

# LANDMINES - THE AWFUL TRUTH



## The Basics

- It is estimated that there are **110 million active landmines**. This means that there is **one landmine for every 17 children in the world**. Or, in other words, one landmine for every 52 people.
- Another 110 million landmines are stored ready to be used.
- Landmines are found in over 70 countries.
- **2,000 people are involved in landmine accidents every month** - one person every 20 minutes. Around 800 of these will die. 1,200 will be maimed.

## Clearing Landmines

- Clearing mines is very dangerous work. For every 5,000 mines that are removed, one person is killed and two people are injured.
- About 100,000 mines are removed each year. At this rate **it would take 1,100 years to clear all the landmines in the world** (assuming that no new mines are laid).

## The Cost

- The most common mines are cheap - between \$3 and \$30 - but it can cost 50 times as much to remove each one.
- In 1996 the UN Secretary General estimated that it would cost more than **\$50 billion** to remove landmines throughout the world. However, in the same year, **less than \$150 million** was available for removing mines.
- Landmines cause many other costs: land that cannot be used, roads that cannot be used, loss of trade, and the costs of treating injured people.
- Egypt has the most landmines in its land: 23 million. Many of these were left over from World War Two.

## Landmine Deaths

- Most of the people injured and killed by mines are men, often soldiers. 87% of the people killed in Cambodia, and 76% in Afghanistan are men. But in some countries more than 30% of the people killed and injured are women and children.
- In some situations, however, most of the casualties are civilians - particularly when people return to areas where lots of mines have been placed. For example, in Namibia 88% of casualties after 1980 were civilians; in Mozambique (1994) 68%; and in Georgia (1994-95) 80%.
- The deaths of many children may not be recorded: it is thought that 85% of people die before reaching a hospital, so the numbers we have may be much too low.
- **Children, especially, are in danger** because they often play with things they find when they are taking care of animals.

## The Social Cost

- Landmines are found along roads, in fields and forests, near wells and river banks. As a result they can cause serious economic problems by making it difficult to travel with the country.
- Without landmines **agricultural production could more than double** in both Afghanistan and Cambodia.
- In Libya 27% of the total farming land cannot be used because of mines left behind from World War Two, more than 50 years ago.
- In Somalia grazing land and water sources have been badly damaged.
- Delivering relief supplies can become much more expensive. In one part of Angola (1988) it cost the Red Cross \$2,200 per tonne to deliver supplies by aircraft. If there were no landmines, they could have used roads and railways - the cost would have been about \$89 per tonne.



## The Medical Cost

- Providing medical care when there is a war is very difficult. But landmine injuries create even greater problems. The surgery that is required is very difficult and expensive. In 'developing' countries it costs at least \$3,000 to give someone an artificial limb. The UN believes there are about 250,000 amputees worldwide; it would cost around \$750 million to give them all artificial limbs.
- In Cambodia 61% of mine victims went into debt to pay for their medical treatment. In Afghanistan even more did, 84%.
- There are very few facilities for helping victims learn to live more normal lives. There is no care for their psychological problems.

## The Effect on the Health System

- Landmine injuries put a great strain on a country's whole health system. People hurt by mines need many kinds of help; but if you consider only the medical care, the cost of treating mine victims is very high. They need more antibiotics, more dressings and they need to stay in hospital longer than most other patients. On average, people who have an amputation need seven times as much blood as people with gunshot wounds. If 10% of patients in a hospital have been wounded by mines, they may cause 80% of the work in the hospital and use 80% of its supplies.
- The resources needed to treat landmine victims can also take resources away from other serious problems. Sometimes people are so concerned about landmine injuries that they do not realise even more people are dying from other causes. In Cambodia, for example, there were many landmine victims, but even more people were dying from diseases like malaria and tuberculosis.