



# Australian aid: Mine action

'AUSTRALIA IS COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE SCOURGE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES AND OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR WHICH CONTINUE TO POSE A THREAT TO HUMAN LIFE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LONG AFTER CONFLICT CEASES.

AUSTRALIA IS ASSISTING AFFECTED COMMUNITIES TO REBUILD THEIR LIVELIHOODS THROUGH SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR MINE CLEARANCE, SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE, MINE RISK EDUCATION AND INTEGRATED MINE ACTION PROGRAMS, AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION.'

*Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Alexander Downer MP*

## **THE FACTS**

Anti-personnel mines (and other forms of explosive remnants of war) are a tragic legacy of conflict. They continue to constrain development in over 80 countries, including many of the world's poorest. There are between 300,000 and 400,000 landmine survivors in the world today. Affected communities face a long-term burden of caring for survivors and their families, and must endure the loss of productive workers and the contamination of otherwise productive land.

Anti-personnel mines are munitions designed to explode by contact with, or proximity to, a person. They are intended to incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons. These mines, along with the threat from other explosive remnants of war (including unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance) pose a significant threat to human life.

## INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

The 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (also known as the “Mine Ban Convention”), was the first treaty to apply specifically to anti-personnel mines, although the 1996 Amended Protocol II of the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) restricts a State’s right to use mines, booby-traps and other devices. The Mine Ban Convention identified five pillars of mine action: survivor assistance, mine risk education, mine clearance, stockpile destruction, and advocacy to universalise the Convention.

Since opening for signature in December 1997, 151 countries have joined the Convention. Recent ratifications include Brunei Darussalam, East Timor and Cook Islands. About 75 per cent of all countries are signatories to the Mine Ban Convention, but the remaining 25 per cent include the largest producers and stockpilers of anti-personnel mines, although all major mine-producing States continue to observe unilateral moratoria on exports of anti-personnel mines.

The international legal framework on mine action was broadened in 2003 through the conclusion of Protocol V to the CCW, which addresses the humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war.

## PROGRESS IN MINE ACTION

Through the support of the international community, including Australia, there have been some major accomplishments since 1997:

- > The number of new landmine victims has decreased, and thousands of landmine survivors have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into their societies.
- > A de facto global ban on the transfer of anti-personnel mines has been in effect since 1996. Thirty-four States that previously traded in landmines no longer do so.

- > The number of States reporting that they use landmines has dropped from 19 to 3.
- > Of the 151 States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, 134 now no longer possess any anti-personnel landmines, and together the States Parties have destroyed more than 38 million mines.

## ONGOING NEED

While much has been achieved, an estimated 60 to 70 million landmines remain, and there are between 15,000 and 20,000 new landmine/explosive remnants of war casualties each year, mostly civilians, and many of them children.

The 25 percent of States not as yet party to the Convention include some of the world’s largest producers and stockpilers of landmines. Over 80 percent of the world’s anti-personnel landmine stockpile is held by six non-Parties to the Convention, four of which are in Asia (though most countries with stockpiles have placed moratoria on both transfer and further production).

Some of the most heavily mine-affected countries are located in our own region, including Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. Non-State armed groups operating outside of government control and outside the Convention pose a continuing challenge in addressing the anti-personnel mine problem.

There are direct and indirect costs associated with landmine contamination. The costs for many landmine survivors are great. Not only are survivors adversely affected physically and psychologically, but many also lose their ability to make a living. The physical rehabilitation of landmine survivors can take a long time. Children who lose limbs, for example, require replacement prosthesis every four months as they grow.

Landmines also compound refugee problems, laying waste to large tracts of potentially productive land, and interfering with lines of transportation and communication. They deprive affected

populations of basic needs such as water and access to markets to sell their produce, and the on-going need to care for and rehabilitate landmine survivors also results in considerable strain being placed on the local health care systems.

