2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty, and the 25th anniversary of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. In this booklet, campaigners, partners and friends of the Mine Ban Treaty share their memories of the landmine ban process, and their conviction that a mine-free world is within reach.
Margaret Arach Orech  
Ugandan Landmine Survivors Association, ICBL Ambassador

The Mine Ban Treaty is foremost a humanitarian treaty. Victim assistance is equally important as other aspects of mine action, yet, over the past years it appears to be less appealing, especially in countries where clearance has been completed.

With our hearts set to Finish the Job by 2025, and as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty, I call on States not to lose focus of their obligations and reignite the treaty’s passion for victim assistance. Survivors are and will remain an integral part of the Mine Ban Treaty. We are waiting!

Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi  
Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations in Geneva

Happy birthday, ICBL! Without the ICBL we would not have achieved the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention 20 years ago. I remember my first meeting with Jody Williams and Steve Goose back in early 1996, and how impressed I was to find a well-organized NGO coalition with a clear strategy that became a wonderful partner thanks to their understanding of political sensitivities and easiness to communicate with. We sometimes joked that Steve, always dressed in a dark suit with a white shirt, was more diplomat than we diplomats.

I want to use the 20th anniversary of the convention and the Meeting of States Parties in December in Vienna, to reenergize the parties to meet the 2025 goal and address the increased use of anti-personnel mines by armed non-state actors. As more affected countries become mine-free, victim assistance remains important and its implementation, a key action to be discussed in Vienna. See you in Vienna!

Habbouba Aoun  
Landmines Resource Centre for Lebanon - University of Balamand

I remember that I joined the ICBL in 1997, I am missing the exact day/date now but for sure I was there for the Mine Ban Treaty process in the Middle East and North Africa region (Yemen meeting on 1-2 November 1997 by Radda Barnen for instance) and for the Ottawa meeting in December 1997. Twenty years ago, we were calling to ban landmines and to help survivors. Twenty years later, we are still calling to ban landmines and to help survivors. It is true that a lot has been achieved and that 80% of the world has joined the Treaty. It is true that the Mine Ban Treaty pioneered at many fronts and that it led by example subsequent treaties. Yet, we still need to finish the job. Many countries are still suffering from mines, including my own country, Lebanon, that still witnesses more than one casualty per month on average. Demining operations need sustained funding, post-clearance developmental efforts need sustained funding. Most importantly, survivors have lifelong needs, and assistance needs lifelong funding. We are grateful to you donor countries, but we still need you to finish the job. No more wars, please! Let's stop the legacy of mines.

Camilo Serna  
La Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas

How to get humans to live together without killing each other? Surely if there were no weapons this would be possible. A utopia that began to be built 25 years ago when the purpose was to eradicate landmines from the face of the earth. Five years later the world welcomed the dream and today we can say that at least an infamous and cruel weapon no longer exists in part of the world.

In Colombia, my country, the war has brought thousands of dead and mutilated by landmines. Today this panorama has changed thanks to the peace agreement with the guerrillas. Demining is progressing and every day more land is declared free of mines. But the work is hard and long, there is still a long way to go, and there are thousands of victims whose needs have to be addressed. The Convention must continue, it is the example and the measure offering hope for a future free of arms, and surely a world in peace.
Alma Al-Osta  Handicap International

Coming from a mine-affected country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and working in organizations implementing the Mine Ban Treaty at the national and international levels, allowed me to follow its full progress. It was powerful to see how contaminated land was cleared and how people were using cleared land to grow crops, build roads and live without fear. Thousands of people living in affected areas received mine risk education, which prevented new accidents. Adequate assistance was provided to survivors ensuring that the right services exist, and that they are accessible and reachable. A lot of progress has been made up to now, but it is far from being perfect. A lot of work still needs to be done in the years ahead of us, and all of us have important roles to play: affected and donor countries, international organizations and civil society. We all have to work better and harder to make sure a mine-free world is a goal that we will reach by 2025!

