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CLUSTER MUNITION VICTIMS

WHAT IS KNOWN AND WHAT IS NEEDED?

REUTERS/Damir Sagoli

OVERVIEW

There are victims of cluster munitions in at least 21 States and four areas of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe. A 2007 study published by Handicap International confirmed 13,306 deaths and injuries due to cluster munitions. Men were found to be the most frequent victims, followed by children, who are often attracted by the shape, size and colour of cluster munitions. Boys are particularly at risk due to the activities they are often assigned in rural communities (such as farming and herding). Women make up a smaller percentage of cluster munition victims in most of the contaminated areas.

Survivors of cluster munition incidents will often have serious blast or fragment injuries. They will frequently need long term treatment and rehabilitation, which will include medical care, physical rehabilitation, psycho-social support and socio-economic reintegration.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF CLUSTER MUNITION INCIDENTS ON VICTIMS?

People who survive the explosion of a submunition are likely to have serious, often multiple blast or fragment injuries. Such injuries include not only damage to vital organs but also the loss of hands and feet. Eye injuries are common. Submunitions also tend to kill or injure several people in a single incident more frequently than other explosive remnants of war (ERW) (ICRC). In **Laos**, for instance, submunitions were responsible for 43% of all multiple casualty ERW incidents (Handicap International, 2007).

Physical injury is often accompanied by psychological trauma. Surviving victims suffer loss of dignity and self-esteem, and they are frequently subjected to discrimination and ostracism. The psychological impact is heightened when a victim is no longer able to fulfil the role he or she previously played in the family or community. If severely disabled, survivors may not be able to resume their former work and may become unemployed.

The countries and regions in which affected communities live are usually poor and the economies in which they subsist are primarily agricultural. In **Chad**, for example, the affected areas are mainly rural and the farmers and shepherds there generally have a low income (Handicap International, 2007). Submunition contamination can increase the vulnerability of such communities because it can hinder access to farmland and water sources. In the aftermath of conflict it can also block the rebuilding and restoration of homes, schools, roads and other infrastructure.

Mushroom farmer Do Thien Dang survived a cluster munition explosion, but will remain disabled for life.

REUTERS/Nguyen Huy Kham

According to Handicap International, victims of cluster munitions can currently be found in:

Afghanistan
Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Cambodia
Chad
Chechnya
Croatia
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Iraq
Israel
Kosovo
Kuwait
Laos
Lebanon
Montenegro
Nagorno-Karabakh
Saudi Arabia
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Sudan
Syria
Tajikistan
Vietnam
Western Sahara

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS?

Information on victims of cluster munitions is often hard to obtain because data is not always separated out from that concerning accidents caused by other unexploded ordnance, and because many accidents are never recorded. It is clear, however, that where cluster munitions have been used on a large scale, they cause significant numbers of preventable civilian casualties.

Men are generally the most common victims of cluster munitions. In **Laos**, for example, they represent 84.1% of all those killed or injured (Handicap International, 2007). In families where males are the main income earners their death or injury represents a great economic loss for the family.

The psychological impact for men upon losing their role as the main income earner is also considerable, especially given the lack of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, financial assistance and vocational training in many countries.

Children are also common victims of cluster submunitions. Reasons for this include children being particularly attracted to the shape, size and colour of submunitions and, in many societies, their engaging in livelihood activities that expose them to risk. Boys are particularly at risk and in most cases constitute the second largest group of victims after men (Handicap International, 2007).

In **Kosovo**, 62.5% of the civilian victims in the year after the conflict (March 1999–August 2000) were boys under 18 (Handicap International). Those killed or injured by submunitions were five times more likely to be under the age of 14 than those injured by anti-personnel mines (ICRC). Data gathered by UXO Lao since 1999 in areas where it operates indicates that more than 50% of the victims in Laos are children. In **Cambodia**, boys aged between 6 and 15 represent 37.8% of all cluster submunition victims (Handicap International, 2007).

Incidents involving children usually occur while they are playing, carrying out livelihood activities or collecting scrap metal. In **Afghanistan**, children make up 36.3% of overall victims and 40% of post-strike victims. The most common activity at the time of these incidents is tending animals, with children constituting 52% of those that become victims while tending animals. (Handicap International, 2007). In **Laos**, the price of scrap metal rose significantly between 2002 and 2005, and children were reported as being regularly engaged in scrap collecting, including the collection of explosive ordnance (GICHD).

