

# CAMBODIA MINED EARTH

November 28 – December 2, 2011

Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine  
Ban Convention

Phnom Penh, Cambodia



PRESS KIT

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# The Phnom Penh Meeting: A step closer to a universal ban on anti-personnel mines

## OTTAWA TREATY

Signed in 1997, the Ottawa Treaty bans the use, production, transfer and sale of anti-personnel mines and requires Signatory States to destroy their stockpiles, decontaminate their territories and assist victims. Twelve years after the treaty entered into force (1999), it is now a recognized international standard respected by most States worldwide. There are currently 159 Signatory States. Among the 37 states that have yet sign are major military powers, including the United States, China, Russia and Israel: <http://www.icbl.org/index.php>.

Cambodia signed the Ottawa Treaty on December 3, 1997, and ratified it on July 28, 1999, becoming a State Party to the treaty on January 1, 2000.

The 11th Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention will be held from November 28 to December 2, 2011, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This annual meeting provides States Parties with an update on progress toward implementing the treaty. This year, the Phnom Penh Meeting will also provide an opportunity to review progress on the Cartagena Action Plan adopted in 2009 at the second review Meeting of States Parties. The plan commits States Parties to undertake a range of specific actions in order to implement the Mine Ban Convention, including the destruction of stockpiles, demining and victim assistance. For States Parties, this meeting will also provide an opportunity to underline their commitment to the convention and to denounce the use of anti-personnel mines by non-States Parties in 2011:

**In Libya**, government forces under Col. Gadhafi used mines against rebels in March 2011. On April 27, 2011, the Libyan National Transitional Council issued a statement renouncing the use of landmines (anti-personnel and anti-vehicle) and agreed to destroy its stockpiles. The Council also expressed its desire to cooperate with demining, mine-risk education and victim assistance activities, and would like the future government to sign the convention.

**In Israel**, the army used anti-personnel mines to dissuade Syrian demonstrators from entering the Golan Heights.

**Myanmar** (Burma) continues to regularly use landmines.

Media, such as the Associated Press, has reported new use of landmines by **Syrian** troops near Syria's border with Lebanon.

Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including Handicap International, that are members of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), will be present in Phnom Penh to meet with delegations and outline their expectations regarding the implementation of the treaty. Several mine victims will also speak at the meeting to testify to the brutal nature of these weapons and remind States of their obligations as they work toward a "world without mines." Several non-States Parties, including South Sudan, could announce their intention to sign the Ottawa Treaty during the Phnom Penh Meeting.

Handicap International will launch a new report on victim assistance in Cambodia at the meeting. This report, which includes testimonies from 24 anti-personnel mine victims, sheds light on the structural deficiencies of victim assistance policies.



## “The Phnom Penh meeting is an opportunity to check if States have risen to the challenge”

Marion Libertucci,  
weapons advocacy manager for Handicap International

### **What's at stake during this meeting?**

It's an opportunity to review progress toward the operational implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan two years after its adoption. The States have committed themselves to taking 67 practical steps by 2014, including mine clearance, victim assistance and the destruction of stockpiles. The meeting is an opportunity to check if States have risen to the challenge and have deployed all necessary means to achieve these objectives.

### **What is Handicap International expecting from this meeting?**

Detailed and practical presentations of activities performed by States since last year. Some of them are behind schedule on demining and the destruction of stockpiles, and victim assistance is not always provided. We hope that States have realized the scale of the task and are able to announce tangible results. Several non-States Parties may sign the Ottawa Treaty, which would represent a major step forward: Only one State has ratified the convention since 2007.

### **Why do we need to keep up the pressure?**

More people fall victim to mines every day. And the injured are not correctly case-managed. An NGO like ours, which works in the field, has to maintain pressure on public authorities as long as this intolerable situation persists. What's more, Libya and Israel, two non-States Parties, laid new anti-personnel mines in 2011. Myanmar continues using landmines on a regular basis and some reports from press agencies suggest Syria recently used them too. These are examples of why we need to remain mobilized to ensure all States sign the Ottawa Convention - it's the only way of bringing the carnage caused by these weapons to an end.

# Cambodia

## A land ravaged



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Devastated by almost four decades of civil war and international conflict, Cambodia is one of the countries most affected by anti-personnel mines in the world.

