
**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**

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Mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM)

The humanitarian impact in Cambodia

Submitted by Cambodia

I. The situation

1. Cambodia's landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) problems are the result of a protracted sequence of regional and internal conflicts which lasted for over thirty years, leaving the country heavily contaminated and resulting in thousands of casualties and a prolonged clearance effort which is still ongoing. An early estimate projected that between 4 to 6 million landmines were laid during the conflict. Even after 19 years of demining, vast areas of land still require clearance. The National Mine Action Strategy estimated in 2010 that it would take ten years to clear 648.8 square kilometers of identified contaminated land, and that baseline and technical surveys would need to be carried out on a further 1,097.8 square kilometers. In addition to the problems posed by landmines, ERW contamination resulting from surface and air-dropped ordnance is also significant. Information received from the United States Department of State reveals that during 1965-1975 more than 2.75 million tons of bombs were dropped on Cambodia. From 1979 until May 2012, 64,057 Cambodian people have become victims of landmines and ERW. Specifically, 50,802 people were victims of landmines and 13,255 of ERW. Currently, there are four main humanitarian clearance operators working in Cambodia to address the contamination problems, and a number of organizations and institutions also provide mine/ERW risk education and victim assistance.

II. Examples of the problems caused by MOTAPM in Cambodia

2. Since mine action began in Cambodia, 941,696 anti-personnel mines (AP mines), 2,218,368 ERW, and 22,098 anti-tank mines (AT mines) have been removed and destroyed. While the number of casualties has been greatly reduced to fewer than 300 per year, the number is still unacceptably high. In the last 5 years, 324 casualties resulted from AP mines, 750 from ERW (including cluster munitions), and 283 from AT mines. The relatively rapid mechanization of agriculture in Cambodia over the last few years has resulted in a worrying increase in the number of AT mine incidents. Incident surveillance data collected by the Cambodia Mine Victim Information System shows an upward trend in the number of AT mine incidents since 2007, whereas incidents caused by AP mines and

ERW continue to show a downward trend. AT mine incidents often claim far more victims than AP mines, and several high-casualty AT mine incidents in 2010 highlighted the threat of these devices which killed nearly three times as many people as did AP mines in the same year. In a three month period from December 2011 to February 2012 nine AT mine incidents occurred in Cambodia resulting in a total of 38 casualties.

3. AT mines were laid mostly by the Khmer Rouge for immobilizing and destroying vehicles including tanks and for tactical motives. They were laid on roads, rural paths and forest routes. Often these former military roads and paths fell into disuse and became overgrown with vegetation, but in recent years these roads and tracks have been increasingly used by farm vehicles and machinery. The recent results of the on-going national baseline survey indicate 12,016 minefields found to be affected by AT mines and a combination of AT and AP mines, compared to 835 minefields which contain only AP mines.

4. As noted earlier, incidents involving only one AT mine often result in multiple casualties. For instance, on 3 February 2012 in a western province of Cambodia, 8 people were killed and one person was seriously wounded as a result of an AT mine. The incident took place while the victims were traveling on a homemade tractor on newly reclaimed land. This case was similar to many of the AT mine incidents which have occurred over the last 5 years, where people have sought to clear previously un-used land for agricultural purposes. In some instances, old roads and tracks have been used in the past by people, but with the new use of heavy farm machinery the AT mines have been triggered on those paths previously considered safe.

5. The Royal Government of Cambodia is greatly concerned about the impact of landmines and particularly the increase in incidents caused by AT mines. The baseline survey commissioned by the Cambodian Mine Action Authority, has assisted the government in identifying land that is potentially contaminated with AT mines so that action can be taken in terms of clearance. A recent assessment of the MRE program in Cambodia has also identified the need to better target risk education towards AT mine risk, specifically in terms of highlighting the dangers of agriculture extension and the use of heavy farm machinery and providing information on how to ensure suspected land is verified by clearance agencies before farming begins. A targeted campaign has been proposed which will involve TV and radio broadcasts, education and monitoring by local authorities and community-based MRE networks, enforcement by the police and a verification and clearance response by the mine action agencies.

III. The role of cooperation and assistance – Cambodia’s experience

6. Since the beginning of its mine action program, Cambodia has benefited from the opportunity to engage with the international community within its own borders and beyond. Mine action operators, both national and international, have collaborated and shared their experience and expertise with the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA). An example of such cooperation and collaboration was the development of the Article 5 extension request under the Mine Ban Convention. During this process, national and international operators convened together to contribute their expertise to estimate the remaining contamination levels in Cambodia. Later, this joint contribution led to the development and implementation of a baseline survey process and the development of the 2010-2019 National Mine Action Strategy. Cooperation with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and Norwegian Peoples’ Aid has led to the development of a national land release standard, which is currently being implemented by national operators.

7. Having learnt from other partners, Cambodia has gone on to share its expertise and knowledge to assist other States in their efforts to enhance their own mine action

programmes through exchange visits, third country training and knowledge sharing programs. Evidence of this type of cooperation can be seen in the tripartite knowledge sharing arrangement with Colombia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which is supported by Japan.

8. International financial and in kind assistance in the form of human capital, equipment, research and development provided by the international community has enabled Cambodia to address its landmine/ERW problems with notable success. International cooperation and assistance was essential for developing the capacity for clearance, MRE and victim assistance and to establish a platform which is enabling the Cambodia Mine Action Programme to meet the future challenges.

9. Given that the majority of funding for mine action in Cambodia has been from international donors and development partners, sustainable funding of mine action operations continues to be a major challenge. Assistance is needed for the CMAA and operators to mobilize resources and sustain capable human capacity and expertise. An immediate challenge Cambodia faces is the ability to address the increase in incidents caused by AT mines in an environment of decreased donor funding. These problems demonstrate the absolute need for international cooperation and assistance to be included in any future frameworks to address the humanitarian impact of MOTAPM.
