

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Key statistics:

Weapon Design:

Cluster munitions are weapons that, when launched or dropped by aircraft, disperse large numbers of sub munitions over wide areas that can be the size of two to four football fields. These sub munitions, or bomblets, are usually designed to explode upon impact. Often they fail to do so and remain unexploded and unstable on the ground.

Casualties:

Globally, cluster munitions have caused over 10,000 injuries and deaths, the vast majority of the victims being civilians concentrated in five countries: Laos, Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon.

Impact on Civilians:

In addition to claiming casualties, cluster munitions contribute to household food insecurity by contaminating arable land and killing livestock. They create health and hygiene problems by blocking access to shelter, water and sanitation, exacerbate poverty and present barriers to economic recovery and development.

Where cluster munitions have been used:

Since World War II, cluster munitions have targeted at least 32 countries and territories. Since 1999, millions of submunitions have littered countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Lebanon and territories such as Kosovo, Chechnya and Western Sahara.

- Lebanon: In July and August 2006, cluster bomb strikes covered more than 48 million square meters in southern Lebanon. More than 250 civilians were killed and many more injured when civilians returned home after the conflict.
- Lao: The Lao PDR is the most heavily bombed nation in the world on a per capita basis. During the Indochina conflict, over two million tons of ordnance rained down on the country, large amounts of which were cluster munitions. As a result, 15 out of 18 provinces are now contaminated by sub-munitions and unexploded ordnance, nine of them severely. With an estimated failure rate of up to 30 percent, it is estimated that as many as 80 million bomblets or sub-munitions failed to explode and lay on or under the ground as live and indiscriminate killers.

Use:

At least 15 countries have used cluster munitions: Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Israel, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Russia (USSR), Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, United Kingdom, United States, and FR Yugoslavia. A small number of non-state armed groups have also used the weapon.

Stockpiles:

At least 75 countries stockpile **billions** of cluster munitions – most of which are the type known to have high failure rates.

Failure rates:

The rate at which cluster bombs fail to explode upon impact makes them particularly lethal to civilians, whose homes and communities are turned into defacto minefields. Failure rates are difficult to verify, as they vary according to for example climate, terrain and height of dispersal. Conservative estimates set failure rates at five percent, but in reality they are much higher. For example:

*Laos: Clearance operations are still ongoing more than 30 years after conflict left 75 million unexploded cluster bombs across Laos, where failure rates were 10 to 30 percent.

*Kosovo: NATO estimates that ten percent of the cluster bomblets dropped in Kosovo failed to explode, but disposal experts estimate the failure rate was closer to 15 percent.



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Proliferation:

Over 210 different types of cluster munitions are produced in at least 34 countries, and billions of cluster munitions are currently stockpiled by more than 70 countries worldwide. If even a small percentage of these were to be deployed, it would set off a humanitarian catastrophe claiming countless innocent lives and crippling countries recovering from conflict for years and even decades to come.

Call to Action:

Cluster munitions are indiscriminate and unreliable weapons both at the time of use and long after conflicts have ended. The use of cluster munitions poses significant challenges to international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and jeopardizes humanitarian, early recovery and development efforts.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) prohibits the use, transfer, production and stockpile of cluster munitions, requiring all State Parties to destroy stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years of the convention's entry into force and to clear all cluster munitions remnants within ten years. The CCM also provides groundbreaking provisions to assist victims of cluster munitions and facilitate their socio-economic inclusion. Furthermore, the new treaty obliges State Parties to provide technical, financial and material assistance to State Parties affected by cluster munitions.

The convention will be opened for signature in Oslo on 3 December 2008. The United Nations strongly encourages all countries to sign the Convention and to ratify it as quickly as possible so as to allow its swift entry-into-force. The United Nations stands ready to support and assist State Parties to meet their obligations in implementing the new Convention.

For governments committed to the protection of civilians and to overcoming the threat to human development posed by cluster munitions, the Oslo process offers an opportunity for decisive action.



Submission in scrap yard - Landmine Action UK

UNDP in Action:

- Raises awareness, and works to develop a better understanding of cluster munitions and the unacceptable harm they pose to civilians through its global advocacy strategy;
- Collects and shares information and data on the humanitarian and development threat posed by cluster munitions;
- Supports research on the weapon's socio-economic impact;
- Shares its expertise at bilateral and multilateral levels, actively participating in meetings of the Oslo process and of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons;
- Supports the Oslo process and the conclusion by the end of 2008 of a Convention on Cluster Munitions;
- Enables states to participate in the Oslo process through the global network of UNDP country offices and the administration of sponsorship programmes; and
- Supports the organization of regional meetings through the presence of UNDP country offices to promote the process and enhance understanding at regional levels.

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