



GENEVA CALL

APPEL DE GENÈVE

LLAMAMIENTO DE GINEBRA

ADVANCING MINE ACTION IN SRI LANKA: MOBILISING THE SRI LANKAN EXPATRIATE AND TAMIL DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

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ORGANISED BY GENEVA CALL
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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Workshop	2
Summary of the Proceedings	3
<i>Morning Session</i>	3
<i>Global Overview of the Landmine Situation in Sri Lanka</i>	3
<i>Mine Clearance, MRE & Victim Assistance in Government Controlled Areas</i>	3
<i>Mine Clearance in LTTE Controlled Areas</i>	4
<i>MRE & Victim Assistance in LTTE Controlled Areas</i>	6
<i>Afternoon Session</i>	7
<i>The Mine Ban Movement & the Convention & the Government's Response</i>	7
<i>The Geneva Call Deed of Commitment and the LTTE response</i>	8
<i>Switzerland's Efforts Towards Mine Action and a Mine Ban in Sri Lanka</i>	8
Observations and ideas from participants	9
Concerns Raised by the Participants	9
Ideas for Further Action	11
Lessons and Conclusions	18

Introduction

It is estimated that between one and one and a half million mines were laid by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during the conflict that began in 1983. At the time of the ceasefire, in February 2002, each month saw 15 to 20 new mine casualties. Most of the landmine (LM) contamination is located in the northern and eastern provinces, including areas under the control of the LTTE, and directly affects the lives of the Tamils. Specifically, landmines are preventing the internally displaced persons and refugees from returning to their homes. Following the ceasefire, a mine action programme, which mainly relies on international aid, was implemented. Humanitarian mine action in Sri Lanka has been focusing on supporting reconstruction activities and resettlement of displaced persons.

Despite the ongoing mine action programme, neither the GoSL nor LTTE have made a commitment to stop using anti-personnel (AP) mines. However, both parties appear receptive to the idea of such as mine ban, which would most likely materialize if it were a joint effort or enacted in a reciprocal manner.

Challenges remain to advancing the landmine ban in Sri Lanka, not the least of which is the current standstill in peace negotiations, the lack of confidence between the two parties and the escalation of violence. However, Geneva Call believes that there is still space to proceed forward with mine action in Sri Lanka and to work towards an AP mine ban.

Geneva Call is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to engaging armed Non-State Actors (NSAs) to respect and to adhere to humanitarian norms, starting with the ban on AP mines¹. Geneva Call provides an innovative mechanism for NSAs, which do not participate in the drafting of treaties and thus may not feel bound by their obligations, to express adherence to the norms embodied in the 1997 anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) through their signature to the "*Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action*"

Since 2002, Geneva Call has worked in collaboration with local and international organisations to secure a ban on AP mines by both sides of the conflict and to help move forward mine action in Sri Lanka. Geneva Call has engaged the GoSL and the LTTE in direct dialogue on the issues. Furthermore, Geneva Call has participated in a larger effort to raise awareness among the Sri Lankan communities, both inside and outside the country, of the dangers of landmines in Sri Lanka and to mobilise the various stakeholders behind mine action activities (mine clearance, stockpile destruction, Mine Risk Education (MRE), victim assistance and mine ban advocacy). A special emphasis was placed on mobilising the Tamil Diaspora to support mine action efforts, having taken into consideration the strong familial and identity links with the Tamil communities living in Sri Lanka, who are among those most affected by the dangers posed by landmines. In this framework, Geneva Call organised, in collaboration with the Centre for Just Peace and Democracy (CJPD), a workshop in Zurich on 10 April 2006 with members of the Sri Lankan expatriate and Tamil Diaspora communities coming from USA, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. This workshop followed a similar workshop that was held in Paris in May 2005 for members of the Sri Lankan expatriate and Tamil Diaspora communities coming mainly from Europe².

¹ Under Article 1 of the Deed of Commitment, AP mine are defined as those devices which effectively explode by the presence, proximity or contact of a person, including other victim activated explosive devices and anti-vehicle mines with the same effect whether with or without anti-handling devices. This includes commercially manufactured AP mines, victim activated improvised explosive (IEDs), anti-vehicle mines that can be triggered by the weight of a person.

² See the report on Geneva Call's website (www.genevacall.org)

The Workshop

The objectives of the workshop were to raise the awareness of the landmine situation in Sri Lanka, explore ways for advancing mine action in the current context, and to mobilize the participants and their respective communities to become actively involved in mine action.

