

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, there are over 13,000 confirmed injuries and deaths due to cluster bombs, with the vast majority 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:

First used during World War II, cluster munitions have since been targeted against at least 25 countries and 5 territories¹. Since 1999, millions of sub munitions have littered Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Lebanon.

* Lebanon: In July and August 2006, cluster bomb strikes covered more than 38 million square meters of Lebanon, that together with other weapons systems have killed or maimed some 1,200 civilians. Over one million sub munitions failed to explode, prohibiting access to one quarter of Lebanon's usable arable land.

* Afghanistan: More than 1,200 cluster bombs containing nearly 250,000 bomblets rained down on Afghanistan between October 2001 and March 2002;

* Kosovo: In 1999, 1,765 cluster bombs containing more than 295,000 sub munitions were dropped in Kosovo by NATO forces.

* Iraq: In the Iraq war of 1991, 24 to 30 million sub munitions were used in Iraq and Kuwait. In 2003, another two million sub munitions were dropped in Iraq.

Production and Use:

Over 210 different types of cluster munitions are produced in at least 34 countries.

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.



Submission in scrap yard - Landmine Action UK

Proliferation:

At least 13 States have transferred over 50 types of cluster munitions to at least 60 other States and non-State armed groups. For example:

* U.S.: The U.S. sold cluster munitions to Bahrain, Greece, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Thailand between 1970 and 2001;

* UK: 15 countries possess or use cluster bombs produced in the United Kingdom;

*USSR: 22 countries are reported to stockpile cluster munitions from the former USSR.

Call to Action:

With their inherent inaccuracy and frequent malfunctioning, cluster munitions are particularly indiscriminate both at the time of use and long after conflicts have ended. The use of cluster munitions poses significant challenges for international humanitarian law.

The United Nations Secretary-General has urged Member States to address the horrendous humanitarian, human rights and developmental effects of cluster munitions by concluding a legally binding instrument of international humanitarian law.

This treaty should: 1) prohibit the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm; 2) require the destruction of current stockpiles of those munitions; and 3) provide for clearance, risk education and other risk mitigation activities, victim assistance, assistance and cooperation, and compliance and transparency measures.



UNDP Cambodia

Until such a treaty is adopted, Member States should take domestic measures to immediately freeze the use and transfer of all cluster munitions.

A core group of countries including Austria, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, and the Holy See, have initiated the “Oslo Process” in February 2007.

The Oslo Process supporters have agreed to “conclude by 2008 a legally binding international instrument that will prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.” Member States, UN agencies and civil society should build upon the momentum of the Oslo Process and give full support to this constructive and inclusive international effort.

Member States and NGOs must raise public awareness about these weapons, setting the foundation for a global movement to stigmatize the use of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

International donors must prevent civilian casualties by funding risk education in affected countries and measures to clear contaminated land in post-conflict zones.

UNDP in Action:

- Raises awareness of and works to develop a better understanding of cluster munitions and the unacceptable harm they pose to civilians through its global advocacy strategy.
- Conducts surveys and collects information on the humanitarian threat posed by cluster munitions to define the impact of these weapons.
- Supports research on the weapons’ humanitarian and economic impact.
- Shares its expertise on cluster munitions at bilateral and multilateral level, actively participating in meetings of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the conferences of the Oslo Process.
- Works with UN colleagues to develop strong common position on cluster munitions that supports the swift creation of new legal measures to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.
- Supports the Oslo Process in concluding in 2008 a legally binding international instrument of humanitarian law on cluster munitions.
- Facilitates for states to participate in the Oslo process through the global network of UNDP country offices and the administration of sponsorship programmes.

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JANUARY 2008



¹ Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Chechnya, Croatia, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Falkland Islands/Malvinas, Iraq, Israel, Kosovo, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Montenegro, Nagorno-Karabakh, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tajikistan, Syria, Uganda, UK, Viet Nam, Western Sahara.