In addition to their physical injuries, children injured by cluster munitions often suffer flashbacks, nightmares, poor memory, lack of concentration and behavioural changes.

Women become victims less often. However, the number of women victims is higher in countries with a greater number of women-led households where they engage in livelihood activities traditionally carried out by men (e.g. herding, farming and collecting wood). In **Tajikistan**, where in some areas up to 50% of the male workforce has gone to work abroad, women accounted for 17% of submunition casualties and girls for 10% (Handicap International, 2007).

In addition to the psychological impact, women whose spouse has been killed or injured by a cluster munition often face difficulties obtaining employment, in par-ticular where this contravenes cultural norms.

Returnees are the main victims in several countries. In **Vietnam**, for example, 52.4% of all cluster munition victims occurred during the first five years after the war, making post-conflict returnees the largest group at risk (Handicap International, 2007).

In August 2006, approximately 1 million people fled southern **Lebanon** because of the conflict. One week after the ceasefire, 60%-70% of these people had returned, and 33.8% of deaths and injuries caused by submunitions occurred when they entered their villages and went to check on their houses (Handicap International, 2007).

CLUSTER MUNITION VICTIMS

Children are common victims of cluster munitions. Sobhi Abbas was injured while playing with one.

AP/Mohammed Zaatari

WHAT HELP DO CLUSTER MUNITION VICTIMS NEED?

The needs of cluster munition victims must be seen in the broader context of inadequate access to services for victims of armed conflicts in general.

Assistance for the victims of cluster munitions should include emergency and medical care, physical rehabilitation, psycho-social support and socio-economic reintegration programmes, enabling survivors to be included in society. Access to information concerning medical facilities, rehabilitation centres and reintegration programmes is also an important aspect of victim assistance.

Assistance programmes should not only focus on the directly affected individual, but also on their family and community. Victim assistance is a long-term activity that must continue even after all unexploded submunitions have been cleared.

Legislation and public policies are needed to protect the rights of disabled persons, including cluster munition survivors, from discrimination, and to ensure that they have equal access to public facilities, social programmes, education and employment. Helping survivors is more than just a medical or rehabilitation issue; it is also a human rights question. Ratification and implementation by States of the recently adopted Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (December 2006) is an important step towards implementing an integrated approach to the needs of survivors.

ARE CLUSTER MUNITION VICTIMS GETTING THE HELP THEY NEED?

The most significant problem is the dangerous environment accompanying the armed conflict. This means that the need for medical and rehabilitation services increases at precisely the time when the ability to deliver such services diminishes.

These dangers also make it harder to collect reliable data to guide assistance efforts. Effective assistance depends on accurate data about the impact of cluster munitions and other needs in a given context.

Whether due to the lack of security, remote location or a poor health care system, people living in many areas contaminated by cluster munitions have limited access to medical facilities or victim assistance programmes.

The cost of medical treatment can be crippling for families of survivors. They frequently have to sell their main source of income, such as livestock, to pay the bills for initial hospital treatment, follow-up treatment and rehabilitation. Transport costs alone can be a huge burden, as the nearest medical or rehabilitation facilities are often hours away from the location of the incident.

Assistance to cluster munition victims is not always seen as a priority, even by affected communities themselves, in comparison to other urgent problems, such as ongoing violence or HIV/AIDS.

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CLUSTER MUNITION CONTAMINATION

WHERE ARE CLUSTER MUNITIONS? WHAT IS THEIR LEGACY?

REUTERS/Damir Sagoli

OVERVIEW

At least 21 States and four areas of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe are affected by cluster munitions or have been in the last five decades. In some countries, cluster munitions were used extensively, such as in Laos where the weapons were dropped over a period of nine years (1964 to 1973), creating a widespread lethal hazard for the population (GICHD, February 2007). In other contexts, their use has been more limited but the impact has also been severe. In Kosovo, for instance, the conflict lasted only 11 weeks, but it is estimated that between 230,000 and 290,000 submunitions were dropped (Landmine Action/ICRC) and that approximately 30,000 remained unexploded on the ground when the fighting ended (ICRC, 2001).

WHICH STATES AND AREAS ARE MOST AFFECTED BY CLUSTER MUNITIONS?

