

# Clearing mined land

*When the non-governmental community brought the issue of landmines to the world's attention in the early 1990s, the magnitude of the problem seemed insurmountable. Rough estimates were made of tens of millions of landmines planted in over 70 countries in every region of the world.*

Over the past few years, the mine action community has come to understand that the sheer number of mines in the ground does not effectively explain the nature of the problem. A more accurate measure is the number of people directly and indirectly affected by the threat of mines. This has led to improved priority-setting in mine clearance.

In addition, the Ottawa Convention obliges states to clear mined areas within a 10-year time-frame. This combination of factors has led to the belief that we will overcome the challenges of the most severe and terrorizing cases of mined land in years, not decades.

While clearing mined land continues to be a frustratingly slow, expensive and dangerous exercise, the international community is making measurable strides toward returning more and more once-mined land to safe and productive use. Mine clearance in some form is taking place in 71 mine affected countries or areas.

In some of the most mine affected countries and areas, significant progress has been made over the past year to clear mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) and to return cleared land to productive use:

- Afghanistan: In 1999, 110 square kilometres were declared safe. A total of 465 square kilometres have been declared safe since 1993.
- Bosnia-Herzegovina: In 1999, 3.7 square kilometres were cleared.
- Cambodia: In 1999, 11.9 square kilometres were cleared. Between 1993-99, 155 square kilometres were cleared.
- Croatia: In 1999, 23.6 square kilometres were cleared.
- Kosovo: In 1999, 8 square kilometres were cleared.

More and more once-mined land is being returned to safe and productive use.



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