Ian Mansfield  Former UN Mine Action Programme Manager and Deputy Director GICHD

The ultimate responsibility to clear landmines rests with the mine-affected state itself, and today thousands of brave men and women deminers in over 40 countries are doing just that. However, it is never easy to get the resources and support to sustain the effort. Over the past 20 years, the Mine Ban Treaty has provided significant political will and direction, and kept the issue alive with donors to hopefully allow these affected countries to finish the job by 2025.

Jody Williams  Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1997), ICBL Ambassador

Who could have envisioned that twenty years later, the Mine Ban Treaty would be one of the most effective disarmament treaties ever and that our model of activism would have had such a huge impact on other efforts to rid the world of weapons of war. The Nobel Peace Prize that same year was an important and timely recognition of our efforts.

Mark Gwozdecky  Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Affairs Canada

The audacious and breathtakingly rapid Ottawa Process reminds me every day that inclusive coalitions and disruptive approaches to responding to global challenges are relevant today, and ever more needed.
Pope Francis  Message to the Maputo Conference, 2014

“Every person seeks peace, the opposite of fear. Anti-personnel mines are underhand because they prolong war and foster fear even after the conflicts have ended. To the human failure that war represents, they add a sense of fear which pervades the way of life and alters the building of peace. This feeling is destructive not only for the person subjected to it but also for the one who imposes it. Peace is the joy of life, faith in the day by day relationship of brotherhood, of gratuitousness, where the interests of all can be found only in sharing, in cooperation, and in the rejection of hate and indifference. All individuals, direct or indirect victims of landmines, are there to remind us every moment of this human failure and the emptiness that results from it. Conventions such as that on anti-personnel mines or that on cluster munitions, are not only cold legal frameworks, but they represent a challenge for all those who are seeking to safeguard and build peace, and, in particular, to defend the weakest. Human dignity is what we all, strong or weak, rich or poor, have in common, apart from our various limitations. True wealth is not money, true power is not arms. True happiness is in love, in sharing and in the generosity of heart... Do we truly want security, stability, and peace? Then let us reduce our weapons stockpiles! Let us outlaw the arms that have no place in human society, and let us invest in education, in health, in safeguarding our planet, in building societies that are more supportive and fraternal with their diversity, which is so enriching.”

Sister Denise Coughlan  Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions

20 years since the days we both cried and cheered! Landmines banned. Nobel prize won. Civil society and government in cahoots for a great cause. What heady days they were. I still remember dancing and wheeling and hopping on how many legs we had to celebrate.

Since then, many have worked tirelessly to implement the treaty. The mine clearance agencies, survivor groups who helped their peers, lawyers and doctors, journalists, human rights advocates, monks and priests and imams and rabbis, ordinary people everywhere. May this anniversary reignite the spirit of peace, the will to disarm, the joy of giving. We remember especially the resilience of those who suffered.

The Dalai Lama  Letter written March 26th, 1996

I support the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The terrible toll that landmines take clearly show the immense destruction and suffering these awful weapons are capable of causing. We, therefore, should consider the banning of landmines as a step toward ultimately achieving global demilitarization, for which I am determined to do whatever I can.

As a Buddhist monk to whom compassion is the core practice, I especially admire the noble work of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The ethical aspect of compassion is to refrain from harming others – not only just fellow human beings but all living beings. That is why it is important that we try to inculcate the value of compassion in our hearts while making efforts to ban destructive weapons, such as landmines.
Mamady Gassama  
**Initiative Solidaire des Actions Development, Senegal**

After 10 years of experience in promoting the rights of people living with disabilities and in advocating against weapons that harm civilians, I acknowledge that the Mine Ban Treaty is one of the great achievements of humanity. This treaty gives us, the landmine survivors a voice to demand for our rights. Together we must continue our efforts to bring the number new landmine victims into zero and continue assisting victims who are in desperate needs around the world!

Ambassador Stefano Toscano  
**Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining**

The signature of the Ottawa Convention 20 years ago triggered a global commitment to mine action that saved lives and promoted development in many countries. Let us strengthen the unprecedented partnership between governments and civil society generated by the Convention and finish the job by 2025 – in the shared interest of humanity.

