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Landmine Survivors Network

Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) works to help mine victims and their families recover through an integrated program of peer counseling, sports, and social and economic reintegration into their communities. In countries in the developing world where landmines are prevalent, survivors lose more than a leg or arm; they often lose their place as a valued and respected member of their society. LSN works with survivors and their families to support their efforts to retrace their place and become productive members of their communities. For example, landmine survivors play a crucial role in landmine education, particularly for children within communities at risk.

Since its inception, LSN has been building a worldwide network to link landmine survivors with the resources available to help them. LSN is developing the first comprehensive database designed to track the rehabilitation needs of mine victims and the organizations that can chapter urgently needed assistance to the impoverished survivors who need it most.

Today, the network is concentrating its efforts on the mine-polluted countries where most survivors live, including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia and Montenegro. In each country, we are working to bring medical supplies, education and employment opportunities to thousands of survivors. LSN is on the steering committee of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a coalition of more than 1,000 humanitarian, religious and development groups, that was a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

Jerry White

Jerry White, co-founder and director of LSN, stepped on a mine in Israel in 1984 while hiking with friends. He has 10 years experience tracking the spread of weapons of mass destruction. A graduate of Brown University, White worked at the Brookings Institution prior to becoming assistant director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control in Washington, D.C. He has testified before Congress and published numerous articles in the New York Times.

Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and International Herald Tribune. White is a past editor of the Risk Report, an award-winning publication and database that tracks military-related technologies. White's injury in a mine field in Israel belies the arguments of those who believe the mine problem can be solved by better signs and fences. White spent five months in a hospital in Tel Aviv, where he underwent five operations and learned to walk with a prosthesis. "I was only four years old when Syrian soldiers,retreating during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, laid Soviet supplied mines in the Golani Heights. The soldiers no doubt hoped the mines would maim or kill Israeli troops. Instead, my mine waited silently in the ground for nearly 17 years until it exploded under my foot and blew off my left leg."

I was 20 years old. I had taken part in my university studies in the United States to explore the Middle East. I wasn't a soldier, but I had an army backpack and an Arabic and Hebrew dictionary. Two friends and I had decided to explore northern Ireland on a hiking trip. We were looking for a place to camp and had no idea where we had entered a mine field. There was no fence and no sign to keep us out. The next morning, on a beautiful spring day, I stepped on a mine. I can still remember the deafening blast that sounded like a thunderclap, the blast of blood, burnt flesh and metal. Only when my friends rolled me over did they see the extent of my wounds. The explosions had ripped off my right foot, shredded my lacerated skin and my left leg. When I awoke I was in a hospital with a bone sticking out of my calf. We screamed for help but it seemed that no one but God could hear. Either I would bleed to death, or my friends would have to carry me out of the mine field. Luckily we made it out without further loss.

"All the talk about fencing and marking mine fields is a distraction from the real challenge: to stop the proliferation of landmines. I was injured in a country that takes pride in how well it has fenced and marked its mine fields. But even in a small, security-conscious state like Israel, fences break down, signs fade, foul are stolen and mines shift with changes in weather and soil erosion."

Ken Rutherford

Ken Rutherford, co-founder of LSN, holds master's degrees in international affairs and business administration and has extensive international experience, including work as a U.S. Peace Corps trainer in Mauritania and for the U.N. High Commission for Refugees in Senegal. Rutherford was a training officer in Somalia for the International Rescue Committee when he was injured by a landmine in December 1993. Rutherford underwent 11 operations including the amputation of both his legs below the knee. Since his accident, he has traveled worldwide to speak out in favor of a ban and to raise awareness of the mass suffering caused by these weapons. Rutherford currently holds a teaching fellowship at Georgetown University, where he is pursuing doctoral studies in government.

"In December 1993, I was working as a training officer for the International Rescue Committee in Somalia, where my job was to help Somalia apply for loans so they could rebuild their country. My project was funded by USAID. On December 16, as I was inspecting a project site near the border with Ethiopia, my car suddenly became something rare for an American: a landmine victim. It was to change my life forever."

