



UNORTHODOX AND HISTORIC: THE OTTAWA PROCESS AND THE MINE BAN TREATY. 25 YEARS OF A SUCCESS STORY OF MULTILATERALISM

Heterodoxo e histórico: el Proceso de Ottawa y la Convención sobre la prohibición de las minas antipersonales. 25 años de una historia de éxito del multilateralismo

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The 1997 Ottawa Convention to Ban Landmines entered into force 25 years ago, on 1 March 1999 and was the result of the Ottawa Process, a freestanding process of treaty negotiation outside a United Nations-facilitated forum with the aim of outlawing anti-personnel mines. It was also a product of an unusually cohesive and strategic partnership between governments, international organizations like the ICRC, UN agencies, and civil society, represented by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). This article explains the Ottawa process, from the lens of the survivors, Jesuits and courageous religious sisters who were involved since the early stages of ICBL. Echoing Pope Francis in his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, the article sets this process as an example for reconfiguring multilateralism. It also aims to be a renewed call for the banning of landmines worldwide and its clearance in places like Myanmar, Ukraine or Iraq, so that displaced people can go back safely to their lands one day.



Abstract

Landmines; cluster munitions; Ottawa Convention; Ottawa Process; multilateralism; Cambodia; refugees; ICBL; JRS.

Minas antipersonales; bombas de racimo; Convención de Ottawa; Proceso de Ottawa; multilateralismo; Camboya; refugiados; ICBL; SJR.



Key words

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Fechas

*La Convención de Ottawa sobre la prohibición de las minas antipersonales de 1997 entró en vigor hace 25 años, el 1 de marzo de 1999, y fue el resultado del Proceso de Ottawa, un proceso independiente de negociación fuera de los foros facilitados por las Naciones Unidas y cuyo objetivo era la ilegalización de las minas antipersonales. Fue también el resultado de una asociación cohesiva y estratégica inusual entre gobiernos, organizaciones internacionales, como el ICRC, las agencias de la ONU y la sociedad civil, representada por la Campaña Internacional para Prohibir las Minas Antipersonales (ICBL). Este artículo explica el Proceso de Ottawa, desde la perspectiva de los supervivientes, jesuitas y hermanas religiosas que se involucraron desde sus inicios en la ICBL. Recordando al papa Francisco en su reciente exhortación apostólica *Laudate Deum*, el artículo presenta este proceso como un ejemplo para reconfigurar el multilateralismo. También busca ser una nueva apelación a la prohibición de las minas antipersonales a nivel global y su desactivación en lugares como Myanmar, Ucrania o Irak, para que así las personas desplazadas puedan, algún día, volver a sus hogares de manera segura.*



1. Introduction

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, also known as the “Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention” is an instrument of international law that prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, and use of anti-personnel mines. The Convention entered into force 25 years ago, on 1st March 1999. It was the result of the Ottawa Process, a freestanding process of treaty negotiation outside a United Nations-facilitated forum with the aim of outlawing anti-personnel mines. The process was so called because it was launched in Ottawa by the minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada in October 1996.

The treaty was the product of an unusually cohesive and strategic partnership between governments, international organizations, like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UN agencies, and civil society, represented by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

The experience and resilience of Cambodian landmine survivors and a growing network of local communities and organisations made possible that Jesuits and friends joined the ICBL back in 1994. Strategic partnerships and most especially the voice of the survivors themselves were key to success, giving birth to a unique, historic and unorthodox multilateral achievement: The 1997 Ottawa Treaty to ban Landmines. ICBL was later awarded the Nobel Peace prize that same year.

This article explains the Ottawa process from the lenses of the survivors, Jesuits and friends. Echoing Pope Francis in his 2023 Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, this process can be an example for reconfiguring multilateralism. It is also a reminder of how these evil arms harm innocent people even years after wars are over. The article aims to be a call to stop the production, use, transfer and stockpiling of landmines and cluster munitions, used these days in countries like Myanmar, Ukraine or Iraq. We hope refugees and displaced persons can go back safely to their lands one day.

The article is dedicated to Sr. Denise Coghlan RSM and to Fr Kike Figaredo SJ, for their love and faithfulness to the cause of the landmine survivors.

The Ottawa Process was a freestanding process of treaty negotiation outside a United Nations-facilitated forum with the aim of outlawing anti-personnel mines

2. The vision of Fr Pedro Arrupe S.J.: The creation of the Jesuit Refugee Service as a “switchboard” connecting identified needs with offers of assistance

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) was founded on 14 November 1980 by Fr Pedro Arrupe, at the time Superior General of the Jesuits. Pedro Arrupe remained General from 1965 until incapacitated by a cerebral stroke in August 1981.

