

Generating Momentum Toward Peace: The Banning of Landmines

Thursday, November 29, 2007



The Mine Ban Treaty was signed on December 3, 1997

- 156 countries have signed on to the treaty
- 39.5 million anti-personnel landmines have been destroyed globally
- Among countries that have not signed the treaty, more than 160 million landmines await destruction

What is a landmine?

An anti-personnel mine is a device “designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person...that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons,” according to Article 2 of the Ottawa Treaty that bans these mines.

They are victim-activated weapons that do not discriminate between civilian and military personnel, adult or child, war or peacetime.

There are nearly 350 different types of anti-personnel landmines. All mines are either blast mines or fragmentation mines.

The most common type of conventional landmines are blast mines. They rely on the energy released by an explosive charge to harm their target. They are either buried by hand or remotely delivered. Most blast mines depend on explosion alone for their effectiveness, since a person generally needs to come into contact with the mine to set it off.



With fragmentation mines, the direct effect of the blast on a victim is usually not as severe as the wounds inflicted by its fragments, which may be the size of small bullets. The fragments are shot out over a large radius at high velocity (approximately twice the speed of a bullet). These mines are usually activated by tripwires, which may be placed a few centimetres above the ground or even on the ground itself.

Since these mines are usually mounted on a stake or brackets or attached to trees or undergrowth, they are also known as “stake” mines. The mine is set off by a person walking over or brushing against the tripwire with about one kilogram of force.



US Soldiers removing landmines. Public Domain

What is the difference between landmines and unexploded ordnance?

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) refers to “any object containing explosive of any kind which has been deployed and failed to detonate, or has only partly detonated.”

Examples of UXO include sub-munitions, mortars, grenades, tank shells, artillery ammunition, bombs, rockets and missiles.

Victim-Activated Weapons

Victim-Activated Weapons (VAW) are any weapons that explode, or have the potential to explode, by the presence or proximity of a person. Anti-personnel landmines are one example of VAW, but there are many others.

Cluster munitions are weapons that include cargo containers and sub-munitions. The cargo containers are fired, launched or dropped by aircraft or land-based artillery. The containers open over a target and disperse large numbers of the sub-munitions, which are designed to explode when they hit the target. The vast majority of cluster munitions contain hundreds of sub-munitions that are unguided and can cover up to one square kilometer with explosions and shrapnel. There are two main humanitarian concerns on the use of cluster munitions:

1) the large numbers of submunitions that fail to explode as intended create highly polluted areas full of explosive remnants of war (ERW); and

2) the impact of cluster munitions over an area is wider than the intended target which puts civilians around the target site at risk.

Explosive remnants of war (ERW) are any munitions or explosive devices left after a conflict. ERW can include, but are not limited to, unexploded artillery shells, hand grenades, mortars, cluster submunitions, rockets and any other explosive ordnance that remain after the end of an armed conflict. ERW can be found scattered on top of the ground, half buried, or almost completely hidden. ERW are not a weapon type but a weapon risk state -- the state of being unexploded and therefore potentially lethal. Because explosive material is contained in the remnant, ERW are potentially very dangerous, unstable and, because of this, each ERW needs to be treated as though it is a live ordnance.

www.minesactioncanada.org/home/index.cfm?fuse=Weapons.Home

But isn't the landmine problem solved?