## A TERRITORY CHOKED BY ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS

In the 1960s, the Vietnam War created an unstable political climate across Southeast Asia. Between 1975 and 1978, between 1.5 and 3 million people – 35 percent of the population, died in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge regime. Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, and his supporters made widespread use of anti-personnel mines, which the dictator considered to be “perfect soldiers.”<sup>1</sup>

“Mines are the perfect soldier, because they work constantly, they do not abandon their post, they do not eat, they do not ask for anything, and most importantly, they take away the enemy’s desire for combat.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1979, Vietnam intervened to overthrow the Khmer Rouge regime and seize control of the government. Armed groups took control of Cambodia and laid new anti-personnel mines on already contaminated land. The northwest provinces of Cambodia along the Thai border were the most heavily affected.<sup>3</sup>

The conflict raged on and the use of anti-personnel mines rose throughout the 1980s. To protect its territory, the Cambodian government laid a 650 mile K5 mine belt along its border. Every 0.62 mile of this belt contains 2,400 explosive devices.<sup>4</sup>

## CLUSTER MUNITIONS IN CAMBODIA

### What’s the state of play in 2011?

Cambodia is also one of the countries most affected by cluster munitions in the world. During the Vietnam War, the United States dropped 26 million cluster munitions, 1.9 to 5.8 million of which did not explode on impact. (Source: Landmine Monitor 2010)

- In February 2011, during clashes with Cambodia, Thailand used cluster munitions in the disputed territory around the Preah Vihear temple.
- Cambodia has not yet signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, despite the fact that it was one of the most active countries during the treaty negotiations. However, Cambodia declared in June 2011 that it wanted to sign the treaty in the near future.

1. BBC NEWS – 2003

2. Report from Francisco V. Garonce for the OAS (Organization of American States): [http://www.oas.org/en/americas/pdf/2010/sep/InterAm510\(E\).pdf](http://www.oas.org/en/americas/pdf/2010/sep/InterAm510(E).pdf)

3. Landmine Monitor.

4. Op. cit

## A HEAVY TOLL ON HUMAN LIVES

Every month in 1990, 200 Cambodians were victims of a mine accident. Since the democratic elections of 1993, thousands of Cambodian refugees who fled to Thailand have returned to their country. This influx has led to an increase in mine victims, mainly among people trying to resettle the land they were forced to leave several years previously.

- Between 4 and 6 million anti-personnel mines are still scattered across the country, most of which were laid by Vietnam during the Indochina Wars;<sup>5</sup>
- Some 65,000 victims have died or have been injured in explosions caused by mines or explosive remnants of war since 1979;<sup>6</sup>
- Cambodia is one of the countries with the most mine-accident survivors in the world. Since 1979, 44,000 survivors were identified out of a total population of 13.5 million - nearly one person in 300. They need assistance and care for life;<sup>7</sup>
- Children account for one third of civilian landmine casualties in Cambodia;<sup>8</sup>
- 286 new victims were identified in 2010. Cambodia is one of five countries with the largest number of new victims (the others are Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan and Myanmar).<sup>9</sup>



Some landmine victims are waiting for a consult in the rehabilitation Center of Siem Reap.

5. Cambodia Mine Action Center

6. Landmine Monitor 2010

7,8,9. Op. cit



Testimony of Mom, 22,  
a victim of an anti-personnel mine at the age of eight:

**“ Later, I will have a job  
like anyone else. ”**

Mom is a 22-year-old Cambodian woman who was fitted with a prosthesis at the age of eight. Now a student, she continues to attend the Kompong Cham rehabilitation center.

“My name is Mom, I’m 22 years old. I come to the physical rehabilitation center in Kompong Cham to have my prosthesis checked. When I was eight, I lived with my family in the region of Tonle Sap. I come from a poor family and we reared pigs. My job was to gather vegetables in the woods to feed the pigs. One day, I stepped on a mine that exploded and tore off my right leg. I was taken to the Tonle Sap health center, but since my wound was so bad, I was evacuated to a hospital in Kampong Thom. After six months in [the] hospital, I was transferred to Handicap International’s orthopedic center in Kampong Thom.”

Fitted with an artificial limb and rehabilitated in Handicap International’s centers in 1995, Mom now takes part in the organization’s awareness raising activities by sharing her story with the public.

“Some of you know me already... When I was eight, I was fitted with my artificial limb and Handicap International told my story in its communications campaigns. Today, I am 22, I still have my artificial limb, I can go anywhere I like. I have been able to study, and later I will have a job like anyone else. For all of this, I am very grateful.”

