
**Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the
Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on
the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which
May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious
or to Have Indiscriminate Effects**

4 June 2012

Original: English

2012 Session

Geneva, 15–16 November 2012

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM)

**The Humanitarian Impact of Mines Other Than
Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM)**

Submitted by the International Committee of the Red Cross

1. Anti-vehicle mines have been an issue of concern for many years. Already in the 1970's the expert meetings, which resulted in the adoption of the CCW, identified anti-vehicle mines, along with anti-personnel mines and booby-traps, as a weapon that warranted specific attention due to their potential for having serious indiscriminate effects. Later, in the mid-1990's proposals for detectability requirements and self-destruct features for anti-vehicle mines were discussed as part of the work to amend Protocol II. More recently, as is widely known, CCW States Parties undertook focussed work on anti-vehicle mines between 2002 and 2006. Unfortunately, these efforts failed to strengthen the international humanitarian law rules on anti-vehicle mines or bring relief to the communities affected by these weapons. Today, despite the past work on this issue, anti-vehicle mines continue to take a heavy toll on civilians and to have an impact on their daily lives in many parts of the world.

2. The most widespread and serious consequences of anti-vehicle mines are the result of the long-term denial to vulnerable populations of food, medicine, vaccines and other humanitarian assistance. Anti-vehicle mines, or even the fear of the presence of such mines, can close transport routes and obstruct the movement of goods, people, and essential relief supplies. They can also deny civilians access to much needed medical care and harm economic activity. The result is that hunger, disease, poverty and the additional consequences of armed conflict continue long after the fighting has ended. These effects are perhaps less direct and visible than direct casualties but are no less tragic and disruptive for individuals and communities.

3. Illustrating the point is the current situation of eight neighbouring villages in the northern part of the Casamance, Senegal. The ICRC is aware of these villages through its operations in the country and its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance. These eight villages have a combined population that is estimated to be approximately 3500 people. The roads leading to and from these villages are believed to be mined. This has profound consequences for the people who live there. Some of the impacts known by the ICRC to result from the areas' mine contamination:

(a) There is a significant impact on the provision of medical care. Ambulances are unable to reach these villages and thus are unable to evacuate those in need of emergency care. This includes the wounded and sick, including those injured by mine

accidents. As a result, people needing care are forced to walk or are transported by carts instead of heavier vehicles in search of treatment. There are medical facilities inside the affected areas, however, all qualified personnel have left due to the earlier fighting and have not returned due to the existing dangers. This not only delays treatment for those in need, but also hinders preventative services like the vaccination of children against disease.

(b) There is an impact on education. Nearly all teachers fled during the fighting and have not returned to these villages due to the ongoing hazards. Children are forced to travel to other villages to pursue their education. Many of the children are cared for by host families and organizations near these schools but the children must nevertheless travel over mined roads to return to their homes.

(c) There is an impact on the local economy. The mined roads block access to local or nearby markets. This is particularly damaging for the sale of peanuts which are produced by local farmers.

(d) There is an impact on the reconstruction of housing. Many houses were burned from fighting in the area and displaced people are starting to return. Yet, it has not been possible to deliver materials to help reconstruct housing due to the difficulty of accessing the area with vehicles.

4. These consequences are in addition to the direct dangers that the men, women and children of these villages face every day when they walk or travel by bicycle or small carts upon the mined roads and pathways that lead to and from the affected communities.

5. Specific ICRC projects in this area have also been affected. Due to the lack of access the ICRC has had to abandon or to delay consideration of a number of projects. These include the reconstruction of two medical clinics, the drilling of village wells and the development of latrine systems. Each of these projects would have brought significant benefits to the health and well-being of those who live in these communities.

6. The messages and concerns are not new. In a report presented to CCW States Parties in 2002 (CCW/GGE/II/WP.9, 12 July 2002), the ICRC highlighted in much starker detail the impact of anti-vehicle mines on its operations. These included the deaths and injuries of some 79 ICRC or National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society personnel between 1990 and 2002. The ICRC also had 1 staff member killed and 3 injured in the southern part of Casamance in 2006 in an anti-vehicle mine accident. The 2002 ICRC report detailed the cancellation or interruption of ICRC projects in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Georgia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Russian Federation, Somalia, Mozambique and Sudan.

7. The international community has been considering ways to address the problems caused by anti-vehicle mines for many years now. Despite significant developments such as the adoption of Amended Protocol II in 1996 and the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines, the humanitarian problem of anti-vehicle mines has not been adequately addressed. These weapons remain a serious danger to civilian populations and to the humanitarian organizations that work in war-affected areas. The ICRC believes that now is the time to develop credible and effective measures to address the problems caused by anti-vehicles landmines. The longer it takes, the longer the suffering continues.
