

As this report demonstrates, Canadians are making a difference for individuals and communities in mine affected developing countries. We know that these weapons have a devastating effect. Landmines kill and maim indiscriminately. Often, the victims are the most vulnerable in society: children playing in a field, women in search of water or fuel. Moreover, the fear they instill derails development efforts and limits opportunities.

CIDA is investing strategically in the future of affected countries by helping them to acquire knowledge and tools, building their capacity to clear mined land. Canada also assists individuals and communities suffering from the effects of landmines by strengthening health systems so they can better respond to these needs. Our support for non-governmental and international organizations helps them reintegrate and rehabilitate victims and deliver mine awareness education.

The challenge before us is substantial. Yet, two years after the launch of the Canadian Landmine Fund, we are seeing positive results. As this report shows, the number of new victims of landmines is falling. Also, high-priority areas such as schools, roads and farmland are gradually being cleared.

For me, this is major progress, and it fits into a much broader programme. Protecting children from landmines is an important step. Educating children and youth so they recognize the danger around them is one more step. And this can only happen through focussed investments in social development programs in such areas as health, education and child protection.

Maria Minna

Minister for International Cooperation

The Ottawa Convention, signed in December 1997, marked the first step in eliminating anti-personnel mines.

We have taken many other steps since that time to help rid the world of minefields and help countries destroy their mines before they are laid. The Government of Canada is truly committed to this effort.

The Department of National Defence, through its Centre for Mine Action Technologies in Suffield, Alberta, has made impressive breakthroughs in the development of technology for anti-personnel mine detection. The focus is on low-cost equipment that can be easily used in mine affected countries. Great progress has also been made in the development of protective clothing for deminers. The Centre has become world-renowned for its technological innovations and its testing facilities.

