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## Profile: The Canadian Landmine Foundation

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## Profile: The Canadian Landmine Foundation

**Through projects ranging from advocacy to fundraising to clearance, the Canadian Landmine Foundation (CLF) has made many significant contributions to worldwide mine action efforts. This article highlights some of their recent work, focusing on their achievements in the Balkans.**

by Nicole Kreger, MAIC

### Background

The CLF was founded in April 1999 as a private sector foundation designed "to build on Canadians' pride and involvement in the Ottawa Convention of December 1997."<sup>1</sup> It is a registered charity with the mission of raising awareness and funds "to eradicate anti-personnel landmines throughout the world and end the human and economic suffering caused by these mines."<sup>2</sup> CLF collaborates with businesses, the public sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups and individuals. Its programs and initiatives have spanned the globe and helped raise millions of dollars for mine action. The foundation's clearance efforts have directly impacted Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Mozambique and Cambodia.

### Projects

Over the course of its almost four-year existence, CLF has supported many projects and launched a number of successful landmine-related projects of its own. The following represent some of the foundation's most prominent and successful projects thus far.

#### *Adopt-A-Minefield (Canada)*

In June of 2000, CLF launched the Canadian branch of Adopt-A-Minefield (AAM). The program originated as a program of the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), and has since expanded into the United Kingdom as well. The objective of this organization is to spread awareness of the landmine crisis and raise money for mine clearance and victim assistance projects worldwide. For "adoption" purposes, minefields are separated into areas ranging from 10,000 sq m to 60,000 sq m, each one costing an average of \$40,000 (CAD) to clear. All donations are forwarded to the United Nations, who then coordinates the demining operations. For the AAM (Canada) campaign, CLF partnered with UNA-USA and the Better World Fund. The campaign, based in Toronto, allows individuals and groups to sponsor mine clearance operations in Afghanistan, BiH, Cambodia, Croatia, Mozambique and Vietnam.

#### *Adopt-A-Team*

The Adopt-A-Team program is a branch of AAM (Canada) that focuses on funding demining teams instead of entire minefields. Sponsors can fund a demining team month by month; each month's work costs an average of \$25,000. At present, 15 demining teams of 30 people each are training in Pakistan. Of these teams, 12 are Afghan NGOs and three are international. This project focuses on clearance efforts in Afghanistan, with teams being

based in each of the country's five regions.

### *Canine Demine*

Canine Demine "facilitates the training of ordinary dogs into extraordinary deminers."<sup>3</sup> The program is a partnership between CLF and the Canadian International Demining Corps (CIDC). In June 2002, the program's first two dogs, Fanny and Alex, graduated from mine detection school in southern Bosnia. After completing their six-month training, the dogs began working under the direction of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) Stabilization Force. The CIDC also trains local people as handlers and support staff, which "develops regional expertise and promotes long-term reclamation and sustainability for mine-affected countries."<sup>4</sup>

Through the CLF website, individuals and groups can provide support to Canine Demine. Donations of a few hundred up to several thousand dollars can provide the program with anything from trained dogs to kennels to support staff. Donors will receive information about the dogs and their progress based on their level of support.

### *Clearlandmines.com*

Also in June 2000, CLF founded the Clear Landmines site, [clearlandmines.com](http://clearlandmines.com). The site was developed based on the idea of The Hunger Site, which has been very successful. Clearlandmines.com allows users to clear landmines for free with one click. CLF sells sponsorships to companies and organizations in return for advertising space on the website. Each sponsor pays CLF 0.5 cents for each visitor per day. Ninety-five percent of this money helps CLF fund clearance programs, while five percent is needed for overhead costs for the website. Each half a cent is roughly equal to 21 sq cm of land cleared.

The Clear Landmines site provides a simple way to get a large number of people involved in a good cause without having to donate their own money. For sponsors, it is a unique opportunity to purchase advertising space at a cheap rate and get good publicity for being associated with a worthy humanitarian cause. The site attracts about 45,000 visitors a month, and since August 2001, it has raised money for the clearance of approximately 4400 sq m of land (as of July 8, 2003).