Toshihiro Shimizu  
**Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines**

I was working at the Khao-I-Dang refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border in the mid 80’s. I met an incredible group of mine victims there. It was hard to believe that such tragedy was happening to the people in front of me, including women and children, those who wish to live without fear. I wondered how I could help end this. This is why I joined the campaign. Thanks to this opportunity, I learned a lot of with regards to advocacy, lobbying, and dialogue with various stakeholders. Thanks to this experience, I was confident of the role of civil society. We drove the Ottawa Process becoming a strong and persistent alliance. Congratulations Mine Ban Treaty on your 20th anniversary, we won’t celebrate your 30th because mines and new victims will no longer exist in this world by 2025.

Leila Alikarami  
**Centre for Supporters of Human Rights, Iran**

The Mine Ban Treaty is a key contemporary disarmament measure that has so far saved thousands of lives in different parts of the world. Whereas eighty percent of the countries have now joined the treaty, Iran has remained outside the Mine Ban Treaty. This is despite the fact that Iran is one of the most mine polluted countries in the world. Hardly a month goes by without reports of casualties in border areas. As though landmines, in the course of time, have further deepen their roots into the ground. Nearly three decades after the end of Iran-Iraq war, women, directly and indirectly, are still landmines victims in both side of the border. As an Iranian who has witnessed the ugly face of the war in her childhood, I urge the Iranian government to join the Mine Ban Treaty. While Iranian women are affected by landmines, they have never been given a major role in tackling the issue. For instance, in Iran, landmine clearance remains a male preserve. Yet, it is time to hear the voices of the female landmine survivors and to get them more effectively engaged in the field. One should not allow the fate of female landmine survivors to be crushed by wrong policies. Empowering female landmine survivors restores a new sense of life to a landscape that continues to bear the scars of decades-old war. I therefore, as a woman campaigner who is part of the ICBL, urge Tehran and all other countries to pay particular attention to the important role of women in mine action to enable them to clear the world of landmines by 2025.
Today, 20 years since the adoption and opening for signature of the Convention, we can proudly look back at a number of important successes. A key success has been the stigma placed on the use of this indiscriminate weapon and the strengthening of this key principle of international humanitarian law. In 20 years we have seen 162 states join the Convention, 30 States Parties complete their mine clearance obligations, returning vast areas of previously contaminated land to safe and productive use. States Parties have collectively destroyed over 50 million stockpiled mines and efforts are being made to ensure that the promise of the Convention to landmine victims is fulfilled.

In spite of this success, challenges remain to ensure the universalization and full implementation of the Convention. Complacency is not an option. Thankfully, today States Parties and organizations have a better understanding of the efforts and actions necessary to resolve many of the remaining challenges in an efficient and effective manner. We look forward to contributing our efforts in support of States Parties to see this through.

Juan Carlos Ruan
Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Geneva

I greatly value the remarkable achievements made ever since the establishment of the ICBL 25 years ago. The international campaign played a significant role in bringing the Mine Ban Treaty into being and having it signed by more than 120 countries in Ottawa.

We campaigners from all over the world joined the ICBL, co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize, to contribute to the total elimination of anti-personnel mines, mine risk education, stockpile destruction, universalization and above all the assistance to victims of this weapon.

Bekele Gonfa
Survivors Recovery and Rehabilitation Organization, Ethiopia

Parliamentarians play a key role in armed violence prevention and reduction, through their legislative, oversight and awareness-raising functions. Working on various campaigns for over a decade, primarily on small arms and light weapons (SALW), I have seen how this potential is multiplied when joining forces with civil society.

Civil society works closely with communities and has knowledge of the underlying causes and ideas about how to prevent violence. Parliamentarians have the power and mandate to formulate policy and create legislation; where input from civil society is crucial. At the same time, civil society benefits from the support and assistance of parliamentarians to translate their knowledge and ideas into concrete policy and law, leading to effective measures to address armed violence. Overall, cooperation enhances oversight and accountability.

