

WORLD WITHOUT MINES

ANGOLA AND ZIMBABWE



Photos: The HALO Trust

Irene Rohner and Henriette Eppenberger accompany the mine clearing team in Zimbabwe on a deployment.

A JOURNEY FILLED WITH HOPE

What does it feel like to stand in the middle of a minefield? And why is it that, on this particular occasion, the explosions were cause for celebration? In their travel report from Africa, Henriette Eppenberger and Irene Rohner answer these questions.

After an interlude due to the coronavirus pandemic, World Without Mines could finally carry out inspections on the ground again: for the first time, representatives of the foundation visited the team of women in Angola, supported since 2017, and the mine clearing project in Zimbabwe, funded since 2015.

In Angola, the pair of travellers stayed the night at the mine clearance camp near Muscovoto. The next morning, they visited the village, which basks idyllically in the sunshine, with pigs and goats grazing and carefree children playing. But appearances can be deceptive: for several decades, the village was the scene of bitter conflict during the Angolan Civil War, and the surrounding area is now strewn with mines.

In 2005, many inhabitants returned from exile filled with hope. „The village elder Eduardo Ndumba told us that they began raising cattle again,” explained Irene Rohner. But in 2006, a farmer stepped on a mine and died. Shortly thereafter, other

Irene Rohner, geographer and sociologist, has been Co-Managing Director of World Without Mines since 2023. She gained her many years of experience in international collaboration at the UNO, consultancies and NGOs.

Henriette Eppenberger has been a member of the Foundation Board since 2016. A legal expert, she has worked for the ICRC and in the FDFA department for peace policy, where she also assisted with mine clearance projects in southern Africa.





Children going to school in Nyabawa. Until recently, the area beside the road was riddled with mines.

mines killed two cows. „Since then, we’ve been steering clear of vast tracts of our land,” reported Eduardo. But now there is cause for hope: since November 2023, our partner organisation the HALO Trust has been clearing the mines around the village. The team of women funded by World Without Mines has already defused 68 deadly explosive devices. „Every explosion goes to show how hard the deminers are working to keep us safe,” said Eduardo with gratitude.

„Seeing the deminers at work on the ground was nothing short of electric,” said Irene Rohner. On this day, four mines were found and two were detonated there and

then. Irene Rohner feels that experiencing first hand what it means to stand in a field wearing protective clothing for eight hours a day in the heat and dust has further increased her respect for the dangerous work of „our” deminers.

The impression made on the travellers in Zimbabwe was no less stark: along the border with Mozambique, there is a dense minefield containing up to 5,500 mines per kilometre. But the work of the HALO Trust is bearing fruit: Irene Rohner and Henriette Eppenberger drove for three hours along bumpy gravel roads on land that has already been cleared. „I’ve previously visited a few minefields in various countries and I thought that nothing would shock me any more,” said Henriette Eppenberger. „But these never-ending white sticks, each representing a cleared mine and arranged in rows like graves from the Second World War, were deeply shocking to me. And yet, the results of the mine clearance couldn’t have been more apparent,” continued Henriette Eppenberger. „Nowadays, the cleared land is being used for agriculture and families are moving back in.”

The visit to Nyabawa primary school, which is located right next to the mine field, was particularly moving. Parents feared for the safety of their children, qualified teachers avoided working there and tragic accidents were all too common. But in 2020, the situation improved: with funding from World Without Mines, a HALO team began clearing mines from the area, with facilitating access to the school being a top priority. The areas near the school had already been cleared by 2021 – with astounding results: after the mines were cleared, the number of pupils rose from 56 to 249. Children even travel from neighbouring Mozambique, because this is the nearest school to them. „We no longer fear the worst when they show up late,” explained Macheka, a teacher at the school, with audible relief.

The progress is compelling testament to the fact that mine clearance is about so much more than just defusing explosive devices. It restores people’s livelihoods, paves the way for education and gives people prospects for the future.



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A WILL CAN SAVE LIVES

Many people would like to have a positive impact on the world, even after they die – for example by supporting a charitable organisation.

World Without Mines helps people in areas with landmines to live without fear. Would you like to make a contribution so that children can go to school safely again and families can farm their fields?

Our Co-Managing Director Vanda Mathis is here to answer any of your questions on wills and testaments.



Photos: CSHD

Grenades, rockets, bombs and mines that could have exploded at any moment.

