



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

Landmines and Cluster Ammunition

Policy Position Statement

Key messages:

1. Landmines (anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines), explosive remnants of war (ERWs) including UXOs (unexploded ordnances) and cluster ammunition (weapons that release hundreds of small bomblets over a wide area) are indiscriminate weapons. Their impact continues decades after the end of hostilities.
2. Landmines constitute a major humanitarian catastrophe. Mines kill thousands of civilians every year and also have a devastating effect on the economic well-being of families.
3. Landmines and cluster ammunition have been indiscriminately used by conflicting parties. Long after the conflict has ended, landmines continue to claim victims, many of whom are civilians.

Key policy positions:

Australia is a States Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) which entered into force on 1st August 2010.

PHAA will continue to urge the Australian Government to actively participate in international efforts to address the ongoing use and impact of landmines, UXOs, ERWs and cluster ammunition worldwide.

The Australian Government will continue to foster Australian capabilities in landmine clearance as well as continue to fund and develop local capacities especially in developing countries that have been impacted by landmines to manage and implement Mine Action programmes.

Audience:

Federal, State and Territory Governments, policymakers and program managers, PHAA members, media.

Responsibility:

PHAA International Health Special Interest Group

Date adopted:

23 September 2021

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Policy position statement

PHAA notes that:

1. Landmines (anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines), explosive remnants of war (ERWs) including unexploded ordinances, improvised explosive devices and cluster ammunition (weapons that release hundreds of small bomblets over a wide area) are abhorrent and indiscriminate weapons.¹
 - Land mines constitute a major humanitarian catastrophe and continue to claim victims long after the conflict has ended. Mines kill thousands of civilians every year, and have a devastating effect on the economic well-being of families.^{2,3}
 - In contemporary wars landmines and cluster ammunition have been indiscriminately used by conflicting parties.^{3,4}
 - As well as death and injury, the continued presence of landmines and cluster munition restricts access to basic services, productive land and sustainable livelihoods.
 - In 2019, 5,554 casualties of mines or ERW were recorded with 2,170 fatalities, 3,357 injuries, and 27 casualties with the survival status unknown. Eighty percent of the recorded casualties were civilians of which 43% accounted for children and 85% of all casualties were men and boys. Although the 2019 casualties of mines or ERW was lower than the 6,897 recorded in 2018, it was significantly higher than the 3,457 estimated casualties in 2013. Afghanistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Ukraine, and Yemen all recorded over 100 casualties.⁵
 - *“The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 also generated a new set of unanticipated challenges to which the mine action community had to adapt in order to stay focused on the treaty’s ultimate objective of putting an end to the suffering caused by landmines.”⁵*
2. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (The Ottawa Convention)⁶ was signed in December 1997 and ratified by Australia. However, there is still no international agreement to ban or limit the destructive potential of anti-vehicle mines.
3. A total of 164 countries have signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction or simply, the Mine Ban Treaty. As of 2021, the United States, China and Russia have not signed the Mine Ban Treaty.⁷
4. As of 2018, eleven states are identified as potential producers of antipersonnel mines: China, Cuba, India, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam.⁸

5. Anti-vehicle mines have the same injurious effects on people and access to land as do anti-personnel mines; and are in fact more likely to kill rather than maim. By interrupting humanitarian aid, anti-vehicle mines increase cost of aid and increase the number of people who die and suffer in humanitarian crises.⁹
6. Anti-vehicle mines can be set up to be triggered by pressures as light as children, and can be fitted with anti-handling devices, making them dangerous to mine clearance personnel.⁹
7. Implementing this policy would contribute towards achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals 3: Good Health and Wellbeing.

PHAA believes that the following steps should be undertaken:

8. Foreign policy priority should be given to funding Humanitarian Mine Action programmes internationally in regions, such as Cambodia, Laos, Afghanistan, Iraq, Mozambique and Vietnam.
9. The Australian Government should continue to support programmes of assistance and training, in the treatment and rehabilitation of survivors and mine-affected communities.

PHAA resolves to undertake the following actions:

10. To urge the Australian Government to ban anti-personnel mines under the existing Ottawa Convention (1997); and the production and use of anti-vehicle mines and anti-personnel mines.
11. To urge the Australian Government to continue to engage in efforts to ban the production, use and trade of landmines as a priority foreign policy initiative and to lobby nations which have not done so to ratify the Ottawa Convention (1997) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008).
12. To urge the Australian Government to continue to foster Australian capabilities in landmine clearing and to fund and develop indigenous capacities to implement Mine Action programmes in countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Iraq.
13. To urge the Australian Government to cease its practice of protecting combatants who lay and use landmines as protection for Australian Defence Force personnel.
14. To urge the Australian Government, to shift the cost of mine, ERW and cluster munition clearance operations from the overseas aid budget to the defence budget.
15. To encourage the Australian Government to continue to support programs of assistance and training, in the treatment and rehabilitation of landmine and cluster munition survivors and mine-affected communities.

(First adopted at the 2005, revised in 2015, 2018 and 2021)

References

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