

aspects of the programs: (health, vaccination, parasite-borne diseases...)

## **AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK**

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The presence of mines affects agricultural activities directly, as well as other sectors of the economy. In Cambodia for instance, an estimated half of cultivable fields have been mined and cannot be exploited; in Angola, incomes from agriculture decrease by 500 million dollars each year (from Banque Mondiale)

In rural agricultural communities, the number of victims reaches alarming levels, because people cannot avoid having to go back to work on the land which is the source of their means of survival: irrigation, fire-wood and grazing fields.

### ● **Irrigation channels:**

Destroyed or simply made impossible to maintain because of mines, the state of irrigation channels worsens the situation of farmers, who can no longer grow freely, or who, if they try to, place themselves at great risk.

### ● **Forested areas:**

Forested areas are mined in warfare because of the shelter they provide to opposing forces. Unfortunately, forest areas tend to be rather low on the list of priority mine clearance areas. This is partly because they are so difficult to demine, and partly because there is a tendency to concentrate on «agricultural» land. In some areas, this agricultural bias may be misleading, especially if mine clearance is meant to increase access to exploitable resources. It is interesting to note that in marginal agricultural areas, the forests possibly represent as much of a resource for survival as do the fields. In any case the forest represents an alternative for resources with an «income-like» potential. Forests contain brushwood for fires and for sale as wood or charcoal; housing materials; herbs, berries, roots and fruits for food and for traditional medicines; and shelter and nesting for food animals that can be trapped or hunted.

The cultivation of basic staple crops, especially in single harvest areas, consists generally of short periods of intense activity spread out over the entire year. In-between are often long periods of relatively low agricultural activity.

Overall it could be reasonably imagined that marginal community members with access to a forest - men, women and children- will spend as much or more time in the forests than they do in the fields

Forest-related activities, especially the gathering of fire-wood, is typically the activity that entails the greatest number of mine-victims. In order to gather fire-

wood, it is always necessary to venture out onto «new» land. This represents a danger both to «locals» and to refugees and displaced persons who are unfamiliar with the terrain. The latter group, probably without access to land for crops, is doubly forced to depend on gathering for part or all of their survival needs.

### ● **Livestock:**

Herding livestock is always a high-risk job in mine-infested rural areas. In many countries, the possession of one or more heads of cattle very often represents the only wealth of a family; a great deal of the pasture-land may be mined- and the herds persons are usually children: it is therefore hardly surprising if the victim-rate is high for this activity. Moreover, along with human victims, the animals themselves often suffer from the presence of mines- plunging entire families into destitution when they lose the whole of their «capital» in one fell swoop.

In all countries where vast stretches of agricultural land have been mined, peasant-farmers and their families find themselves up against a cruel choice: either to accept the dangers posed by the mines, or else to give up the lands they live off. Evidence from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kurdistan and other countries has shown that farmers and herdsmen will take ever greater risks as conditions get worse. Moreover, they tend to cultivate tough soils and abandon more fertile ones, thus contributing to worsen the erosion and deforestation phenomenon. The shortage of usable land sometimes, as it has been the case in Angola, for example, leads to situations of non-self-sufficiency with respect to foodstuffs reaching the point of famine.

## **INFRASTRUCTURES**

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### **Means of communication:**

Mined transport routes are left abandoned, and the same is true of bridges, railways, and so on. «Secondary» routes are opened, often adding a lot to the distance, and thus preventing freedom of movement of people and of goods and hindering any economic development. By hindering conveying of goods, minefields also make it difficult to supply the communities with essential goods such as vaccines and drugs, thus rendering the local populations even more vulnerable to debilitating diseases.



**Water and energy:**

Wells made inaccessible by the presence of mines are unusable, in effect depriving whole populations of drinking water, so that villages are abandoned, accelerating the rural exodus to the towns and cities where the situation for the people is even worse.

Energy sources (dams, power stations, and so forth) and transmission lines may be mined, by those who want to protect them as well as by others wanting to make them inaccessible: they have become a real headache by now, so dense is the mine-laying, and anarchic beyond imagining. This problem is also a handicap for the power distribution companies, since they find themselves for the moment denied all access to their installations and unable to carry out any repairs.

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### CULTURAL STRUCTURES

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**Education:** Since schools often serve as «military bases», they are considered legitimate targets for the layers of mines- so that the whole education system has virtually ceased to exist in many regions (e.g., in Cambodia, in Angola, etc.), depriving whole generations of schooling.

**Family Structures:**

The community as a whole, often scattered and demoralised after a period of warfare, is weakened even further by this on-going loss of life, both human and of livestock; indeed, its very existence is threatened by it. Herdsmen and farmers living in self-sufficiency, create their own delicately balanced micro-economy, in which family dimensions are in strict relation to the needs of the farm, the cultivable area and the size of the herd.