## AUSTRALIAN EFFORTS

Mine action is an important part of Australia's overseas aid program. Australia is a leading contributor to international mine clearance efforts, survivor assistance, mine risk education and integrated mine action programs that assist survivors to rebuild their livelihoods. The focus for this assistance has been the heavily-mine affected countries of the Asia-Pacific, Australia's immediate geographic region.

Australia was one of the original signatories of the Mine Ban Convention in 1997. This political commitment was cemented by a \$100 million 10-year pledge to mine action. Domestic legislation was passed in 1998, giving effect to the Mine Ban Convention's provisions under Australian criminal law, as required by Article 9 of the Convention. A year later, the Australian Defence Force destroyed Australia's stockpile of anti-personnel landmines, years ahead of the destruction deadline established under the Convention.

In July 2005, Australia renewed its mine action efforts committing \$75 million for mine action over five years. The renewed pledge will enable Australia to broaden its mine action efforts to include more advocacy work, increased support for survivor assistance, mine risk education, and the funding of partnerships with Australian and multilateral agencies and community groups to combat the continuing threat posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Australia has developed a Mine Action Strategy which will set the parameters of development assistance over the duration of the renewed pledge.

The importance that the Australian Government places on mine action is reflected in the creation of the position

of Australia's Special Representative for Demining in March 1998, in the context of the \$100 million pledge. This position became part of the portfolio responsibilities of the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and supports the achievement of the Australian Government's broader mine action objectives. Australia's Special Representative on Mine Action plays an important role in ensuring the achievement of Australia's commitment to the individual elements of mine action, and the encouragement of effective global coordination of international donor resources on mine action.

Australia will continue to take a leading role in advancing the work on international mine action and implementation of the Convention worldwide, when it takes up the role of the President of the Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention in September 2006.

## EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED

Examples of approaches adopted in AusAID-funded activities in developing countries follow.

### ADVOCACY/UNIVERSALISATION OF THE MINE BAN CONVENTION

Australia provides core funding to organisations to implement activities that contribute to universalising the convention.

Australia provides funding support to the Implementation Support Unit of the **Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)**, which fulfils vital secretariat functions for the Mine Ban Convention. Australia is also sponsoring the translation of GICHD's publication: *Developing Mine Action Legislation: A Guide* into Chinese, Lao and Vietnamese. This document will provide practical assistance to the governments of mine-affected countries within the region.

Australia also provides regular funding to the **International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)** for the publication of the

*Landmine Monitor Report*. This annual report provides a summary of the progress in the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention, including information on mine action efforts, landmine casualties and survivor assistance and mine action funding.

Australia continues to support the advocacy work of the Australian Network of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (AN-ICBL) through the Program to Promote and Advocate the Mine Ban Convention in South East Asia. The aim of this program is to encourage governments of South East Asia and the Pacific Region, who are not signatories to the Mine Ban Convention, to accede to it. Through regular contact with such governments AN-ICBL is promoting the universalisation of the Mine Ban Convention, and generally raising government and public awareness of the landmine/unexploded ordnance issue.

### SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE

In **Cambodia**, Australia has established a Land Mine Victim Assistance Fund. This fund supports a range of Cambodian non-government organisations to assist in the physical, psychological and socio-economic rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors.

One organisation supported through the fund is the **Cambodian National Volleyball League for the Disabled** (CNVLD). The CNVLD allows landmine survivors to reclaim their place in the wider community through re-discovering the joy of physical exercise, teamwork and friendship. The ever growing number of teams that make up the League are raising the profile and standing of the disabled amongst ordinary Cambodians, helping to counter the stigma that is still attached by some to physical disability.

In **Vietnam**, landmine survivors are being supported through a project designed to strengthen peer support networks established by the **Landmine Survivors Network** Vietnam. The Peer Support Network model employed by Landmine Survivors Network is a system whereby

survivors help survivors. The peer support networks provide survivors with the opportunity to share information, empower them to make informed decisions about their rehabilitation, and in some cases, provide direct assistance grants to enable them to gain access to healthcare, and to re-establish livelihoods.

