

Press release: UK to save 50,000 people from threat of landmines worldwide

Sudarana, a 20 year-old woman trained as demining technician by the UK charity The HALO Trust at work in a paddy field in Sri Lanka. Photo credit: Russell Watkins / DFID

The UK will help to save an extra 50,000 vulnerable people from the threat of landmines worldwide, as more children than ever die as a result of these “cruel, indiscriminate killers”, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt announced today.

To mark International Mine Awareness Day, Ms Mordaunt warned that in far too many countries children live in fear and risk their lives every day to go to school or play with friends because years of devastating wars have left land littered with lethal, hidden mines.

According to the latest figures, 2016 saw more child casualties than ever before and the highest number of total fatalities on record for more than 15 years. More than 8,600 people were injured and more than 2,000 people were killed during the year by landmines and other explosive devices left behind by conflict.

From today, UK aid will help save the lives of 50,000 more people in South Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Burma and Cambodia by clearing mines from over five million square metres of land – the equivalent of over 19,000 tennis courts – and through educating vulnerable people about the dangers of landmines, keeping entire communities safe from maiming or death.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

It is unforgivable that more innocent children than ever are being maimed or killed by landmines which have been left behind by decades of devastating wars. One wrong step on the way to school or during a game with friends can cost a life or cause a lifetime of pain and suffering.

Today we are extending UK aid support to help save an extra 50,000 people in future years by educating them about the dangers of mines and also by decontaminating land littered with the devices. This will allow the poorest people to grow crops and their children to walk to school in areas which were once off limits.

Landmines are deadly devices, that have no place in today's world. No one should be forced to live in fear of losing a limb, their life or a child to these cruel, indiscriminate killers.

In addition to today's announcement, UK aid has:

- Cleared mines from 140 million square metres of contaminated land across the world, including in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.
- Helped eradicate landmines from Mozambique – a Commonwealth country – by clearing every deadly explosive device from roads, bridges, schools and villages, making the country completely mine-free.
- Supported The HALO Trust to hand back Afghanistan's most deadly province for landmines to its governor, after making 39 million of square metres of land safe once again.
- Matched pound for pound £214,000 of public donations to the Mine Advisory Group's (MAG's) 'Walk Without Fear' appeal – through UK Aid Match – to double the impact and help return land to almost 8,000 people in Angola, 20 years after Princess Diana walked through a landmine littered field to raise awareness of the devastating impact they have on innocent lives.
- In an event last year with HRH Prince Harry, the Department for International Development (DFID) made a £100 million commitment to make 15 million square metres of land safe again over a three year period. Today's announcement of £3 million of UK aid to South Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Burma and Cambodia for a three month period is a new allocation from this existing support which will be delivered by the Halo Trust, MAG and Norwegian People's Aid.
- The £100 million also includes:
 - £12.6 million in 2017/18 as an extension to the pre-existing contract of the Global Mine Action Programme, which is delivered by the Halo Trust, MAG and Norwegian People's Aid in Burma, Cambodia, South Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Laos, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.□
 - £60.4 million for demining programmes in financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 in Angola, Burma, Cambodia, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.
 - £20 million for Afghanistan in financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 delivered by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).□
 - £4 million for mine action in Sudan for 2018/19 and 2019/20 which will be delivered by UNMAS to clear 500,000 square metres of land in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, open 1,000 km of priority routes for

humanitarian aid delivery and provide education to 200,000 vulnerable people about the dangers of landmines.

- In addition to this, through UK Aid Match, the UK Government matched pound for pound public donations to MAG's demining appeal. DFID will be continuing its programming in Asia and Africa including Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Somalia and South Sudan.
- According to the latest statistics from the Monitor which provides research and monitoring for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), in 2016 8,605 mine casualties were recorded, of which at least 2,089 people were killed. Following a sharp increase in 2015, the casualty total in 2016 marked the highest number of annual recorded casualties in Monitor data since 1999 (9,228) and the most child casualties ever recorded (4,152).