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Celebrities and Landmines

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Many celebrities have become active in raising awareness and funds for mine action around the globe. Whether it be consciousness, money or advocacy, celebrities are helping the cause of landmines.

by Jenny Lange, MAIC

Over the past few years, the issue of landmines has received the attention of many people around the world. This attention includes that of celebrities who have become actively involved in mine action and awareness. Whether these celebrities increase the attention on landmine issues is open to debate. Some celebrities are trying to draw attention to the subject, others are trying to push the landmine ban on their country, while others would like to see the problem resolved. Whether their purpose is political or humanitarian, the issue of landmines, just as any other cause, may be able to use the help of high-profile individuals to raise awareness through mainstream media.

Royal Celebrities

Princess Diana

The first celebrity that drew a great deal of attention to landmine issues was Princess Diana. The issue of landmines was brought to her attention in 1997 when she was invited by the International Red Cross to visit Angola in an effort to create an international awareness of the landmine problem. During this visit, Princess Diana was encouraged to keep working for the cause of landmines. One of her main objectives in visiting Angola was to "forward the cause of those...striving in the name of humanity to secure an international ban" on landmines. In June 1997, she delivered the Keynote Address at a conference hosted by the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) and the



Mines Advisory Group (MAG). She continued her work with LSN and accompanied the group on a trip to Bosnia. This visit brought much publicity to the landmine issue around the world. According to an LSN article entitled "Princess Diana's Legacy," "She was determined to use her

The late Princess Diana views a landmine display in Bosnia-Hertzoegovnia. c/o UNICEF

celebrity to draw attention...to landmines. It is even possible that without her help the Nobel Peace Prize would not have been awarded to those of us who have worked together on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines." Many people interpreted the Princess's work with landmines as a political statement, but she herself stated, "I am not a political figure, ...my interests are humanitarian. That is why I felt drawn to this human tragedy." Her heartfelt emotion for the issue of landmines is the reason why she worked towards a worldwide ban on landmines.

Since her death, her work with mine action has continued to have an effect on people around the world. LSN attempted to make a living memorial for Diana, Princess of Wales, which called on all governments to provide new artificial limbs for all mine victims by the year 2010. It is believed by many that Princess Diana's involvement drew a lot of attention to the topic and was motivation for other individuals to become involved with landmine issues.

Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan

Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan is Patron and Honorary Chair of LSN, Advisor to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a member of the Advisory Boards of Adopt-a-Minefield and Marshall Legacy Institute as well as a Patron of the Mineseeker Foundation. She has been a long-term supporter of international efforts to ban landmines since the late 1970's. Queen Noor was inspired by the humanitarian contribution of Princess Diana, and in 1997 she also became a patron of LSN at the request of founders Ken Rutherford and Jerry White. Some say that Queen Noor took on Princess Diana's efforts to draw attention to the landmine situation and advocate the landmine ban and, just like the late Princess of Wales, Queen Noor is bringing much needed attention to the issue. In October 1999, Queen Noor accompanied LSN to Vietnam and Cambodia to witness first hand the landmine problems in these countries.

Not only does Queen Noor support work with mine action, but she also has played a key role in changing landmine policy. Jordan was one of the first Middle Eastern states to join the International Mine Ban Treaty in 1998. It has participated in all international conferences on eliminating landmines, initiated awareness programs in schools and universities by the royal Jordanian corps of engineers and launched a project to establish a center for the rehabilitation and training of landmine survivors through the Jordan National Red Crescent society. Queen Noor has also urged the United States to reconsider landmine policy and sign the Ottawa Treaty. Unlike Princess Diana, Queen Noor's work is humanitarian *and* political, not only drawing attention to the subject, but also helping to change it.

Heather Mills and Sir Paul McCartney

Background Information

Heather Mills has been involved in the landmine issue for over 10 years having lived in and experienced the war in former Yugoslavia. On a visit to the UK in 1993, Heather was involved in an accident that caused her to lose her left leg below the knee. As a result, Heather became an even stronger advocate for the disabled. In October 1994, just a year after the accident, she started shipping used artificial limbs and medical equipment to Croatia. These convoys helped over 22,000 amputees and survivors of landmine explosions. For many years, she had been funding her work with her private money. A few years ago, she set up the Heather Mills

Health Trust in order to accept outside donations to further her cause. The Heather Mills Health Trust is currently supporting a World Hope International Project in Sierra Leone that trains local people to produce artificial limbs with

local resources. Heather no longer ships used prostheses to Croatia. Instead, she supports local projects that are more efficient and sustainable through Adopt-A-Minefield, which is the focus of her charitable work.

Adopt-A-Minefield

Heather Mills and Paul McCartney joined Adopt-A-Minefield (UK) in September 2000 as the Campaign's International Patrons. Since then, they have been actively involved in promoting Adopt-A-Minefield's mission to raise awareness of the global landmine crisis and to raise funds for mine clearance and survivor assistance. Heather was instrumental in bringing Adopt-A-Minefield—originally established in the U.S.—to the U.K., as well as expanding its mission to include survivor assistance.



Heather Mills and Paul McCartney with the winners of the Adopt-A-Minefield poster competition at the British Academy for Film and Television Arts, June 2001.

—c/o Heather Mills

originally established in the U.S.—to the U.K., as well as expanding its mission to include survivor assistance.

Sponsors of the program actually adopt an entire project and provide the necessary funds to clear a mine field or help landmine survivors rebuild their lives. Smaller contributions are pooled together, and all sponsors receive activity reports and clearance certificates. Heather Mills and Paul McCartney are involved with Adopt-A-Minefield because they want to draw attention to the landmine crisis around the world, and make a difference by supporting mine clearance and rehabilitation projects. To spearhead these efforts, they have adopted a mine field in Croatia, which has now been cleared of landmines.

