

are kept when mines are being used. In Afghanistan for example, millions of AP mines were scattered indiscriminately out of the backs of airplanes and trucks. While there is no precise estimate of the total number of AP mines in Afghanistan, the pollution is known to have affected more than 850 square kilometres of land, including 223 square kilometres of agricultural land.

While it costs between US\$3 and US\$30 to purchase an AP mine, it costs between US\$300 and US\$1000 to remove one. Numbers of landmines alone do not do justice to the issue; recent efforts to address the contamination focus instead on the extent of priority land affected to give a truer measure of the human and environmental impact of these weapons. It is generally agreed, however, that the overall cost of undoing global landmine contamination will be in the billions of dollars.

When we look at the broader effects of landmines, the long term cost of their use is even more devastating.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that, globally, landmines take some 2000 victims a month with 800 killed and 1200 injured. Since 1975, there have been more than one million casualties—most of them civilians, many of them children. Where they do not kill immediately, landmines severely maim their victims, causing trauma, life-long pain and often social stigma. World wide there are some 250,000 landmine amputees. Survivors face terrible physical, psychological and socio-economic

difficulties. In many already economically fragile countries, the cost of providing long term support and rehabilitation is an unaffordable burden.

Beyond the direct costs of mine clearance and victim assistance are wider economic and social costs. Poor, rural, post-conflict societies are quickly overwhelmed by the challenges of repairing infrastructure and replacing lost agricultural production. Landmines also disrupt commerce and trade, producing shortages and inflation and preventing economic stabilization in post-conflict societies. In short, landmines perpetuate poverty and are a major obstacle to sustainable development.

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*This child's scars are the grim legacy of landmines.*