Mozambique is on the verge of achieving a feat of historic proportions. Within a few months, the country will destroy the last remaining anti-personnel mines scattered across its territory. Once one of the world’s most heavily mined countries, it has taken Mozambique 16 years to eradicate this scourge. Handicap International has been closely involved in the effort and was present when the first demining operations began in 1998. Just days before 161 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty meet in Mozambique for the Maputo conference from June 23-27, the country is making major strides towards achieving its goal.

Contact: mbevington@handicap-international.us
Content

I. Mines and explosive remnants of war in Mozambique .............................................................. 3
   1. A country ravaged by war .................................................................................................. 3

II. Maputo Conference (June 23-27, 2014) .............................................................................. 5
   1. A key conference ............................................................................................................ 5
   2. The demining challenges ............................................................................................... 6

III. Handicap International in Mozambique: 28 years of action ............................................... 7
   1. Background to our actions in Mozambique .................................................................... 7
   2. Demining in Mozambique ............................................................................................ 7
   3. Complementary and effective techniques ...................................................................... 8
   4. Demining stages ............................................................................................................. 8
   5. The safest and most reliable method: men, dogs, machines ........................................... 8

IV. Women deminers ............................................................................................................... 9

V. Remember the victims! ...................................................................................................... 11

Appendix 1: About Mozambique .......................................................................................... 123
Appendix 2: Handicap International spokespersons ............................................................. 14
   Mozambique ...................................................................................................................... 14
   Handicap International’s head office .............................................................................. 14
I. Mines and explosive remnants of war in Mozambique

1. A country ravaged by war

Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world: nearly 55% of its population lives under the poverty threshold.\(^1\) It is ranked as the third least developed country in the world in the 2013 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program.

A devastating 25-year war of independence (1965-1975), followed by a civil war (1977-1992), left Mozambique among the four most mined countries in the world, ranked alongside Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia. In 1998, the National Demining Commission estimated the number of mines scattered across the country at 500,000. In 2008, a new landmine impact survey revealed that there were three times as many mines in Mozambique than previously thought, with more than 500 new mined areas identified. In January 2013, 82%\(^2\) of the contaminated areas were located in the provinces of Sofala and Inhambane where Handicap International works.

This scourge has claimed thousands of victims since 1992. More than 2,400 victims have been formally identified, but the real figure is much higher because the data collected is incomplete.

The U.S. Department of State estimated that the number of victims was between 10,000 and 30,000, between 1992 to 1998. According to IRIN News, in 2009, anti-personnel mines were the third leading cause of amputation in Mozambique after diabetes and road accidents.\(^3\).

Contaminated sites are often close to schools, roads, hospitals and sources of drinking water or cultural venues and represent a daily threat to the population.

But the clearance work undertaken, including by Handicap International from 1998 onwards, has allowed for considerable progress in a country devastated by these weapons. The decontamination\(^4\) of the country will soon come to an end, providing hope to all of the other countries affected by anti-personnel mines.

---

\(^1\) http://www.mz.undp.org/content/mozambique/en/home/countryinfo/
\(^2\) http://www.themonitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/741#_ftn5
\(^3\) http://www.irinnews.org/report/86892/mozambique-help-for-landmine-victims-hard-to-come-by
\(^4\) Decontamination: identification and destruction of explosive remnants of war
The shattered lives of children in Chibabava

In 2007, a mine explosion caused the death of four children and injured three others in Inhambane province.

It was late afternoon, near the village of Chibabava. A group of children were walking home from school along an unlit path. In front of them they saw a strange object. Intrigued, the children tried to open it to see what was inside. The device exploded, killing four children instantly and injuring three others. The villagers came running, then stood rooted to the spot, frightened and paralyzed before this terrible scene. Unsure what had happened, they did not dare approach the children.

