

Landmines and Children

A total of **5,426 new casualties** from mines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were recorded in 78 countries and other areas in 2007.¹ This included 1,401 people killed and 3,939 injured; the status of the remaining 86 casualties is unknown. Males (boys and men) comprised 89% of all casualties where gender details were known, while females (girls and women) accounted for 11%.² As in previous years, in 2007 civilians accounted for nearly three-quarters (71%) of recorded casualties.

Although fewer casualties were registered in 2007 than in previous years, the number of mine/ERW survivors continued to increase. In addition, many more casualties remained unreported as 25% of casualties (1,358) occurred in countries/areas without a formal data collection mechanism (up from 19% in 2006).

Child Casualties³

The largest group of recorded casualties remained men of working age, but children constitute a significant group of those falling victim to mines, and especially ERW. In 2007, children accounted for just under one-third of total casualties (31% or 1,407) where the age was known (4,583), but, more significantly, children accounted for nearly half of the civilian casualties (46%). Reporting indicates that children are often injured or killed when their daily activities bring them in contact with mines/ERW: as they travel to school, play or help to contribute to meager family incomes in tenuous post-conflict economies. A significant number of incidents occur when children deliberately engage with ERW to salvage scrap metal or demonstrate bravery.

States and areas with the most child casualties in 2007

State/ Area	Boy	Girl	Unknown	Total Child Casualties
Afghanistan	244	43	0	287
Chad	118	32	0	150
Palestine	21	3	34	58
Lao PDR	46	7	0	53

The number of child casualties decreased slightly in 2007 (down from 1,445 in 2006). However, considering that 843 casualties were of unknown age, it is certain that many child casualties remain unidentified in casualty statistics because:

¹ The totals in this fact sheet include casualties caused by victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which function as antipersonnel mines and are therefore prohibited by the Mine Ban Treaty. Although remote-detonated IEDs cause a significant number of casualties in several countries and create similar needs for victim assistance, casualties due to these weapons are not included because they are not victim-activated. Casualties due to antivehicle mines are included in the totals, unless the antivehicle mine was clearly remote-detonated.

² Although women and girls comprise a smaller percentage of the total recorded casualties, they are often under-reported and they face additional discrimination, including abandonment and limited access to medical services in some countries. In some countries, such as Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan, girls with disabilities are often hidden, and not reported to census or survey teams. In many other countries, such as the DRC, Uganda and Angola, women are abandoned and left isolated. See, for example, country chapters of Landmine Monitor annual reports for 2008, 2007 and 2006. See also the story of ICBL Ambassador Margaret Arach Orech at www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/About-Us/Ambassadors/margaret.

³ A child casualty is defined as a civilian under the age of 18.

- the age and/or date of birth of casualties is not recorded;
- not all countries use the same age limit to determine whether a person is still a child (age limits can range from 15 to 21); and
- certain countries use an age range rather than actual ages (for example, between 15 and 21 years), which makes classification in the child or adult category impossible.

Female child casualties are often among the most under-reported groups, as in some countries, disability is seen as a stigma that needs to be hidden, especially for girls.⁴

Highest percentages of child casualties in 2007

State/ Area	Child Casualties	Total Casualties	Child %
Chad	150	186	80%
Palestine	58	94	62%
Ethiopia	47	84	56%
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	15	28	54%
Lao PDR	53	100	53%
Egypt	13	25	52%
Nepal	49	104	48%
Sudan	40	91	44%
Uganda	10	23	43%
Afghanistan	387	811	35%

Child Casualties and Gender

The vast majority of child casualties are boys (82%). In Chad, Kosovo, and Lao PDR, boys were the largest single casualty group. In many countries contaminated with mines/ERW, boys are more involved than girls in outdoor activities during which they are likely to come across mines and ERW, such as herding, gathering wood and food, or collecting scrap metal. Boys are more prone than girls to deliberately handling explosive devices. Accordingly, boys accounted for 49% of total civilian ERW casualties, while girls accounted for 12%.

Though there were fewer girl casualties than boys, girls are still affected and female casualties are often underreported. In **Afghanistan**, 62% of recorded female casualties were girls under 18 (43 of 69). In countries like **Yemen**, where girls traditionally herd sheep, they constitute a high-risk casualty group. For example, in 2007, three out of seven casualties in Yemen that occurred during livelihood activities were girls tending animals and two were women carrying out other livelihood activities; similarly in 2005, five of six girl casualties were injured while tending sheep, supposedly in cleared land.⁵ However, stigma about disability also means that many girl casualties are not reported, do not receive medical or other care and are considered a burden on their families.

The percentage of child casualties where gender was known was nearly 85% in 2007, essentially the same as in 2006 (84%).

⁴ See above.

⁵ See *Landmine Monitor Report 2006*, p. 792.

