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EDITORIAL

Landmine Free 2025: A Shared Responsibility

by Camille Wallen [The HALO Trust] and Chris Loughran [MAG, Mines Advisory Group]
On Behalf of the Landmine Free 2025 Campaign

“ New use of landmines, particularly in the Middle East, has created new humanitarian priorities and funding requirements for the mine action community. While extensive, new contamination from landmines of an improvised nature affects only a handful of countries, it must not become an excuse to turn a blind eye to so-called legacy contamination, where support falls far short of what is required to achieve the 2025 goal.”²

Just over 20 years ago, states and civil society came together to put an end to the harm inflicted by anti-personnel mines. The result was the ground-breaking *Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention* in 1997. Better known as the Ottawa Treaty, it prohibited the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel mines. It also created time-bound legal obligations requiring the destruction of all stockpiles, the clearance of all mined areas, and assistance for landmine victims.

The Ottawa Treaty was truly a beacon of shared effort and responsibility to address unacceptable human suffering. It was only possible due to determination and a willingness to challenge the status quo. It depended on states, individuals, and organizations setting aside self-interest in order to act together for the benefit of communities living with the horror of landmines.

A Call to Action

The Third Review Conference took place in Mozambique in 2014, just as the once mine-ravaged country was on the brink of completing its clearance. Gathering in the city that hosted the very First Meeting of States Parties fifteen years earlier, States Parties aimed to rekindle the same determination and finish the job. They committed to the Maputo +15 Declaration, including committing “to clear all mined areas as soon as possible, to the fullest extent possible by 2025.” This target was bold and ambitious but achievable. States Parties reaffirmed their original commitment to ensure that no mine-affected community was forgotten.

Unfortunately, the spark from the community’s original fire and determination did not catch light. The years that followed saw a steady improvement in operational approaches and efficiencies, but not the necessary increase in political engagement by States Parties. Clearance of long-forgotten minefields

from the wars of the 1980’s and 1990’s vanished from donor agendas and the public conscience. Angola, once a beacon of the Ottawa Treaty, saw support for clearance programs reach a 90 percent drop over a decade, dependent on the United States for mere survival.

Globally, progress is not fast enough, with the clock ticking and the 2025 target in jeopardy. Meanwhile, over 60 million people remain at risk from mines and unexploded ordnance with lives, limbs, and hope in jeopardy, and promises and potential unfulfilled.

With the Fourth Review Conference less than a year away, there is just enough time to turn the 2025 commitment into a reality. Success will depend on more than a brief spark of determination by a handful of committed civil servants, diplomats, and NGOs. It will also require a concerted effort by all stakeholders and a sustained increase in funding commitment.

Looking toward 2025, it should be clear that the Ottawa Treaty will not implement itself. Implementation depends on ownership and leadership by its States Parties for which there can be no substitute, including from the United Nations. As civil society, we need to step up and work closely together, remobilizing the lapsed public support that was essential to bringing about the Ottawa Treaty in the first place. We will all need to look beyond our community for real innovation. Once again, we must challenge and change the status quo.

What is the Landmine Free 2025 Campaign?

Landmine Free 2025 is a campaign to complete landmine clearance by 2025. The campaign is a call to action to donor and mine-affected states, civil society, and the public to reenergize support for mine clearance. It aims to build and strengthen national and global partnership to realize the goal of a world free of landmines. The Landmine Free 2025

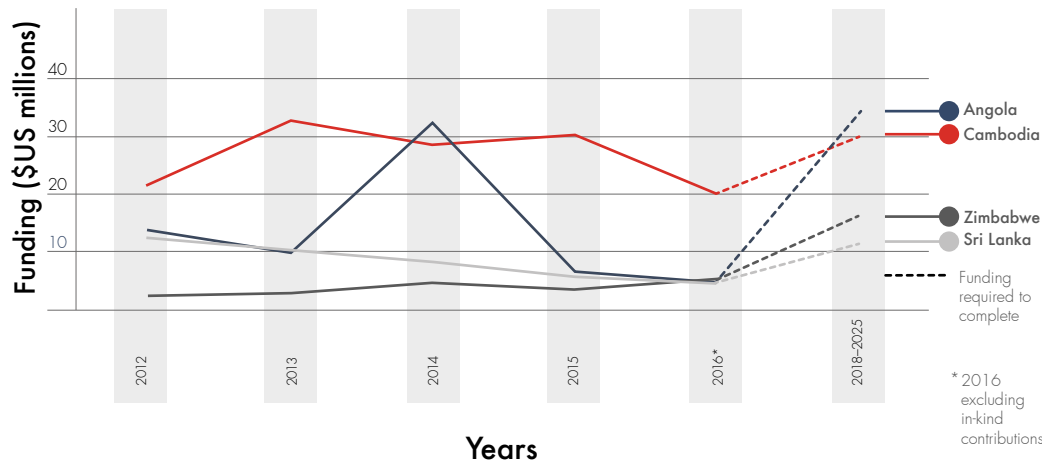


Figure 1: Clearance funding trends for Angola, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. Figure courtesy of the 'State of Play' report, Landmine Free 2025.

campaign also calls for clearance completion strategies to be survivor sensitive. Striving for completion must take into account the reality that the needs of survivors endure for life.