Seven years later, the wound is still fresh and the trauma deep. The three survivors—Louisa, 17, Filipe, 15 and Zacarias, 16—still live in the village. Despite this tragedy, their family and the other villagers continue to visit the minefields, because they have no other choice: they need to cultivate their land in order to eat. They harvest mangoes and coconuts, and gather firewood.

What has changed, however, is their knowledge of mines. Thanks to preventive work by Handicap International in villages and schools, the public is better and better informed about the risks and how to behave in the presence of a remnant of war. This is the only way to avoid another tragedy until the demining teams are able to clear the fields.

Testimony: Luis Rafael “For 15 years, I lived near a well surrounded by mines”

Corn, manioc, onions—all of these vegetables are once again growing in Bende Povoado. But for many years, the villagers were too scared of anti-personnel mines to venture into their fields.

“During the civil war, mines were laid around the wells,” says Luis Rafael, a small farmer. “We fled the region for several years because of the fighting. When we returned at the end of the war, the mines were still there. The authorities then created a new water source for the villagers, a few miles away. We were able to start cultivating our fields again but we all lived in fear of mines when we set out to work them. I lived a quarter-mile from the mined wells. A woman was killed there by a mine explosion. I was terrified by the idea that my son might go and play there,” explains Luis.
II. Maputo Conference (June 23 – 27, 2014)

1. A key conference

The next Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention will be held in Maputo from June 23-27, 2014. This will be the Third Review Conference. Every five years, in accordance with Article 12 of the Ottawa Treaty, the Secretary General of the United Nations convenes the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to review recent advances (demining, stockpile destruction, etc.) and identify lessons to learn from the reports submitted by each State. The conclusions adopted provide the basis for a new five-year plan with which all States must comply. One of the other aims of attendees is to secure commitments from States which have not yet signed the Treaty, including major powers such as China, the United States and Russia.

The choice of Maputo for this Third Review Conference of the Treaty is particularly symbolic because it could provide the Mozambican government with an opportunity to announce that the country is on the verge of clearing all of the mines on its territory.

A delegation from Handicap International will be present to ensure that the commitments made by the States address the current needs among populations affected by mines and that the action plan strengthens the political success and the practical implementation of the Ottawa Treaty.

Mine-free does not mean victim-free. The fact that clearance is in the process of being completed in some countries carries the risk of people forgetting the mine and explosive remnants of war\(^5\) (ERW) victims. Actually, while it is true that there should be no more new victims, countries that have met their clearance obligations will continue to be responsible for all victims that are already living on their territory. The future of humanitarian mine action, in fact, is victim assistance.

Yet, funding earmarked for victim assistance was dramatically reduced in the last two years, constituting less than 5% of the overall humanitarian mine action budget. This has led to a reduction or, in some cases, an absence of services available to mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities in at least 12 countries and affected regions. Funds earmarked for victim assistance should continue to be made available, and consolidated efforts should be made to ensure assistance to victims is also provided through interventions undertaken in the context of disability, human rights and development.

---

\(^5\) The term “explosive remnants of war” refers to various types of munitions equipped with explosive charges used during a conflict, such as grenades, shells, rockets or cluster munitions, which may still be active and present a danger to people’s lives after a conflict has ended. Civilians are the main victims of this type of weapon.
2. The demining challenges facing Mozambique

By signing the Ottawa Convention, the government committed itself to clearing the country of mines as quickly as possible. Handicap International has played an active role in achieving this goal.

The majority of accidents caused by ERW occur while people are going about their daily activities such as harvesting, gathering or collecting wood. Unable to find alternative ways of feeding their families or communities, some peasants run the risk of entering fields marked as mined, despite the threat to their lives.

Demining the whole of Mozambican territory is essential to the security of civilians and the country’s socio-economic future. Mines and ERW prevent people from growing crops and building infrastructure (roads, electric supply lines, railways, etc.) and limit the circulation of goods and people. Even the suspected presence of mines can act as a strong deterrent to tourists and foreign investors.

