

WORLD WITHOUT MINES

ZIMBABWE



Photos: The HALO Trust

Celebrations marking the completion of the landmine clearance efforts in Mount Darwin District include a moving speech from Chief Chiswiti at the handover ceremony.

A MILESTONE ON A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

The continued efforts of World Without Mines have paid off: the first Zimbabwean district was declared mine-free in late-2021. But now, further demining is threatening to grind to a halt.

Chief Chiswiti has changed out of his everyday attire. Gone are the T-shirt and baseball cap. After all, 21 November 2021 is to be a special occasion. And so, he takes to the microphone in his Sunday best: a white shirt, gilet and a tie. A sizeable straw hat protects him as the sun blazes down on Mount Darwin, a district capital in northern Zimbabwe, named after the 1656-metre-high ridge on the horizon, that also gave the region its name: Mount Darwin.

Chiswiti, who has been the District Chief since 2020, is surrounded by some

4,000 people, stood standing and listening. The majority of the crowd belong to the ethnic group known as the Korekore. However, the chief directs his words largely to his guests of honour, sat in the shade of a large tent. The group have travelled four hours from the capital Harare just for the occasion. Among those present are the Secretary of State for Defence and the Minister of State for Mashonaland Central Province.

„We have achieved a great milestone,“ says Chiswiti, „we have had to wait a long



Deminer Ever Magunda also briefly attended the celebration, before heading back to join the demining teams who were already back in action.

Photos: The HALO Trust



„Until recently, around 40 children from Chisescha had to walk through a minefield to get to school.“
Kudzamai Chimedza, Deputy Head of Chisescha Primary School



„My heart would race every time I took younger children by the hand and led them through the minefield.“
Kinglong Gotseai (15)

time for this day to come. Our district is finally free of mines. We have taken control of our future. The mines were a serious problem. People were not able to cultivate their land, they were desperate. I felt responsible, but what could I do?” But now, as he says, it is done. „I am very relieved.”

For decades, the region around Mount Darwin was one of the most mine-contaminated areas in the world. In some places there were as many as 5,500 mines per kilometre, that had been deployed by the Rhodesian army between 1975 and 1979, when the people of the country were fighting against the colonial power of Britain.

For the people of the district, the legacy of the war transpired to be an unbearable burden. Mount Darwin is a drought-stricken region where every hectare is necessary for survival. If people have money, they buy livestock; which becomes their capital. But since the end of the war, over 100,000 cattle

have died in the minefields, driving many farmers to ruin.

The mines are also deadly for the children. To get to primary school, they found themselves having to cross several minefields – following trails where one wrong step could mean death.

Kudzamai Chimedza, Deputy Head of Chisescha Primary School, describes what it was like before the mines were cleared: „One of the minefields ran only 100 metres from the school yard. Every day we would go out to meet the children to make sure they got through safely. The older children held the younger ones’ hands. Of course, we kept warning them of the dangers, but they are children. One day, when some boys brought two mines and showed them around the schoolyard, panic broke out. Luckily nothing happened, but we had to evacuate the school and call the deminers.”

Now, however, they have finally put the past behind them, says Chimedza. „Attendance in the school is increasing again. Whereas before there were families who kept their children at home out of fear, now they all have a chance to get an education.”

Since World Without Mines begun focussing its efforts on Zimbabwe, our local partner organisations have destroyed over 50,000 land mines and returned seven square kilometres of land to the people – an important milestone in the country’s ambition to become completely mine-free by 2025.

But further demining efforts are not looking promising. One of the biggest donors – the UK government – recently announced that its plans to drastically cut or even cancel funding for demining projects in various countries. This austerity measure will also impact Zimbabwe and jeopardises further demining progress.

The efforts of private organisations such as World Without Mines are now all the more integral to ensure that demining projects do not fall by the wayside. We will continue to do our best – and we thank all our donors in advance for their kind support.



Photos: CSHD

Three out of four members of a EOD team supported by World Without Mines were killed.

WE GRIEVE WITH THE FAMILIES

In Cambodia, three men from our EOD team lost their lives while trying to disarm an anti-tank mine.

The four-person EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) team of our partner organisation Cambodian Self Help Demining (CSHD) was called to Preah Vihear Province on 10 January 2022 to clear an anti-tank mine. These mines are often secured by other explosive devices. An explosion was triggered as they carried out their work, immediately killing the EOD experts Sun Vong, Ma Simet and Morn Chok. The force of the blast threw the fourth member of the team, En Poy, into the air but, fortunately, he survived with only minor injuries. All the men that lost their lives that day were between 29 and 32 years old, leaving behind families with children.

Following the accident, the requisite official investigation was launched immediately, while CSHD's activities were suspended during this time. CSHD helped its employees to access urgent psychological support via a local organisation and launched a fundraising campaign for the affected families. Together with the insurance benefits, the donations guarantee the families some financial security, allowing them to provide for their basic needs and enable the chil-

dren to receive an education. The official investigation points towards human error and a misjudgement by the team leader as being likely causes of the accident.

This accident is just one example of the tragic consequences of mines laid decades ago. The mine has killed men who risked their lives to rid their country of the deadly traces of war and conflict. In the process, they themselves have become victims of the brutal weapons. Words cannot express how incredibly tragic this is.

Our efforts in Cambodia

Since 1979, there have been 64,950 mine victims in Cambodia, with 19,806 deaths. Even today, accidents continue to happen, as farmers try to cultivate their land.

That is why World Without Mines has been working to alleviate the situation since 2017 by funding two EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) teams of our partner organisation Cambodian Self Help Demining (CSHD).

World Without Mines is also supporting CSHD in-house as it processes this tragic accident.



The demining teams of our partner Cambodian Self Help Demining are called in when mines and ERWs are found.

Please help save lives: Make a donation to support World Without Mines.

Thank you!

An unexploded tail section of a 300 mm rocket which appear to contained cluster munition after shelling on the northern outskirts of Kharkiv on March 21, 2022.



Photo: SERGEY BOBOK/AFP via Getty Images

URGENT WARNINGS

Missiles, shells, mines – the war in Ukraine leaves an dangerous legacy.



Immediately after the war began, posts started appearing on Facebook and Instagram highlighting the dangers of explosive weapons.

The threat of ERWs lie in wait throughout the war zone: unexploded ordnance range from small-calibre projectiles to 200-kilogram aerial bombs. In addition, abandoned frontline positions and army equipment may be littered with mines and booby traps.

These legacies of war compound the humanitarian disaster and will continue to plague Ukraine for months and years to come. This is why our partner organisation The Halo Trust has launched a risk awareness campaign on social media. Ads on Facebook and Instagram warn people of the dangers and call on them to inform local emergency services if remnants of war are found. In just one month, the posts had been viewed 50 million times.

World Without Mines has supported The Halo Trust in realising and growing its campaign since the war started. Ads are also posted to TikTok and Twitter in neighbouring countries to warn refugees who may find explosive devices in the rubble of their homes and towns on their return.

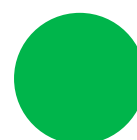
Reports of cluster munitions used in Ukraine

Video footage and photographs indicate that Russia has deployed internationally prohibited cluster munitions. Cluster bombs contain several hundred smaller submunitions that are ejected over a wide area. Up to 40 per cent of cluster munitions do not explode, but remain live and can be triggered with only the slightest touch.

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