What More is Required?

The Landmine Free 2025 campaign's first issue brief was launched in December 2017 at the Ottawa Treaty's 16th Meeting of States and in the 20th anniversary year of its signature. The "State of Play - The Landmine Free 2025 Commitment" report illustrated how a healthy year for mine action funding in 2016 masked serious neglect of so-called legacy contamination.¹ While 2016 saw the third-highest recorded international support for demining in a decade at almost US\$480 million, 30 percent of that funding was spent in Iraq and Afghanistan alone, while funding to many other countries declined.

New use of landmines, particularly in the Middle East, has created new humanitarian priorities and funding requirements for the mine action community. While extensive, new contamination from landmines of an improvised nature affects only a handful of countries. It must not become an excuse to turn a blind eye to so-called legacy contamination, where support falls far short of what is required to achieve the 2025 goal.²

Of course, there can be little dispute of the need for urgent resources for the humanitarian response in the Middle East. The region has seen a new landmine emergency and spike in casualties, this time from mines of an improvised nature. Similarly, increased support to Afghanistan is essential. As one of the world's most contaminated countries, and itself an icon of the Ottawa Treaty, Afghanistan has seen a steady reduction in funding over the last decade.

But response to the world's new conflicts cannot come at the expense of communities in countries that are no longer the focus of international attention. According to the Mine Action Review, around nine out of ten States Parties are off track to meet their Article 5 (survey and clearance) deadlines.³ A lack of national funding resources in affected states and neglect in international cooperation and assistance are a key part of this. Unless there is a fundamental shift in the scale of funding and the way it is prioritized, the 2025 objective will be unattainable for many of the 61 mine-affected countries and territories.

State of Play estimated that Angola, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe needed just short of two and a half times 2016-funding levels in order to complete clearance obligations and commitments by 2025 (2020 for Sri Lanka). That would mean additional sustained funding at \$54 million a year for these four countries until 2025. While this seems high, \$54 million is only 0.2 percent of all global humanitarian funding provided in 2017.⁴ A finite problem of this scale is therefore one that policy makers have the capacity to solve.

The sums needed to achieve a Landmine Free 2025 must be seen as within reach of the aid budgets, including of many Ottawa Treaty States Parties. But to date, the United Kingdom is the only State Party to have significantly increased its funding commitment to the world's forgotten minefields of Angola, Cambodia, and Zimbabwe.

An Agenda for Change

The 2025 goal can be achieved if all stakeholders recognize the need to work together toward a shared responsibility. In a spirit of progressive and forward-thinking partnership, we can work to increase funding levels to what is required,

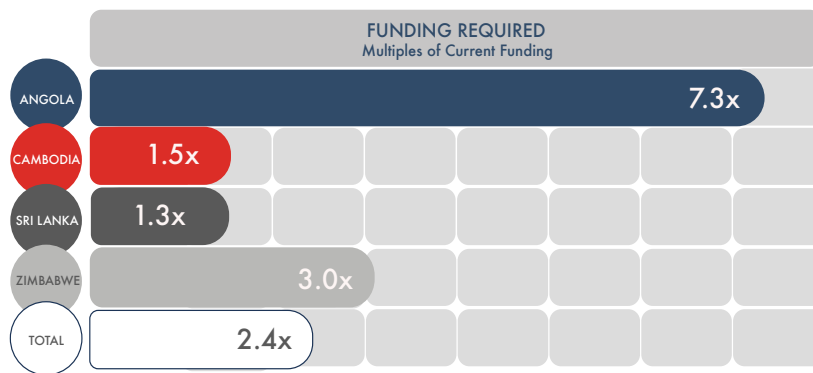


Figure 2: Estimated funding uplift required to reach clearance deadlines.
Figure courtesy of the 'State of Play' report, Landmine Free 2025.

improve efficiency to make best use of resources, and encourage innovation. We must also be willing and able to hold each other to account, calling out when we see or feel good practice is not being applied, or when funding is being squandered without results or real accountability.

Yet there are important glimmers of hope. The Mine Action Review project generated a genuine culture of constructive challenge around good practice in survey and clearance. The individualized approach spearheaded by Switzerland and the Netherlands has done the same for the Article 5 process.⁵ Closer dialogue between NGOs is building long-overdue bridges between the clearance and victim assistance communities, and barriers to confidence and national ownership are being outed.

These examples of shared responsibility and mutual accountability can be carried across the sector. They should be developed to increase political will, enhance cooperation, and learn lessons from the past while being innovative and setting pragmatic milestones to celebrate achievements toward completion.