According to Aderito Ismaël, the manager of Handicap International’s demining program: “This scourge has claimed thousands of victims since 1992. More than 2,000 victims have been formally identified, but the real figure is much higher because the data collected is incomplete. We’ve almost finished the job. Mozambique has committed itself to completing the demining program in 2014, and then it’s all over! But that doesn’t mean we should take our eye off the ball. It’s not because we’ve almost completed our work that we can slacken the pace. On the contrary, I think people are starting to forget the risks they are running.”

Mozambique is committed to completing its mine clearance program by December 2014. It is set to become the world’s 29th country to be declared “mine free” even though it was once one of the most contaminated countries in the world.

Aderito is proud to have secured a safer future for his country: “Once Mozambique has been declared mine free, it will permanently remove a threat that has been hanging over the population for decades. People will be able to return home. There will be no more mine victims: people will be able to use their fields and roads again, and children will be able to return to school without the constant fear of being killed or injured. By returning to areas that used to be mined, Mozambicans will be able to revive the local economy and help boost their country’s development.” It will provide a new lease of life for the millions of Mozambicans who wish to live in peace.

---

6 Since the convention entered into force, 28 countries have completed their demining programs (May 2014): Albania, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Burundi, Congo, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, FYR Macedonia, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Malawi, Montenegro, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Rwanda, Suriname, Swaziland, Tunisia, Uganda, Venezuela, Zambia, Taiwan.
III. Handicap International in Mozambique: 28 years of action

1. Background to our actions in Mozambique

Handicap International launched its operations in Mozambique in 1986, in response to the emergency triggered by the civil war (1977-1992) and opened 16 orthopedic workshops in the country's various provinces. The management of these workshops was subsequently transferred to the government. Handicap International then provided structural and logistical support to the physical medicine and rehabilitation services of the Ministry of Health.

In 1992, the organization set up a mines and unexploded devices risk education project in three provinces and began mapping mined areas. In 1998, the first demining operations were launched in the province of Inhambane.

2. Handicap International and demining in Mozambique

In Mozambique, the demining team consists of 136 people. Its goal is to clear mined areas in the two provinces of Sofala and Inhambane, the two most polluted areas of the country: almost 82% of the contaminated sites are located in these two regions.

Handicap International is one of three international operators demining in Mozambique.

Since 2007, the organization has demined more than 12 million sq.m. of land in the country. In 2009, the Mozambican government asked Handicap International to use its demining expertise to demine half of the land suspected of still being contaminated, that is, 6 million sq.m., by December 2014, the deadline by which Mozambique is required to complete the decontamination of its territory. Handicap International's work in Mozambique is far from over, however. Even after the last mine has been removed from the ground, Mozambique will need to assist the thousands of mine victims among its population, as stipulated under the Ottawa Convention. In 2013, the organization conducted a comprehensive study of the needs of these victims in order to provide them with an appropriate response, in partnership with the Mozambican government. In 2012, Handicap International worked on 90 mined areas, clearing more than 3,700,000 sq.m. of contaminated land (the equivalent of more than 500 soccer fields).

7 http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/cp/display/region_profiles/theme/2860
3. Complementary and effective techniques

Demining is a long and difficult task that requires a large workforce. Handicap International has been training deminers in Mozambique for more than 15 years. These men and women perform this job, which involves a high level of risk, parcel by parcel, square meter by square meter, in order to protect and save lives. The team of deminers is supported by four dog handlers, eight demining dogs and several demining machines (three Tempest machines and one Hitatchi machine).

4. Demining stages

Before each demining operation, Handicap International conducts a survey of local communities and an awareness officer organizes mine risk education sessions. At-risk areas are then marked and access to the site is barred, ready for the demining team to begin its work.