A total of 35 participants were drawn primarily from the Tamil Diaspora communities in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and United States. There were also a few Sinhalese expatriate community representatives from Australia³. All the participants were activists within their own communities.

The workshop was divided up into two sessions. The morning session focused on the theme of enhancing mine action (mine clearance, MRE, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy), while the afternoon session dealt with the subject of obtaining a mine ban in Sri Lanka. The sessions were broken down into plenary, where experts presented various aspects of the topics using visuals and video clips with time for questions and answers, and small group discussions of one hour for brainstorming.

The presentations were the principal starting point for deliberations which, together with the small group discussion exercises, resulted in conclusions leading to informal recommendations. Essentially, the presentation structure and content were formulated to ensure that the end result would give a clear understanding of the landmine situation and mine action in Sri Lanka.

Small group discussions were organized with the participants on each of the major themes. The objective of these discussions was to make the members of the Sri Lankan expatriate and Tamil Diaspora communities consider:

- How mine action could be better implemented;
- How the mine ban can be promoted more effectively; and,
- What could be their role in promoting mine action.

The small group discussions were based on a participative approach to help the participants assimilate the information provided to them during the presentations and come up with a proper, coherent perspective on the topics. Each discussion group was composed of seven to eight participants. Each small group had one resource person, whose role was to help put forward or draw out relevant technical or comparative information within the discussions, and one facilitator, who was in charge of keeping the dialogue focused and progressing, ensuring that everyone was able to speak and be heard. Within these discussions, participants formulated a list of ideas regarding ways to better promote mine action and the mine ban in Sri Lanka. These ideas were presented and debated among the whole assembly at the end of the workshop.

³ One representative of the Muslim expatriate community had been invited, but he was unable to attend the meeting.

Summary of the Proceedings

Morning Session

Global Overview of the Landmine Situation in Sri Lanka

Reverend Rienzie Perera of the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation in Sri Lanka

In his opening speech, Reverend Rienzie Perera emphasized the importance of the Diaspora to help facilitate communication between the two parties to the conflict and to persuade each party to stop the use of landmines, especially as they constitute an obstacle for economic development. He regretted that mutual accusations on the use of landmines continues but at the same time underlined a positive development with the Government of Sri Lanka submitting its first voluntary report under Article 7 of the MBT in 2005, even though it failed to report on its stockpile.

Video Presentation:

As the landmine victims identified to tell their personal stories were not able to attend, a video produced by YaTV in 2006 entitled *Crossing Fires: Stepping Out* was shown. The video mainly discussed social problems encountered by female landmine victims following their physical rehabilitation. Women are particularly affected as they often cannot take part in special social functions, get married or attend school. However, a few women's organizations are addressing this problem by lobbying for a national policy for disabilities and raising awareness among the local population.

Mine Clearance, MRE & Victim Assistance in Government Controlled Areas

Mr. Tim Horner, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Sri Lanka Technical Advisor

Mr. Tim Horner gave the next presentation on Mine Clearance, MRE and Victim Assistance in government-controlled Areas.

He began his presentation by highlighting the extent of the landmine problem in Sri Lanka. According to the figures he presented, there are 1.3 million government mines, most of which were laid in the latter part of the 1990s, contaminating the North and East. Until today, the number of mines procured and fabricated by the LTTE remains unknown.

In order to address the landmine problem, a holistic approach has been adopted consisting of the five pillars of mine action: mine clearance (including mapping and marking), mine risk education, victim assistance, advocacy against the use of landmines and stockpile destruction. This approach has proven to be effective. With respect to mine ban advocacy, Mr. Horner noted that the government of Sri Lanka had submitted its first voluntary Article 7 Mine Ban Treaty transparency report in 2005.

The management and the coordination of Mine Action are based on a pyramidal structure. Mine-Action offices located in affected areas (Jaffna, Vavuniya and Kilinochchi), as well as Mine Action Focal Points in Government Agent Offices (Mannar, Trincomalee, Batticaloa) help to coordinate and support operations locally while oversight is provided by the inter-sectoral National Steering Committee for Mine Action situated in Colombo. Technical support to Mine Action Offices is

provided by UNDP. The action plans of the implementing agencies are established in line with the District plans and the Global strategy plan.

