



ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND DEVELOPMENT

The widespread deployment of anti-personnel (AP) mines mainly in developing countries, is a massive human tragedy. Long after the end of a conflict, AP mines continue to cause casualties among civilian populations. If they do not kill instantly, they maim — causing severe trauma, lifelong pain and often social stigma to their victims.

Land mines are placed strategically, to protect military installations and movements, to destroy a country's social and economic infrastructure, and to create terror within the population. Their widespread use has created a crisis that is global in scope, with serious humanitarian, socio-economic and developmental consequences.

AP Mines: The Invisible Barrier to Development

Because AP mines are cheap, accessible and easy to use, they are the weapons of choice in the world's poorest countries. Countries most affected by AP mines are Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Bosnia and Iraq.

The presence of mines is a serious constraint to development for a number of reasons. Refugees and internally displaced people are afraid to return home, and thus remain a burden on their area of asylum and on humanitarian agencies. For those who do go home, the trip is a high-risk journey to an uncertain destination.

Many hectares of productive land, particularly in border areas, are unsafe and therefore abandoned. In areas where farming and herding continue, casualties occur, leading to disruptions in food supply and causing malnutrition and local famine.

Transport and communications are interrupted, undermining trade and commerce and preventing delivery of essential or humanitarian supplies, which in turn creates shortages and inflation.

Soil and water contamination created by AP mines is growing, and phenomena such as floods and desertification cause mines to shift and relocate.

The scarce resources of a war-torn economy are diverted to the costly and labour-intensive activities related to de-mining and care of mine victims, rather than invested in longer-term development.

.../2