

# Mine Action



Name of the lecturer

*Landmines* is the latest project by the Swedish United Nations Association, launched in April 2015. Today we'll talk about the situation in the world today as well as some of the consequences that arise when you do not clear mines or other explosive remnants. We will also talk briefly about how demining is done in reality.

# What is an explosive mine?



There are many different types of mines. Some of them have an explosive effect with lethal force, while others are designed only to injure. Sometimes conflicting parties prefer landmines that only harm their enemies. This is an effective war strategy since it is much more difficult to take care of a wounded comrade who may have lost a leg or an arm than it is to take care of a dead comrade. The injured requires a completely different kind of care and attention.

**Top left:** US landmine that has been nicknamed "Spider". It is a modern type of landmine equipped with motion sensors exploding not only when someone steps on it but also when someone comes near it. The mine can be set so that it does not explode instantly when someone comes near, it is possible to delay the explosion, so that for instance an entire group of soldiers must have come close to it before it detonates. It is possible to connect several landmines and synchronize them so that they detonate simultaneously. The mine can also come with a remote control, making it possible to lie and watch two kilometers away while detonating it.

**Top middle:** Chinese blast mine, activated by stepping on it.

**Alone to the right:** "Jump mine with trip wire". When a person steps on a jump mine it is pushed up in the air and detonates about waist height. When it detonates it is sending scrap metal over a large area making it possible to harm many people at the same time.

**Bottom middle:** NATO calls the mine green parrot. It is dropped from an aircraft, like cluster bombs. When dropped from the air they glide for a while before spreading out over a large area. They can drill down into the ground, depending on terrain and come in various colors. The mine is usually made out of plastic. When this mine was first used, the number of child deaths increased as a direct consequence of that it

# Global situation



- Mines deployed in over 60 countries and territories.
- Every year 3500 people are injured or killed.
- Which means that someone is injured or killed ever third hour.
- 8 out of 10 victims are civilians, half of whom are children.



Today it is estimated that millions of landmines are deployed in around 60 countries and territories around the world. The reason why there are so many is because the mines remain active for 75 years or more. For example, there are still landmines left from World War II.

On average someone steps on a mine about every three hours – about 10 people are thus in a mine accident every day. This means that about 3500 people are injured or killed by landmines each year. In the mid 1990s, the figure stood at around 20,000 so the trend is moving in the right direction.

Since there are so many mines, and because they remain long after the war is over, mainly the civilian population is affected. About 8 out of 10 victims of mines are civilians, and about half of these are children. The reason why children suffer so hard is because children are more often outside playing and moving beyond the most common paths while they are less careful than adults. It is common that children do not understand it is a mine, pick it up to play with it and then it detonates.

# UNMAS The UN Mine Action Service



UNMAS, The UN Mine Action Service. Teaming up with 14 other United Nations agencies and funds in order to ensure that the demining work is efficient and coordinated. UNMAS has more than 40 projects in 16 countries, including Colombia, Syria, Afghanistan and Mali. They were established in 1997 by the General Assembly. UNMAS puts up local demining centers in countries as part of the peacekeeping forces and to ensure that help such as food deliveries arrive.

They are responsible for, among other things, initiate assistance to mine victims, collecting data on for instance the location of mines and of course ensuring that landmines and other remnants are removed in a safe manner so that other work can proceed. UNMAS is financially supported partly by the General Assembly for its part of peacekeeping operations, but it is also heavily dependent on voluntary funds.

# Five pillars for action against mines



- Demining
- Dissemination of information in areas at risk  
– Mine Risk Education
- Help and assistance to mine-affected
- Destroy old stocks of explosive ordnance
- Shaping the public opinion

## **UN's work against mines consists of five pillars:**

- Demining
- Provide training and information to people living near minefields
- Assistance to mine-affected
- Destroy old stocks of explosive ordnance
- Advocacy work

# Mechanical demining



One of the UN's five pillars in the fight against mines is demining. There are different forms of demining of which mechanical demining is one.

There are two different forms of demining; humanitarian and military. Humanitarian demining is much more careful, while military demining is not as safe as a method.

A major problem with demining is to not know where the mines are located. During a conflict it is common that the conflicting parties keep record of where they place the mines, but in many cases the records are either incorrect or non-existent. This means that the mines could be anywhere making it much more difficult and time consuming to work with demining. At the same time, the mines tend not to remain in exactly the same place as they were placed. Mines are often moving, for instance in connection with mudslides or heavy rain. If a mine is detonated in a village it can be that that mine was the only one in the area. But it may also be that there are ten more mines around the area. In such a situation, one has no choice but to control the entire area for landmines.