Mine clearance began in Jaffna in 1999. Eleven agencies are involved in mine clearance⁴. Over 80% of the demining efforts took place in the Jaffna and Mullaitivu Districts. Progress has been made in demining over the last few years. The cleared areas in 2005 represented more than twice that of all the areas demined during the previous years added together. However, almost 85% of affected areas still need to be cleared.

MRE is primarily supported through United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which works in cooperation with several implementing partners: Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), White Pigeon, Sarvodaya, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Community Trust Fund (CTF), and the National Institute of Education. Statistics show that mine accidents have considerably decreased from over 160 in 2001 to 30 in 2005.

In order to assist survivors of mines/Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), Sri Lanka has several prosthetic centres that are generally able to respond to the physical rehabilitation needs of civilian mine/UXO survivors in government-controlled areas. The Jaipur Foot Centre provides limb fitting, mobility training and physiotherapy. Seven agencies provide survivor support, including vocational training and income generation. UNDP Mine Victim Monitoring comprises stabilization and surgery, information gathering and mine action response.

Mr. Horner drew the participant's attention to the fact that there are several constraints to mine action, namely:

- Limited access to High Security Zones (HSZ), home to 17,000 displaced families;
- The need for mine action organizations to first obtain official authorizations from local government agencies and Sri Lankan Army (SLA) in order to implement a task;
- Increasing security risks for mine action staff in view of recurring attacks and the deteriorating situation; and,
- The decrease in funding, since a mine ban commitment is a prerequisite for many international donors.

In conclusion, Mr. Horner recognized that significant progress has been made to date as the government's target of "free from effects of mines by 2008" seems achievable. However, continued peace and international funding is imperative to achieve this goal. Furthermore, major donors are becoming increasingly explicit in wanting tangible progress on the ban in order to fund mine action.

Mine Clearance in LTTE Controlled Areas

Mr. Velupillai Sivanadiyar, President of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), Sri Lanka

Mr. Sivanadiyar began his presentation with a clip from a video on mine clearance produced by the TRO. The video was followed by a presentation on mine action in the Northeast (NE) of Sri Lanka. The TRO's mine action activities comprise humanitarian demining, MRE and survivors' assistance including a prostheses programme (with White Pigeon).

With respect to demining, the TRO coordinates the work of five implementing partners: Norwegian People's Aid (NPA); Mines Advisory Group (MAG); the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD); Danish Demining Group (DDG) and the Humanitarian Demining Unit (HDU)⁵. The HDU was

⁴ Danish Demining Group, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), HALO Trust, Horizon, Humanitarian Demining Unit (HDU), Japanese Center for Conflict Prevention, Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Milinda Moragoda Trust, Sarvatra, and Sri Lankan Army.

⁵ NPA's activities comprise : Manual Clearance , Rake method & Flail Support; FSD is doing clearing using mine detectors whereas DDG is using rake method; MAG's activities comprise: Survey, MRE & Flail Support

established in 1999 and since that date, has been run by the TRO. It is based in Kilinochchi and consists of 15 demining teams.

More than five million square meters have been cleared of mines since 1999. Over 195,000 explosive devices have been removed of which approximately 105,000 were AP mines. For the future, the TRO plans to clear 21 million square meters. The TRO has established three different levels of priority for affected areas. Land resettlement, reconstruction of infra-structure, access roads to settlements and reclaimed agriculture land are all a high priority for demining. Medium priority areas include water tanks, access to forests and unclaimed agriculture land. Finally, forests and marshy lands are labelled low priority.



Mr. Velupillai Sivanadiyar (On the left), President of the TRO-Sri Lanka, making a presentation on Mine Clearance in LTTE Controlled Areas. Photo credit: S.K.

Due to the 2004 Tsunami, the TRO also focused on Tsunami affected areas in the Northeast by deploying teams to recover the dead and wounded first, and then demining temporary transit camps. Today, the demining of areas of permanent resettlement still continues.

Mr. Sivanadiyar displayed maps of known landmine belts and de-mined areas in the Vanni and the East, as well as the current location of HDU demining teams.

Mr. Sivanadiyar explained that over 650,000 people have attended MRE sessions throughout the Northeast. The Mine Risk Education strategy includes pre- and post-testing on Mine Risk Awareness, provision of seminars and posters for education, and the provision of extra training for villages identified as high risk. The organisation shares the UNDP's finding that the number of landmine victims has significantly decreased in the last six years. According to the figures presented by TRO, in the Vanni, 131 people were victimised by landmines and UXOs in 2000, 17 in 2003 and 2 in 2006.

