REMOVING BARRIERS TO GROWTH
HOW LANDMINES AFFECT AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

LANDMINE FREE 2025
Mine Action in Africa

When a conflict ends, landmines and ‘explosive remnants of war’ (ERW) often remain.

These items can continue to kill and maim for decades after a conflict has ended, preventing communities from being able to use their land and access key services like hospitals, markets, and schools.

Landmine and cluster munition contamination affects 18 countries and disputed territories in Africa, many of which are also impacted by related disarmament issues, such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, management of weapons stockpiles, and illicit cross-border transfer of weapons. All of these issues hinder development growth across the continent, destabilising regions and preventing land from being used to its full potential.

In 2015, Mozambique became the first heavily mined country in the world to declare themselves landmine-free. This was a major humanitarian success, with over 220,000 landmines found and destroyed over the course of 23 years. However, many nations in Africa remain among the most heavily mine contaminated countries worldwide, including Angola, South Sudan, and Egypt.

While the remaining problem is large, Mozambique’s success shows that ridding the African continent, and indeed the world, of landmines is achievable with the right level of funding and support.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063

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<th>Agenda 2063</th>
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<td>A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development</td>
<td>Land release enables safe access to natural resources, promoting economic growth and sustainable tourism</td>
<td>Mine action provides decent work and transferable skills for affected communities, including youth and persons with disabilities</td>
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<td>An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa’s Renaissance</td>
<td>The removal of explosive hazards fosters industrialisation and the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure</td>
<td>Mine-free roads provide access to transportation systems, integrating enterprises into value chains and markets</td>
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<td>A peaceful and secure Africa</td>
<td>Removing explosive hazards and providing education on safe behaviour reduce violence and casualties</td>
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Landmines continue to cause casualties across Africa, with the highest levels being reported in Nigeria (234) and Libya (184) per annum.

Over 3,000 square kilometres of land remains contaminated by landmines in Africa.

Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Morocco, South Sudan and Zimbabwe remain the most heavily contaminated countries in Africa, each country totalling over 20 square kilometres of mined land.

All figures based on Landmine Monitor 2018 data.
Infrastructure Development and Mine Action

Throughout Africa, landmine contamination hinders development by blocking access to key infrastructure, such as dams, roads, and railways.

Safe land is the first step to follow-on economic development in isolated regions. Mine clearance re-establishes access to areas, populations and infrastructure previously cut off from the country’s economy.

Landmine clearance enables countries to reclaim areas affected by conflict and re-establish pre-existing economic linkages and trade routes.

Landmine clearance provides the basis for safe entry of government, businesses and NGOs to enable economic prosperity and inclusive development, with no one left behind.

In a recent study by the World Bank, it was found that poor infrastructure in some areas of Africa reduced national economic growth by up to two percentage points every year and cut business prosperity by as much as 40 per cent.

Reliable transportation infrastructure, in road, rail, air and ports is an essential component of all countries’ competitiveness. Landmine clearance is a one component contributing to the establishment of safe and efficient routes for the movement of people and goods across the African continent. Key regional infrastructure, including railways and Trans-African Highways run through land contaminated by mines.

Mine Contamination along Trans-African Highway #9

Nine Trans-African Highways connect the African continent.

Developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the African Union, and local and regional governments, this network aims to promote trade and alleviate poverty by connecting communities across Africa.

The Trans-African Highway Number 9 transects across five countries in Southern Africa, two of which are heavily landmine contaminated (Angola and Zimbabwe) and two of which are now landmine free (Zambia and Mozambique).

The maps below show sections of Trans-African Highway #9 (in black) in Angola and Mozambique. While the Mozambique section of the highway can now be developed and expanded safely without fear of threat from mine contamination (cleared minefields shown in green dots below), many Angolan sections remain heavily contaminated. There are minefields close to the road, as shown by the red dots along the route below.

Mine clearance has also enabled improved access to key sections of the Nacala Corridor, a major transportation route in Mozambique, shown in blue, that were previously impacted by landmines.

“Somewhere in the world right now, a parent is making the grimmest of choices: to risk cultivating mine-contaminated land or to let their family starve. That is no choice at all.”

-HRH Prince Harry
During its construction in the 1970s a very large minefield was laid on the Cahora Bassa Dam’s southern side, to protect it from sabotage during the War of Independence. The minefield’s presence greatly reduced local people’s ability to cultivate land and rear livestock. It placed animals and herders in danger of injury and death. As food security was already severely impacted by pests and cyclical droughts, there was an urgent need for mine clearance, as well as wider initiatives to support the local community.

The HALO Trust worked in partnership with the local community, Hydroelectrica de Cahora Bassa, the World Food Programme and HelpAge International in order to enhance the effect of clearance around the dam. By 2014, HALO had completely cleared 17km of the minefield, destroying over 26,000 landmines in the process, allowing the land to be opened up for cultivation, increasing trade with neighbouring communities and facilitating the refurbishment of the Cahora Bassa dam.

Today, the dam is the second largest hydroelectric power plant in Southern Africa, serving as a key renewable energy source to both South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi River is one of Mozambique’s most important assets, supplying electricity not only to Mozambique, but also to neighbouring countries.
Along the Kitgum-Gulu highway, a landmine exploded under our bus as I was travelling from my work station to join my family for Christmas. The ensuing blast shattered part of my right leg. I could not run but managed to crawl away from the scene before being spotted by a rebel who picked whatever he could get from me. Playing dead saved me from being abused by the rebels.

