Assistance in mine actions, (**document A/C.4/64/L.9**)
- Assistance in mine actions, (**A/C.4/72/L.12**)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) is an organisation that helps states develop National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) by regulating mines, giving guidance, improving safety and efficiency of mine action and also helping states with meeting their treaty obligations. There are many NGOs as well that campaign about landmines and ERW such as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). Their goal is to promote the clearing of all landmines by 2025 and it has been successful in gaining support from all over the world however is still unable to encourage China to sign the treaty, who is a large manufacturer of mines. The ICLB also largely helped 150 countries to sign the Mine Ban Treaty.

The ICLB was first introduced in 1992 with only six organisations in countries such as France, USA, UK and Germany backing it. Today 350 NGOs from all over the world support and promote it. ICLB work to help spread awareness about this problem as well as wanting to ban the production and stockpiling of mines. They also monitor progress and keep reports annually following the 1997 Mine Ban

Treaty which states that stockpile should be destroyed, landmines should be cleared and victims of landmines should be given assistance to.

Whilst the problem has not been completely solved, the Mine Ban Treaty has helped many victims seek medical attention and receive assistance. According to the UNODA 40 million of landmines have been destroyed and cleared, making previously affected areas now suitable enough for people to return to living there and to reconstruct their livelihoods however over ten million mines are yet to be destroyed and the presence of mines continues to impede growth and development in countries such as Cambodia as well as tens of thousands of victims still have not been able to receive support.

## Possible Solutions

Mine action operations can include destroying landmines, enclosing contaminated areas, and educating people to identify and avoid landmines such as Russia, Pakistan or the US who keep the biggest amount of stockpiled mines.

Training people living in countries contaminated with landmines to identify these areas is a viable option because it also increases livelihood opportunities. Locals would be trained highly by experts and countries could set up cottage industries, businesses carried out in people's home or local areas, so that mines could be eradicated with the supply of sufficient materials and equipment to defuse the landmines; this could be supplied by NGOs or other governments.

Another possible solution could be mine manufacturers to put a timeswitch on them, so after a period of time they would completely deactivate. This innovation would save a lot more lives and would be a more convincing method rather than abolishing all landmines. This could be adopted in China since they are against eradicating mines and have made no effort to sign the Mine Ban Treaty because it would lose a lot of profit for them. A safety switch could be applied to mines so it could also deactivate if exposed to water or air or a specific bacteria. Other equipment that could be used are mine rollers and mine flails but they are only 50-60 percent effective at finding and clearing mines because they work best on flat terrains which is not suitable in all locations. Animals such as dogs and rats can be used to sniff out ERWs or mines however can not be completely trusted since they can be inconsistent in finding the explosive devices or landmines.

Metal detectors can be used as well, however they need to be calibrated to the conditions of the ground. Next all vegetation needs to be suitably cut so that the metal detector can start its work which is a hefty task. A disadvantage to using a metal detector is that it detects every single piece of metal, even

a metal bottle lid and this has to be dug out just in case it turns out to be a mine. Moreover its a labour-intensive job and one that's repetitive, boring and possibly life-threatening.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- I. [www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/31/cluster-munitions-steady-progress-toward-eradication](http://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/31/cluster-munitions-steady-progress-toward-eradication). (Human Rights Watch)

*This website is beneficial because it provides information on the important events and actions taken to eradicate cluster munitions in order of date.*

- II. [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34275604](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34275604). (BBC News)

*This website is helpful as it is a more recent news report on how Mozambique became free of landmines and can indicate possible solutions to the issue.*

- III. [archives.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm%2F1999%2Fchina.html](http://archives.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm%2F1999%2Fchina.html)

(Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor)

*This website is useful because it indicates why China did not agree to the Mine Ban Treaty and why other countries would fail to do the same.*