"After the explosion, I first remember seeing a red light hanging over the hood of a car. I remember thinking: Is it mine? It was. It was my right foot. I remember that I kept trying to put it back on, but it kept falling off. Then I looked at my left foot. The top part was ripped off and I could see bones going to my toes, one of which was missing. I dragged myself out of the car and called for help on my radio. It seemed like a lifetime before help arrived. While I was waiting, I prayed to God. I was also spiriting up blood, so I thought that I might have internal injuries that could be fatal. I asked God that if I lived, I would like to marry Kim, my fiancé of two months, and raise a family. In the evacuation plane from Somalia to Nairobi, a Belgian doctor and an American nurse gave me blood from their bodies, no mine."

I am here today because of the resources I had at my disposal. I had a radio to call for help and airplanes to evacuate me. Most landmine victims are not so lucky. The United Nations estimates that the average lifetime care of a landmine victim costs from $5,000 to $7,000. My medical costs have already exceeded a quarter of a million dollars. The statistics are staggering. Roughly every 20 minutes someone is killed or maimed by a landmine. That amounts to over 26,000 men, women and children each year injured through no fault of their own.

The number of victims has been portrayed in terms of shocking ratios: one in every 230 Cambodians is an amputee from a landmine injury. In Afghanistan, no one knows the exact numbers. Most mine victims die without anyone documenting the tragedy.

Today, there are hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors worldwide, including thousands of children, with no access to proper and affordable medical care and rehabilitation. Moreover, the number of victims is continuing to increase. We need the support of governments and the ICBL, co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

LSN Achievements

• Recognition by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in 1995 of LSN's contribution to the ICBL, co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

• A global ban treaty signed by 124 governments in 1998, including language recommending LSN urging signatories to rehabilitate mine victims, the first time humanitarians were included in an arms control treaty.

• A high-profile tour of Somalia in August by White, Rutherford and Diana, Princess of Wales, attracting global attention to the landmine issue just prior to the September
Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) worked to help mine victims and their families recover through an integrated program of peer counseling, sports, and social and economic integration into their communities. In countries in the developing world where landmines are prevalent, survivors lose more than a leg or arm; they often lose their place as a valued and respected member of their society. LSN works with survivors and their families to support their efforts to retrace their place and become productive members of their communities. For example, landmine survivors play a crucial role in landmine education, particularly for children within communities at risk. Since its inception, LSN has been building a worldwide network to link landmine survivors with the resources available to help them. LSN is developing the first comprehensive database designed to track the rehabilitation needs of mine victims and the organizations that can channel urgently needed assistance to the impoverished survivors who need it most.

Today, the network is concentrating its efforts on the mine-affected countries where most survivors live, including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, and Mozambique. In each country, we are working to bring medical supplies, education and employment opportunities to thousands of survivors. LSN is on the steering committee of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a coalition of more than 1,000 humanitarian, religious and development groups, that was a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

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Jerry White, co-founder and director of LSN, stepped on a mine in Israel in 1984 while hiking with friends. He has 18 years experience tracking the spread of weapons of mass destruction. A graduate of Brown University, White worked at the Brookings Institution prior to becoming assistant di-rector of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control in Washington, D.C. He has testified before Congress and published numerous articles in the New York Times.

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"I was 20 years old. I had taken time from my university studies in the United States to explore the Middle East. I wasn't a soldier. I carried only a backpack and an Arabic and Hebrew dictionary. Two friends and I had decided to explore northern Israel on a hiking trip. We were looking for a place to camp and had no idea that we had entered a mine field. There was no fence and no signs to keep us out. The next morning, on a beautiful spring day, I stepped on a mine. I can still remember the disemboweling blast, the rush of blood, heat and flash. Only when my friends rolled me over did they see the extent of my wounds. The explosions had ripped off my right foot, shattered my lacerated skin and my left leg. I had a stump that was a bone sticking out of my calf. We screamed for help but it seemed that no one but God could hear. Either I would bleed to death, or my friends would have to carry me out of the mine field. Luckily we made it out without further loss."