THE OTTAWA TREATY

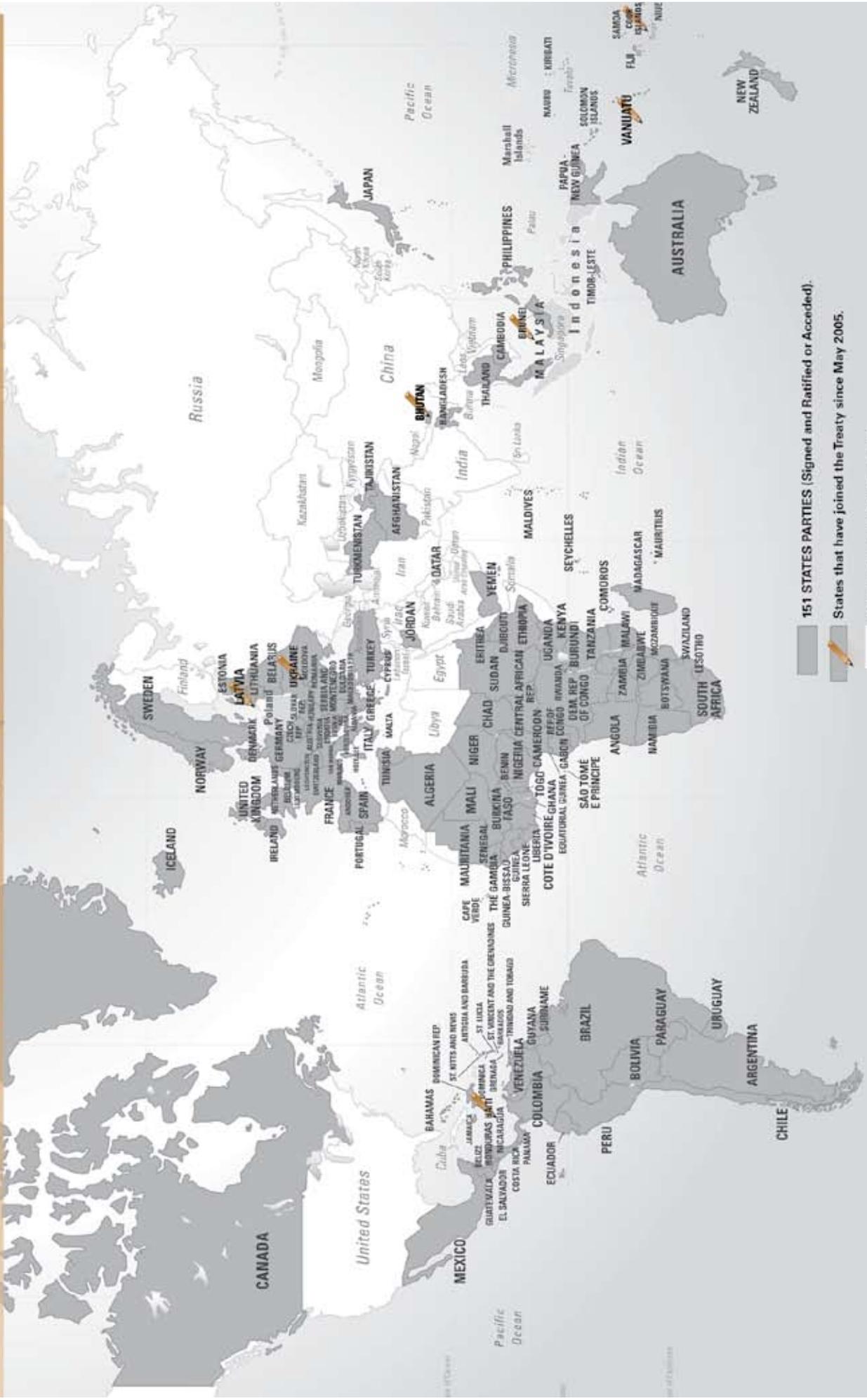
The Mine Ban Treaty is the international agreement that bans anti-personnel landmines. Sometimes referred to as the Ottawa Convention, it is officially titled: the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

The treaty is the most comprehensive international instrument for ridding the world of the scourge of mines and deals with everything from mine use, production and trade, to victim assistance, mine clearance and stockpile destruction.

In December 1997 a total of 122 governments signed the treaty in Ottawa, Canada. In September the following year, Burkina Faso was the 40th country to ratify, triggering entry into force six months later. Consequently, in March 1999 the treaty became binding under international law, and did so more quickly than any treaty of its kind in history. Today, the treaty is still open for ratification by signatories and for accession by those that did not sign before March 1999.

As of February 2007, there are 153 member states of the treaty and a further two signatory countries which still need to ratify the agreement. A total of 40 countries remain outside of the treaty entirely and these include China, Egypt, Finland, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia and the United States.

1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction



- 151 STATES PARTIES (Signed and Ratified or Acceded).
- States that have joined the Treaty since May 2005.
- 3 Signatories (Signed but not Ratified).
- 40 States not Party (Not yet Acceded).

Survivor Assistance

The impact from landmines and ERW on individuals and communities is profound and life-long. In many mine-affected countries, even if the medical and psychological issues are addressed, the survivor and his/her family and friends struggle against ongoing social and economic factors.

Who are landmine/ERW survivors?

- The majority of victims are civilians.
- Depending on cultural factors, landmines can become a gender issue. For instance, in some regions where most victims are men searching for water, women are profoundly affected. In the long term, women either support an injured or maimed male relative or partner or try to cope with his loss on every level, i.e. socio-economic, cultural, emotional and psychological. Elsewhere female survivors face personal, social and economic discrimination if they are disabled.



