

International Campaign to Ban Landmines
Mine Action Working Group

Report to the Fourth Meeting of States Parties

To the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use,
Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel
Mines and on Their Destruction

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Article Five Treaty Obligations: A Strategic Approach

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Mr Chairman and friends,

Just over ten years ago the handful of NGOs that were working in the field to assist landmine victims and to clear landmines launched the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and five years ago in Oslo and Ottawa the Mine Ban Treaty was negotiated, adopted, and signed. What a Decade!

The Treaty represents:

a deep concern about an ugly weapon of war;

a unique collaboration between civil society and governments; and

a solemn commitment that we will undo what we as a human family have done to each other – we will rid the world of landmines.

In these ten short years we have moved from isolated NGOs and UN agencies coping with a horrendous crisis in the field to outrage to political agitation to the Treaty – all of this accompanied by the growth and increasing professionalism and coordination in the mine action community that has grown up to rid the world of the social and economic catastrophe that this weapon produces from its silent hiding places under the ground of communities around the world.

At the January meeting of your Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Related Technologies Sara Sekkenes of the Norwegian People's Aid presented a paper of the ICBL Mine Action Working Group on the Article Five obligation of all States Parties to destroy anti-personnel mines in the ground. I will quickly summarize her points and bring you up to date on the work ahead.

1. The Article Five obligation for States Parties to destroy all antipersonnel landmines in the ground from their territories is serious. There are 10 year extension arrangements in the event deadlines are not met, but explanations are required.
2. The effort will, in all likelihood, not be met without forward planning and more strategic allocation of resources. These are the financial

and personnel resources of the affected States Parties supplemented with assistance from non-affected States Parties.

3. Without a reasonable idea of the size and nature of the mine problem affecting States Parties and without an approximate sense of the cost and work rate of clearing mines there will be no way to rationally maximize resource allocation to meet Treaty obligations in Article Five.

The Co-Chairs (Yemen and Germany) of the Standing Committee on Mine clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies remind us in their Final Report for 2001 – 2002 to this body that more than 40 States Parties “suffer from the impact of mined areas.” They conclude:

To ensure that action proceeds in a manner that takes into consideration the 10 year time frame of the Convention, the Co-Chairs recommend that the ICBL, UNMAS, donors, mine-affected States and other interested parties continue to collaborate to gather reliable information on progress in clearing mined land, identify challenges that remain and the resources that will be required to overcome these challenges.

This presentation will continue the dialogue started at the January Standing Committee by Sara Sekkenes and continued in May by MAWG consultant Anne Capelle. Sara is not present with us today because she delivered a healthy baby boy into this world on Tuesday. This process of studying the status of implementation is being funded by the German government. Today we will focus on the question of determining the size and nature of the global landmine problem as a prerequisite to developing a coherent collaboration by States Parties that will move us into compliance with the requirements of Article Five.

I have good news to report to you. With the first four countries reporting Landmine Impact Survey results there is reason to hope that with a focused targeting of resources we might, just might, meet the great humanitarian challenge of Article Five – rid States Parties of landmines in mined areas.

This may be overly optimistic but let me explain the cause for cautious optimism on this critical Treaty issue.

If you want to solve a problem within a timeframe, it is vital to know the size and nature of the problem. To know the size of anything you must have a unit of measure. We have all learned that trying to count landmines hidden in the ground is impossible and, even if you could, it gives you little useful information for either strategic or operational planning. We need a better measure.

The Survey Working Group is an NGO initiative that involves many of the major NGOs and UN bodies involved in mine action. It meets at least twice a year to develop and authorize the protocols that define the standards for the conduct of Landmine Impact Surveys. It is truly interagency cooperation at its best.

The members are:

Association for Aid and Relief	Japan
Cranfield Mine Action	United Kingdom
Danish Demining Group	Denmark
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining	Switzerland
GeoSpatial International	Canada
HALO Trust	United Kingdom
Handicap International	Belgium and France
Landmine Survivors Network	USA
Mine Clearance Planning Agency	Afghanistan
Mines Advisory Group	United Kingdom
Norwegian People's Aid	Norway
Swedish Rescue Services Agency	Sweden
UN Development Programme	UN
UNICEF	UN
UN Mine Action Service	UN
UN Office for Project Services	UN
Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation	USA

From the very beginning of the Survey Working Group process that began in Ottawa in 1998 the SWG knew that we all needed a better measure of the landmine problem that went beyond counting landmines and minefields.

Landmines are a problem when they impact on human beings. Marking and clearing mines and mine risk education are all aimed at reducing the impact of this obscene weapon on human beings. We have learned from

the experience of the development community that the best way to help individuals is through analysis and help to their communities. Therefore, the Survey Working Group has designed the impact survey to use communities as the basic unit of measure of landmine impact.

The horror of landmines should not blind us to the reality that all mine fields are not equal. I sometimes think as we learn more about minefields that they have personalities like human beings – some are truly psychopathic and some are benign. Their impact on communities can vary accordingly.