Identifying the degree to which States are affected by cluster munitions can be difficult, as data on cluster munition contamination is sometimes mixed in with data on contamination by other types of unexploded ordnance (UXO). However, we do know that where cluster munitions have been used extensively, they have accounted for a large part of the explosive remnants of war problem and have had a severe impact on civilians and communities.

Laos became contaminated by cluster munitions between 1964 and 1973 as a result of the wars in the region. Handicap International's National Survey on the Impact of UXO in Laos found that the most common type of UXO contamination involved unexploded submunitions and that 1,553 villages were contaminated by these weapons (Handicap International, 1997). The Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme estimates that approximately 270 million submunitions were released from cluster bombs (UXO

Submunitions can land far from the intended target. Darwish Abd el-Aal looks at an unexploded cluster munition hanging from a tree in an orchard.

AP/Mohammed Zaatari

Lao) and estimated that with a failure rate of 10% to 30%, between 9 million and 27 million unexploded submunitions remained on the ground at the end of the conflict (ICRC Expert Meeting on ERW, 2000). As of March 2007, Handicap International had recorded 4,837 people killed or injured by cluster munitions (Handicap International, 2007) – and victim data is still incomplete. About 200 new victims of explosive remnants of war, including submunitions, are still recorded in Laos each year. In addition, a significant number of incidents probably go unrecorded (GICHD). Laos is thus a prime example of the potentially long lasting effects of cluster munition use.

The case of **Kosovo** demonstrates that cluster munitions can leave behind severe problems that take years to address, even when they are used in short-lived conflicts. During the 11 week war in 1999, between 230,000 and 290,000 cluster submunitions were dropped in the territory (Landmine Action, 2007/ ICRC, 2001) and it is estimated that approximately 30,000 failed to explode (ICRC, 2001). This created a serious hazard to civilians who, despite the warnings, entered cluster-strike areas such as fields, forests and vineyards because they had to in order to earn a living (ICRC, 2001). A Landmine Action study revealed that at least 54% of the contaminated area was agricultural land (Landmine Action, 2007). In 2007, the Kosovo Protection Corps Coordination reported that 61 hazard areas remained, mainly in the west of the territory (Handicap International, 2007).

The latest recorded use of cluster munitions was in southern **Lebanon** in July and August 2006. Although there is no data available on the total number of submunitions used, an initial estimate in November 2006 by the UN Mine Action Co-ordination Centre in South Lebanon (UNMACC SL) indicated that up to a million submunitions remained unexploded after the fighting ended.

Areas contaminated by these weapons included agricultural land and water and power infrastructure. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) estimated that in large areas of southern Lebanon at least 25% of the cultivated area was contaminated by unexploded cluster submunitions (UN FAO, 2006). Overall, agriculture constitutes nearly 70% of the total household income in southern Lebanon and half of the working population earns its living entirely from this activity (UN FAO, 2006). Unexploded submunitions have also hindered reconstruction efforts, e.g. by disrupting repairs to power lines (Landmine Action, 2006).

By December 2007, 217 civilians had been killed or injured by unexploded ordnance, almost all by submunitions (UNMACC SL, December 2007). A significant proportion of these incidents occurred when people returned to their homes following the fighting, or just after their return (Landmine Action, 2006).

By September 2007, the UNMACC SL estimated that 40% of the contaminated area had been cleared of all surface threat. However, only 21% had been fully cleared (i.e. to a depth of 20 cm). In October 2007, it reported that 131,115 unexploded submunitions had been cleared so far.

Cluster munitions were also used extensively in **Afghanistan** in the conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s and, most recently, in 2001–2002. However, many contaminated areas in Afghanistan are not mapped, and submunition contamination is often not differentiated from that due to other explosive remnants of war (Handicap International, 2007). By February 2007, 222 out of 269 known sites had been cleared of recent contamination (Handicap International, 2007).

WHAT CHALLENGES ARISE IN AREAS AFFECTED BY CLUSTER MUNITIONS?

Like anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war, unexploded cluster submunitions have severe effects, which go well beyond individual casualties. As highlighted above, the contamination from these weapons often blocks access to basic necessities such as food, water and fuel, and to schools, markets, health care and other essential services.