What is survivor assistance?

- Emergency medical care to ensure that victims are less likely to die from blood loss or shock.
- Medical support to ensure that survivors have ongoing prosthetic care.
- Access to comprehensive rehabilitation programs that include counselling for all landmine survivors, including those in remote areas.
- Programs to assist the economic and social re-integration of survivors into the community.
- The overall socio-economic and political situation in a mine-affected area can severely affect survivor assistance programs.

What is being done?

- In 2005 several survivor assistance programs suffered from a funding shortfall, despite the fact that victim assistance funding increased 29%.
- In 2005, the largest donor to survivor assistance programs was the United States (US \$18.5 million). In the same period, Canada gave US\$1.9 million.
- Although survivor assistance is a legal obligation for all states party to the Mine Ban Treaty, this area typically receives less money. In the long-term, it is the area where funding shortfalls increase socio-economic stresses on survivors and their communities.
- In 2005, \$376 million was used for mine action. Less than 10% went towards victim assistance which is inadequate. The absence of substantial long-term funding raises serious concerns about the success of the Ottawa Treaty.

<http://www.minesactioncanada.org/documents/Survivor%20assistance%20-%20overview%20english.pdf>

Stockpile Destruction

Stockpile destruction is the most effective way to prevent new landmine casualties. Once these weapons are destroyed, they cannot be deployed to kill or hurt anyone.



What is stockpile destruction?

- Upon becoming a member of the Ottawa Convention, governments commit to destroy their anti-personnel landmine reserves within four years of their becoming an official state party (i.e., signatory to treaty).
- According to Article 4 of the Ottawa Treaty, governments must destroy their anti-personnel landmine stockpiles or stockpiles “under their jurisdiction or control,” e.g., stockpiles housed in other countries.

How many member governments have destroyed their stockpiles?

- 74 member governments have destroyed their stockpiles.
- 64 member governments have declared that they do not possess any anti-personnel landmines.

And how many weapons have been destroyed?

- In total, 39.5 million anti-personnel landmines have been destroyed globally.

How many stockpiled landmines have yet to be destroyed by States party to the Ottawa Treaty?

- Over 16 million landmines possessed by 13 member countries have yet to be destroyed.
- The largest known landmine stockpiles due for destruction are as follows: Ukraine (6.7 million), Belarus (3.7 million), Turkey (3 million), and Greece (1.6 million).

How many stockpiled landmines have yet to be destroyed by states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty?

- Over 160 million landmines in non-party states await destruction.
- The largest stockpiles due for destruction amongst these states are estimated at: China (approximately 110 million), Russia (approximately 26.5 million) and the USA (approximately 10.4 million). In 2005, it was reported that Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) in eight countries possessed stockpiles, including Bangladesh, Burma, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, Somalia, Turkey and Uganda.

What is being done?

- States already party to the Ottawa Treaty continue to lobby other governments to join the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Article 6 of the Mine Ban Treaty states that “each State Party in a position shall provide assistance for the destruction of stockpiled mines.” This means that member countries that have technical and financial resources, like Canada, are obligated to assist other mine-affected member countries with the destruction of their stockpiles.

<http://www.minesactioncanada.org/documents/Canadian%20Mine%20Action%20Funding%20-%20overview%20english.pdf>

How do landmines affect development?

Landmines severely hinder development.

They hurt victims and families, and their presence in and around communities, on roads, in farmland and near water prevents productive use of land, water and infrastructure for development. In fact, it was field workers trying to work on development projects in landmine infested areas that first sounded the alarms on the issue in the late 1980s.

An anti-personnel mine only costs US\$3 to US\$30 to buy, but it can take thousands of dollars to clear a small field that might contain a single mine. Counting landmines cannot fully measure their effects: recent efforts to measure their true human and environmental impacts focus instead on the hectares of good land that they contaminate. It is generally agreed that undoing global landmine contamination will cost billions of dollars. It's a price that most affected countries cannot afford.

Beyond the direct costs of clearing mines and helping victims are the wider economic and social costs. Poor, rural societies emerging from war can be quickly overwhelmed by the challenges of repairing infrastructure and replacing lost farm production. Landmines also disrupt business and trade, causing shortages and inflation and preventing economic recovery. In short, landmines prolong poverty and greatly obstruct sustainable development.

http://www.international.gc.ca/foreign_policy/mines/II_F-en.asp

How do landmines affect disaster assistance?