Finally, Mr. Sivanadiyar underlined TRO's appeal to the international community to:

- Provide support to victims of landmines and UXOs and promote awareness programmes;
- Provide support for TRO/HDU's ongoing commitment for the removal of all landmines and UXOs; and,
- Help mobilize the Diaspora to support landmine clearance activities.

MRE & Victim Assistance in LTTE Controlled Areas

Dr. Namasivayam Moorthy, White Pigeon UK

The presentation began with a video produced by White Pigeon.

White Pigeon UK is a charitable organization working toward the rehabilitation of those deemed to be disabled by landmines and the conflict, or any other reason, in Sri Lanka. The role of White Pigeon UK comprises various actions: fundraising; advocacy and awareness raising; identifying and promoting skills exchange; assisting in the set up of other international branches; and promoting and maintaining links between all White Pigeon branches. All of White Pigeon UK's work is carried out by volunteers.

The objective of Dr. Moorthy's presentation was to give insight into the projects carried out by White Pigeon Sri Lanka and to share some of the stories of landmine victims.

White Pigeon is mainly involved in mine/UXO survivor assistance with the production of artificial limbs and rehabilitation. This includes fitting of prostheses made in technical centres by trained technicians, walking with the assistance of trained therapists, repairing prostheses and providing wheel chairs and crutches. White Pigeon UK supports White Pigeon Technical Centres in Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Jaffna and Puthukkudiyiruppu.

White Pigeon is also engaged in Mine Risk Education for children and adults. Dr. Moorthy emphasized that they are especially encouraging women to take part in their programmes, as women and children need specialized MRE. White Pigeon's MRE methodologies for children include songs, pictures, street drama, and role plays. The education of adults is mainly made through banners, street drama and pictures cards.

In addition to MRE, White Pigeon's educators gather information from villagers about the possible location of landmines and UXO and transfer their reports to Mine Education Centres. This information is forwarded to the HDU. Villagers are also encouraged to report any sighting of explosives to the mine awareness centres in each town.

The stories of landmine victims shared with the workshop participants showed how landmine victims are able, with the help of artificial limbs, vocational training and support, to continue normal life and to reintegrate themselves in socio-economical activities.



Photo credit: S.K.

Afternoon Session

Video Presentation:

The afternoon session began with a video produced by UNICEF with the help of YaTV entitled, Advocacy and Stockpile Destruction. The video discussed an initiative by the Sri Lankan Campaign to Ban Landmines in 2001, which urged the GoSL to sign the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) and the LTTE to stop using landmines. At the time, both sides agreed with this proposition, although, presently, the situation is at a stalemate. In October 2002, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister announced, during a session of the United Nations General Assembly, that Sri Lanka would become a signatory to the MBT and that the main factor impeding it from doing so is the LTTE's unwillingness to stop using mines. The ceasefire agreement has enabled some mine clearance and since 2001 there have been no new allegations of the use of victim-activated landmines by either side. Advocating a complete mine ban goes hand in hand with destroying stockpiles and so far, neither the GoSL nor the LTTE have disclosed the size of their stockpiles. Landmines are mostly located in the NE of the country and have had a devastating effect on the people there. To prevent further casualties it is necessary to lobby the GoSL to sign the MBT and the LTTE to stop using landmines. Peace would then become more sustainable.

The Mine Ban Movement & the Convention & the Government's Response

Ms. Anne Capelle, former director of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)

Ms. Capelle opened the afternoon session with a presentation on "The ban on antipersonnel landmines: a vision which became reality". In the presentation, she gave an overview on the history of the mine ban movement which culminated in the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty in Ottawa in 1997 by 122 States⁶. After having explained the convention's provisions, Ms. Capelle noted that armed NSAs have equally started to endorse the convention's norms, mainly through the signing of Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment.

Next, she presented the response of the GoSL to the mine ban. Widespread use of landmines in Sri Lanka stopped with the cease-fire agreement in 2002. However, Sri Lanka remains one of the 44 states which are still not party to the MBT. Preliminary steps taken by the government toward the possible elimination of landmines included voting in favour of an annual UN General Assembly resolution calling for the ban (1996-2005), acceding to the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (2004), participating as observer in the first review conference of the MBT in Nairobi (2005) and submitting a MBT article 7 voluntary report in June 2005.