### *Night of 1000 Dinners*

Night of 1000 Dinners (N1KD) is an annual charity event that was founded by CLF in support of AAM. The idea behind N1KD is for people to host dinners in their homes or with their co-workers or communities to raise awareness about landmines and collect donations to support AAM. The money raised goes toward clearance efforts in AAM's six sponsored countries, Afghanistan, BiH, Cambodia, Croatia, Mozambique and Vietnam. The first time the event was held (November 30, 2001), thousands of people all over the world came together in support of the cause. In its first year alone, over \$1 million (U.S.) was raised by participants from all over the world. The event grew in its second year, when thousands of people, from celebrities to government officials to ordinary citizens, showed their support at a total of over 1200 dinners in over 27 countries.

### *Peacekeepers Demining Fund*

The Peacekeepers Demining Fund, launched in December 2001, gathers funds to sponsor mine action projects in the name of specific peacekeepers. Money donated to this project is directed through programs already in place, including Adopt-A-Minefield (Canada) and Canine Demine or other specific tasks approved by CLF's board. Thus far, the Peacekeepers Demining Fund has embarked on two major projects. The first is the clearance of a minefield in BiH that measures approximately 19,000 sq m. The area has been abandoned due to the threat landmines pose to civilians. This project is being carried out in the honor of Lieutenant-General Gordon Reay, who was a special adviser to the Canadian Ambassador for Mine Action. He was killed in December 2000, as a result of a car accident that occurred while he was on a humanitarian mission in Croatia.

The second Peacekeepers Demining Fund project honors Master Corporal Mark Isfeld, a Canadian Military Engineer. He was killed in Croatia on June 21, 1994, while removing landmines as part of his UN peacekeeping duties. A minefield measuring 27,000 sq m will be cleared in his name, and funding in the amount of \$67,226 has already been provided for this project through CLF. The area is located in Kila Vilka village in Croatia, near the

place where Master Corporal Isfeld was killed. The village was heavily affected by the war and is still highly contaminated, posing a great risk to the citizens who have returned to the village in spite of the looming threat. The clearance efforts will allow people to once again gain access to their homes, the local playground and the Vuksic-Bila Vlaka Stankovci road belt.

## Successes in the Balkans

CLF has completed a number of projects in the Balkans, specifically in BiH and Croatia. Most of them have been funded through AAM. The money for these projects has been provided to AAM by individuals, organizations (such as Kiwanis National and Rotary National), N1KD contributions and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

During 2000–2001, one of the projects completed through AAM with the biggest impact was the demining of a 59,130-sq-m field in southeastern BiH. This area encompassed an entire village that had been abandoned since the conflict in the early 1990s. The project enabled power lines to be cleared and 100 people to leave displaced person camps and return home.

CLF funded clearance of four minefields in BiH in 2001–2002, one of which was a 14,644-sq-m area of land in the Orah area. Eighty percent of the homes here were destroyed during the war, and the ordnance left behind prevented most people from returning to their homes and was a threat to the few that had already done so. Additionally, mines prevented the residents from utilizing the agricultural land in the area as well as reconstructing a low-voltage power line.

For 2002–2003, CLF programs funded six clearance projects in BiH and Croatia. These included a 20,000-sq-m minefield in a Croatian village near the former confrontation line and one in Visoko Visoko, BiH, where destroyed homes have yet to be rebuilt because of the contamination. Additionally, CIDA and N1KD provided the Canadian International Demining Corps (CIDC) with the \$100,000 (CAD) necessary to clear approximately 34,000 sq m of contaminated land so that residents of the area can return home, rebuild their property, and resume use of their forest, agricultural and pasture land.

## Conclusion

While CLF is still a relatively young organization, it has made great strides in conquering the threat of landmines around the world. Its contributions have made it one of the world's most prominent organizations involved in the effort to make the world safe from mines. With continued involvement and further development, CLF will remain at the forefront of humanitarian mine action for years to come.

## Endnotes

1. <http://www.canadianlandmine.org/about.cfm>.
2. <http://www.icbl.org/links/Advocacy/Americas/>.
3. <http://www.canadianlandmine.org/CanineDemine/default.cfm>.
4. <http://www.canadianlandmine.org/CanineDemine/canineDev.cfm>.

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