Since this interview, Mom is working as a secretary for Handicap International. She got married at the beginning of this year and she’s expecting her first baby for next spring.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STIFLED BY THE SCARS OF WAR



Savy Voeun, 12 years old, walked on a landmine, five meters away from her house. After the accident, her father found 35 other mines around their dwelling.

Cambodia continues to feel the after-effects of 30 years of war: Despite a huge drop in the annual number of victims (4,320 in 1996 compared with 286 in 2010) due to efforts made by the Cambodian government and NGOs, hundreds of square miles have not yet been cleared:

**Nearly half of villages are contaminated** with explosive devices.<sup>10</sup>

**80 percent of Cambodians live in rural areas** and most earn a living from agriculture.<sup>11</sup> The real or suspected presence of mines prevents people from farming their fields or performing everyday tasks. Some peasants are still at risk by entering mined fields because they have no other way of feeding themselves, their family or community.

**The mines have a serious socio-economic and environment impact in Cambodia.** By limiting access to farmland, water, roads, infrastructure and schools, they keep an already destitute country in extreme poverty (Cambodia has a low human development index (HDI) and ranks 169 out of 196 countries<sup>12</sup>).

In 2000, during an international summit at U.N. headquarters in New York, **eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** were adopted to eradicate poverty around the world by 2015. Mines are a major obstacle to achieving the MDGs. This is why the Cambodia, like Laos, created a ninth MDG in 2009 relating to demining and victim assistance.

> An estimated **276 square miles of Cambodian land was still mined by 2010**. So far, it has taken 17 years of relentless work to clear 193 square miles. Faced with the complexity and scale of the task ahead, Cambodia requested and was granted a 10-year extension in 2009 to complete the decontamination of its territory. Cambodia will not achieve this task without the help of the international community.

10. The Landmine Impact Survey – 2002.

11. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>

12. UN Development Program 2010

13. Landmine Monitor – 2010

# Cambodia: Birthplace of Handicap International's anti-mines campaign

Handicap International's history is closely linked to Cambodia: The organization was founded nearly 30 years ago in the Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand.<sup>14</sup>

Handicap International was established in 1982 in the camps of Khao I Dang, where 160,000 survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime had taken refuge. Shocked by the suffering of thousands of Cambodians maimed by anti-personnel mines, a group of young doctors and physiotherapists set up an orthopedic-fitting project for amputees.



