

Reducing mine casualties

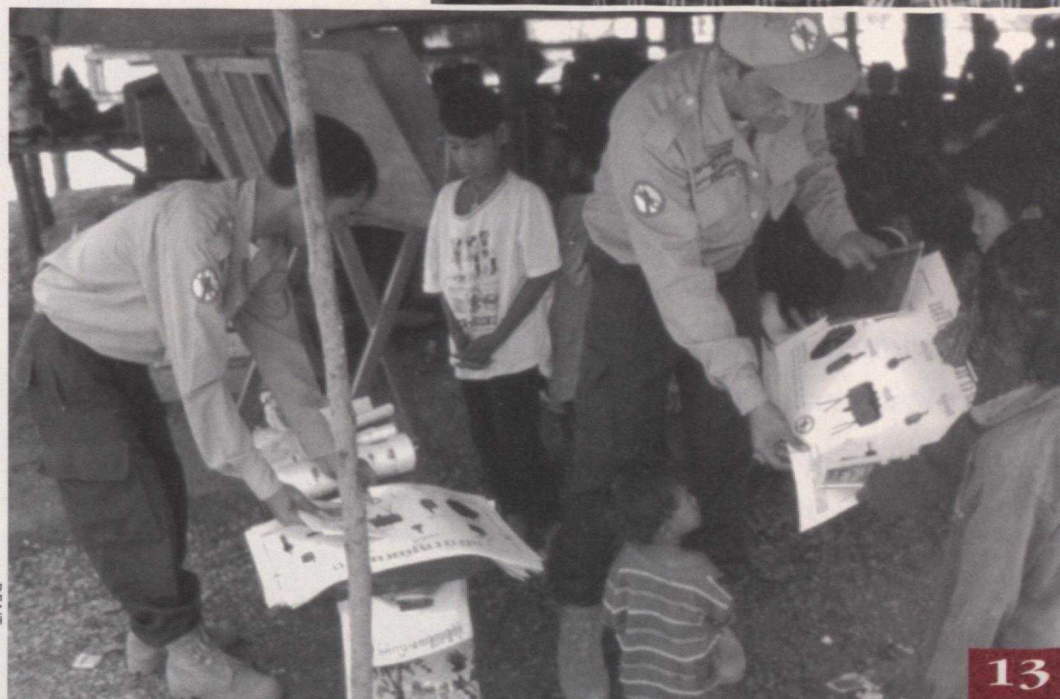
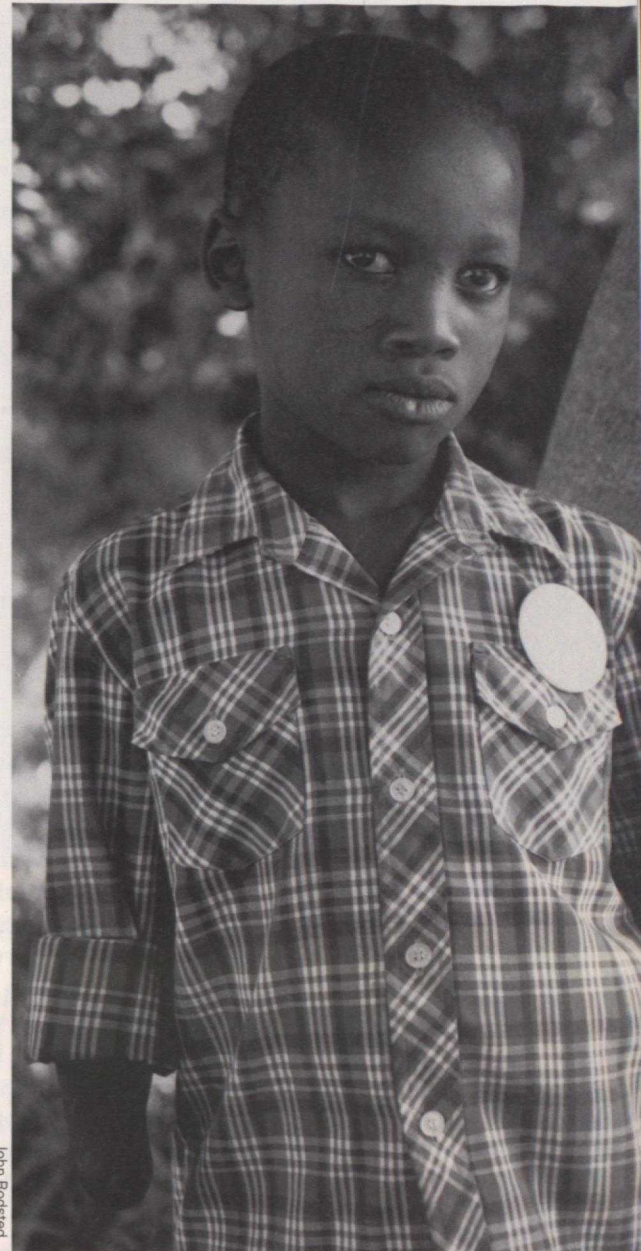
Reducing - and ultimately eliminating - landmine casualties is one of the primary aims of the global effort to ban and remove these weapons. However measuring progress against this benchmark remains a tremendous challenge because of the difficulty gathering reliable data on victims. Many of those who encounter landmines never make it to hospitals or field clinics, they die on impact. Their families may or may not report the incidents to authorities. Even when survivors do find their way to medical help, there is no guarantee that their injuries will be recorded in a systematic registry of data on landmine incidents.

But where credible data does exist, there is room for guarded optimism. The incident rates in several regions severely affected by landmines appear to be decreasing. Casualty rates in both Afghanistan and Cambodia fell by almost half between 1993 and 1998. In Bosnia, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recorded a huge drop in the casualty rates, from 56 victims per month in 1995 to 5.5 per month at end of 1998. In Mozambique over the same period, the monthly incident rate dropped from approximately 55 to fewer than 7.

More study is needed before firm conclusions may be drawn about the causes for these improvements. Ultimately, casualties diminish as the threat of landmines is removed and, in the short term, as people become more aware of the dangers and find safe alternative routes. Canada contributes to reducing casualties through its efforts in banning the use, production and trade of landmines, aiding in land clearance and stockpile destruction and supporting mine awareness training programs.

With sustained efforts to ban the use of AP mines, clear land and train affected populations to recognise and avoid these weapons, there is hope for an end to such tragic injuries.

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