Ms. Capelle concluded that the MBT had a very positive effect on the mine situation around the world: 71 States Parties have completed the destruction of their stockpiles, collectively destroying more than 38.3 million antipersonnel mines; the number of reported new mine/UXO casualties has dropped significantly in some heavily mine-affected countries; and demining projects have received increased funds. However, she emphasized the challenges that remain. In particular, victim assistance remains desperately inadequate in most mine affected areas: the number of landmine survivors continues to grow, therefore the support for survivors needs to be increased.

Finally, reminding that landmines affect civilians for their entire lives, have a long-term impact even after the conflict is over and have a big price on society (limit land access, high cost of clearing mines, long lasting needs for survivors), she urged all states to accede to the MBT and NSAs to endorse the Deed of Commitment.

⁶ At the time of her presentation, 150 States were Parties to the Convention

The Geneva Call Deed of Commitment and the LTTE response

Ms. Katherine Kramer, Programme Director for Asia at Geneva Call

Ms. Kramer presented the organization's role in the global effort to ban landmines and more particularly in Sri Lanka. She began her presentation by introducing the problematic nature of landmines, i.e. that they are indiscriminate, inhumane, continue to kill long after the conflict is over, and that their use is a violation of basic human rights. While States have the possibility to accede to the MBT, armed Non-State Actors cannot do so. This is why, Geneva Call produced the Deed of Commitment, a mechanism allowing NSAs to declare their adherence and respect to this international humanitarian norm. The Deed of Commitment engages NSAs to cease the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of AP mines, as well as encourages cooperation in- and undertaking - mine action, and collaboration in implementing and monitoring the ban. This is an essential step to the complete ban of AP mines because many States' mine ban policies are affected by the use of mines by the NSAs on their territories. It is also a measure of confidence building between governments and NSAs.

Ms. Kramer proceeded by presenting Geneva Call's efforts in encouraging the LTTE to sign the Deed of Commitment. In the last few years, Geneva Call has met with the LTTE negotiating team as well as with the LTTE Peace Secretariat on several occasions. LTTE delegates attended Geneva Call's conference on women in armed opposition groups in addition to the First Meeting of Signatory Groups to the Deed of Commitment. Moreover, Geneva Call organized a mine ban workshop in Jaffna, in May 2004, as well as two Diaspora Meetings, one in Paris, in 2005, and this one. The objective of the latter two was to raise awareness among the Tamil Diaspora and the Sinhalese expatriates about the landmine problem in Sri Lanka.

The end goal in Sri Lanka is to secure a reciprocal landmine ban by the LTTE and the GoSL, according to Ms. Kramer. The objective of a ban by both sides is to spare communities from new mines being planted in the ground, to enhance mine action in affected areas and to build confidence between the GoSL and the LTTE in the framework of a peace process.

Switzerland's Efforts Towards Mine Action and a Mine Ban in Sri Lanka

Ms Janine Händel, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Händel followed with a presentation on the Swiss mine action strategy in Sri Lanka. The aims of Switzerland's actions there consist in the promotion of human security and peace by the achievement of both the political objective of a landmine ban and the operational objective of a landmine free country.

In order to promote the landmine ban, Switzerland is engaged in advocacy with bilateral contacts, and the Embassy of Switzerland in Sri Lanka supports the Landmine Ban Advocacy Forum, a forum formed under the auspices of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies consisting of representatives of UN agencies, local and international NGOs, the donor community, the Sri Lanka government and mine action agencies.

With respect to Mine Action, Ms. Händel felt that it is very important to support in an impartial manner efforts in government as well as in LTTE controlled areas. Switzerland finances mine clearance in Mannar, Vavuniya and around schools in the Jaffna Peninsula.

In conclusion, Ms. Händel emphasized Switzerland's support for the landmine ban and underlined that it was one of the first countries to support Geneva Call and the Deed of Commitment.

Observations and ideas from participants

Concerns Raised by the Participants

Participants were very interested in the different themes presented during the workshop. Many questions and concerns were raised during the Question and Answer sessions, the small group discussions and the final debriefing.



