



## 1. Introduction

In the early 1990s international concern was focused on the humanitarian impact of landmines, especially anti-personnel mines. Initial estimates by the UN suggested that there might be 100 million anti-personnel mines buried in countries around the world. This figure was not based on any survey or quantifiable evidence and was quickly discounted as a gross exaggeration.

The first attempt to quantify the global problem of anti-personnel landmines was undertaken by the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA) in 1994. VVAFA completed a series of surveys in a number of known mine-affected countries. The results were published in a book titled 'After the Guns Fall Silent – The Enduring Legacy of landmines.

The report identified 83 countries where landmine incidents had been reported in the past. VVAFA also undertook detailed household surveys in six countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Mozambique

While it was a good first attempt to quantify the landmine problem, it was still not possible to put any meaningful number on the total number of landmines or area affected. The different types of data collected in the different countries made comparisons or summaries difficult.

At the field level, maps of mined areas rarely existed or were unavailable, so demining programmes were forced to undertake their own surveys. Different terminologies were used but the three basic types of surveys undertaken were:

1. Non-technical surveys (or Level One surveys). Data was gathered through document searches, questionnaires and interviews with local people to determine if there was any knowledge of landmines in the area, any casualties etc.
2. Technical (or Level Two) surveys. Trained and properly equipped personnel would enter suspected areas to confirm the presence of mines, their type and the extent of the area contaminated.
3. Completion (or Level Three) surveys. Trained personnel checked an area to ensure that all mines had been cleared.



## Current assessments

Some national programmes are now more than twenty years old and it is possible to compare what was actually found with some of the earliest estimates.

The original estimates for Afghanistan suggested that up to 20 million mines might be present. To date, and with the great majority of mine-affected areas already addressed, the total number of mines found is around 610,000 (with more than 13 million items of UXO). In Mozambique almost 140,000 mines have been cleared, against early estimates of several million.

The situation is similar in most affected countries, suggesting that more appropriate estimates for global contamination levels are of the order of millions, rather than many tens of millions.

That is not to say that there are not areas where very large numbers of mines will still be found, such as along the Turkish/Syrian border or within the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. In both cases mines are generally confined to controlled, fenced and off-limits zones, having relatively little direct humanitarian impact.

### Defining mine action

Mine action is a broad set of efforts intended both to prevent and to address the problems caused by mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

According to the United Nations, mine action comprises five complementary groups of activities or 'pillars':

1. Mine/ERW risk education
2. Demining, i.e. mine/ERW survey, mapping, marking and clearance
3. Victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration
4. Stockpile destruction
5. Advocacy against the use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

The definition further notes that a number of other enabling activities are required to support these five components of mine action, including:

1. Assessment and planning
2. Mobilisation and prioritisation of resources
3. Information management
4. Human skills development and management training
5. Quality management
6. Application of effective, appropriate and safe equipment.



## **Start of international mine action NGOs**

The creation of the world's first international humanitarian mine clearance NGO the Hazardous Area Life-Support Organisation (HALO Trust) – occurred in 1988. Another British organization – the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) was set up the following year and in 1989, MAG conducted the first survey of the impact of landmines in Afghanistan.

In 1992, Handicap International, which had already been operating for 10 years as a humanitarian NGO implementing projects in favour of the disabled, including mine amputees and other victims, made an alliance with MAG to set up its first two demining programmes in Cambodia and northern Iraq, and took part in the creation of the ICBL.

Norwegian People's Aid has also participated in mine action since 1992. It first became involved in mine action in Cambodia and has since been operational in more than a dozen countries on three continents. A more complete list of over 350 current mine action organizations can be found on the GICHD website.

### **Commercial demining organizations**

Following the 1991 Gulf war, clearance of mines and UXO, by a number of commercial demining companies, took place in Kuwait (well over 1 million AP and AT mines have been cleared during the following two decades).

The 1991–1993 clearance programmes involved a significant use of mechanical equipment and stimulated its development.

Subsequently, a number of commercial companies, such as Royal Ordnance, DSL, ELS, BACTEC, Mine-Tech and Mechem emerged, evolving through mergers and expansions into an active commercial industry. Today, international and many national companies compete for 'mine action' contracts for a range of clients serving humanitarian, development and commercial interests.

Company Detektor Ltd joined this first initiative and as of the foundation participates in this task of demining in order to provide better life for the generations to come.