5. The safest and most reliable method: men, dogs, machines

After armored machines have prepared the area for demining by clearing it of dense undergrowth, the dogs are brought into action. The use of dogs, whose lives are not put in danger, cuts demining times by 80%. Unlike metal detectors, which sound an alarm even when they detect harmless metal, their unique sense of smell means that dogs “stop in their tracks” at the slightest hint of explosives. Their handler then marks the area and calls on the services of a manual deminer to probe the area and identify the object.

“Dogs help us clear large areas more quickly,” Adérito says. “Dogs and machines do very different jobs, but together they produce great results.”

The deminer can then enter the secured plot of land, delicately probe each square centimeter of the area identified by the dog and neutralize the explosive device hidden below the surface.

The explosive remnants of war are then destroyed. When an area has been completely cleared, a ceremony is held to mark the restoration of the land to the local people. This helps build the trust of the villagers and symbolises the end of the danger.
IV. Female deminers

As part of its mine clearance operations, Handicap International launched a major recruitment campaign in 2010. A lot of women applied to do this work which had long been considered only for men. Dynamic and motivated, these Mozambican women have proven to be just as reliable as men in decontaminating their country and restoring farming land to villagers.

“The women are very involved, patient and conscientious,” Aderito says. “They are extremely particular about safety rules and every day provide proof that demining is not only for men.”

Twelve women were recruited and sent on a 45 day training course before starting work in the field. Each deminer is equipped with regulatory protection gear weighing nine pounds. The heat can rise to 100 degrees in Mozambique. Working conditions are hard and the task dangerous. Demining requires a lot of concentration, meticulous attention to detail and a lot of patience. One square meter can take hours to clear. The deminers work in the field for ten days followed by four days of rest. The pace is intense but these women are proud of their work.

“Seventy-five percent of people live from the land,” says Raufa, 21, one of Handicap International's female deminers. “For years, we went hungry because we didn't dare venture into the fields. When I was small I saw a lot of people maimed because they went out to cut manioc. I’m proud of the work I do for Handicap International.”

Testimony of Sarneta, 28, a deminer: “I’m the only woman in Mozambique who knows how to operate a demining machine!”

Sarneta was hired by Handicap International in 2010. Day after day, she searches close to villages and roads for vestiges of past conflicts—anti-personnel mines, rockets and shells that are buried or covered by dense undergrowth. After detecting them, she digs them out so that they can be destroyed.

“Before I became a deminer, I'd been through some hard times,” she says. “I stayed in school until sixth form, but after that my family didn't have the money to support me. I ended up doing odd jobs to support myself, but when I heard on the radio that I could work as a deminer for Handicap International, I applied straightaway! I knew victims of anti-personnel mines and what these weapons could do, so this job seemed interesting to me.”
Sarneta lives in an outlying district of Inhambane, one of Mozambique’s biggest towns, where she was raised by her adoptive uncle and aunt and their two daughters. Within no time at all, Sarneta was able to build a small house with the money she managed to save up. She lives with Ruth, her youngest sister, who is 17, and her niece Dinah, an 8-month old baby. Without Sarneta’s help, Ruth, a single mother, would never have been able to raise her child or continue her studies. Whenever she gets time off, Sarneta goes back to join them for a few days. The rest of the time, she lives with the other members of the Handicap International team in a camp close to the demining site.

Sarneta says she loves her work: "What I love most is how valuable my work is. I feel useful. We often work near villages and fields and I know that every explosive device I find, each mine I dig up, potentially represents a life saved. Soon our country will be totally free of these weapons, thanks to us. That’s what matters most to me. Plus I feel really fulfilled by this work. I started by doing manual demining, but a few months ago, I asked to be trained to use demining machines. They help prepare the ground and enable us to demine faster on difficult terrain that’s either hilly or wooded. The most effective one is an enormous armored machine that weighs 30 tonnes. I’m the only women in Mozambique who knows how to operate this type of machine!" she explains with a hint of pride.
V. Remember the victims!