Bleeding heavily, there was nothing I could do in the middle of the isolated area until the army came to our rescue after nearly an hour. The army took all the injured to a nearby health unit that was ill equipped to handle our emergencies. It was not until after eight or more hours later that I was transferred to Lacor Mission hospital over 80 kms away in a cattle truck. I made it alive and underwent surgery, stayed for two nights in the intensive care unit and was moved to the wards on Christmas day.

My life took a difficult path after this traumatic event as my five children were forced out of our rented house in Kampala and I was without a job.

I faced rejection, became bitter and worried about my helpless situation. The resilience within me kept me hoping for a better life afterwards. I realized that by holding on to the past, my inner healing would suffer. Sharing my experience and telling of the trauma, pain and suffering encountered helped in my healing process. Here I am today after that difficult road to recovery and the transformation from victim to survivor, to peace advocate.

I still continue to campaign against use of antipersonnel landmine and for improved assistance to landmine victims with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). In 2006 I was named ICBL Ambassador. Later in 2014 the Institute for Peace & Justice of the University of San Diego named me as a Woman Peace Maker. In 2018 I received the European Union Human Rights Defenders Award.

Looking back over 20 years, a lot has changed. I am successfully rehabilitated and empowered to fulfil my life.

I made it and so can others if they are ready to let go of the past and embrace the process of peace and reconciliation.”

In a survey of respondents randomly selected from Hameshkorib, Tallok and Wad El Helaw localities, 94 per cent reported that they had changed their behaviour after attending the RE session.

A total of 89 per cent of them started to avoid areas suspected to be contaminated by landmines and ERW, and 43 per cent started to inform others about presence of suspicious objects.

Meanwhile, 9 per cent answered that they had stopped collecting suspicious objects such as scrap metals.

The results from this survey indicated that MRE sessions may bring better knowledge and safer behaviours towards landmines and ERW in the community.

A portion of local community members may have acted unsafely towards landmines and ERW if they had not had participated in MRE sessions.

MRE is a vital step in the process of mine action, especially for communities where landmine clearance has not yet taken place, contributing towards casualty reduction as communities learn to adopt safer behaviours when living in landmine contaminated areas.
How Does Mine Clearance Facilitate Investment And Development In Africa?

Increased GDP
After declaring themselves “mine free” in 2015, Mozambique is now open for business. In a 2018 study, titled ‘Landmines and Spatial Development’, researchers found that Mozambique’s GDP in 2015 would have been an estimated 15-25 per cent lower if no landmine clearance had occurred. This demonstrates that landmine clearance directly facilitates economic growth.

Economic Payoff for Communities
Clearing minefields along the transportation network and rural areas of commercial importance to the local community seem to map into larger economic payoffs than interventions in remote and at-the-border areas” throughout Mozambique. Landmine clearance facilitates more efficient transport of local agricultural produce to wider markets.

Decreased Journey Times
Further research from the study shows that 16 per cent of minefields in Mozambique were located along major transportation networks, and that had no landmine clearance taken place, journey times would have been three-and-a-half times longer to transit.


Photo (below): In landmine-affected countries like Angola, Japanese-owned Nikken Corporation works with national demining authorities to develop fit-for-purpose mechanical demining equipment for use in efficient and effective clearance techniques. In 2009, Nikken supplied Angola’s National Demining Institute (INAD) with mechanical clearance assets that were used to clear Catumbela airport in Benguela Province.

In Zimbabwe, families from Mozambique regularly cross the border at Mukumbura to trade goods, like the Matlas family who have come to trade maize and shoes. The HALO Trust has cleared sections of the minefield at Mukumbura for safe crossing.

In landmine affected territories like Somaliland, mines laid along roads have hindered safe access to food, doubling journey times and fuel costs for local farmers and traders, like Ahmed Nuur Aw Nuuh, a small business owner in Ceel Bardaale.
Clearing trade routes in the DRC

Funding from the Government of Japan supported the clearance of explosive ordnance by the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) along an important trade route in the Democratic Republic of Congo, resulting in its safe return to the local community.

Clearance of a 33km stretch of the R630, which connects the villages of Kabwela and Kakuyu in Katanga Province, resulted in nearly 300 explosive ordnance including mortars and small arms ammunition to be found and destroyed by the MAG demining team. Now safe, this route allows the local community to resume work in the surrounding fields, and transport crops to the Kabalo market and beyond.

The Kakuyu area is an important provider of crops not only to Kabalo, but also to the surrounding territories, including Kalemie to the east and Mbuji Mayi in the neighbouring province to the west. Villages along the Kabwela-Kakuyu road also benefited from other humanitarian assistance, with the Food and Agricultural Organisation and World Food Programme able to extend their Purchase For Progress project – which enables farmers, especially women, to grow and sell more – to previously inaccessible places.

The clearance of this section of the Kabwela-Kakuyu road was part of a 12-month project financed by the Japanese Government. In supporting the Congolese government Japan’s partnership allowed the country to move another step closer in reaching its commitments under the Ottawa Convention to clear the country of all landmines by 2021.

“The closure of the road has had a terrible impact on the social and economic life of the population in Kabalo, where the provision of agricultural products was made impossible.”

- Administrator of the Kabalo Territory, Hubert Kanza Vumba, at a ceremony to mark the road reopening on 14 March 2015.

A commitment to mine action is also a commitment to the people of mine-affected African countries.
Mine action restores security and increases confidence for investors, helping the development of nations and communities.

A commitment from Japan, and likeminded governments, to increase funding for mine action would realise an achievable goal of a prosperous, inclusive, and Landmine Free Africa.