This is particularly true in terms of promoting international instruments, ensuring that states join and fulfill their commitments. It is time to finish the job and make SALW and antipersonnel mines a thing of the past!

Teresa Dybeck
Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Sweden

I have known the Mine Ban Treaty from different perspectives – as a government representative of a mine-affected state, managing a program for a leading mine clearance operator and as a member of the ICBL. – I remain in awe of what we can achieve for the benefit of affected communities and the wider community when we combine our individual strengths; this is what inspires me to continue working to achieve the common goals of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions!

Sheila N. Mweemba
Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Geneva
In the modern-day world, anti-personnel mines are considered outlawed and outdated; there is no place for such victim-activated weapons. Civilized nations around the world are joining hands to eradicate landmines by clearing them from affected land and according to the Mine Ban Treaty. So far more than 80% of all nations around the world have joined the Mine Ban Treaty. Joining the treaty guarantees that landmines will not affect land, or cause mine victims in the future. Girls, boys, women, men, and the natural environment are all victims of landmines.

We campaign and call on governments and the international community to finish the job by 2025 by assisting victims, clearing mine-affected land and according to the treaty. My own country Sri Lanka must join the Mine Ban Treaty without delay, clear the mine-affected lands before 2025 and provide sustainable assistance to all landmine victims.

Vidya Abhayagunawardena
Sri Lanka Campaign to Ban Landmines

I remember seeing an early flyer of the ICBL when I was working on the Thai-Cambodian border where landmine pollution was a problem impossible to ignore. In June of 1995, we had a civil society meeting on a Global Landmine Ban in Phnom Penh, which really launched civil society activity and several national campaigns in Asia.

I remember at that meeting I spoke with a representative of Jane's Defense Journal who confidently predicted to me that since this weapon was in such widespread possession and use by national military forces, our movement would never go anywhere. We also had a few governmental representatives, such as one from Thailand's Foreign Ministry, who said that their country would not be interested in giving up the weapon.

Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan
Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Canada/Thailand

It is difficult looking back now to see how radical our simple proposal was and what we have accomplished. It was not then the norm for civil society organizations to involve themselves in the security matters of states. Today it is. This is one of the less visible accomplishments of our movement -- that we opened the door for civil society movements to question security issues, and many other movements have moved through that opening we created since, such as the cluster munition campaign, the campaign to stop child soldiers, civil society movements focusing on small arms, and others. We opened a door which will never ever be closed again. Oh, we also brought about the global ban on landmines!

Jill Sinclair
Former representative of the Canadian government, involved in the negotiations of the Mine Ban Treaty
Islam Mohammadi  Afghan Landmine Survivors Organization

I am Islam Mohammadi, ICBL campaigner in Afghanistan. Also, I am the executive director of the Afghan Landmine Survivors Organization. Afghanistan is a State Party to the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, but it still is one of the most landmine affected countries in the world. In my country, sadly, the number of victims has been increasing, in particular as a result of improvised explosive devices. Survivors are facing many challenges, such as limited access to psychosocial support, rehabilitation, health, education, and transport. As an ICBL campaigner from an affected country, I can fully understand how important the work of the ICBL is and I support the campaign and demand the international community to help finishing the job by 2025.

I want the government of Afghanistan to do more to finish the job, and achieve the goal of Afghanistan mine-free by 2023. I also appeal the international community to support mine action and victim assistance programs, because without your support Afghanistan cannot accomplish it.

Arianna Calza Bini  Gender and Mine Action Programme, Switzerland

Significant progress has been made in the past 25 years to free the world of landmines and assist the victims. Part of this progress has been the recognition that activities must benefit women, girls, boys, and men affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war, and that mine action is most effective when it takes into account the needs of diverse groups spanning gender, age, ethnicity, and disability. Mine action programmes delivered effectively and in an equitable way benefit all and ensure that the job of freeing the world from landmines can be completed by 2025.

