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OUR EXPERTISE

Armed violence reduction

Handicap International - Humanity & Inclusion





Extensive experience and an enduring commitment

The history of Handicap International - Humanity & Inclusion (HI) is intrinsically linked to the fight against armed violence, whether caused by the presence of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions or explosive remnants of war or by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. From the moment it was created in 1982 to assist Cambodian refugee injured by landmines up to the adoption of the Political Declaration against the Bombing of Civilians by 83 States in 2022, HI's history has been marked by its humanitarian commitment to reducing the impact of conventional weapons and improvised explosive devices on civilian populations.

A global approach for saving lives and strengthening resilience

Thanks to its extensive experience in the world's most contaminated countries, HI is able to offer a holistic approach that closely combines action against explosive devices and small arms and light weapons with emergency interventions, early recovery and development actions and conflict transformation.

- Our aim is to provide appropriate, conflict-sensitive approaches designed to restore people's security, guide communities towards non-violent methods of conflict resolution and promote development.
- What sets us apart is that we covers all the main pillars of humanitarian mine action - humanitarian demining, victim assistance, risk education and advocacy - while working on the root causes of a conflict.

Demining and decontamination: releasing land back to the populations

The objective of demining is to release safe land or infrastructure back to the communities, reduce accidents and ensure the personal and economic safety of local populations. It enables them to rebuild, to resume farming and it allows the safe return of displaced people or refugees. To do so, HI mobilises a range of traditional and innovative practices, tools and techniques. Contaminated areas are cleared by teams of surveyors and deminers who survey the sites, decontaminate them and render them safe.

Our decontamination actions are based on adapted and effective study techniques

This enables us to validate the potential presence of explosive remnants of war in an area. A technical survey then provides formal confirmation one way or the other, enabling us to optimise and plan our operations.

Destruction of explosive devices

Demining is carried out manually by trained individuals organised into teams.

This meticulous work is facilitated by the use of equipment designed to prepare the ground (by cutting down vegetation, for example,) and detect or detonate explosive devices. Explosive detection dogs can also be used to support demining operations.

Innovation for preparing the future

HI uses innovative and complementary methodologies and technologies to improve the security, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of demining operations, taking into account operational issues. For example, our teams use drones to map suspected hazardous areas. Drones can produce very precise images and provide thermal analyses of very large areas, which enables our teams to locate the presence of suspicious explosive devices, establish more precise security perimeters and plan their demining operations more efficiently. As part of the Odyssée2025 project, which won the European Commission's Horizon Prize in 2020, we are also training other actors in the use of drones.

HI's ITHACA project provides field teams with body cameras for demining operations. These cameras allow access to confined or hard-to-reach areas, but also increase the safety of field teams by reducing the number of people on site, particularly during high-risk demining operations. They are also fitted with a real-time communication system providing direct contact with the teams. This allows them to receive technical assistance in real time. By improving the efficiency of demining operations, innovation is helping to exponentially reduce the risks and impact of explosive devices on communities.





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Risk education to reduce the number of accidents

Our experts, drawing on more than 20 years of experience, favour a global approach to risk education. The aim is to help affected communities improve the ways they manage risks and to reduce the number of accidents. Prevention activities involve raising awareness and bringing about changes in behaviour through:

- Community liaison carried out by trained local agents, which enables us to build a relationship of trust with communities and exchange and report vital information, such as the presence of explosive devices in uncharted areas. Community liaison enables local people to protect themselves better and helps the surveyors and deminers to identify and prioritise hazardous areas.
- Community-based risk education, aimed at people living near areas contaminated by explosive devices. We train focal points within the communities, who then take responsibility for sustainable risk prevention actions.
- Risk education in emergency contexts, aimed at vulnerable populations being displaced who will be exposed to the risks of explosive devices as they leave or return to their homes. We intervene when a conflict or emergency puts a population at risk from the presence of unexploded ordnance (newly mined areas, presence of explosive devices on the route to exile, etc.).
- Activities to prepare and protect civilians in the context of open conflicts (Gaza, Ukraine), which involve large-scale awareness-raising on the measures to take to stay safe and reduce the risks incurred in the event of explosive weapons use in urban areas, for example during bombings.
- Education on the risks associated with the circulation of small arms and light weapons, aimed to limit the number of accidents caused by the misuse and proliferation of these weapons. Our teams organise media campaigns (including spots on national radio stations), awareness-raising sessions and training for teachers, members of civil society and local authorities to provide better information and promote appropriate behaviour to reduce the risk of accidents.