Demining machines are armored vehicles that with the help of their weight or by using chains hammered into the ground make the mines they run over explode. Demining machines can have either an armored cabin or be driverless. Mechanical demining is fast, but the big machines are difficult to transport and can not be used in all terrains. Furthermore, demining machines are not completely secure. Therefore, demining with machines always has to be accompanied by another clearing technique to be absolutely sure that the land is mine-free. Military demining usually use only mechanical demining, which contributes to it being more uncertain than humanitarian demining.



# Manual demining



Manual demining is the most reliable method, but also the slowest, most expensive and most dangerous one. First, the vegetation has to be cut down, then the area has to be swept over with a metal detector. The areas that are being cleared are about one meter big at a time.

When the metal detector reads something the person doing the demining has to lay down on the ground and gently **dig the mines out, using a specific method and technique**. It has to be done from a special angle to not trigger the bomb. If it is a mine it is often detonated at the spot. When sweeping with a metal detector, it will provide approximately 1000 readings before it gives a reading for a mine. It means that the person working with the demining has to have much patience.

# Meet Douglas



NOTE! Optional! If you are short on time, skip this slide.

Now let's watch a short film about what life as a deminers can look like. The film is made by UNMAS, narrated by Daniel Craig and about 5 minutes long. In the film you get to follow a deminer during one day of his life. Link on the photo or here:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f290Q2FN28>**

## **After the film:**

How common do you think it is that deminers are injured or killed?

- In 2013 85 deminers died or were injured, the majority of accidents occurred in Iran. In 2012 the number was 132 pointing at a downward trend. Overall, deminers account for 3% of all injured, military personnel account for 18% and civilians account for 79%.



# Mine dogs and mine rats



Mines made out of metal can be found with a metal detector, however, mines made out of other materials, such as glass or plastic are also created, only to complicate the search and demining. Fortunately there are other ways to find the mines. For instance dogs have an ability to find mines, the dogs are not trained to find metal but their job is to smell the explosives and mark where the smell is coming from. With the help of dogs mines can be cleared five times faster than if removed manually. This makes it possible to quickly highlight mine-safe areas and areas where there are mines. Dogs are reliable and can be used in any terrain, but it takes a long time to train a mine dog and there are simply too few dogs available.

A new method which also is very clever is to use mine rats, this is used in Mozambique. The rats are light weighted and do not trigger the mines, and have learned to mark when they smell explosives. The rats are extremely durable since they are naturally found in the area they work in.

# Mine Risk Education (MRE)



Another one of the UN's pillars in the fight against mines is information and education to people in mine-affected areas. This is usually called MRE, Mine Risk Education. The MRE is effective since you can quite easily reach out to many people. Demining is time consuming and expensive, to educate people about the risks is fast, cheap and rescues many lives. Cambodia has in this way halved the number of victims.

During the MRE it is explained what areas to avoid and which places that can be typical mine-risk areas, such as the rivers or the sides of the roads. Warning signs are explained as well as what mines look like, which items to avoid and why you should not touch them. The MRE also brings up what to do in case of an accident.

This poster is available in basically all schools around Cambodia.

# Assistance to mine victims



At least 20% of the UN's work on mines goes to help mine-injured, another pillar of the UN's work. In addition to emergency hospital care, it is important that the victims receive long-term assistance, eg, rehabilitation, and physical therapy. A mine-injured person can be bedridden for several months, leading to withering of the muscles. These muscles will later have to be rebuilt, and people who have lost one or both legs need help learning to walk with a prosthesis.

The assistance to mine-affected also includes the manufacturing of prostheses. The prosthesis must be tailored for every individual, one standard model for all the affected is not enough. This makes prostheses very expensive. The prosthetics also has to be replaced periodically (every three to five years for adults and every six months for children). This makes it an even larger financial burden for the victim, especially for those affected who are already poor.

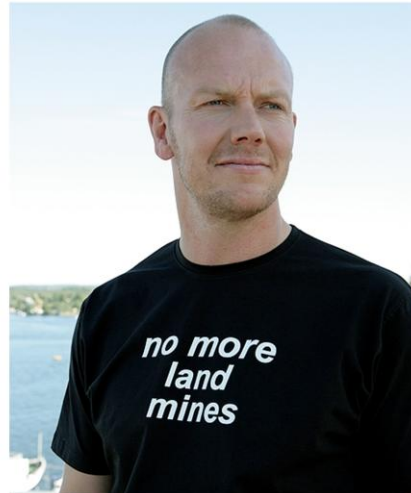
Usually already vulnerable people are affected worst by the mines. Farmers, nomads, playing children, refugees and people returning home after the war. People who have no choice but to farm land that they might know is dangerous. There is no alternative other than to daily risk their lives. People need to take care of their crops and fetching water, even though this means they have to go out into the minefield.

