

MINE ACTION

Not just about “de-mining”: what is mine action?

Designed to kill or maim, anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to inflict death and injury. Every year, several hundreds of innocent people step on an anti-personnel landmines or explosive remnants of war. Many are children. Besides causing individual suffering, anti-personnel landmines (APL) and explosive remnants of war (ERW) are also responsible for serious social and economic problems. They land into no-go zones, hindering fertile agriculture and development. In post-conflict societies APL and ERW can impede the return of refugees and internally displaced people, hinder reconciliation, stabilisation and economic recovery. Once triggered, mines are indiscriminate as they do not distinguish between soldiers and civilians. And by mutilating so many people, they place heavy care burdens on families and communities.

Mine action is the term used to refer to activities aimed at reducing the social, economic and environmental impact of landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO). It is not limited to de-mining (mine and UXO survey, mapping, marking and clearance) only, but covers also other four major components:

- Mine risk education (also known as mine awareness);
- Victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration;
- Stockpile destruction; and
- Advocacy against the use of anti-personnel landmines.

Together with demining, these are known as the “five pillars” of mine action.

The response to the problem: the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions

The determination to be rid of anti-personnel landmines dates back to the mid 1990s, when heated debates on banning the use of these weapons took place in international fora. The international campaign against landmines reached its climax in 1997 when the Ottawa Convention, also known as [Mine Ban Treaty](#), was concluded. The Ottawa Convention legally obliges all States parties to the treaty to cease the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. The role of civil society, both non-governmental organisations and individuals, in leading the campaign was significant. The vast majority of world's countries (156 to date) are now parties to the Ottawa Convention. The positive impact of the APL Convention has also inspired a similar initiative to rid the world of cluster munitions. The [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#) came into being in Dublin in May 2008. Ninety-four States immediately joined the Convention in the Oslo opening signing ceremony on 3 December 2008.

The European Community in action against mines

The European Commission has worked hard in the framework of the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) to address the issue of ridding the world of mines. The fight against anti-personnel landmines is at the top of the European Commission's human security agenda. Fighting landmines does not only mean providing assistance to dig out mines from fields so that economic activities can resume there. The European Community's mine action efforts are also driven by the responsibility to protect civilians and

to empower mine victims through care, rehabilitation and re-integration in post-conflict societies, hence avoiding their discrimination and exclusion. That is why mine risk education or mine victim assistance and rehabilitation programmes, have been – and still are – supported by the European Commission. Programmes and projects financed by the European Commission in countries such as Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia and Laos, which have the highest toll in the world in terms of number of mine victims, are a good case in point.

The European Union's Member States have shown a high level of engagement to implement the Mine Ban Treaty by providing assistance to mine-affected countries. European Community's assistance together with aid provided by the EU Member States bilaterally makes the European Union becomes by far the largest donor in the fight against mines and ERW (about 1,5 billion euro contribution from 1997 to date).

- *European Community's mine action from 2002 to 2007*

Mine action has always been part of EC development co-operation with third countries, including activities such as APL stockpile destruction, mine risk education, mine victim assistance, rehabilitation and socio-economic re-integration. EC action in this field was based on two Regulations on Action against Anti-Personnel Landmines (2001) and two multi-annual strategies:

- 1 - EC Mine Action Strategy and Programming 2002-04;
- 2 - EC Mine Action Strategy and Multi-annual Programming 2005-07.

- *European Community's mine action from 2008 onwards: Linking mine action and development*

In November 2009 the [Ottawa Convention](#) will be reviewed for the second time since its adoption at a summit in Cartagena, Colombia.

Participants will take stock of the significant progress made over the last five years and outline further challenges. In preparation for the 2009 Second Review Conference the European Commission has taken a number of steps to improve its assistance to mine-affected countries and populations worldwide. The main objective has been to approach the “zero-victim target”, which has been the focus of the European Union's mine action policy since 2005.

The Second Review Conference to evaluate progress made by the international community in the fight against landmines in the last five years.

The main measures taken to enhance the effectiveness of the EC's contribution to mine action worldwide include:

- A set of guidelines on how to more effectively link mine action with development for future programming of EC mine action over the 2008-2013 period. (Link: *What's new* from the old website: *Guidelines on European Community Mine Action 2008-2013*).

- A series of studies to improve donorship, summarised in the booklet [*Advice for Donors on Setting up and Running mine action programmes*](#)
- A comprehensive evaluation of mine action funded by the European Commission under its Mine Action Strategy 2005-2007. (evaluation available in March 2009).

KNOW THOSE MINES

- Anti-Personnel Landmines (APL): explodes by the presence, proximity or contact of a person. Can injure or kill one or more persons.
- Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)
Unexploded ordnance and munitions or sub-munitions from cluster bombs.
They include mortar shells, rockets, artillery shells, grenades, and air-dropped bombs. Some of the main sources of UXO are cluster bombs.
- Unexploded ordnance (UXO): explosive weapons such as bombs or shells that failed to work when first used.

WHAT IS MINE ACTION?

- Raising awareness of mines
- Training specialists
- Surveying and marking suspected areas
- Detecting and identifying APL
- Clearing mines
- Destroying APL stockpiles
- Assisting and reintegrating mine victims

KEY FACTS

- Landmines kill or injure up to 10,000 innocent people every year
- Mines and unexploded ordnance affect some 65 countries
- About 176 million mines sit in stockpiles in at least 44 countries worldwide
- From 1997 to date, the EU spent about one and half billion euro fighting mines