Photo credit: Geneva Call

Most of the participants were not familiar with the landmine issue and they wanted to have more information on the different types of landmines. A participant asked about the existence of toy-look-alike mines. According to the presenters, this type of mine was used during the conflict but since 2002 it has been very rare to find one. A person inquired about the origin of the mines. Learning that countries like Russia, Pakistan and China were still exporting mines, some of the participants publicly expressed the idea to stigmatize these countries.

All of the participants were very supportive of mine action in Sri Lanka in handling the humanitarian impact of landmines. However, participants raised some concerns related to certain aspects of mine action. A person was anxious about the possible return to conflict and questioned the efficacy of mine action if, following the fighting, mine clearance would have to start back at zero as a result of UXO contamination. Another concern brought forth had to do with the territorial repartition of the mines. A participant highlighted the fact that landmines and UXO are mainly located in the North and the East. People were also curious to know more about who decides where each organization will concentrate its mine clearance efforts. Additionally, the efficiency of mine action was brought up in connection with MRE and, more particularly, why accidents still happen and whether people are properly sensitized. Finally, the 2008 timeframe for a mine-free Sri Lanka was questioned by one of the participants who asked whether it was realistic.

A question was also raised with regards to stockpile destruction. A participant was concerned about the question of transparency and why the government is not willing to disclose the size of its landmine stockpiles. He was worried that this possibly meant that it is larger than previously thought.

With respect to UXOs, one participant felt that the problem was not adequately addressed as only landmines were mentioned. First it was pointed out that a victim is a victim whether the accident is caused by a landmine or an UXO. The presenters explained that mine clearance also includes UXO clearance. However, the focus on the landmine ban is a result of the fact that landmines are an indiscriminate weapon that should never be used. Another presenter added that UXOs were also easier to clear than landmines.

The participants were much more critical and concerned with regard to the engagement of the LTTE to ban landmines.

Some participants expressed their unwillingness to assist in efforts driving the LTTE towards a mine ban, highlighting the fact that Geneva Call's mandate appears unilateral to them, as it only focuses on the LTTE.

Another person felt it was unfair to make the LTTE and the government sign two different contracts, as this would disadvantage one of the sides. To illustrate this "unfairness" of treatment, one participant highlighted the fact that in the MBT signatory states can withdraw if they want to whereas the Deed of Commitment makes no similar provision. In response, one of the presenters explained that the MBT has been designed by states to be signed by states only. Therefore, the international community needed to be creative to find new mechanisms to involve NSAs. Moreover it was reminded that in the process of the peace talks, the GoSL and the LTTE could sign an agreement on mine action and the ban.

One participant was interested to know if there were any suggestions for alternatives to the use of landmines. This was addressed by explaining that it was not the role of Geneva Call to suggest alternatives to the groups but to facilitate the process for groups to think about alternatives and come up with their own ideas.

Most of the participants felt that the mine ban would not be achievable prior to a peace agreement. They expressed concern about the lack of trust between the GoSL and the LTTE, which, according to them, constitutes a major obstacle to the parties' agreement for signing the MBT/Deed of Commitment.



Photo credit: Geneva Call

The question of the reliability of the sources of information used by the landmine ban community was raised by some participants. Several participants doubted the accuracy of the Landmine Monitor Report due to Human Rights Watch's (HRW) participation in the report and allegations made in the book on the use of child soldiers by LTTE⁷. The inclusion of the Landmine Monitor Report in the workshop preparation package thus created some confusion and anger among the participants. This was addressed by explaining how the Landmine Monitor Report is compiled and published. It was emphasized that the Landmine Monitor Report is based on a research network and constitutes a work in progress. As the Landmine Monitor Report welcomes feedback on its research, participants were encouraged to provide such feedback if they felt that the current report was inaccurate. Furthermore, it was underlined that Geneva Call is linked neither to the Landmine Monitor Report nor to HRW and does not participate in the drafting of the Landmine Monitor Report.

Ideas for Further Action

Besides a forum to raise concerns among participants, the small group discussions also served as a brainstorming session for ideas for further action. The main ideas given by the participants are presented in the table below.

These ideas and recommendations were made by participants and do not necessarily reflect Geneva Call's position. Furthermore, these recommendations were presented informally to the assembly of participants and were not formally endorsed by them.



Dr. Moorthy (White Pigeon UK) and Reverend Perera (IRPF) facilitating a small group discussion.
Photo credit: S.K.

⁷ The participants expressed strong dissent with a recently published paper by Human Rights Watch which, according to many participants, has made Human Rights Watch lose its credibility among the Tamil Diaspora.

