Children and Landmines: A Deadly Legacy

Landmines are killing, injuring and orphaning children. In many mine-affected countries, children account for one in every five landmine victims. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people are killed or maimed by landmines every year, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

- In Cambodia children account for up to 50 per cent of landmines casualties, according to the Cambodian Red Cross. In Somalia more than 55 per cent of landmines victims are children, according to the 2003 Landmine Impact Survey.

- Children are often attracted by the intriguing and colourful appearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

- Children are far more likely to die from landmine injuries than adults. An estimated 85 percent of child victims of landmines die before reaching the hospital.

- Children, particularly refugees and displaced children returning home, are in particular danger of landmines because they are most likely to be unaware of the dangers of playing in or traversing hazardous areas.

- Landmines cause gut-wrenching injuries: children may lose their sight or hearing; lose fingers, toes and limbs; suffer injuries to their genitals. They also suffer psychologically from the trauma of a landmine injury.

- Without adequate medical treatment, children injured by landmines are often pulled out of school. They face limited future prospects for education and employment and are often perceived as a burden to their families.

- Landmines devastate the lives of children by killing or maiming their parents or caregivers. When mothers are maimed or killed, children are less likely to receive adequate nutrition, to be immunized or to be protected from exploitation. When fathers fall victim to landmines, children are often forced out of school and into work to supplement family income.

- The cost of providing long-term care for child landmine victims can be prohibitive. Rehabilitation clinics are often too far away or too expensive to access.

- Uncleared landmines prevent access to reconstruct homes, roads, schools, health facilities and other essential services. They deny access to farmland and irrigation.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance violate nearly all the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: a child's right to life, to a safe environment in which to play, to health, clean water, sanitary conditions and adequate education.