Since joining Adopt-A-Minefield, Heather and Paul have produced the Adopt-A-Minefield video and have conducted numerous interviews with national and international press, television and radio. In the U.S., they appeared on such shows as *Larry King Live*, *Today Show*, and *20/20* to help raise awareness. They have also hosted and appeared at a number of high profile events, including the launch of Adopt-A-Minefield (UK) at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and the first annual Adopt-A-Minefield Fundraising Dinner in Los Angeles. Since the Campaign began in the U.S. in 1999, Adopt-A-Minefield globally has raised more than \$5.4 for mine clearance and survivor assistance.

Pushing Politics

In April 2001, Heather Mills and Paul McCartney met with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell to discuss their efforts to clear mine fields around the globe. Heather Mills also discussed the topic of "smart mines," mines that deactivate themselves after a certain amount of time, as a possible step towards the landmine ban. Heather said, while meeting with Powell, "I have worked with the people. I've lived in the former Yugoslavia, and the reality of a full ban—which we all want—is many, many years off so I am looking for an interim solution." Powell admitted there were a number of areas in which the U.S. government could cooperate with them.

Linking the Personal with the Campaign

As Patrons of Adopt-A-Minefield, Heather and Paul have taken initiative on many occasions to link their personal activities with the landmine cause. In February 2002, INC International Concepts, a top women's fashion brand, announced Heather Mills as the new face for its Spring 2002 campaign. Heather negotiated that all publicity include information about landmines and Adopt-A-Minefield, and so INC devoted its campaign to raising awareness and funds for the Campaign and donated a percentage of the proceeds from all INC purchases in February 2002. Macy's of New York City gave \$10,000 (U.S.) to the program. Heather will have her chance to educate consumers about the landmine crisis by making personal appearances at INC-sponsored events. Heather acts as a continuous spokesperson for the cause and uses every media opportunity to talk about it. She has visited the people benefiting from Adopt-A-Minefield's efforts in Croatia and

Vietnam and allowed British national television to make a documentary about it. She will also be co-editing a vegetarian cookbook that will be sold to benefit Adopt-A-Minefield's *Night of a Thousand Dinners* initiative.

Paul has designed a stamp for the Isle of Man, which will go on sale in July 2002, and proceeds will go to mine clearance and survivor assistance. He has also donated a painting of his to be sold as lithographs and greeting cards in benefit of the Campaign. Promotional materials for Paul's current US tour "Driving USA" include an appeal for people to donate and get involved with landmine issues.

Alexandra Lagelée, Director of Adopt-A-Minefield (UK), said: "Heather and Pauls' involvement has given Adopt-A-Minefield a level of exposure and access to certain audiences that would otherwise not have been accessible. I can't even start to list all the ways in which they have supported us. Heather's active and hands-on involvement means that we are in a very lucky position for mobilizing resources otherwise not available for mine action on a large scale."

Making Music, Raising Awareness

Concerts for a Landmine Free World

The Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFF) formed a program called "Concerts for a Landmine Free World." This program brought together different artists to perform concerts in order to raise awareness and money for assistance to landmine victims. The first concert, performed in 1998 in Washington D.C., included many famous artists such as Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow, Lucinda Williams and Steve Earle. Emmylou Harris, who headlined the roster of artists, is an active supporter of the landmine ban and traveled to Cambodia and Vietnam with Bobby Muller, president of VVAFF to witness the effects of landmines in 1997. As a result of her first-hand exposure to mine-infested regions, she brought other musicians to the cause. In 1996, Sheryl Crow accompanied Hillary and Chelsea Clinton to Bosnia as part of a USO tour. It was here that Sheryl Crow saw the impact of landmines. In addition to the entertainers appearing at the concert, many other celebrities have joined the landmine campaign, including Boys II Men, Jackson Browne, Bruce Cockburn, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Judy Collins, Jewel, Harry Connick Jr. and Bruce Springsteen. Performers are able to be a part of different activities to support the campaign including benefit events, public service announcements and media appearances. Proceeds from the concerts support the VVAFF's Campaign for a Landmine Free World by raising money for rehabilitation services, removing mines and raising awareness.

After the first concert in Washington D.C., the artists toured together in California on five successive nights in December of 1999 and included additional artists such as Nanci Griffith, Guy Clark, Gillian Welch, Elvis Costello, Kris Kristofferson, David Rawlings and Bruce Cockburn. A second tour among the artists was launched in the Northeast United States and Canada in December of 2000. In March 2001, Vanguard Records released an album entitled "Concerts for a Landmine Free World," which is a compilation of songs from the sold-out concert series. A third tour was launched in 2001 and went international during 2002. VVAFF has announced that these concerts will be performed every year to continue to draw attention to the subject and raise money for the landmine campaign. Queen Noor has asked the tour to appear in Jordan. Emmylou Harris will always be apart of the tour lineup and will continue to campaign for landmines. "It has been a fantastic chapter in my life. It is a chance to give back, to use my celebrity," Harris says. For the past few years she has been pushing politicians to sign the Ottawa Treaty, but she also supports mine clearance as well, "It's not enough to say we won't put them in the ground; we've got to get them out," says Harris.

Do Celebrities Really Help?

There is controversy among the mine action community as to the degree celebrities are helping mine action. Many question their desire to help because they interpret celebrity involvement as publicity seeking.

Regardless of the reason celebrities are involved with charities, attention is still drawn to the charity. As long as more attention gets paid to the landmine situation around the world, more people will become involved, more money will be donated, more policies will be changed and more mines will be cleared.

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