

## Making a Difference

Canada's role in addressing the impact of landmine use has been well documented, from its key diplomatic role in fast-tracking the successful negotiation of the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines in 1996 and 1997, to its ongoing commitment and leadership in universalization of the Convention and in global mine action. Three years after the Ottawa Convention entered into force, the efforts of Canada in this field are making a difference to the lives of people living in mine-affected regions around the world.

### The Impact of Anti-Personnel Mines

Anti-personnel (AP) mines are intended to be weapons of war and end up being weapons of intimidation for communities that have to endure the threat of their presence long after the conflict has ended. AP mines are designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person, and thereby kill or injure those within range of the blast. Such mines are indiscriminate—most of their victims are civilians and many are children.

AP mines are cheap to produce and became, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, a convenient weapon for poorer countries with limited resources. AP mines are easy to deploy in significant numbers. They are planted, often at random, in or on the ground—e.g. on roads, in fields, in areas where local populations need to go in order to pursue their lives and livelihoods. In many mine-affected countries where basic needs like health care, educational opportunities and ways of making a living are often limited, the presence of AP mines adds a significant burden to individual and community development.

Many victims of AP mines are killed outright or die before receiving medical attention. Landmine survivors face a period of extensive rehabilitation and, in the long term, a lifetime of adjustment—to being limited by the loss of a limb, to being a financial burden on their families or, if prosthetic care is available, to using an artificial limb that requires regular maintenance and occasional replacement.

Any military utility that AP mines might have is far outweighed by their cost in human suffering and long-term negative impact upon civilians. The real or possible presence of mines hinders the safe and productive use of land, roads, schools, clinics, water sources and other infrastructure. In emergency situations caused by conflict or natural disasters, they pose a serious obstacle to the delivery of humanitarian aid, and to the safe return of refugees to their homelands or internally displaced people to their communities. Over the longer term, they hinder post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, and lessen the chance of communities attaining sustainable levels of development.

### What Canada has done to lessen this impact

#### Canada recognized and acted on the problem

The problem caused by AP mines received international attention in the early 1990s by the non-governmental sector involved in development work and humanitarian assistance at the community level overseas. The legacy of landmines in many countries—a legacy of human suffering for the victims and their families, and of impediments to productive land use for whole communities—made it extremely difficult to engage in effective development efforts. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began focusing their attention on an achievable solution. In 1992, a coalition of NGOs from around the world, including many Canadian organizations, formed the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), and launched a coordinated movement to ban AP mines, to clear mined land and to assist landmine victims.

The Government of Canada, building on its foreign policy agenda of promoting human security and alleviating global poverty, recognized the need for and the value of this concerted effort and, along with other states, joined the international movement for a global ban on landmines. Canada became a leading player in this state-civil society partnership, initiating in 1996 an unique form of fast-track diplomacy. Referred to as the "Ottawa Process", this culminated in the fall of 1997 with the successful negotiation and signing of the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction*—known around the world as the Ottawa Convention.

#### Canada committed to a framework for action

The framework for addressing the global landmine problem is the Ottawa Convention. Canada has led by example in ensuring the successful adoption and implementation of this framework:

- Canada completed the destruction of its AP mine stockpiles one month before the Convention was signed in December 1997.
- Canada became the first country to ratify the Convention.
- Canada passed legislation making it a criminal offence for any