

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

First introduced during the Second World War, cluster munitions have been used during at least 20 conflicts in the last 60 years. Expensive and time-consuming to locate and remove, they are responsible for thousands of civilian deaths each year both during and after attacks, and exacerbate poverty for those living in contaminated areas. In 2008, 94 UN Member States signed the **Convention on Cluster Munitions** to prohibit their use.

What are cluster munitions?

Cluster munitions are canisters of often hundreds of smaller bombs that open in mid-air. On impact, the smaller explosive devices (known as sub-munitions, bomblets or bombies) scatter explosions over a wide area. They are commonly used as an anti-personnel weapon against large groups of enemy. They may be delivered by rockets or artillery; however, they are most commonly dropped by aircraft. Their wide dispersal pattern results in a very large area of impact. This, combined with the fact that most aerially-delivered bombies cannot be precisely targeted, exacerbates their indiscriminate nature. Design and environmental factors, such as landing in rice paddy or thick vegetation, combined with their small size, make them prone to fail on impact. They therefore often remain hidden in the ground, where they may explode if disturbed; often years after a conflict has ended.

Sixty percent of cluster bomb casualties occur during normal activities, such as plowing, construction or gathering firewood. Forty percent of all recorded cluster munitions casualties are children, who often pick them up to play with.

As well as causing horrifying injuries, cluster munitions stifle development and prevent the elimination of poverty. Poor communities, often facing poor nutrition and economic hardship, may be unable to use much needed land that is contaminated with cluster munitions without serious risk to life and limb; leaving them unable to increase food production; build schools, clinics or new homes; or develop their communities. People injured by cluster munitions may be unable to seek employment without rehabilitation, putting an economic strain on poor families and healthcare systems.



10 Cluster Air Bomb BL 755-being positioned for destruction, as part of a UNDP Small Arms Control and Reduction Project funded by the EU. Credit: Irfan Redzovic/ Resolute Barbara Range, Glamoc, UNDP BiH.

Affected countries and territories

More than eighty countries have kept stockpiles of cluster munitions. Cluster munitions have been used during armed conflicts in at least **34** countries and territories:

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Grenada, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Mauritania, Montenegro, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Chechnya, Falklands/Malvinas, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh and Western Sahara.

The cluster munitions convention

Following increased concern about the use and proliferation of cluster munitions, Member States of the United Nations embarked on an ambitious programme to prohibit their use. In late 2008, the **Convention on Cluster Munitions** was signed in Oslo, Norway by 94 countries. The Convention prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions. It is the first binding

instrument of international law that pertains to cluster munitions, and provides groundbreaking provisions to assist victims and facilitate their rehabilitation. The treaty obliges state parties to help countries affected by cluster munitions to clear unexploded bombs and free-up much-needed land. UNDP was one of the most active supporters of the Oslo Process since its inception.

UNDP'S WORK ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

UNDP supports the Convention by:

- Globally raising awareness about the unacceptable harm that cluster munitions cause to civilians;
- Supporting research and sharing data about the socioeconomic, development and humanitarian impact of cluster munitions;
- Sharing expertise about cluster munitions with governments, civil society and other UN agencies and actively participating in meetings of the Convention;
- Working to encourage all Member States to sign the Convention;
- Helping to organize regular regional meetings on the Convention;
- Helping unexploded ordnance clearance programmes and victims' rights organizations in **Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Mauritania, Montenegro, Mozambique, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Nagorno-Karabakh.**

UNDP in action

Cluster munitions are the most common form of unexploded war remnants in **Lao PDR** with an estimated 80 million bombies littering the countryside when the Indo China war ended in 1975. Accidents caused by cluster bombs and other unexploded remnants of war have killed over 20,000 people since 1975 and continue to kill, injure and maim hundreds of Lao people each year.

Through the government's National Unexploded Ordnance Programme, UXO Lao, UNDP and other partners help to clear cluster munitions, as well as artillery shells, grenades and other leftovers of war, releasing land for agriculture and reducing the risk to villagers. UNDP provides UXO Lao with improved technology, international advisors, trains deminers and helps offer community-based risk education and surveys. UNDP also helped the Government to establish the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action as a focal point for prioritizing

clearance areas, tracking survivors, overseeing and setting standards for organizations that work on reducing the impact of cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. Since the programme began in 1996, more than 250 square kilometres of land have been cleared and more than one million unexploded bombs have been destroyed.

UNDP has provided international experts, advice and money to the **Lebanon** Mine Action Centre, which is in charge of cluster munitions clearance, risk education and victim assistance. In 2011-12 **Lebanon** assumed the presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and with UNDP assistance, hosted the second Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions concluding with the unanimous adoption of the Beirut Declaration, which defines their obligations to the treaty over the next four years.

Although mines constitute the largest unexploded ordnance threat in **Cambodia**, the country was also heavily bombed with cluster munitions during the Indo China conflict. Cluster munitions are disposed of as part of ongoing mine action. Between 2006 and 2011, UNDP provided more than US\$ 40 million to this sector. In 2011 alone 15,000 people were able to use land newly cleared of mines and other unexploded ordnance for either housing or agriculture and more than 200,000 people were able to access schools, roads, pagodas, and other public infrastructure. In the same year, Cambodia recorded the lowest ever number of casualties resulting from landmines and other explosive remnants of war, down to 211 from a high of 4,320 in 1996.

In **Iraq** UNDP is working with the government and NGOs to ensure that the needs of victims from mines and other unexploded ordnance are integrated into government policy. In 2011, UNDP assistance helped nearly 1,700 people disabled by unexploded ordnance receive prosthetic devices, physiotherapy and other help.

In January 2012, **Bosnia and Herzegovina** destroyed its last stockpile of cluster munitions with technical and financial support from UNDP. Bosnia and Herzegovina is now in compliance with its Article 3 obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In addition, UNDP funded the destruction of 321 BL755 cluster bombs, 151 Orkan rockets and 95,000 KB1 bomblets in 2012.

In 2012 **Guinea-Bissau** declared that it had met obligations under article 3 of the Convention—the destruction of Cluster Munitions stockpiles. UNDP provided technical, logistical and financial support to the government during the eleven years of the cluster munitions programme's duration.