Arrupe’s vision remains inspiring: It is the close contact with refugees that time and again provides JRS workers with new strength and motivation. This was in fact Arrupe’s vision. He knew that the refugees themselves would be a gift to the Jesuits and their companions. He knew that to work with refugees would be good for them but for the Society too. Later on, on the Thai-Cambodia border, the first Jesuits confirmed this vision:

There is a formidable lesson of courage and dignity to learn from refugees. I remember all the people who had stepped on landmines and had lost an arm or a leg. I went to visit them and many said: “Father, there is no problem.” John Bingham and I were the only ones authorised to stay in the camp, as priests. What a crazy show to take the road towards the place where everything was going to be bombed, and watch the civilian and military cars driving fast the other way. (Ceyrac, 1998)

Coming to appreciate refugees as a gift may surprise some, since the stories concerning refugees are often overwhelming and depressing: Ukraine, Palestine, Myanmar, Venezuela, just to name a few. To the distant observer, the history of refugees is a succession of desperately similar crises likely to inspire compassion but often defying understanding. New crises may seem beyond our reach or leave us feeling there is little we can do. In actual fact each new crisis provokes new initiatives. New organisations are born out of concern and devise practical ways to offer assistance.

JRS was created in precisely this fashion. Fr Pedro Arrupe, who had himself lived in Asia, was deeply moved by the image of Vietnamese people seeking to escape their homeland by boat. When he voiced his concern to others, he discovered that they were similarly moved by these dramatic scenes. And when concerned individuals responded with diverse, creative and substantial offers of help, he realised that the Society of Jesus was well placed to coordinate coherent international action. Arrupe saw congruence between the Vietnamese refugees’ plight and specific characteristics of the community he headed. Moreover, he quickly perceived that the Society could help not only the Vietnamese, but also the refugees then in flight from Somalia and Ethiopia, and also those escaping Cambodia and Laos. Fr Arrupe established JRS as a unit within the Society designed to communicate the plight of refugees and to act as a “switchboard” connecting identified needs with offers of assistance:

I soon found that I was one of a number of Jesuits recruited from various provinces to serve in the Thai refugee camps as part of the Society’s response to minister to refugees. In Thailand it meant not only ministering to the Vietnamese boat people but also to those fleeing Cambodia and Laos as well. We were sponsored by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) which in turn was serving as part of COERR, the Thai Catholic Relief and Refugee Agency’s response to the refugee crisis. In the following months I was happy to get to know fellow Jesuits from the various camps with whom we had periodic meetings to share experiences. Later I was also joined in Ban Vinai by several Jesuit companions. (Brady, 2005)

Arrupe’s vision remains inspiring: It is the close contact with refugees that time and again provides JRS workers with new strength and motivation

Fr Arrupe was sure that the Society could rely not only on the cooperation of its own members and communities, and not only on the parishes, schools and other institutions under its care, but also on the generosity of our many friends, especially religious congregations and lay movements. Arrupe has been proved right. Many JRS projects involve only a tiny contribution by Jesuits, but make possible the collaborative efforts of hundreds of volunteers, lay and religious. This, in a way, was the seed of a small-scale form of multilateralism.

Although the threefold mission of JRS, namely “to serve, accompany and defend the rights of forcibly displaced people,” acquired this succinct formulation only in the late 1990s, the JRS vision was clear from Arrupe’s 1980 letter and in the earliest initiatives of JRS. In the otherwise quite diverse early projects one sees the term “refugee” interpreted broadly, to mean people forcibly uprooted from their homes and families and livelihoods. Later, more precise terminology would be developed in international law to distinguish internally displaced persons, stateless persons, urban refugees and asylum seekers. This legal terminology remains important in assigning responsibilities among governments and international organisations. For JRS, however, the human experience of forcibly displaced persons of any category is a summons, and Catholic social teaching has always endorsed this broad understanding of “refugee.”

In our days, the face of forced migration has changed, leading to new challenges. More people than ever are on the move today, yet fewer places exist in which a forced migrant can find safety. While modern society is distinguished by high numbers of migrants, many societies are nonetheless hostile to new arrivals. Harsh border restrictions confront asylum seekers, rational political debate is deliberately undermined, and difficulties are placed in the way of expanding migration even in countries that have traditionally opened their doors to newcomers. Meanwhile, tens of millions of people displaced by conflicts are unable to cross a frontier and so are left uprooted within their own countries. These are described as “internally displaced persons.” Victims of natural disasters are also numerous, though often human action, or inaction, must take some of the responsibility for their plight.

As populations increase, poorer people are pushed into unsafe areas such as denuded hillsides on the edge of cities, or overcrowded valleys in earthquake-prone regions, or to coastal shores of cyclone-vulnerable islands. Thus, they are made more vulnerable to natural disasters. The magnitude of climate crisis and its impact in forced displacement is already happening and it is the point of an iceberg still to come.

Many refugees struggle to find safe and permanent solutions due to limited pathways to safety. They face restrictions on work and education, making it difficult to build a secure future. JRS continues to accompany refugees and displaced people all over the world, learning from them on a daily basis, and learning to read the world events through their eyes:

Refugees rewrite the history of the world, from the point of view of the dispossessed and powerless. They enable people, like myself, to begin to re-configure our own lives. Refugees reveal the structural sin embedded in the world’s contemporary systems. They reveal a task still to be accomplished. So, my refugees friends, whom I deeply admire for your incredible courage, resilience, creativity and humanity, a huge ‘Thank You’. Your retention of your own humanity despite your often appalling treatment and experiences, is, for me, a mystery of the power of God’s tremendous loving compassion in your lives and is a challenge to a world so clearly in need of loving compassion. (Townsend, 2005)

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3. The contribution of the Society of Jesus in the elimination of landmines

The presence of the Jesuits in the Thai-Cambodia border camps goes back to the early 1980s, right after the foundation of JRS. Way before, Jesuits had arrived in Cambodia in the seventeenth century, due to persecutions in Japan. So, these Jesuits were refugees in Cambodia. The first presence of the Society of Jesus in this little Southeast Asian country lasted until the suppression. During those years, the Jesuits developed all kinds of mission apostolates.