Hanna Puchkouskaya  Belarus Campaign to Ban Landmines

I am Hanna Puchkouskaya and I represent the Support Centre for Associations and Foundations - Belarus Campaign to Ban Landmines (SCAF-BCBL). I am a young campaigner. As for my older colleagues, they have been working with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines since 1998. Supported by the ICBL, our campaign convinced the government to ban landmines. This year Belarus has destroyed all its landmines. I wish other governments would do the same.

Finish the job by 2025!

Raza Shah Khan  Sustainable Peace and Development Organization, Pakistan

I feel honored and proud to share my views on the occasions of the 20th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty and 25th anniversary of the ICBL. As a campaigner of the ICBL for the last 17 years, I have found the ICBL as one family of diverse nationalities striving towards the noble cause of a mine-free world. The Mine Ban Treaty is the practical example of civil society and governments collaboration, driven by the one single cause: a ban antipersonnel landmines. We have made a history of eliminating a cruel weapon, we have collectively contributed to saving innocent lives and limbs, and to bringing back mine-contaminated land to social and economic progress for human beings. Our vision of a mine-free world is closer and I urge the remaining few countries to join the Mine Ban Treaty so that we are able to finish the job by 2025, and to give new hope to our future generations.
As a teacher who has been “at it” for quite a while, I can attest to the fact that many times the students become the teachers and the teacher becomes the student! In 1999, I assigned a project to my art students: design an artwork that would educate the public about a global social justice issue. Little did I know that such a small idea could have such life-changing consequences. I will never forget a student bringing me a binder of information on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and telling me I needed to study it! The statistics were overwhelming: 26,000 people a year... a victim every 22 minutes. We learned that the ICBL had been actively working on this issue and had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. The students cleverly designed a sculpture of 500 painted shoes with facts about landmines attached and we discovered that art can have an important social message that would engage and educate the public.

The students pushed for a school organization that grew to become PSALM/WVCBL. These students had such initiative. We soon met Nobel Laureate Jody Williams, Landmine Survivors Network founders Ken Rutherford and Jerry White, and Cambodian Campaign to Ban Landmines’ Tun Channareth and Sister Denise. What inspiring role models these folks were! They really went out of their way to educate the students and myself about the issues.

Eighteen years later and PSALM students are still at it. The students not only educate their own families, classmates, and school but have reached out to others nationally and internationally. It is a true testament to the perseverance of children who only want to see a world that is more just and peaceful for all. When asked by a reporter why they are a member of PSALM, a student replied, “We want a world where all children can walk to school and play without the fear that each step may be their last. We want a world where people can gather food and water or build safely”.

We acknowledge the legacy of the ICBL and campaigners from all walks of life who have dedicated their lives and work to making the world safer for future generations. Please know that each and every one of you stands as a role model of courage and determination for us. It is an honor to know and work with you all. There is a lot of work ahead of us but don’t forget to savor this special moment in time when the seemingly impossible became possible. Our gratitude and thanks to all of you that “Push for Progress”, work to “Finish the Job” each and every day and make this “Mission Possible”!

Nora D. Sheets Proud Students Against Landmines and Cluster Bombs, West Virginia

Jesús Martínez Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad, El Salvador

All members of the ICBL, including men and women and survivors should be proud of their contribution to ban one of the worse weapons of our times, landmines. This worldwide movement has made history. A world free from the plague of landmines is our legacy to future generations. But, the work is not finished yet; we must continue to urge governments to take concrete steps towards achieving a mine-free world.

The voices and testimonies of survivors have been an essential part of the campaign, their stories proved that landmines are indiscriminate. Landmines not only kill and injure civilians, they also shatter the dreams of children and impoverished communities. With the support of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we have to continue our collective efforts to promote the rights of survivors.

Tun Channareth Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions, ICBL Ambassador

For these 20 years I have watched and waited to see all landmines cleared. Much has been done by governments and NGOs, but still we must finish the job. The 2025 date is a bit far, but... much better than later on.

New landmine casualties on the Myanmar/Bangladesh border urge us to take strong action to universalize the treaty so that no one else is killed or injured, nor find themselves in a state of insecurity. Mines banned. Nukes banned. Clusters banned. Everywhere and forever.

That is my Nobel wish!