Looking at landmines through impact on communities and understanding that all minefields are not equal can lead to some encouraging analysis. Five Landmine Impact Surveys have been carried out to date in Yemen, Mozambique, Chad, Thailand and Cambodia. We have the full reports from the first four and the results are very interesting. Using definitions adopted by the Survey Working Group and modified within controlled parameters by national authorities we now know the full extent of the landmine impact on virtually all the mine affected communities in these four countries. Taken together the percentages of high, medium and low impacted communities are intriguing:

Less than 10% of all communities are high impact
About 25% of all communities are medium impact and
More than 65% of all communities are low impact.

This is new information and it can have radical implications for how we view the landmine problem and how we develop strategies to combat it.

If our primary goal is to control the terror and contain the crisis, then national authorities now have at their disposal vital information to prioritise scarce resources of time and money.

An acute phase of the mine problem in every country with impact data can now be identified. This data is in the public domain and the national authorities are now in a position to develop strategic plans based on transparent data developed to international standards set by the Survey Working Group and certified by an independent process chaired by the UN Mine Action Service.

With good strategic planning by the national authorities this should challenge the donor community to make every effort to provide long-term, strategic support.

Good strategic planning should lead to solid strategic support.

In terms of long term support let's look a little more closely at the percentages presented earlier – less than 10% high impact, 25% medium impact and over 65% low impact. The absolute numbers in the four countries referenced above are equally interesting:

150 high impact communities

500 medium impact communities

1500 low impact communities

2150 total communities in four surveyed countries

One must approach this aggregated information with caution. Each community has its own individual profile and areas of contamination can vary a great deal. But the overall picture should be encouraging. We are not seeing an overwhelming number of communities in the high and medium impact categories. The low impact communities are not living with any immediate threat to life, limb or livelihood. While we are committed to leave no community behind we now have data that will allow maximum effort to get at the worst problems first – before lethal mine fields take more victims or impoverish livelihoods.

Yemen produced the first strategic plan based on impact survey data and the way the national authorities approached this task is instructive. The Strategic Plan for Yemen puts immediate priority in the first five years on the 100 high and medium impact communities that the Landmine Impact Survey identified. This will require a relatively high degree of mobilization of national and international resources in this first phase. After the crisis represented by the high and medium impact communities has been eliminated the low impact communities can be approached with residual capacity – what is referred to as the fire brigade approach. There will be continued international cooperation during this later phase but at a significantly reduced scale and national resources will shoulder most of the burden. Yemen has produced a plan that is based on transparent data and appropriate to the crisis that they face. They are not asking for international assistance without end. They have done the hard work to identify the specific

crisis and make a rational plan. Will the donor community seize on this opportunity to mobilize resources?

This preliminary information from the first four surveyed countries will be expanded significantly as the results from on-going surveys are published. Surveys are ongoing right now in:

Azerbaijan
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Lebanon
Somalia –northwest

A landmine impact survey will soon begin in Afghanistan and a SAC mission will soon visit Angola to meet with government representatives. Plans are underway to visit Sri Lanka to ascertain government interest in Landmine Impact Surveys. SAC has received an invitation to visit Columbia later this year to discuss a Landmine Impact Survey. The United Nations Mine Action Strategy calls for 15 surveys in this two year period.

We are now entering a period when impact data will be available for many of the most mine affected countries. While it may not be practical or necessary to conduct a full impact survey in every affected country we should certainly not leave any country behind in terms of support to meet their Article Five obligations.

Globally, for the first time we are nearing a point where we will truly know the size and nature of the problem that we face and this is a pre-requisite for rational planning at the strategic level for national authorities. It will also allow the donor community at Meetings of States Parties and the intersessionals in the future to better define the global problem and to coordinate and mobilize the resources necessary to meet the legal and moral obligations set out in Article Five of the Treaty. We urge all mine-affected countries to attend the intersessional Standing Committees and to come well-prepared with information on how they plan to meet Article 5 obligations.

There needs to be further work done along the lines laid out by Sara Sekenes' presentation in January. We need to have more consistent information on cleared areas and we need to know more about unit clearance

costs. UNMAS and GICHD are working together to produce a reporting template that will help us to do this. ICBL will continue to work within the Standing Committee and the UN and GICHD to pursue these issues.

This presentation on the advances that have been made to define the size and nature of the problem suggests the following actions:

1. National authorities should develop strategic plans with a phased approach that clearly identifies of the crisis phase of the problem.
2. The timeframe for strategic plans should reference the 2009 date for compliance with Article Five obligations. We strongly urge States Parties to include information about their national strategic plans in their Article 7 reports, including analysis of the challenges faced and technical, financial and/or human resource needs. Putting this in the public domain can contribute to identifying needs and gaps and will aid in matching needs with donors resources.
3. Donors should take transparent and phased strategic plans very seriously and make special efforts to provide multi-year funding especially while the focus is on high and medium impact communities.
4. Implementing agencies [NGO, UN and commercial] in submitting proposals to donors should reference the role their proposals play in supporting the national strategic plan and donors should insist on funding work that advances the national plan.

With these actions in place and the growing global understanding of the size and nature of the problem we can make significant progress toward landmine impact free countries within the decade.

Thank you.