Child Casualties by Device, Activity and Location

Evidence shows that ERW, usually found on the surface and often appearing interesting to children, are an increasing cause of child casualties, especially when countries are in conflict or are transitioning out of an emergency situation. Recovering and selling metal from ERW provides children with pocket money or can be the child's contribution to the family's income. Children are often more vulnerable to ERW present in or near a community as they might be unaware of the danger or distracted while playing. In addition, children, sometimes unaware of what the dangerous artifact they have discovered actually is, might bring the object into the home or school—potentially causing more casualties. However, in some situations, particularly in countries with significant scrap metal trade such as Lao PDR, Vietnam or Cambodia, children knowingly handle explosive devices.

In 2007, children made up 26% of casualties resulting from antipersonnel mines and 48% of casualties resulting from cluster munition submunitions. However, data from **Lebanon** has skewed the latter statistic considering the number of adult casualties in that country was higher than in other submunition-affected countries due to the high-risk activities that adults undertook for economic reasons. For example, a study in Lao PDR showed that “while contributing factors of voluntary exposure were often rooted in poverty, it was rarely perceived by communities or individuals as the only option. More commonly, intentional UXO risk-taking was found to be based on a rational decision-making process involving weighing the potential costs and benefits of a range of available options.”⁶ The study also found that over half the children surveyed engaged in scrap metal collection. For countries significantly affected by submunitions and where the submunition contamination has been present for many years, children were generally the majority casualty group in 2007, for example in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

The only device where the adult-child distribution was roughly equal was submunitions (48% children, 52% adults). Children (mainly boys) were nearly 60% of total ERW casualties but only 20% of mine casualties. Among civilian ERW casualties, boys accounted for 49%, men 31%, girls 12%, and women 8%. ERW (excluding submunitions) was also the only device category where girls accounted for significantly more casualties than women.⁷

In **Cambodia**, where children represented over one-third of all casualties (124), boys represented 50% of total ERW casualties (100). In addition, 67 child casualties resulted from handling mines/ERW, and 57 child casualties resulted from standing near such activities. In **Chad**, where in 2007 over three-quarters of reported casualties were children (81% or 150), nearly all of the casualties were caused by ERW. Most of the child casualties in Chad resulted from handling ERW or standing nearby. In **Nepal**, 89% of casualties resulting from intentional handling of ERW were children, an increase from 82% in 2006. Analysis of casualty data showed that most incidents occurred in agricultural areas or by the home. In **Lao PDR**, where children accounted for over half of the casualties in 2007, the main activities at the time of incident recorded were farming, destroying ERW, and handling activities, such as hitting and playing. In the **DRC**, children accounted for 54% of casualties in 2007. Many incidents resulted from children playing play with unknown devices that they find on the road to school, putting them at great risk for severe injuries.

Assistance to Child Casualties

Victim assistance providers rarely keep statistics that are reliable measurements of how many child mine/ERW survivors or other children with disabilities have been assisted and which services have been rendered. However, child survivors have specific and additional needs in all aspects of victim assistance. Children whose injuries result in amputated limbs require more complicated rehabilitation assistance; they need to have prostheses made more often as they grow and corrective surgery for changing stumps. Few countries or health systems report on the capacity they have to address this situation. In **Lebanon** and **Colombia**, survivors are only entitled to free replacement prosthetics after

⁶ Jo Durham, “Needs Assessment in Lao PDR,” Journal of Mine Action, Issue 11.1, Summer 2007, www.maic.jmu.edu/Journal/11.1.

⁷ The categories are: antipersonnel mine, antivehicle mine, unspecified mine, submunition, other ERW, victim-activated IED, and unknown device.

two and five years, respectively—a time-period not adapted to the needs of a growing child. In October 2007, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended budget allocations for the implementation of rehabilitation and social reintegration services for child victims of war in **Croatia** by late 2007 under the National Plan for Children's Rights 2006–2012. However, by June 2008, no progress had been reported.

In many countries, child survivors have to end their education prematurely due to the period of recovery needed and the accompanying financial burden of rehabilitation on families. As the Croatian case illustrates, psychological support for children experiencing trauma is rarely available while the psychological effects linger for many years (and sometimes for the rest of their lives). Accessible inclusive or special education is seldom available and further hindered by the lack of appropriate training for teachers. In addition, insufficient awareness of disability issues among teachers and fellow pupils can lead to discrimination, isolation and the inability to participate in certain activities. This is a de-motivating factor for child survivors to stay in school. As a result, education rates among child survivors are lower, while school drop-outs are more frequent, which results in diminished employment prospects later on. However, in 2007, **Vietnam** enhanced its national disability strategy by allocating national funds for the first time to inclusive education. These funds will allow children with disabilities to learn within ordinary Vietnamese schools. Additionally, in November 2007, **Mozambique** announced that access to inclusive education had increased for children with disabilities. In fact, it was reported that over six thousand disabled survivors had access to inclusive education in 2007.