Because submunitions have such a high failure rate and are scattered in such large numbers, even a single cluster munition strike in or near an agricultural area, for example, can pose a significant long-term socioeconomic and physical threat to the population.

In **Iraq**, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), agriculture provides employment to 37% of the population (UNAMI, December 2006). Reports by the Iraq Landmine Impact Survey (ILIS) in 2006 revealed that in some areas of southern Iraq, 100% of agricultural land and 95% of pasture land was inaccessible due to ERW, including submunitions (Handicap International, 2007).

When agricultural areas are contaminated or water sources become inaccessible – and as it often takes time to clear the affected areas – people may take conscious risks in order to access their fields, fuel

Areas contaminated by cluster munitions create a serious hazard to civilians and have long-term consequences for war-affected communities.

John Rodsted

sources or clean water. In **Vietnam**, 61.1% of all cluster submunition deaths and injuries between 1975 and 2007 occurred while the victims were farming, herding or digging, and 53.1% of incidents occurred on agricultural or grazing land (Handicap International, 2007).

Unexploded submunitions can also represent valuable but extremely dangerous sources of income. For example, nomads in **Afghanistan** have fallen victim to submunitions as they collect the weapons as scrap metal to supplement their income (Handicap International, 2007). In **Cambodia**, scrap metal collection and trade is a common activity (Handicap International, 2004). When scrap metal prices rose after 2002, so did the number of accidents resulting from deliberately handling ERW to extract metal (Cambodian Red Cross). In a survey by Handicap International, 32% of the children interviewed relied solely on scrap metal for their income (Handicap International, 2004).

Submunitions are highly explosive and may be extremely unstable. Clearance teams therefore have to exercise extra care when encountering and destroying them. This also makes the process more expensive and time-consuming. The same characteristics make it likely that when a person accidentally detonates a submunition, others in the immediate vicinity will also be killed or maimed.

A Mines Advisory Group (MAG) team clears unexploded cluster submunitions. This is a highly dangerous, time-consuming and expensive task.

Sean Sutton/Panos Pictures

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CLUSTER MUNITIONS

WHAT ARE THEY AND WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

REUTERS/Damir Sagoli

OVERVIEW

Cluster munitions have been a persistent problem for decades. The wide area effects of these weapons and the large numbers of submunitions that fail to explode as intended have caused large numbers of civilian casualties. Although only a limited number of countries have actually used cluster munitions, many have these weapons in their stockpiles. If even a fraction of the cluster munitions in current stocks are used or transferred to other countries or non-State armed groups, the consequences could far exceed those of anti-personnel mines. Technological improvements to cluster munitions have not provided an adequate solution and a growing number of States are joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions to address the humanitarian problems caused by these weapons.

WHAT ARE CLUSTER MUNITIONS?

- Cluster munitions are weapons consisting of a container that opens in the air and scatters large numbers of explosive submunitions or "bomblets" over a wide area. Depending on the model, the number of submunitions can vary from several dozen to more than 600. Cluster munitions can be delivered by aircraft, artillery and missiles.

- Most submunitions are intended to explode on impact. The vast majority are free-falling, meaning that they are not individually guided towards a target.

- Cluster munitions were first used in World War II and a large proportion of currently stockpiled cluster munitions were designed for the context of the Cold War. Their main purpose was to destroy multiple military targets dispersed over a wide area, such as tank or infantry formations, and to kill or injure combatants.

WHY ARE CLUSTER MUNITIONS OF SUCH CONCERN FROM A HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE?

- History has shown that large numbers of submunitions fail to explode on impact as intended. Credible estimates of the failure rates of these weapons in recent conflicts have varied from 10% to 40%. Large-scale use of these weapons has resulted in countries and regions being infested with tens of thousands, and sometimes millions, of unexploded and highly unstable submunitions.

- Unexploded submunitions often explode when handled or disturbed, posing a serious danger to civilians. The presence of these weapons poses a threat to displaced civilians returning to their homes, obstructs relief and reconstruction efforts and makes vital subsistence activities like farming hazardous for years or even decades after the conflict has ended.

- Because they are "area weapons," which can release vast numbers of submunitions over an area of up to tens of thousands of square metres, the impact of cluster munitions on civilians during conflicts is also a serious concern, in particular when they are used in populated areas.