Galvanizing Political Will and Public Support

Achieving and sustaining the necessary funding increase for countries to complete clearance will not be possible without an increase in political will among donor countries, particularly Ottawa Treaty States Parties. Meanwhile effective cooperation, strategic planning, and management of the issue also requires political engagement in affected states.

Landmine clearance carries high levels of public support. Polling conducted in the United Kingdom in 2017 showed that 78 percent of the public support it. By harnessing this support, the mine action community could once again mobilize the public conscience to increase awareness, political engagement, and support for funding. In an age of aid skepticism, the importance of the public and taxpayers' support cannot be overlooked.

But public support alone will not ensure political and donor support in the long-term. To sustain public and political interest, the mine action community needs to improve the way we measure and articulate the impact of landmines. We need to ensure it is relevant to the broader response to current humanitarian crises, development potential, and most importantly, to people and communities.

Too often mine action is put in a silo, whether in donor funding strategies, national management and oversight, or within the United Nations system. This frequently results in a lack of awareness or buy-in among senior government officials and national authorities being confined to departments with limited influence.

Meanwhile, the impact of landmines does not exist in isolation. They not only remain a threat to lives and limbs, but also block access to homes, land resources and services, and hinder recovery and socioeconomic development decades after the end of conflict. Their impact is also greatest on the most vulnerable—women, girls, boys, and men—who have lost their homes and livelihoods to conflict.

Mine action stakeholders must work together to demonstrate the continued impact of landmines on the world's most vulnerable communities. Demonstrating how clearance can support humanitarian protection, livelihoods, health, and trade is vital to break out of silos and rejuvenate support, particularly in countries that have fallen off the radar of most donors' foreign policy interests. In doing so we should reverse the trend of talking about mine-affected communities in Geneva or New York where they are almost always unable to participate. Instead, we should use modern technology to give them the seat at the table that is rightly theirs.

Broadening Cooperation

Coordination and cooperation between stakeholders can help to create clear national strategies, which are essential for every affected state. The chance of success is greatest when the development of plans is led and owned by national authorities with in-country support from donor states and operating organizations.

A good national strategy is an essential step for every affected state to work toward completion. It should clearly assess the extent of mine contamination remaining, planning the best use of clearance resources and organizations in country,

and calculate the funding requirement to complete by 2025 or sooner if possible.

Where there are successes in coordination such as the individualized approach, we should build on them and the progress they have achieved for countries like Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Similar enhancement in cooperation is achieved when stakeholders work together to support states in their development of Article 5 extension requests. These can go on to act as the basis of common plans and avoid duplication. Partnership agreements between donors and affected states are a further approach that proved critical in supporting Mozambique to achieve completion in 2015.

The Ottawa Treaty's Fourth Review Conference in 2019 is an opportunity to agree on a collective road map for realizing the 2025 aspiration. If the mine action community does not seize it, they will run out of time to achieve 2025 completion goals. If we embrace the opportunity of the Review Conference and are, together, willing to make the change needed, we can still succeed.

Funding and Innovation

There should be no doubt that a step change in funding for many so-called legacy countries is required to achieve the 2025 aspiration. To help countries achieve clearance by 2025, our sector needs to be more collaborative, but also more innovative, with renewed thinking about funding.

Many States Parties can and should increase their funding commitments. But simply asking existing donors to give more is unlikely to succeed on its own and funding could benefit from fresh thinking, including exploring innovative aid financing mechanisms. This could include impact investments, bonds, and collaborative approaches to leverage private financing. Innovation of this sort will take imagination, courage, and trust. But it could ultimately offer a lifeline to the 2025 aspiration and make a key contribution to achieving a Landmine Free 2025.

Celebrating Achievements

The 2025 goal may be bold and ambitious, but it is an important, achievable target for many states. As with any global target, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, we must be pragmatic about the campaign's implementation and break it down into achievable milestones. This could be a country's completion, or completion of provinces in highly-contaminated countries such as Afghanistan. Whenever an opportunity for celebrating success exists, we should collectively harness it and use it to reinforce our commitment. Drawing attention to the issue will not only benefit those

States that could complete by 2025, but it will generate momentum that could benefit all mine-affected countries.

Looking Forward

We were recently asked, "So, what will the Landmine Free 2025 campaign say in 2026 when there are still landmines left in the world?" This was an important and helpful question, and the type of constructive challenge the mine action community needs. The world is imperfect and there may well still be landmines to clear. This will likely be in some of the most heavily contaminated countries, places with restricted access due to ongoing conflict, or as a result of new contamination. But it must not include landmines that could have been cleared yet were not as a result of broken promises. Moreover, there can be no dispute over whether or not the remaining landmines need to be cleared.

The issue is not about whether some landmines remain when we wake up on the first of January 2026. It is about the choices we made before then and the steps we took to avoid failing 60 million people and future generations. It is about whether we were willing to set aside our self-interest, work closer together, strive even harder, embrace innovation, and change the status quo when it does not reflect what we fundamentally believe. We must not only do what is possible, but what is necessary, and what is right. ©

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