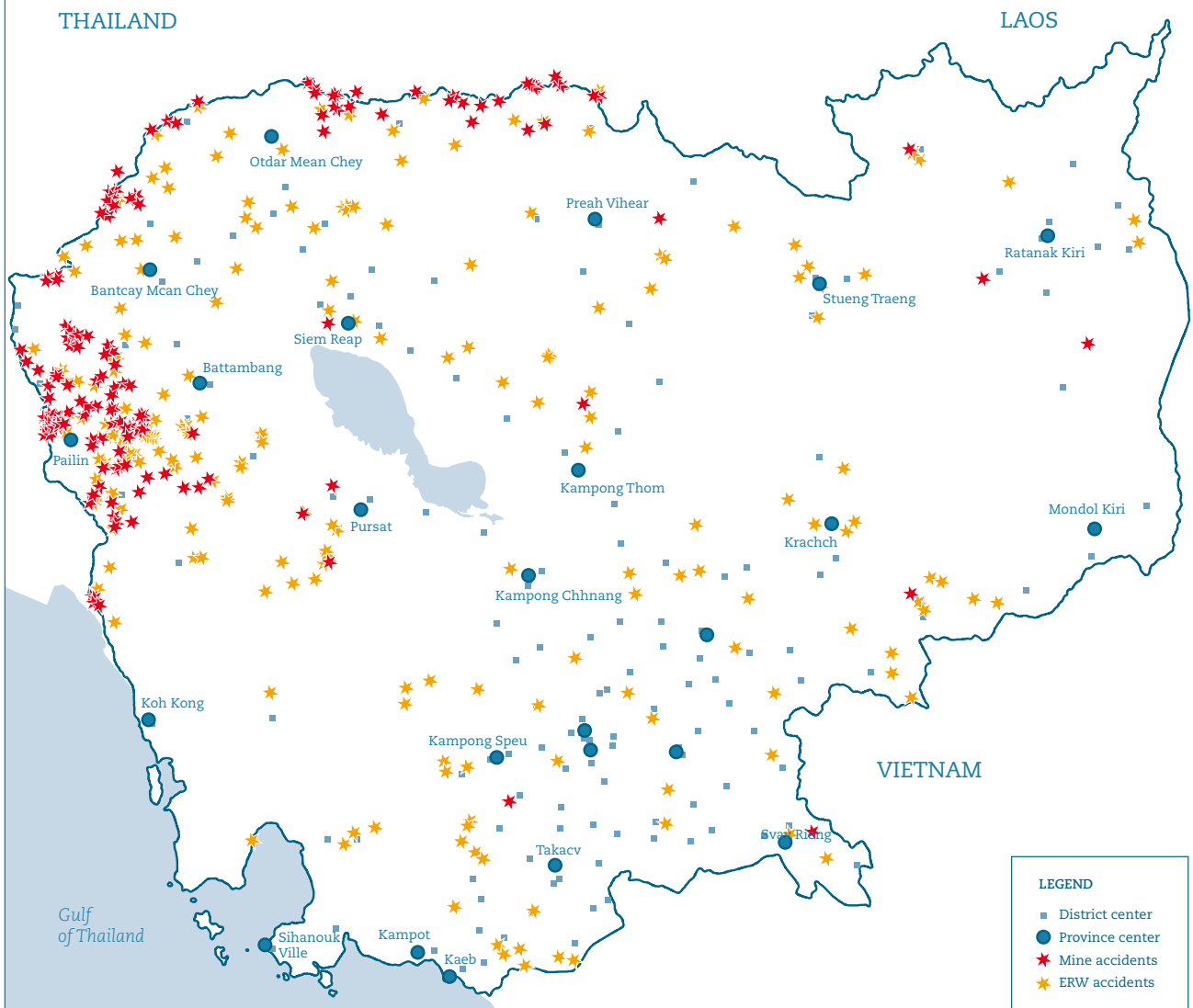
Gnep, one of the first beneficiaries of Handicap International, in Cambodia.

- They produced simple, solid, repairable and adjustable orthopedic devices using local materials (leather, wood, iron bars, used tires, etc.). Sophisticated devices would have been useless because they were impossible to repair and there was a lack of necessary materials there.
- They set up simple physical rehabilitation programs to prevent potential deformities and to teach people how to walk again.
- They worked in close cooperation with medical teams to improve the case-management of victims through appropriate surgical operations.
- Handicap International's specialists also devoted a lot of time and energy to training local technicians to provide follow-up care to patients and case-manage new mine victims.

However, the teams soon realized that the prostheses were not a sufficient response to the distress felt by victims. By founding the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) with five other NGOs in 1992, Handicap International committed itself to a long political fight. Following a campaign supported by communities, NGOs and some States, the Mine Ban Treaty was signed in Ottawa, Canada, in 1997. The organization members of the ICBL were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the same year.

<sup>14</sup> Handicap International was founded in 1982 by Claude Simonnot, Yves Gaumeton and Jean-Baptiste Richardier, the organization's current Executive Director.

# Cambodia Mine/ERW contamination and accident location



Source: Cambodia Mine Action Center.

## ACTIONS AGAINST EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR



### Humanitarian demining

Contamination by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions poses a permanent threat to the Cambodian people and stifles the economic development of affected communities. These weapons kill, maim and inflict serious psychological damage. The healing process can be very long.

Handicap International has been conducting humanitarian demining operations to help people return to their land since 1995. Between October 2008 and March 2011, the organization worked in 60 villages in Kampong Cham, Kratie and Svay Rieng. More than 956,792 square yards have been cleared and 20,000 mines and explosive remnants of war have been destroyed.

From December 2011, demining operations will be extended to new contaminated villages in the region.

A mine clearance expert from the Cambodia Mine Action Center, who was trained by Handicap International.

### Risk education

Between October 2008 and December 2011, Handicap International organized mine and cluster munition risk-education sessions for children aged 10 to 15. Around 120,000 people in 120 villages in the provinces of Battambang, Pailin, Banteay Meanchey, Otdar Meanchey and Siem Reap have already benefited from these sessions. The organization also provides risk-prevention education in 11 districts for police officers, who then serve as awareness coordinators for people at risk.