Being injured by mines is of course something that can contribute to poverty. Someone injured by mines may lose the capacity to work and therefore not be able to contribute to the household in the same degree as before. Perhaps it is the breadwinner who is injured, then the other family members have to begin to support the family. Such a situation could lead to children not attending school because they have to work for the family, babysit sibling or take care of an injured relative. To reduce the risk of people losing everything the training in the UN program to support mine-affected also includes retraining and education.

# Advocacy



- The Ottawa Treaty
- The Oslo Process



The last pillar of the UN's work against mines is *advocacy*. It implies creating public opinion against the use of mines and cluster weapons, which can be seen in the Ottawa Treaty - or as it is officially called; Treaty on the prohibition of landmines. It is an international agreement banning landmines that 162 countries in the world (or over 80% of the world's countries) joined, and it contributed to a drastic reduction in the use of mines.

The Convention was adopted in 1997 and entered into force on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1999. Since then, over 47 million mines have been destroyed, large areas of land have been liberated from the mines and the international norm against the use has grown strongly. Those who have joined the Convention may not use or manufacture landmines, nor may they encourage others to do so. In order for a convention to be binding the states must ratify it. Of the countries joining in the beginning only the Marshall Islands have not ratified it.

The Convention on Cluster weapons is called the Oslo Process and is a contract that contains a ban on cluster weapons. In the current situation, 83 states have ratified it, and another 29 have signed but not ratified.

The advocacy work is about influencing other states to sign the conventions and agree not to make use of mines or cluster weapons, and to reinforce the agreements that are already available. It is also about trying to influence states to legislate a ban on investments in companies that produce weapons such as mines and cluster weapons. Belgium has introduced such a ban.

# United Nations Millennium Development Goals



1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Global partnership for development



Demining is not solely about making sure people don't die or get injured. The project also affects several of the important Millennium Development Goals.

Since mines may prevent people from using their land and might injure people so that it gets more difficult for them to earn a living the demining is relevant for the **1<sup>st</sup> goal** of eradicating poverty and hunger.

When a family suffers financial hardship as a result of not being able to farm their land it can result in them not affording to send their children to school. This often leads to children having to work, in or outside of the home and therefore also affect the prospects of achieving the **2<sup>nd</sup> goal** when a place is mine-affected.

The goals about gender equality, health and environment (**goals 3,4,5,6 & 7**) are not directly affected by the mine situation, however, there is an indirect link. When people's financial situation is uncertain that obviously increases the risk of them not affording to seek treatment for simple diseases or pregnancy, which is one reason why infant and maternal mortality and the spread of diseases might be stopped by the demining.

**Goal 8** is about international cooperation. This is where we enter the picture, since we may be able to support the work of demining financially, through advocacy work and with information dissemination.

# Consequences



... Hindering refugees from returning home after the war.

... Exposing entire families to danger. Children cannot play safely in their own communities and mines can prevent them from going to school.

... Hinder economic and social development. Farmers can no longer farm their land, which means that their source of income might disappear completely.

... Preventing societies that have been in a conflict to be rebuilt.

Deployed landmines also prevent humanitarian personnel to help those most in need in a conflict by preventing accessibility.

It is important to know that in addition to causing physical and psychological damage to people, landmines prevent entire communities from recovering after a war is over. Mines and minefields disturb the functioning of societies, threatens food security and access to infrastructure. Mines prevent refugees from returning home, even after the conflict ended. This means that there are in fact many more people who are adversely affected by mines than just those who are injured or killed, or have a family member who is injured or killed.



# Naser and Esmetullah



This is Naser (left) and Esmatullah Ahmad. They are brothers. They live with their families in the Qarabagh district of Afghanistan. One day Esmatullah found a small object under the vines in the yard and took it to his brother Naser. The boys curiously began to play with the metal gadget - a decision that changed their lives forever. The boys were playing with an unexploded ordnance that had landed on their yard during the war. Suddenly the ammunition exploded in the hands of the boys and Naser lost his left hand. Over half a million people in Afghanistan live in direct threat of mines and half of all civilian victims are children, like Naser.

# Did you know?



- Which states used mines 2013-2014?
- Are mines still produced?
- Which one/ones of these states have signed the Ottawa Convention?  
The United States, Sweden, China, Russia, Armenia and Germany

If you are short on time you can skip this slide.

1. Syria, Myanmar/Burma. Non-state armed groups in Afghanistan, Colombia, Libya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria. Ukraine has accused Russia of using mines in the Ukrainian land, but it has not been confirmed.
2. Yes. Through the ages more than 50 states produced mines, today we are down to 11 states that have been identified capable of producing in the current situation. China, Cuba, India, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam. Most are not active in their production, but have reserved the right to produce.
3. Sweden and Germany.

# Get involved!



- Create an activity to support the project
- Follow our work at: #motminor
- Donate through a text, swish or become a monthly donor at [www.fn.se/motminor](http://www.fn.se/motminor)



# Thank you!

