

# Lebanon

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The overwhelming presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war<sup>1</sup> in Lebanon has created a diverse and complex problem that continues to affect the socioeconomic development of the country. A number of mine/ERW accidents have occurred while individuals engage in farming activities. According to *Landmine Monitor*, about 62 percent of contaminated areas is agricultural land, and casualties tend to increase in planting and harvesting months.<sup>2</sup> With contamination of agricultural land, landmines have delayed the implementation of a major drinking and irrigation water pipeline project.<sup>3</sup> Also, there has been a noticeable decrease in agricultural production, the major source of income for Lebanese villagers. The country faces high unemployment rates and an increased number of individuals with disabilities. In South Lebanon, the most contaminated area of the country, these problems affect the livelihoods of roughly 500,000 people.

## Contamination

From the beginning of the civil war in 1975 to the end of the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon in 2000, an estimated 137 square kilometers (53 square miles) of land have been affected by mines and unexploded ordnance.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Lebanon has experienced devastating problems with explosive remnants of war, particularly cluster munitions. According to the Israeli Defense Forces, during the 34-Day War in July–August 2006 between Hezbollah (a militant Shiite group) and Israel, the IDF dropped between 2,000 and 6,000 items of ordnance, including cluster munitions, every day.<sup>4</sup> It is estimated that after this latest conflict, 37 square kilometers (14 square miles) of land was contaminated by 1.2 million submunitions, as well as over 15,000 pieces of other UXO in Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> The majority of contamination is in South Lebanon; however, other areas of the country are also affected.

In addition to an increase in ERW, there have been suspicions of recent landmine contamination. In late 2006, the Mine Action Coordination Centre in South Lebanon alleged that Israeli forces laid landmines during the 2006 conflict, but Israeli forces deny this allegation.<sup>2</sup>

## Progress in Clearance

Lebanon is neither a State Party to the Ottawa Convention<sup>5</sup> nor to the Convention on

Certain Conventional Weapons.<sup>6</sup> A great deal of humanitarian mine action, however, is conducted throughout the country.

MACC-SL coordinates humanitarian clearance. Some nongovernmental organizations, such as DanChurchAid and Mines Advisory Group, are also involved with clearance.

Following the conflict with Israel, mine-clearance activities were halted and priority was given to rapid-response explosive-ordnance disposal. At the end of 2006, an estimated 3.4 square kilometers (1.3 square miles) had been cleared, with the destruction of over 100,000 pieces of UXO.<sup>2</sup>

Clearance continued into 2007. During the first three months of the year, almost five million square meters (1,236 acres) of surface and 834,731 square meters (206 acres) of subsurface were cleared of over 113,000 unexploded cluster munitions. Also, 164,689 square meters (40 acres) of mined areas were cleared, with the destruction of 157 anti-personnel mines, five anti-vehicle mines and 79 pieces of UXO.<sup>2</sup>

## Casualties and Economic Consequences

Immediately following the August 2006 ceasefire there was a dramatic spike in cluster submunition casualties. In fact, 100,000 people were disabled because of the 2006 conflict.<sup>2</sup> Common injuries involved shrapnel to limbs, abdomen and the head. Many of these injuries necessitated amputations of arms or hands.

Civilian cluster submunition casualties most often occurred while individuals were doing “house reconnaissance, especially immediately after the cease-fire (79) and livelihood activities (45) or just walking in the village (29).”<sup>2</sup>

In 2006, there were over 30,000 disabled individuals of working age.<sup>2</sup> Disabilities have a profound affect on families and their income. As of July 2007, only 35 percent of the 1,169 disabled individuals in need of prosthesis after the conflict had received one.<sup>2</sup> The cost of a prosthetic device exceeds the means of many Lebanese people. With limited vocational training in the country and a lack of necessary prosthetic devices and adaptive technologies, disabled individuals and their families are left without sustained incomes. As a result, Lebanon has high unemployment rates. The

unemployment rate in South Lebanon alone was estimated at 70 percent after the conflict.<sup>2</sup>

## 2007 Mine-action Policy

The Lebanese Mine Action Authority is responsible for mine-action policy, while MACC-SL fulfills a liaison function between the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces. A part of LAF, the National Demining Office coordinates, implements and manages all aspects of mine action. As of May 2007, the NDO was renamed the Lebanon Mine Action Center and now manages the mine-action program.<sup>2</sup>

## Future Outlook

Despite progress made to clear mines, Lebanon is still plagued by the threat of mines and ERW. With over 90 million square meters (35 square miles) of land contaminated by minefields and submunitions, the socioeconomic status of Lebanon continues to be affected.<sup>2</sup> ♦

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