Although Mozambique is on the verge of being declared "mine free", the country is still facing tough challenges. Handicap International continues to conduct actions in support of mine victims and people with disabilities more generally. By the end of 2014, when the last mine has been removed, the survivors and their needs will remain. Their needs include socio-economic inclusion and access to health services and rehabilitation care.

To better understand and meet these needs, Handicap International conducted a needs assessment for victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)\(^8\). The results are unequivocal: most live in conditions of extreme deprivation, highlighting a vital need to reduce poverty and to improve access to services to enhance their quality of life. Eighty-six percent of survivors interviewed had limited or no access to paid employment. More than 96% stated that there are no adapted care services close to their homes. Handicap International provides support to health services, social services, the national authorities and civil society to help meet this challenge.

Reliable data on the total number of victims in Mozambique is limited, since most accidents are not reported. In 2011, the government estimated the number of victims at more than 10,000. In addition to these victims, Mozambique is home to a large number of people with disabilities. In 2009, the first national survey\(^9\) estimated that 6% of the population had a disability—more than 1.5 million people. In order to meet the diverse needs of these often vulnerable individuals, Handicap International implements social and economic inclusion projects and promotes access to health and education services.

In rural areas, Handicap International helps improve social and economic inclusion by promoting learning and access to employment for victims and people with disabilities, including by helping them to set up their own businesses. The organization also helps people living in conditions of urban deprivation to access health and education services. Handicap International trains staff working in these services to ensure they are accessible and take into account the needs of people with disabilities. The organization also meets and provides support to people experiencing difficulties by supplying them with information and directing them to these services. This helps literacy centers to become more inclusive and enables people often rejected by the school system to access it in order to learn to read and write. Educators visit communities who need education, in order to improve their self-reliance and their quality of life.

At the national level, Handicap International brought together institutional players to draw up a joint national action plan to assist mine victims, in line with the disabled people’s assistance policy.

---

\(^8\) Handicap International, RAVIM - Shattered Dreams Living conditions, needs and capacities of mines and Explosive Remnants of War survivors in Mozambique, Maputo 2013

\(^9\) SINTEF, FAMOD & INE, Living Conditions Among People with Disabilities in Mozambique, Oslo, 2009

© Handicap International
Handicap International is working actively alongside the victims of conflict in Mozambique, people with disabilities and vulnerable individuals, in order to provide them with support and assistance.

Handicap International’s coordinator of mine action in Mozambique, Adérito Ismaël, who is confronted, on a daily basis, by the needs of people who have long lived in fear and suffering, calls on all governments to take the needs of the most vulnerable people into account: "We hope that governments will take into consideration the still very real needs of the people of Mozambique, and continue helping us until the mining operations have been completed."
Appendix 1: About Mozambique

- **Capital:** Maputo
- **Surface area:** 799,380 sq.km
- **Population:** 24.7 million* inhabitants
- **Official language:** Portuguese (10%) - Emakhuwa (25%) - Others (65%)
- **Life expectancy:** 52 years*
- **GDP per capita:** $1,200/year*
- **Human development index (HDI):** 185/187**
- **Ottawa mine ban convention:** State party
- **Oslo convention on cluster munitions:** State party

* CIA World Fact Book
** UNDP 2013
## Appendix 2: Handicap International’s spokespersons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mozambique</th>
<th>Handicap International’s head office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Yann Faivre" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Lucile Papon" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yann Faivre</strong>, Director of Handicap International Mozambique</td>
<td><strong>Lucile Papon</strong>, program Desk Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Aderito Ismaël" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Gilles Delecourt" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aderito Ismaël</strong>, Head of demining operations in Mozambique</td>
<td><strong>Gilles Delecourt</strong>, Mine action department Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### About Handicap International

Handicap International is an independent international aid organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. Working alongside persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions, and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was founded in 1982, Handicap International has set up development programs in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. The network of eight national associations (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States) works constantly to mobilize resources, jointly manage projects, and to increase the impact of the organization’s principles and actions. Handicap International is one of six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the co-winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, and the recipient of the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Award.