

1. WHY ARE SCOUTS INVOLVED IN FIGHTING AGAINST ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES?

The cowards' war. What else can we call the use of anti-personnel mines which often affect children, a weapon which regularly mutilates and kills even when peace has returned. (Every 20 minutes, someone becomes a victim of an anti-personnel mine!) How

can we avoid being touched by the suffering of these victims, the atrocious nature of their wounds and the disability they will carry with them for the rest of their life. As young westerners we are all the more revolted when we know that mines, or some of

their components, were developed, manufactured and sold by our own countries.

As Scouts, we feel all the more concerned by the fact that children are not spared. It becomes dangerous for them to play football or any other game around their villages. A



permanent sense of insecurity takes hold, and when parents and neighbours are mutilated for life, the misery increases. Faced with this reality, what happens to the rights of these children (right to education, right to security, right to love, right to play, etc.)?

As Scout leaders, we try to sensitise the children and adolescents who are in our charge to the world around them. The Scout Movement is above all an educational movement. We try to help them to reflect on the complex situations which humanity faces today, to observe their surroundings with a critical eye and to learn to form their own opinion. We also want to show them that an individual or collective action can make things change and we try to educate them for peace.

Convinced of our educational role, we have decided to act against the scourge of anti-personnel mines. As a citizen of

the world and a future heir of a mined world, each young person must know of the existence – and the problem -- of anti-personnel mines. He or she must also have the possibility to state his or her opposition to such weapons. Mines claim many victims, often with no one knowing. It is this lack of knowledge that we have decided to fight.

With this in mind, we have developed a game! Not because the problem should not be taken seriously; but because games are universally understood and are extremely useful when it comes to helping young people become aware of a problem. It is that game which we present to you in this booklet. We hope that many young people around the world will play it, and that as a result they will understand better this scourge and will be motivated to take action.

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2. THE SCANDAL OF ANTI- PERSONNEL MINES

2.1 SOME FACTS

- Each month 2000 people are killed or maimed by mine explosions. These victims are usually civilians.
- Today, several million mines are buried in the ground in over 70 countries, ready to explode at any moment. Thirty-three countries are particularly affected, includ-

ing Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

- Over the past 20 years, mines have been used increasingly to terrorise and force civilian populations to flee. They are strategically placed so as to paralyse access to agricultural land, irrigation channels, communication routes, etc.

grazing their animals, and refugees returning home are their prime targets.

2.3 ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES ARE A DISASTER FOR DEVELOPMENT

The presence of anti-personnel mines has dramatic consequences on the development and reconstruction of countries emerging from a period of war. Mines render large expanses of agricultural land unusable, ravaging the economy and the environment, preventing refugees who return home to their countries devastated by war from settling down and rebuilding their lives. Mines make it virtually impossible to rebuild roads, railways, electricity lines and water courses. Minefields interfere with people's mobility, including that of teachers, technicians, doctors and mobile vaccination teams. The exorbitant cost of removing mines exhausts financial resources, often already feeble.

2.2 ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES CONTINUE THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

Anti-personnel mines strike without discrimination: they kill and maim more civilians in times of peace than in times of war. At the end of a war, guns are silenced, people slowly make peace, but mines continue to kill and mutilate. These "arms without masters" are set off accidentally, by the victims themselves, years - sometimes decades - after the end of the conflict. Children at play, women fetching water or wood, farmers working or



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2.4 ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES CAUSE ATROCIOUS MUTILATION

Anti-personnel mines cause excessive suffering:

- 50% of the victims of mine accidents die before they can receive help, usually bleeding to death either on the spot while waiting for a means of transport to a medical centre or during their evacuation.
- Those who survive the blast of the explosion very often have to have one or more limbs amputated. They also have to overcome complications resulting from a multitude of perforation wounds, contaminated by earth. These complications can sometimes spread throughout the body. In addition to the physical and psychological trauma of the wounds, the victims also have to cope with all the difficulties and suffering involved in

readapting to life, both physically and socially.

2.5 ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES BREAK UP FAMILIES AND DESTROY LIVES

Victims often become burdens on their families.

Without suitable prostheses or rehabilitation, the amputee is condemned to permanent invalidity. He or she can no longer work in the fields, nor carry heavy weights, nor contribute to the upkeep of the family. A handicapped person becomes less of a contributing family member and becomes more of a burden. Moreover, for most amputees, prostheses are much too expensive.

2.6 WHAT IS CURRENTLY HAPPENING TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM?

Aid to victims

Numerous humanitarian organisations support victims medically as well as socially.

However these initiatives require substantial human and financial resources and fall far short of meeting the needs which continue to increase along with the constant flow of new victims.

These organisations were the first to be convinced that the problem needed to be solved at its roots by banning anti-personnel mines.

Mine clearance

Today, more mines are laid than are removed. Each year, some 100,000 mines are removed, but 2 million others are laid. Removing mines is slow, expensive and dangerous. Removing a mine can cost up to 1,000 times more than its purchase price.

It is clear, therefore, that mine clearance does not constitute a global, long-term solution to the problem if the total ban on the manufacture, sale and use of mines is not respected.

Prevention

Mines kill in part because the populations who have to live in or cross mined regions are not always well informed about the dangers. Preventing accidents involves getting information to populations at risk via the local media (radio, television, etc.), and in particular to children (at school, etc.). However this solution is still less than perfect.

Banning

- The International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Launched in 1992 by six organisations, including Handicap International, the International Campaign today includes more than 1300 NGOs in almost 70 countries. The objective of the Campaign is a total ban on the manufacture, sale and use of anti-personnel mines. In 1997 the Campaign was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

- The Ottawa Process

Following the breakdown of negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Convention, and faced with the ever-increasing mobilisation of the public and influential authorities around the world, the States which are most in favour of a total ban launched a unilateral process to ban anti-personnel mines, at Canada's initiative. The idea behind this process is to propose to each country that wants to truly and completely ban these mines to "set an example" by unilaterally signing a treaty. In this way, they will show to the whole world that their country says no to anti-personnel mines. This process reached its climax in December 1997 at a Conference in Ottawa during which 122 States signed a convention. In September 1998 the convention was ratified by 40 States, thereby

enabling it to enter into force in March, 1999. Today the International Campaign is intensifying its efforts so that an even greater number of States sign the convention, ratify it and, most importantly, implement it.

2.7 ACTION UNDERTAKEN BY HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL: FOR A MINE-FREE EARTH - THE NEED FOR ATONEMENT

After ten years of trying to deal with the terrible consequences of landmines in 48 countries, in 1991 Handicap International decided to alert the public to the scandal of landmines and of the relentless massacre of civilians - countryfolk and shepherds, villagers and refugees. Since 1991, Handicap International has developed awareness campaigns aimed at politicians, the public and the media, in particular in France, Belgium and Switzerland, but also in the United States and

in Germany. At the same time, it is attacking the root of the problem and, in 1994, established a "Mine Department", in charge of implementing mine clearance programmes, and to inform and educate the public about the dangers of landmines. Today, these programmes are in operation in Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Mozambique and Senegal. In 1992, Handicap International co-founded the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. It has since become a member of the Coordinating Committee and is a partner of the Campaign. It is also a partner of Landmine Monitor, established by the Campaign in October 1998, primarily involved in helping victims and in collecting information on the Asia-Pacific region. In future, however many signatures and ratifications there are to the Ottawa Treaty, and until the countries that signed the

Treaty honour their duty to make amends, Handicap International will continue its information and mobilisation campaigns.



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