

Anti-personnel mines inhibit repatriation. Many refugees remain in refugee camps out of fear. Mines also inhibit reintegration, for example when a farmer is afraid or unable to return to the land. Eighty percent of those displaced are women and children; they are being disproportionately harmed with far-reaching consequences.

The UNHCR does not itself have the capacity to deactivate landmines except on a very limited scale. Its main roles will continue to be those of advocacy, education and coordination among organizations.

In conclusion, Jessen-Petersen said that demining must now be given priority in order to allow for the return of refugees to their homeland. The warring parties should be responsible for clearing the land as they know where the mines are. This crime against human kind must not be allowed to continue.

The Socio-Economic Costs of Anti-Personnel Mines

Dr. Neil Andersson
Executive Director, Community Information & Epidemiological Technologies International (CIET)

Dr. Neil Andersson presented the concept of "mine smartness", noting that although "mine awareness" is certainly not a problem with most countries, it has not changed the behaviour of those living near landmines over the years. This newer approach has a mobilizing effect by allowing those most affected to become involved, and the real impact is felt at the local level. This is the beginning of the second era of landmines research.

Dr. Andersson asked delegates to imagine the sound and flash of a landmine explosion. Harder to imagine, he said, is what happens after the flash. One-third of those involved in landmine explosions die immediately. Those who survive are left to pick up the pieces of their lives, and most suffer psychological damage. Men report that they no longer feel like men, and women no longer feel like women. They suffer the loss of their productive power and their ability to provide, the loss of their livestock, and often the loss of their household goods as they sell possessions to help pay for their rehabilitation. The results include disabled

households, disabled communities, and disabled countries. This also has serious negative consequences for national economies.

Based on recent "mine action tracking" studies conducted on substantial populations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Bosnia and Mozambique, Dr. Andersson concluded that it is possible to quantify the human and some of the social consequences of AP mines, and people's response to their effects. In parallel to skill-building, there must be training to measure and benchmark social impacts.

The Use of Anti-personnel Mines in War

Major General (retired) Dipankar Banerjee
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This is a historic moment, Major General Banerjee began, for a weapon of war is on the verge of being banished through people's actions. "Nations have been shamed into participating and expediting the process," he declared, "but we are just at the beginning of a process." As long as the military feels that landmines serve a useful purpose in conflict, they will pressure governments not to sign a treaty banning their use. However, he attacked the military's argument that landmines are necessary for legitimate security needs.

According to General Banerjee, the anti-personnel mine is outdated; its military usefulness long over. Landmines cause more harm than good. Historically, he said, landmines were used to blast walls and fortresses. They were not used extensively in warfare until the Second World War.

There are six kinds of anti-personnel mine fields: border, defence, tactical, dummy, nuisance and protective fields. Landmines have never really been very effective, said General Banerjee, for there are always ways around them. Military history strongly suggests that their success was limited and doubtful at best. In some cases, for example Korea and Vietnam, the mines were turned around by the enemy, resulting in casualties to the armies that initially laid them.

Landmines can be easily replaced by other technologically advanced systems that are not so indiscriminate and injurious to civilians. It is time to rid the world of this "horrible weapon of war."