RECORD FIND: 212 UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN ONE PLACE

When the team from **Cambodian Self Help Demining (CSHD)** was called to the village of Kbal Snuol in northeastern Cambodia, what they discovered was extraordinary: inhabitants of the village had gathered 212 explosive weapons over the course of many years – all of which were left over from the decades of conflict.

CSHD, our partner organisation, has been operating in Cambodia for over 20 years, but this discovery exceeded all that came before.

FOUND AND DEFUSED:

- twenty-seven Chinese 60 mm Type 27 and 30 HE mortar bombs
- four 60 mm M49 HE mortar bombs, made in the USA
- four 81 mm M374A1 HE mortar bombs, made in the USA
- thirteen 81 mm M853A1 illuminating mortar bombs, made in the USA
- two 107 mm WP M2 smoke mortar bombs, made in the USA
- one 107 mm M335 HE illuminating mortar bomb, made in the USA
- eleven Chinese HEAT B 40 grenade launchers
- twenty Chinese 85 mm HEAT Type 69 rockets
- one 114 HE M16 rocket, made in the USA
- two 40 mm M381 HE grenade launchers, made in the USA
- two Chinese 43 mm HE M46 fragmentation hand grenades
- nine Vietnamese 45 mm HE rifle grenades of unknown model
- one Japanese 1 kg bomb (from the Second World War)
- twenty 23 mm artillery shells, made in the USA
- two 37 mm artillery shells, made in the USA
- three 104 mm M327 HEPT artillery shells, made in the USA
- one Type 69 Chinese landmine
- two PMN landmines, made in the USSR
- thirty-four PD detonators, thirteen BD detonators and fourteen bomb detonators
- one 37 mm artillery shell, made in the USSR
- various BLU Dragontooths (cluster munitions), made in the USA

Team Lead Than Bunthong said: „Normally, we find six or seven unexploded mines at a given location, maybe 15 to 20. But 212 explosives at a single location is truly extraordinary!”

The CSHD team required three whole days to defuse the explosives on site or safely transport them away. But first, they had to sort through them, as each type has its own detonation mechanism. This yielded an impressive list.

Fortunately, no one was harmed during this dangerous deployment thanks to the professionalism of those involved. Nonetheless, the discovery laid bare the serious consequences that Cambodia is still suffering as a result of its past conflicts. The defusing of the explosives is a huge relief for the people of Kbal Snuol. But there is still a great deal of work to do until the whole of Cambodia has been cleared of unexploded ordnance. CSHD will forge ahead with its work – thanks in no small part to the support of World Without Mines.



World Without Mines has been working in Cambodia since 2017 and is currently supporting two clearance teams from Cambodian Self Help Demining (CSHD).

Annual report 2023

Would you like to find out more about our work and the difference made by your donations? Scan the QR code now and read our annual report.



Photos: DASH

FAIR PAY FOR EXTRAORDINARY WORK

Paransodhi Rajeshwaree was displaced by the civil war in Sri Lanka. Back in her hometown, she was unable to find work – until she completed training to become a deminer. Thanks to her hard work, she is able to feed her family and her daughters can go to school.



Paransodhi Rajeshwaree is proud to have helped make her country a safer place.

The 35-year-old mother of three daughters originally comes from Kilinochchi. Her older brother was recruited by the Tamil Tigers when he was a teenager. As a result, Paransodhi had to drop out of school to help her parents. Later on, she married and had children. „When we were forced to flee in 2009, I lost three family members in a bomb attack,” she recounted. For some years, she was internally displaced in Trincomalee. Back in the village, the situation was desperate – out of work and deserted by her husband. „How am I supposed to feed my daughters?” Paransodhi asked herself.

In 2011, she took advantage of the opportunity to start working as a deminer at our partner organisation Delvon Assis-

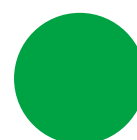
tance for Social Harmony (DASH) – in spite of the dangers involved. „I was given rigorous training for my mine clearance work. I always wear protective equipment and follow the safety regulations to the letter. This enables me to minimise the risks and handle any hazardous situations properly. Since starting this job, I have been able to provide for my family,” said Paransodhi with gratefulness. In addition to her job, she sews and sells clothes to supplement her income.

Ananda Chandrasiri, Director of DASH, confirmed: „The achievements of women like Paransodhi are incredible. Over the last twelve years, she has helped to clear over 30 hectares of land.”

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WELT OHNE MINEN
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MONDE SANS MINES