Following Hurricane Mitch:

As Central Americans struggle to recover from Hurricane Mitch they must fight another plague. The storm that killed more than 10,000 people and destroyed so much of the region also dredged up deadly ghosts from the past -- landmines buried during the civil wars of the 1980s.

Now a team from the Organization of American States is working to find where the raging rivers tossed the mines. Canada is giving \$4.7 million toward the effort.

Worst hit is Nicaragua, where 73,000 landmines must be found and removed before more people are hurt or killed. So far, some of the mines have been found kilometres away from where they were first buried.

Most of the mines were planted by the Sandinista government during its war with the U.S.-backed Contra rebels.

<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/1998/12/03/mitchbomb981203.html>



Following the 2004 South Asian Tsunami:

Landmines are an ongoing threat in some places hit by the disaster -- but the risk has not increased dramatically. This is the word from experts, who question earlier reports of floating landmines and increased mine casualties in afflicted countries.

Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Thailand and the Maldives were worst hit by the disaster. With the exception of the Maldives, these countries all have a mine problem. While there has been no large-scale displacement of mines or casualties due to tidal wave, anti-personnel mines continue to be a threat to civilians and aid workers. What's needed is caution and continued awareness, ongoing mine action, and pressure to ban mine use forever in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India (Thailand is already a Mine Ban Treaty member, as is the Maldives.) Source: ICBL

Children and Victim-Activated Weapons

Children living in places with landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war are denied their most basic rights: the right to survival, to education, to adequate nutrition, to health care, and to a childhood.

How Are Children Affected?

Children are innately curious and tend to pick up strange objects. The interesting shapes and colours of anti-personnel mines, particularly PFM-1 "butterfly" mines, tend to entice children. Children are attracted to the appearance of balls and drinking bottles, only to discover that these are in fact dud cluster munitions. Children too young to read may not heed warning signs.

Economic activities expose children to the dangers of victim-activated weapons. In many countries, children are responsible for herding cattle, cultivating fields or gathering firewood -- activities which put them at risk of entering mine-infested areas. Children often also work as scavengers and gather landmines and ERW to sell for scrap metal.

Due to their small size and the close proximity of their vital organs to the blast, children are more likely to be killed by victim-activated weapons than adults. Even a small explosion can be lethal.



Children who survive face severe medical problems. Treatment and rehabilitation is costly and many families cannot afford medical expenses. Few survivors receive prostheses that keep up with continued growth of their bones. Children require a new prosthetic as often as every six months.

Child survivors are often prevented from returning to school or are hesitant to socialize with their peers for fear that they will be teased and ostracized.

It is important that the children traumatized by war be offered an everyday life as close as possible to their life before the war. However, the presence of victim-activated weapons often prevent the

normalization of life in post-conflict communities. Access to schools, clinics, water sources, and safe play areas are jeopardized by the presence of victim-activated weapons.

Children and their families are often forcibly displaced from their homes by the presence of victim-activated weapons, resulting in long-lasting psychological trauma. Even when children themselves are not primary victims, victim-activated weapons have a significant impact on their lives. The death or injury of a parent or sibling often forces children to withdraw from school to work and contribute to their family's income.

<http://www.minesactioncanada.org/documents/Children%20and%20Victim-Activated%20Weapons%20english.pdf>

Somali children die in mine blast

From BBC News, July 6, 2007

Five children who were playing with a landmine in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, were killed when the device exploded, witnesses say.

The children between the ages of six and 12 were playing football before they found it. One of them picked it up and threw it against a wall.

One of the children's mothers said they were on their way to mosque for Friday prayers when they had stopped to play.

Somalia is awash with guns and other weapons after 16 years of civil war.

An extensive operation to confiscate weapons in the city in house-to-house searches has been under way since late April, when Ethiopian-backed government forces drove insurgents from the northern suburbs.

Ethiopian soldiers have been in Somalia since December, when they helped oust an Islamist group that had taken control of the capital and surrounding areas.

The BBC's Mohammed Olad Hassan in Mogadishu says the explosion occurred around the livestock market in the north-east, where supporters of the ousted Union of Islamic Courts and other insurgents live.

"The mine went off and caused a huge explosion killing five children and three other people passing near by," local resident Ashkiro Mo'alin told the BBC by phone.

"We sent the children to the mosque to attend Friday prayers but they stopped on the way and started playing football before they died in the explosion," said Shamsa Abdi Mahdi, the mother of a six-year-old boy who died.