FOCUS

A GLOBAL APPROACH

based on the needs of the populations.

HI has adopted an innovative approach to humanitarian mine action that incorporates a range of complementary activities. In other words, our organisation combines demining operations, risk education campaigns, victim assistance and conflict transformation activities, rather than juxtaposing compartmentalised actions, which would be more costly and have limited impact. Led by teams with complementary technical skills, our activities can be implemented in emergency, recovery or development settings. In the design of projects, we involve local people from the outset to ensure better and more sustainable coverage of their needs.

Advocacy campaigns to change policies and practices



HI first international advocacy campaign, launched with a number of other NGOs, led to the signing of the Ottawa Treaty in 1997, banning the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. For this campaign, HI and the other founding members were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The initiative was repeated with the Oslo Treaty signed in 2008, which banned the use of cluster munitions. In 2010, HI launched a new campaign to protect civilians from the bombing and shelling of cities and secure recognition of the devastating humanitarian consequences of these military practices. On 18 November 2022, 83 countries signed a political declaration in Dublin.

HI's legitimacy and strength are based on:

- our capacity to bear witness to the extent of the dangers of mines and cluster munitions and the catastrophic consequences for civilians of bombing in populated areas, and to provide an overview of the problem to be addressed.
- our commitment to monitoring the implementation of treaties and putting pressure on states to honour their undertakings.
- our desire to position ourselves as a mouthpiece for victims so that their voices are heard. To this end, HI collects and publishes their testimonies and works with those who wish to take part in international conferences.

Victim assistance

From clinical care to socio-economic inclusion, HI provides a range of solutions to cover all aspects of assistance to victims of mines and explosive remnants of war:

- Technical support for physical and functional rehabilitation centres and training for rehabilitation professionals (physiotherapists, orthopaedic technicians, occupational therapists, etc.).
- Psychosocial support, creating and linking support networks for survivors.
- Education, vocational training, employment and access to rehabilitation and social services to allow the socio-economic inclusion of victims with disabilities.
- Training and support for governments to introduce public policies in favour of mine victims, in accordance with the obligations of the United Nations.

Conflict transformation

HI differs from other organisations working to reduce armed violence in that we integrate conflict transformation activities into our programmes.

Conflict transformation reduces the likelihood of a conflict becoming violent and requiring emergency intervention. It also makes it possible to reduce the scale and duration of an emergency, support the conditions necessary for the safe and voluntary return of populations and create the conditions for a transition to a more stable environment. Conflict transformation responds to local conflicts with community-based solutions.

This approach aims to highlight and then reduce the structural inequalities and systemic violence that are the root causes of violent conflict. By offering awareness-raising sessions on non-violent conflict management, detailed mapping of local mediation mechanisms, participatory risk identification and reduction exercises and training in inclusive governance, HI helps to bring about a lasting transformation in the power dynamics and thus strengthen the resilience of communities to the risks of violent conflict.

Key figures

24 countries | 65 projects

SEE MAP OPPOSITE⁽¹⁾



60 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES are still contaminated by mines⁽²⁾

3 984 367 m² OF LAND was cleared and released back to the communities by HI in 2023⁽³⁾

56 CIVILIAN CASUALTIES⁽⁴⁾ per day CAUSED BY EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

AROUND

1 BILLION SMALL ARMS

and light weapons in circulation in the world⁽⁵⁾

THE **second biggest**

cause of conflict-related deaths among civilians⁽⁶⁾.

SOME

31 273

people killed or injured by explosive weapons in 2022⁽⁷⁾

WHEN USED IN POPULATED AREAS,

90% of casualties are civilians⁽⁸⁾

570 022

PEOPLE INFORMED

about the dangers of weapons in 2023⁽⁹⁾



¹ HI Network's Annual Report 2023 | ² Landmine Monitor 2023 | ³ HI data 2023 | ⁴ Explosive Violence Monitor: 2022 (AOAV) | ⁵ Small Arms and Light Weapons, Security Council Report – October 2021 | ⁶ Small arms and light weapons, Report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/823) | ⁷ Or an 83% increase on 2021 | ⁸ Explosive Violence Monitor : 2022 (AOAV) | ⁹ HI Network's Annual report 2023

Main partners

UNMAS (United Nation Mine Action Service) | GICHD (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining) | ICBL (International Campaign to Ban Landmines) | MAG, Halo Trust, Danish Church Aid, Danish Demining Group, and Norwegian People Aid | Centres for humanitarian demining (local authorities), and all countries in which HI operates.

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