Australia has also funded the publication of two documents dealing with the issue of survivor assistance - *101 Great Ideas for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Mine Survivors*, and *Landmine Victim Assistance in 2004: Overview of the Situation in 24 States Parties*. A 2005 Overview Report is also being prepared.

### INTEGRATED MINE ACTION

In **Cambodia** Australia has supported a number of integrated mine action programs. The recently completed CARE Integrated Demining and Development Project (IDDP) is one such example. This focused on creating an environment for sustainable post landmine clearance livelihoods. It worked with villagers on agricultural programs, water and sanitation projects, community and institutional capacity building, infrastructure, village mapping, and land tenure.

The landmine/unexploded ordnance marking and clearance component of CARE's IDDP Project, was undertaken by the Cambodia Mine Action Centre, working in close collaboration with the Mine Action Planning Unit to ensure transparent allocation of resources. The mine risk education program focused on practical options, such as training women in the use of stoves to reduce risks associated with venturing on to mine contaminated land to harvest firewood. Children in all project village schools took part in the mine risk education program.

Building on the success of the CARE project and other integrated mine action projects implemented by World Vision and AUSTCARE, AusAID is supporting the design of three new integrated mine action activities for heavily-mined areas of Cambodia.

## MINE RISK EDUCATION

Australia has been a major supporter of unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance in **Laos** over the last decade. Recent activities include a UNICEF project aiming to reduce the risk of UXO accidents amongst families and children. It also aimed to improve the capacity of teachers, Lao Youth Union, education officials and local communities to implement UXO awareness activities. The activity trained 3276 teachers in the dangers of UXO, produced and distributed education materials, including over 3000 UXO awareness story books and classroom posters. In addition, children participated in community-based 'safe-play' activities to assist in raising awareness of safety issues related to UXO.

## MINE CLEARANCE

Australia is funding a new community-based UXO clearance program in **Laos**, to be delivered by Swiss NGO *Fondation Suisse du Deminage*, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP). This program will increase the capacity of communities to deal with UXO by training and employing locals to clear UXO in four heavily contaminated provinces. The activity will clear areas identified for paddy expansion, dams and fish ponds and road construction.

In **Cambodia**, Australia is supporting the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC). CMAC carries out landmine clearance, minefield surveying and marking and mine awareness activities. Australian support is promoting the development of an approach to mine clearance through CMAC that better integrates national, provincial and local development plans. CMAC will work with Mine Action Planning Units, which have a mandate to prioritise land for demining in consultation with mine affected communities.

The **Sri Lanka** National Mine Action Programme has been established to accredit, license, coordinate and monitor all mine action activities. This process ensures that funding is targeted to the highest priority areas for resettlement and rehabilitation. The project has two key aims including strengthening national and sub-national capacity in mine action coordination and information management; and to support mine action field operations, including resource mobilisation and advocacy.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Nairobi Conference, first review of the Mine Ban Convention

[www.reviewconference.org](http://www.reviewconference.org)

Information about landmines from the United Nations

[www.ncrb.unac.org/landmines/UNinfo.html](http://www.ncrb.unac.org/landmines/UNinfo.html)

International Campaign to Ban Landmines

[www.icbl.org](http://www.icbl.org)

Links to other landmine sites

[www.icbl.org/links](http://www.icbl.org/links)

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

[www.gichd.ch](http://www.gichd.ch)

[www.mineaction.org](http://www.mineaction.org)

[www.undp.org/bcpr/mineaction](http://www.undp.org/bcpr/mineaction)

[www.unicef.org/emerg/index\\_landmines.html](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_landmines.html)



## **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AUSTRALIAN AID**

Further information about the Australian Government's overseas aid program is available online at [www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: *A little girl learns to walk with her new prosthetic leg, with help from a physiotherapist and a friend (Phnom Penh, Cambodia).* PHOTO: Kevin Evans

BACK COVER IMAGE: *Close-up of a landmine (Cambodia).* PHOTO: Rodney Evans

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[www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)