Brainstorm of ideas generated during small group discussions

	Mine Action	Mine Awareness	Victim Assistance	Mine Clearance	Advocacy
Expatriate & Diaspora Communities	Diaspora could provide professional training to locals; this could be a model for other Diaspora	<p>Approach host governments to fund mine awareness</p> <p>With the support of UNDP, Geneva Call, CJPD, raise awareness of the landmine issue in host countries</p> <p>Work with local associations on mine awareness campaigns</p>	<p>Organise cultural events with the participation of landmine survivors</p> <p>Support the Centre for Women Development & Rehabilitation (CWDR)</p> <p>Promote sports programmes for mine survivors (e.g. provide wheelchairs)</p> <p>Help build the capacity of White Pigeon (e.g. conceptualisation and writing of proposals)</p>	Provide consultancy support for TRO's demining effort	<p>Continue supporting the landmine ban in Sri Lanka and other parts of the world</p> <p>Provide air time to Geneva Call to give interviews on Tamil radio and TV stations as well as in newspapers.</p> <p>Place regular advertisements in community newspapers, TV and radio stations</p> <p>Maintain ongoing dialogue with Geneva Call, with trustworthy reports & feedback based/defined by humanitarian values</p>

	Mine Action	Mine Awareness	Victim Assistance	Mine Clearance	Advocacy
Geneva Call	Persuade the international community to support mine action in Sri Lanka	Provide the participants motivated in implementing awareness raising projects with relevant contacts			<p>Take the initiative to bring the LTTE & GoSL together to discuss the landmine issue/the mine ban</p> <p>Circulate among the Diaspora a regular newsletter highlighting mine action in Sri Lanka</p> <p>Organise a group of experts from communities from Sri Lanka to advocate the mine ban</p> <p>Target the expatriate community to advocate the mine ban on the government side</p> <p>Take extra effort to improve impartiality of its propaganda and advocacy work</p> <p>Develop a larger vision for peace (i.e. linking to the peace process) While advocating the mine ban</p> <p>Approach both parties</p> <p>Re-define NSA so that not all NSAs are lumped together</p>

	Mine Action	Mine Awareness	Victim Assistance	Mine Clearance	Advocacy
International/ Local Mine Action Organisations	<p>Give equal footing to local organisations</p> <p>Apply international standards to local organisations</p> <p>Encourage partnerships between local & international organisations</p>	<p>Place more emphasis on landmine education for children, women, and farmers</p>	<p>Implement modern methods of physiotherapy</p> <p>Encourage the communities to empower the disabled</p> <p>Provide vocational training for victims</p>	<p>Give patent rights to TRO for landmine clearance tools used by them, and give all proceeds to TRO</p> <p>Clear roads and streets, as well as other essential routes in addition to farmland, hospitals and around wells (sources of water)</p> <p>Employ, give preference to and invest more in local deminers (providing training, etc.)</p> <p>Prioritise Mine clearance for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to be able to resettle</p> <p>Improve access & quality of equipment in LTTE-controlled areas</p> <p>Consult local authority about demining</p> <p>Promote realistic timeframes , 2008 is not realistic</p>	

	Mine Action	Mine Awareness	Victim Assistance	Mine Clearance	Advocacy
International Community	<p>Abolish dual standards regarding landmines</p> <p>Push for peace in Sri Lanka to avoid further planting of landmines</p> <p>Place landmine producers on a “black” list for unethical practice that would be published and distributed</p> <p>Get landmine manufacturers to contribute to mine action programmes, specifically in capacity building</p> <p>Monitor the manufacturing and distribution of landmines by States through international monitors</p>		<p>Tax landmine manufacturers to contribute to victim assistance</p> <p>Help fund White Pigeon</p>		<p>Pressure the GoSL & the LTTE to commit to the mine ban</p> <p>Pressure countries to stop selling mines to the GoSL</p> <p>Pressure the GoSL for the peace process</p> <p>Re-define NSA so that not all NSAs are lumped together.</p>
GoSL	<p>Sensitise the SLA about responsible use</p>	<p>Make available landmine awareness brochures to tourists (Tamil Diaspora, Sinhalese expatriates & other tourists)</p>	<p>Provide monetary compensation to all victims, similar to what is provided to soldiers</p> <p>Meet basic needs, specifically with regards to accessibility for the disabled</p>	<p>Clear all mines outside of HSZ within a limited timeframe</p> <p>Demine in the HSZ prior to the conclusion of peace talks</p>	
LTTE					