- As most submunitions are not precision-guided, their accuracy can be affected by weather and other environmental factors. They may therefore hit areas outside the military objective targeted. When such weapons are used in or near populated areas, they can pose a significant danger to civilians both during the attack and in the immediate post-strike period when people resume their normal activities.

A cluster munition can contain several hundred individual "bomblets."

AP/Mohammed Zaatari

HOW MANY COUNTRIES PRODUCE AND STOCKPILE CLUSTER MUNITIONS?

- 34 countries are known to have produced over 210 different types of cluster munition. These include projectiles, bombs, rockets, missiles and dispensers (Hiznay).
- At least 87 countries currently stockpile cluster munitions or have done so in the past (HRW, Information Chart). Current stocks amount to millions of cluster munitions, containing billions of individual submunitions.

HOW MANY COUNTRIES HAVE USED CLUSTER MUNITIONS?

- Out of the 87 countries that have or have had stockpiles of cluster munitions, 16 have actually used them during armed conflict (HRW, Information Chart; Cluster Munition Coalition).
- Use by non-State armed groups has been documented in a few cases (HRW, Overview).
- If even a fraction of the cluster munitions in current stocks are used or transferred to other countries or non-State armed groups, the consequences could far exceed those of anti-personnel mines in the 1990s.

CAN SELF-DESTRUCT MECHANISMS AND OTHER TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS SOLVE THE CLUSTER MUNITION PROBLEM?

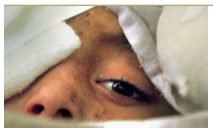
- The majority of cluster munitions in current stocks are old models (20 years old or more). These are becoming increasingly unreliable and should not be used.
- Some later models have self-destruct features to ensure that submunitions destroy themselves if they fail to explode as intended. However, this technology has not provided an adequate solution to the reliability problem. Self-destruct features have decreased the number of unexploded submunitions in controlled tests, but the actual failure rate in battle remains high. Even these weapons have been shown to leave a significant number of unexploded submunitions on the ground.
- Fortunately, a growing number of States have or are in the process of adhering to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This Convention was negotiated and adopted by 107 States at a diplomatic conference in Dublin, Ireland in May 2008. The Convention establishes new rules to ensure that cluster munitions are no longer used and that the existing humanitarian problems associated with these weapons are addressed. (See fact sheet, *The Convention on Cluster Munitions: a new treaty to end the suffering caused by cluster munitions*).

An unexploded "bomblet" from a cluster munition found only 100 metres from a hospital.

AP/Ben Curtis

Cluster munitions dropped from aircraft can quickly cover tens of thousands of square metres with explosive submunitions.

Associated Press



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THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

A NEW TREATY TO END THE SUFFERING CAUSED BY CLUSTER MUNITIONS

REUTERS/Damir Sagoli

OVERVIEW

In response to the death, injury and suffering caused by cluster munitions, 107 States negotiated and adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions at a diplomatic conference in Dublin, Ireland in May 2008.

The Convention is an important addition to international humanitarian law (IHL). It establishes new rules to ensure that cluster munitions are no longer used and that the existing humanitarian problems associated with these weapons are addressed. Importantly, the Convention has specific provisions which aim to meet the needs of victims and affected communities.

The Convention enters into force on 1 August 2010.

WHAT DOES THE CONVENTION DO?

The Convention comprehensively bans cluster munitions by prohibiting their use, production, stockpiling and transfer. It also prohibits States Parties from assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to undertake any activity prohibited by the Convention's provisions.

In addition to the aforementioned prohibitions, States that possess or are affected by cluster munitions have specific obligations to destroy stockpiles, to clear cluster munition remnants and to provide assistance for victims.

- **The destruction of stockpiles** – Each State is required – within eight years of becoming a party to the Convention – to destroy the stockpiles of cluster munitions under its jurisdiction and control. This deadline may be extended for an additional four years and further extensions of four years may also be granted in exceptional circumstances. States may also retain a limited number of cluster munitions and explosive submunitions for training in clearance and for the development of destruction techniques.

- **Clearance of cluster munition remnants** – Each State must also clear its territory of unexploded submunitions and abandoned cluster munitions within 10 years of becoming a party to the Convention. If a State is unable to do so, it may request extensions for additional periods of five years. States must conduct risk education programmes to ensure awareness among civilians who live in or around areas affected by cluster munitions.

