

## Social Issues

### Landmines



#### Definition:

Landmines are tools of war. They are explosive devices that are buried underground in times of war intending to injure, maim or kill enemies if they walk or drive over the area.

There are two main types of landmines:

- Anti-tank mines – triggered by the pressure of a heavy load, they are designed to destroy tanks and other large vehicles.
- Anti-personnel mines – designed to kill or maim people, they are triggered by a trip-wire or footstep.

When wars end mines are often not removed and be a danger to civilians who return to live in the area, so even in times of peace civilians can be at continued risk of harm from landmines.

#### Examples:

There are millions of active mines scattered in over 70 countries waiting to explode. The UN estimates that there may be 100 – 120 million mines around the world. This roughly translates to one mine for every 17 children in the world.

#### Why the situation occurs?

In war torn countries landmines seem to be a good way of defence as they restrict the movement of the enemy, but more problems are caused when local civilians get injured. Injuries from landmines can be fatal or very severe, leaving people with missing limbs. Often this problem occurs in poor countries and medical treatment cannot cope with the severity of the injuries thus intensifying the impact of the problem.

Even after the conflict has ended the mines can be a hazard to the local community for many years. The removal of landmines is dangerous and expensive. It can cost as little as £2 to buy but may cost as much as £750 to remove one mine. On average for every 5,000 landmines removed, one de-miner is killed and two are injured.

### **How you can make a difference:**

Tackle the issue – help young people to learn about the effects and issues surrounding landmines.

Support those whose lives may have been influenced by landmines and help to give them positive ways to tackle the issue.

Find out what the international community is doing on this topic e.g. In the Ottawa Treaty, signed in 1999, and the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World (2004).

Use the materials and tools provided to follow the process of:

1. Identify the problem
2. Develop Awareness and empathy
3. Take action
4. Measure the change

### **Resources and links:**

The Global Awareness Partnership Project (GAPP) website contains good information and activities to raise awareness on this subject. GAPP is a Peer Education project of the UK Scout Association

<http://www.gapp.me.uk>

The website for the International Campaign to ban landmines: <http://www.icbl.org>

The International Committee of the Red Cross website has a section dedicated to the Ottawa Convention and its impact on people living in mine-affected areas:

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/mines>

The World Health Organisation (WHO) website contains useful information on Landmines:

<http://www.who.int/topics/landmines/en/>

World Scout Conference Resolution 17/99 on Landmines

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