	Mine Action	Mine Awareness	Victim Assistance	Mine Clearance	Advocacy
GoSL & LTTE	Agree on some restrictions on mine use if they go to war before committing to the mine ban				<p>Meet together to discuss the landmine ban, the outcome of which would be included in the peace negotiations (perhaps also with donors and mine action organisations)</p> <p>Link Mine ban with peace process</p> <p>Make the GoSL and LTTE sign the same document to ban landmine (Like in private law, there should be a contract between both of them)</p>

	Mine Action	Mine Awareness	Victim Assistance	Mine Clearance	Advocacy
Non-specified	<p>Consider 3rd party, impartial monitoring</p> <p>Partnership organisations should endeavour to be impartial in their humanitarian efforts</p> <p>Translate material linked to mine action into the local languages</p> <p>Address also UXOs</p> <p>Provide support to local NGOs doing mine action (through direct funding or through in-kind support, e.g. providing computers, psychiatric help, etc.)</p> <p>Network with other expatriate groups in their respective host countries</p>	<p>Sensitise mainstream NGOs in mine awareness</p> <p>Publicise the landmine issue and its consequences through animal rights groups (with a focus on animal cruelty)</p>	<p>Form volunteer groups that can help relieve the emotional and physical burden for a short period of time on a daily basis</p> <p>Build the capacity of local organisations, such as White Pigeon, to provide psychological support to survivors (via specialists, advance training, volunteers), rehabilitation of women and children victims and raising the awareness in communities where survivors are living.</p> <p>Help strengthen & develop specialised departments within local organisations (e.g. White Pigeon) to deal with women, children, etc.</p>		<p>Need for impartial/unbiased reporting with no stigmatisation of any one group</p> <p>Produce mine ban education material (video, slides, photos, fact sheets, list of types of mines found in Sri Lanka, etc.)</p> <p>Make advertisements in Tamil/Sinhalese newspapers (in Sri Lanka), as well as Tamil newspapers (outside of Sri Lanka) and via Tamil Radio stations</p> <p>Inform the GoSL and its population about what is happening in the Northeast in order to be persuaded to support the ban</p> <p>Initiate dialogue between state residents & de facto state residents</p>

Lessons and Conclusions

- Overall, the workshop was a very positive experience. The workshop achieved its objectives of raising awareness among the participants of the landmine situation in Sri Lanka and mobilizing them to be more actively involved in mine action.
- The participants showed a keen interest in the topics covered and felt it was a good initiative. Many were not familiar with the landmine issue. They felt that the meeting was very informative and instructive. They were very concerned by the suffering caused by the use of AP mines. As a result, the contributions by the participants were honest and open. It was felt that a real dialogue was established
- In general, the participants were happy with the organisation and content of the workshop. They felt that the topics presented were relevant, in particular the ones related to mine action. The small group discussions were very well received and helped the participants to better understand the content of the sessions. Many questions were able to be addressed in the framework of these discussions. However, it was evident that the workshop needed to be longer. Due to time constraints, some questions raised were not answered and some misunderstandings and concerns were not adequately addressed. After the workshop many participants came to the presenters with additional questions.
- In future workshops of this type, more attention needs to be made to reference material provided and pre-screening of video presentations, in light of the audiences sensitivities to ensure that they do not unnecessarily antagonise the participants.
- Though Geneva Call tried its best to focus on the request for both sides of the conflict to commit to the mine ban in a reciprocal manner, the overall perception of the participants was that the workshop was unequal with undue emphasis placed on the LTTE. It appears that this was inescapable as Geneva Call's mandate is to work with NSAs. Partnering with another organisation more focused on state accession to MBT as well as a more balanced participation among the different Sri Lankan communities outside Sri Lanka may prevent the emergence of such feelings.
- Many participants were keen on actively working on this issue by sensitising their respective communities of the landmine problem in the country. There was some criticism expressed that there was not enough time to develop any follow up strategies or concrete plan of actions. It was clear that the participants felt Geneva Call should assume the role of keeping the momentum going and coordinating follow up activities. Geneva Call is working on the conceptualisation of such activities, taking into account ideas and recommendations that emerged during the workshop.

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