- **Providing assistance for victims** – The Convention contains robust provisions on assistance for victims. Each State Party that has cluster munition victims on its territory or under its control must provide for their medical care and physical rehabilitation, psychological support and social and economic inclusion. In addition, the State must assess domestic needs in these areas and develop plans and mobilize resources to meet them. This is the first time that such a detailed provision on assistance for victims has been included in an IHL treaty.

It is worth noting that not only those who are killed or injured by cluster munitions are defined as "cluster munition victims"; the term also covers families and communities that have suffered socio-economic and other consequences. This broad definition reflects a growing consensus among those concerned with weapons removal.

HOW ARE CLUSTER MUNITIONS DEFINED IN THE CONVENTION?

Under the terms of the Convention, a cluster munition is a conventional munition that disperses or releases explosive submunitions: small, unguided explosives or bomblets (each weighing less than 20 kilograms) that are designed to explode prior to, on or after impact.

Weapons with fewer than 10 explosive submunitions are not considered to be cluster munitions as long as each submunition weighs more than four kilograms, can detect and engage a specific target object and is equipped with electronic self-destruct and self-deactivating features. Also excluded are weapons that are designed to dispense flares, smoke or pyrotechnics as well as munitions designed to produce electrical or electronic effects. The Convention neither prohibits nor restricts the use of these weapons; however, their use is regulated by the general provisions of IHL.

HOW WILL IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONVENTION BE MONITORED?

The Convention includes a variety of mechanisms for promoting its implementation and ensuring that its provisions are respected.

In the interests of transparency, States are required to **report annually** to the UN Secretary-General on a range of matters including the types and numbers of cluster munitions destroyed, the extent and the location of areas contaminated by cluster munitions, the status of clearance programmes, the measures taken to provide risk education and warnings for civilians, the status of programmes for providing assistance for victims and the measures taken domestically to prevent and suppress violations of the Convention. Reporting on these matters also provides an overview of the status of implementation.

In addition, **meetings of States Parties** will be held regularly to review the effectiveness of the Convention. Such meetings are an important opportunity to review progress in implementation, discuss best practices and resolve issues related to implementation and compliance.

Should concerns arise about a State's **compliance** with the Convention, clarification may be sought through the UN Secretary-General. If necessary, the issue may be submitted to a meeting of States Parties, which can adopt procedures or specific mechanisms to clarify the situation and draft a resolution. In any dispute involving two or more States Parties, efforts shall be made to settle the issue by negotiation or other peaceful means of their choice, such as referring the matter to the International Court of Justice in accordance with the Court's Statute.

Finally, each State Party has an obligation to take all appropriate **legal, administrative and other measures** to implement the Convention. This includes the imposition of penal sanctions to prevent and suppress violations by persons, or on territory, under the State's jurisdiction or control. This often requires the adoption of domestic legislation as well as amendments to regulations governing the armed forces.

WILL THE CONVENTION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

When implemented, the Convention will prevent tremendous human suffering by ensuring that hundreds of millions of cluster submunitions are never used and are destroyed. In addition, the Convention will directly benefit affected communities through increased efforts to clear areas contaminated by cluster munitions, thus saving lives and returning land for agriculture and other productive activities. It will also help the victims of cluster munitions through an increased commitment to various types of support, including medical care, rehabilitation, psychological support and social and economic inclusion. All States Parties to the Convention have a responsibility for ensuring its success. When they are in a position to do so, even States that do not possess stockpiles or have cluster munition remnants on their territory must provide assistance for affected countries to help implement the Convention.

In addition to affecting the behaviour and practice of States Parties, the Convention on Cluster Munitions will also have an impact on States that have not yet signed or ratified the instrument. With the adoption and entry into force of this Convention, many countries, the media and the public now consider cluster munitions to be a stigmatized weapon. It will be more difficult for any State or armed group to use cluster munitions in the future.

With the adoption and entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, international humanitarian law establishes a comprehensive framework for preventing and ending the civilian suffering caused by "weapons that can't stop killing." The 1997 Mine Ban Convention, the 2003 Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions together constitute a far-reaching response to the humanitarian consequences of unexploded and abandoned ordnance and provide hope of a future when communities will be able to live without the threat of these weapons.

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