

CANADIAN LANDMINE FOUNDATION – TEACHERS FACT SHEET

Introduction

- Each year approximately 15 000 to 20 000 people are killed or injured by landmines.
- Over 80% are civilians.
- From one third to one half of those killed or injured are children.
- There are an estimated 70 million landmines left in the ground in over 90 countries.
- Landmines are now illegal in two thirds of the countries in the world.
- Real progress is being made. Students can have a voice and a role in supporting the clearance of landmines and in assisting landmine survivors.

Background

- Early use of mines in U.S. Civil War where they are called ‘land torpedoes’.
- Anti-vehicle mines developed in World War I to damage newly invented tanks.
- Anti-personnel landmines were developed initially to protect anti-vehicle mines.
- Anti-personnel landmine use expanded in World War II to provide defence of positions.
- By the 1960s, it became possible to plant landmines via air delivery and not only manually by hand.
- During the Vietnam War the United States first used scatterable landmines that can be dropped from planes and helicopters.
- During the 60’s and 70’s landmine use mushroomed. Landmines were cheap and easy to produce. Landmines use expanded from defence of an army’s own position, to serve to terrorize civilians and to negatively impact community life.
- The Ottawa Treaty banning the production, use and trade of anti- personnel landmines was opened for signature on December 3rd 1997. 122 countries signed their commitment to implement the Treaty.
- The Treaty requires signatories to destroy their stockpiles within 4 years of ratification and to clear the mines from their soil within 10 years.

- In March 1999 the Ottawa Treaty became international law – the fastest ratification in history.
- Landmines are now illegal in about two-thirds of the world's countries (144).
- Among the countries that have not signed the treaty are the United States, Russia, China, Pakistan and India.
- Landmines are still being used not only by some countries who have not signed the international treaty, but by non-state groups as well (terrorist groups, rebel groups, etc.)
- Official trade in landmines has been reduced from 34 countries in 1995 to 0 by 2003.

Mine Clearance

- One mine – or even the suspicion of a mine – makes a minefield.
- In many cases landmines are not mapped nor are their locations recorded.
- Few minefields are marked, partly because of the resources required, partly because markers are moved by weather, partly because markers are removed by the local population to serve as building materials or firewood.
- Manual demining, although slow and tedious, is the only method that can guarantee 99.6% clearance
- No effective landmine clearing machine or other technology has been developed to deal with all circumstances;
- Demining dogs are safely used to assist humans in landmine clearance – increasing the area that can be cleared by up to 10 times.

Survivor Assistance

- There are several hundred thousand people who have been injured by landmines.
- Landmines damage feet, legs, arms, eyes, cause internal injuries, and disfigurement.
- Often landmine accidents occur in remote areas where the survivors have little access to medical care.
- The term 'survivor' is used, rather than victim, because the person is more than the injury they have sustained.

- Landmine survivors require assistance the rest of their lives: artificial limbs (prostheses) must be replaced every six months for growing children and every few years for adults.
- In addition to immediate assistance, survivors require physical rehabilitation, psychological counselling, social and economic guidance and support, and protection of their rights as disabled persons.
- In many countries, disability is a stigma that leads to further social exclusion and trauma. Many females are seen as unworthy of marriage and they become outcasts.
- Pain management is an ongoing issue for survivors. The fitting to the body needs to be constantly adjusted as the residual limb changes shape.

The Good News about Canada and the Landmine Issue

- The Ottawa Treaty is a hallmark in Canada's history.
 - The creation of this treaty and its implementation have significantly contributed to Canada's positive image around the world.
 - This was the most rapidly negotiated treaty in history – the method of building this agreement is known as the Ottawa Process.
 - The Ottawa Treaty was created outside of regular diplomatic channels by a partnership of international governmental representatives of both large and small countries and non-governmental organizations.
- There are no landmines in Canada. The last time Canada used landmines was during the Korean Conflict in the 1950's.
- In keeping with Canada's participation and leadership in international humanitarian causes, Canadians are making a difference in assisting landmine clearance and survivor assistance.