From December 2011, Handicap International, in partnership with the Cambodia Mine Action Center, will start the second phase of the pro-active battle area clearance project. Pro-active means that a team of deminers visits a village for a longer period of time, conducting risk education and a contamination study followed by clearance operations, in the provinces of Kompong Cham, Kratie and Svay Rieng.



A mine-risk education session for children.

### Rehabilitation

In 1992, the organization expanded its orthopedic-fitting and rehabilitation activities in Cambodia to help victims "stand tall." Between 2002 and 2010, Handicap International ran two physical rehabilitation centers in Siem Reap and Takeo provinces to help 5,000 people.

Since Handicap International took over the management of the Kompong Cham rehabilitation center in 2002, the number of beneficiaries has increased fourfold, with an increase in orthotic and prosthetic production and the steady development of the orthopedic, physiotherapy and socio-economic inclusion services. Since 2008, 2,500 patients attend the center every year, half of whom are children.

In 2010, Handicap International produced 310 prostheses, 500 orthoses and 200 wheelchairs for the center.



Rehabilitation session in the Takeo Center.

### Entrepreneurship

Since 2002, the organization has run socio-professional inclusion projects for victims of mines and explosive remnants of war. These aim to reduce the social exclusion and poverty of people with disabilities and improve their living conditions over the long-term. Over three years, 560 people and their families have been provided with support.

# Contacts



## Bruno Leclercq

Head of Handicap International's Policy Unit

A lawyer by training, Bruno Leclercq has worked for Handicap International's Belgian national association for 12 years. He was initially appointed Africa Desk Officer before becoming the Asia Desk Officer at the Brussels office (1999-2004).

Currently the head of the organization's policy unit, he has also spent five years in the field in Cambodia (2004-2009) as Program Director.



## Jeroen Stol

Field Program Director in Cambodia  
for Handicap International's Belgian national association

Jeroen Stol has worked for Handicap International for three years. He was Field Program Director in the Maldives before holding the same position in Cambodia. He manages the organization's demining and risk-education activities. Jeroen is also responsible for organizing activities in the fields of road safety, prevention, rehabilitation and the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in Cambodia.



## Paul Vermeulen

Advocacy and International Relations Manager at Handicap International

Paul Vermeulen was the co-founder of Handicap International's Swiss national association in 1996, and its director until 2011.

Paul played a key role in Swiss and international campaigns to ban anti-personnel mines in 1997 and cluster munitions in 2008.



## Benjamin Nguyen

Field Program Director in Cambodia  
and Thailand for Handicap International

Trained in international affairs and development, Benjamin Nguyen initially worked in Cambodia in 1994. He runs socio-professional inclusion projects for victims of mines and explosive remnants of war, and is responsible for activities at the Kampong Cham rehabilitation center.

He also organizes inclusive education activities in Cambodia and support for people with disabilities in Burmese camps in Thailand.

# Appendices

## ABOUT HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL



Handicap International is an independent international aid organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. Working alongside disabled and vulnerable people, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs and improving their living conditions. Handicap International also promotes respect for their dignity and their fundamental rights. Since it began in 1982, Handicap International has set up development programs in more than 60 countries and works in numerous emergency situations. There are eight national organizations in the Handicap International network: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, the United States and Switzerland. Together, they continuously mobilize resources, jointly manage projects and extend the organization's principles and actions around the world. Handicap International is one of six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. Handicap International operates and campaigns wherever it is a challenge to "stand tall".

### The fight against anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions

Despite the entry into force of two ban treaties, more than 80 countries or territories around the world are contaminated by mines and cluster munitions. These weapons pose a daily threat to more than 16 million civilians, sometimes decades after the end of military action. This conservative estimate is based on data gathered in just seven contaminated countries.



### How anti-personnel mines work

First developed in the 19th century, anti-personnel mines have been systematically deployed in conflicts since the Second World War. Buried in the ground or hidden in vegetation, they can be set off by direct contact or setting off a trip wire. They explode on the ground or in the air, and kill or maim by scattering metal fragments.

### How cluster bombs work

These weapons can be dropped from aircraft or fired as missiles. The container opens in the air and ejects cluster munitions over a wide area. Designed in principle to explode on contact with the ground or intended target, an estimated 5 percent to 40 percent do not explode on impact and continue to maim and kill innocent civilians for decades, just like anti-personnel mines.