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"After the explosion, I first remember seeing a four-lane highway on the floorboard of my car. I remember thinking: Is it mine? It was. It was my right foot. I remember that I kept trying to put it back on, but it kept falling off. Then I looked at my left foot. The top part was ripped off and I could see bones going to my toes, one of which was missing. I dragged myself out of the car and called for help on my radio. It seemed like a lifetime before help arrived. While I was waiting, I prayed to God. I was also spiriting up blood, so I thought that I might have internal injuries that could be fatal. I asked God that if I lived, I would like to marry Kim, my fiancée of two months, and raise a family. In the evacuation plane from Somalia to Nairobi, a Belgian doctor and an American nurse gave me blood from their bodies to mine."

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"In Somalia, I was lucky. I was given an amputee facility and my medical needs were met. I was given an artificial leg and a car. I was able to get medical care. But in Afghanistan, where I was injured, there is no one knows the exact numbers. Most mine victims die without anyone documenting the tragedy."

"Today, there are hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors worldwide, including thousands of children, with no access to proper and affordable medical care and rehabilitation. Moreover, the number of victims is still increasing. The LSN/ICBL programs are unable to keep up with the demand."

LSN Achievements

• Recognition by the Norwegian Nobel Committee to LSN's co-founder, Ken Rutherford of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.
• A global ban treaty signed by 124 governments, including language recommended by LSN urging signatories to rehabilitate mine victims, the first time humanitarian assistance for victims to be included in an arms control treaty.
• High-profile tour in North America in August by White, Rutherford and Diana, Princess of Wales, attracting global attention to the landmine issue just prior to the September
P R O F I L E S

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Norwegian People's Aid

Founded in 1939, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is one of Norway's largest non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although NPA is currently involved in more than 300 projects in thirty countries, the organization still adheres to the basic principles set forth by its founders: solidarity, unity, human dignity, peace, and freedom. The range of NPA's projects is diverse, from extensive outreach programs for the people of Palestine, to short-term emergency relief programs and long-term development cooperation in over twelve countries in Africa, and more. One of NPA's most notable efforts is in humanitarian demining activities, centered in Asia and Africa.

A History of Excellence

It should come as no surprise that the founding principles of the NPA should have guided it to take a place as a driving force behind the world-wide humanitarian demining effort. Starting in 1992 with mine work in Cambodia, NPA has expanded their operations into several other countries, especially Mozambique, Angola, and Iraq. In accordance with the spirit of its founding principles, NPA not only tackles the physical problem of landmines, but the social and political factors that make mines such a determent to the development process of these recovering countries. The landmine must be addressed not only as a physical threat, but also as a symbolic anchor on the efforts to rehabilitate and rebuild a country.

With this in mind, NPA has developed a multi-faceted mine program that is easily adaptable to individual local needs, but always contains the following elements:

- Mapping of mine fields—NPA is quick to point out that the mapping of mine fields is nothing new, but the social angle which the organization imparts to the activity is. To NPA, mapping is not only an aid to the operation of demining, but an important psychological step to empowering the local population by limiting their paranoia fear of the mines.
- Training—NPA has developed a three-step program for training deminers, and a two-step program for training, accompanying medical personnel. The eventual goal of both programs is to make the local population self-sufficient, and eliminate the need for Norwegian presence within five years.
- Demining—NPA's demining operations are based on models used by the Norwegian Army, altered to fit peacekeeper goals. NPA points out that it has set the official UN standards for demining in many areas. One of the most successful elements of the organization's demining programs is the dog-sniffing project, started in October 1994. The dogs make a vital contribution to the demining effort by sniffing out mines and helping to determine the borders of mine fields, so miners do not waste time and resources clearing areas where there are no mines in the first place.
- Mine Awareness—NPA realizes that the extent of the landmine problem is so great, that even with the best of clearance efforts, the local populations of seriously affected countries will have to live with the daily threat of mines for at least the next thirty years. The organization's mine awareness program consists of instructor training and day-long courses for the local population. The secret of the program lies in the choice of instructors. NPA points out, "It is not enough for the person to be a good instructor, he or she must also be an important resource person that most of the local people will trust. In this way we ensure that the projects will continue for a long time without our presence."