An imam at a nearby mosque said a 16-year-old girl had lost her right leg and had been rushed to hospital. Two others had less serious injuries, he said.

Our correspondent says the insurgent groups are known to plant roadside bombs and mines to target government officials, soldiers and Ethiopians when they pass by.

Gender and Victim-Activated Weapons

Women and men are affected differently during conflict and post-conflict situations. The gender dimensions of victim-activated weapons are different for every region and generalizations can not be applied to all affected countries.

In many countries, women and men tend to have different work responsibilities, and thus have different exposure to the victim-activated weapons in their region. In many countries, such as Afghanistan and Yemen, women have primary responsibility for household work and for the care of family and dependants, and are also the primary care-givers of victims.

The gender division of labour in landmine-affected countries, such as Mozambique and Angola, also has different implications for women and men. Women and men will often grow different crops and have different responsibilities during the crop cycle. This may influence who works on land that may be infested with victim-activated weapons left behind from conflict.

Women and men have different mobility patterns and thus have different exposure and vulnerability to these weapons. While women are more vulnerable when gathering fuel or water, men are in greater danger while traveling on public roads.

Post-conflict life is also different for women and men. High death rates of men during conflict means women are often left as heads of households and are the sole or primary breadwinners for their families. This is often a new and unfamiliar role compared to the pre-conflict situation.

Who cares for victims of landmines and are those people getting adequate support?

It is often women and girls who provide care and long-term support for victims immediately following injuries. In the majority of mine-affected countries, disabled men rely on their wives for support, while disabled women are often abandoned by their partners or have difficulty finding one. Women are not receiving adequate support.

What are the gender differences regarding the social and economic impact of victim-activated weapon injuries?

Being disabled can affect a woman's chance of marriage. In many cases, married women with disabilities face immediate divorce and are left with the responsibility of children, and thus a high risk of poverty. The Women and Disability Resources organization reports, "The unemployment rate for disabled women in developing countries is virtually 100 percent"!

<http://www.minesactioncanada.org/documents/Gender%20and%20Victim-Activated%20Weapons%20english.pdf>

What are MCIC members doing about the landmine problem?

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) works at peace-building in many areas of the world, including the West Bank, Lebanon, Iraq, Cambodia, Burma, Philippines, Indonesia, India, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Colombia, Guatemala. MCC also runs refugee assistance programs in Canada.

In Viengxay District, Laos, MCC trains and supports teachers from 26 primary schools to include an unexploded ordnance (UXO) education component curriculum in their classes. MCC has also produced a book of short stories and two series of flipcharts to support UXO-awareness and provide additional education material for teachers. This is an ongoing project, which began four years ago.

The United Nations Association (UNA)-Canada has been a Mines Action Canada (MAC) member since 1996. A representative of UNA-Canada currently acts as MAC chair and board member. UNA-Canada has also been engaged in the development of policy positions on cluster bombs and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

UNA-Canada has provided organizational support for MAC's Demining Technology Competition from its inception. The competition is designed to:

- encourage development of appropriate technology and mine-action equipment;
- support awareness of the landmines detection and clearance issue; and
- foster work on technical aspects of the problem in Canadian universities.

2001-2002 was the technology competition's fourth year of operation.

*UNA-Canada has a Canada-wide network of local branches. Along with the National Organization, the National Capital Region Branch is also a MAC member.

World Vision overseas programs that compliment and support communities affected by landmines include:

- 1 Emergency health and nutrition
- 2 Peace-building through the reintegration of ex-combatants and other war-affected children into their communities
- 3 Psycho-social trauma recovery
- 4 Formal and non-formal education
- 5 Food security programs
- 6 Community development through micro-enterprise development and the capacity building of local organizations.

One of World Vision's landmine-related projects is the "**Vocational Rehabilitation of Landmine Survivors**" project in Cambodia. The goal of the project is to assist the disabled population -- mostly landmine survivors -- to become reintegrated into society through employment or small businesses that will enable survivors to be self-sufficient. In addition to this project, the wider World Vision partnership operates several additional landmine-related programs supported by field offices.

These include:

- 1 Mine/UXO awareness programs in Angola, Cambodia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Mozambique.
- 2 Mine/UXO clearance programs in Cambodia, Kosovo, Laos, and Mozambique.
- 3 Victim assistance programs in Laos and Vietnam.
- 4 Advocacy programs about landmines/UXOs and their effects in Angola, Australia, Austria, Cambodia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Kosovo, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Palestine, Taiwan, UK, and USA.