Over and above the human tragedies, loss of workers because of mines may have devastating conse-

quences, prompting further migration towards the urban centres.

In many regions, mine victims, on their discharge from hospital, return home without having available any of the rehabilitation or psychological support structures they need for their reinsertion. In an agricultural community, the one and only thing a person can provide is his or her labour, which presupposes perfect health and being able to carry out the same tasks as the others. Victims who are unable to provide for their own needs or for those of their family rapidly become a burden for all. Therefore the consequences of the problem go far beyond the individual level and they directly affect the well-being and survival of entire communities.

**Migrations:** Shortage of unmined farm-land, loss of human or animal life, lack of drinking water, impossibility of gathering fire-wood, feelings of uselessness or of being a burden on the part of amputees: these are all so many factors which push the individual or even whole families to go off and take their chances in the urban centres. Such a rural exodus in developing countries adds to the number of the urban poor while at the same time aggravating the problem of rural depopulation in the abandoned countryside.

The other side of the story is that the sudden and usually unprepared exodus driving urban populations to flee cities which have become the scene of combats (in Kurdistan and in Afghanistan, for example) into rural districts gives these populations little opportunity to properly understand the real danger of mines. This accounts for the large number of accidents and for the belief, found in certain places, that the ground can be freed of mines by burning off the hillsides, or suchlike attempts.

**Cultural weight:** Another important factor to be taken into account in certain developing countries is the cultural and/or religious aspect of the problem. A mine victim is no longer «whole»; and if he or she is unmarried, then the chances of being able to take full part in social life as an adult with children are slight. And moreover, if the victim is alone, then the burden of looking after him or her falls on the community.

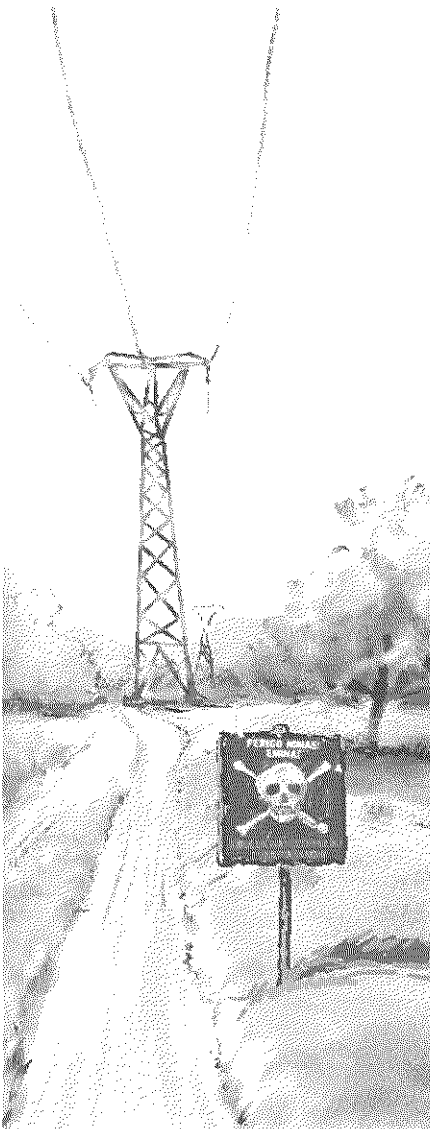
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### REFUGEE REPATRIATION

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Refugees who return home are one of the categories of people most affected by the land-mine crisis. Mines very often delay their return and hinder their reinsertion by making the land unusable.

Not only to protect the returnees, but also to assure the success of any reinsertion and rehabilitation programme, it needs to be ensured that the road back, the resettlement areas and the land and infrastructure they



## CHAPTER II

are going to be making use of in their day-to-day lives have all been cleared of mines

Roads mined, wells mined, land made inaccessible if considerable resources have not been devoted to clearing the area of mines, then the returning refugees will have to be resettled elsewhere. Since refugees only add to populations already confined to areas considered to be free or relatively free of mines, they usually end up with not much choice but to go and take their chances, at the risk of their lives, somewhere else...

Even though they may be under mandate, peace-keeping forces generally lack the capacity to convey humanitarian aid or guarantee the repatriation and reinsertion of populations.

The early 1990's saw the return of Afghan refugees to their homes from Pakistan, as well as the return of Somali refugees from Ethiopia. Both of these population movements were followed by a vertiginous increase in the number of land-mine-accident victims.

**In short, it is evident that mines delay or even inhibit the rehabilitation of all social and economical areas of the Economy and the implementation of the most essential social services due to the citizens.**

**Such a situation increases the risks for failure of the peace-restoration process and the chances of a relapse into war.**

