The Landmine Action
Smart Book
Abandoned landmines and other remnants of war have left humankind with a terrible and deadly legacy. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians—many of them young children—are killed or injured by landmines each year.

However, the impact of these abandoned weapons—which can be found in nearly 60 countries—is even more insidious and far-reaching. Landmines keep people from leading normal, productive lives; they hinder agriculture and economic development; and they undermine the establishment of lasting peace and stability in areas beset by war and conflict.

This situation can change, however, through the concerted efforts of governments and private citizens. The first step is to understand the nature and scope of the global landmine problem, and the tools available to solve it. Providing that information is the purpose of this booklet. While our goal is to inform and educate, it is also our hope that after reading this book you will “become smart” on mine action and will be in the best position to join with other concerned individuals and groups to help make the world mine-safe.
The Landmine Action Smart Book
Why should I get involved?

Since you are looking at this book, you are undoubtedly someone who wants to be informed about a serious issue—one that affects the citizens of over 60 nations; one that adversely affects the health and well-being of countless civilians worldwide; and one that impedes progress and stability on virtually every continent of the globe.

People who want to add their skills, talents and energy to the global effort to eradicate landmines contact the Mine Action Information Center (MAIC) at James Madison University in Virginia continually. Lacking knowledge about the basic issues involved in mine action, they often ask: "How can I get involved?" and "Whom should I contact?"

There are a number of resources available at the MAIC and elsewhere to help people get involved. This edition of The Landmine Action Smart Book is perhaps the best place to start. This book was designed to give readers a basic introduction to the subject of mine action, a discipline that includes a diverse set of activities such as landmine clearance, research and development of new demining technologies and practices, mine risk education, survivor assistance, planning and coordination, and policy formulation.

Each chapter of the Smart Book provides an overview of the components involved in reaching our ultimate goal of a world that is safe from the threat of landmines. The chapter on International Diplomacy outlines the efforts undertaken by various government and non-government entities to limit the use and threat of these weapons. Other chapters will help you to learn more about the strategies employed to limit the damage to the health and welfare of civilian populations for whom landmines are a daily concern. At the end of this book you will find helpful suggestions to get you started on the road to action and a list of websites to further guide you in your endeavors.

Increasingly, professional mine action organizations and governments have recognized that they alone cannot solve the residual problems of landmines and abandoned ordnance; the problem is too complex and must compete with other humanitarian assistance priorities of donor states. Thus, the involvement of private individuals and philanthropic organizations is critical to augment government funding and help ensure significant and timely results.

Therefore, it is the goal of this publication to provide you, the reader, with the background needed to answer the most important question one can ask: "How can I help?"
What is a landmine?

A landmine is an explosive device activated by a person or vehicle, or command-detonated by electric wire or radio signal. Most landmines are laid on or below the surface of the ground. Normally manufactured from durable materials such as plastic, bakelite, concrete, glass or metal, landmines are designed to survive the effects of weather, seasons and time. The purpose of a landmine is to disable, immobilize or kill.

What are the consequences of using landmines?

Years of war have left millions of scattered and unrecorded landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in scores of countries. The current nature of war and terrorism places the threat of landmines squarely on the doorstep of civilians. Civilian men, women and especially children, who often mistake mines and UXO for toys, make up the bulk of all mine accident victims in peacetime. Sadly, countries recovering from conflict are ill-prepared to address the following problems associated with landmines:

A Place in History

Mines activated by pressure first appeared in the American Civil War. Brigadier General Gabriel J. Bains of the Confederate Army designed the devices. Though used on a limited basis, the mines caused panic and fear among Union troops. General William Sherman of the Union Army stated that landmines "were not war, but murder." Several of these first mines survived the elements and were discovered near Mobile, Alabama, in 1960.

Unusable Land: Consider the effect that a few mines can have on a village. "In 1996, Norwegian Peoples Aid cleared a village in Mozambique after it had been abandoned by the entire population of around 10,000 villagers due to alleged mine infestation. After three months of work, the deminers found four mines. Four mines had denied the people access to their homes and land and caused the dislocation of 10,000 people."

Health Problems: Landmines impact the health of affected populations in the following ways:

Direct Health Consequences:
- Mines kill and maim innocent civilians long after conflicts have ended.
- Mined agricultural land and water contribute to malnutrition and waterborne diseases.
- Mined public places and roadways prevent food delivery and make it difficult for mobile health and vaccination teams to access the area, which can result in an increase in childhood killer diseases that are otherwise preventable.
- Amputation and injuries requiring blood infusions drain local blood supplies.
**Indirect Health Consequences:** Landmine accidents affect entire families and communities. Death, or the disability of a parent, takes an economic toll on the family and emotionally scars the widow or widower and children. Caring for the injured survivor can put enormous stress on a family. Medical treatment, transportation and rehabilitation costs can further impoverish a family.

**Developmental Consequences:** If landmines are present or are suspected, no economic development can occur. In order to develop an area successfully, people need access to roads, water, markets, schools and facilities. Landmines also hinder travel and inhibit the mobility of teachers, technicians and employers, restrict the availability of goods and services—particularly food—and impede the restoration of normal community services.

**What is mine action?**

Mine action involves reducing the social, economic and environmental impact of mines and UXO. Mine action is not just about demining, removing mines and destroying UXO. It is also about people and societies and how they are affected by landmine contamination. The objective of mine action is to address victims’ needs and to reduce the risk posed by landmines so that people can live safely and so that economic, social and health development can occur freely.

Mine action has five recognized components:

- Humanitarian demining
- Survivor assistance
- Mine risk education
- Stockpile destruction
- Diplomacy

By addressing the full spectrum of mine action activities, the goal is to develop a comprehensive and systematic way of dealing with UXO and mine problems in a societal context, while meeting the needs of individually affected people. The Landmine Action Smart Book summarizes many of the critical components of mine action.