Thanks to Fr Arrupe's call, the Jesuits returned to the area to serve the Khmer refugees who were fleeing from the Vietnamese invasion and from a violent civil war. The activities of JRS in the Asia region were dominated at first by the sequelae of the Indochina wars. Most initiatives were set against the background of Cold War ideology and rhetoric. JRS quickly established programs in every camp that housed Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees throughout the Southeast Asian region.

3.1. In the Thai-Cambodia border refugee camps: Fr Pierre Ceyrac SJ

Fr Pierre Ceyrac SJ, a French Jesuit, worked between 1980 and 1993 in the Thai-Cambodia border camps. He has devoted all his life to the service of the poor. For this reason, he received the *Legion d'Honneur* from the French Government. Fr Ceyrac explained the beginnings of this adventure:

We went to Rome to meet the Curia and Fr Arrupe together with all his assistants, and during two hours we spoke about the situation. In 1982 Fr Arrupe, gave us the authorisation to go to the Cambodian border. So, we finally went to Cambodia. We fell in love with the Cambodian and Vietnamese people who at times shared the same camps. First, we stayed in a camp inside Cambodia, called Anpil. After four years, we were chased out by the bombings which put us at great risk, so we went back to Thailand. It was like a film scene, under the bombs, in the middle of great chaos and in a state of emergency. But it was not cinema. People died. For me it was a deep experience: we touched what is deepest in human distress. I had met distress in the slums of Calcutta and Bombay. But I think there is nothing comparable to the distress of a refugee. They are uprooted people, cut off and thrown out like the trees that we transplant and uproot. Refugees think that they finally left behind hell but distress continues in the camps and sometimes it follows them in the western asylum countries where some of them arrive, which they call "third countries."

Advocacy towards a durable solution to refugees was a natural part of the work of the Jesuits since the beginning of their presence in the camps. It was not something programmed but rather, it flew from accompaniment of the people and service. In an unorthodox and unique way, Fr Ceyrac was the pioneer of JRS's advocacy work. The context of refugees worldwide was quite different, as was the openness of many Western countries to receiving refugees, as Fr Ceyrac recalls in this passage:

From time to time, I happened to visit a "third country." I went to France, the US, Canada to raise awareness about the situation we were living and to ask them to open their

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borders to refugees. I remember on one occasion a beautiful sentence of the archpriest of Montreal who was responsible for the services to refugees in French Canada: “For us it is not an obligation to receive refugees but a privilege!”

The service offered by JRS is always pastoral, but the meaning and manner of its pastoral presence changes depending on the beliefs of the refugees themselves. Pastoral care offered to Muslim, Buddhist or Christian people is distinctly different in each case. In the Thai-Cambodia border camps, from the beginning of its presence, JRS offered support to survivors of landmines and other remnants of war, who in their big majority were Buddhist:

The refugee population was 225.000 people, 200.000 of them were Buddhists, 20.000 Muslims and 5.000 Christians, Catholics or Protestant. I was very linked to the Buddhist monks. One of their abbots was called Monichenda. He quickly became an extraordinary friend with whom I worked a lot. Under his inspiration, the community of monks developed several humanitarian works. This is not frequent, since it is not in the tradition of Buddhist monks to be present in the world. We made big marches together. Monichenda became a brother and I was always welcomed in his place, in his little house or in the pagoda, with great sense of fraternity.

Many Church agencies, especially the Caritas federation, became firm and mutually supportive allies of JRS. JRS teams generally included a significant number of local workers as well as international personnel. Because of their closeness to survivors, JRS personnel and partners had credibility to speak with authority about the world-wide problem of landmines, as its field teams were so authentically engaged in listening to survivors:

Relationships among communities and between the different NGOs were generally excellent as well as our relationships with bigger organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNBRO, which represented the High Commissioner for Refugees. Working together for one cause helps developing deep friendship. With the mandate of the United Nations, we were responsible for the education of 110.000 children. I led a team of 40 people coming from 16 different countries, most of them young people with a humanitarian feeling. They spent between four and five years in the camp. Together we were able to establish an education system: schools, vocational training, and universities for engineers and lawyers. With little means but great effort we fought for human dignity. This experience was very strong for all these young people. All of them keep this “wound of the border”, which is a very deep expression we use among us. Three of us were the last ones to leave the bigger camp, Site Two, when it was closed. It was an endless cascade of ambulances driving handicapped people back to Battambang, in Cambodia.

Communication is at the heart of any advocacy success. Its elements include hearing the people affected, reflecting on experience, and developing effective communication within the organisation and a credible voice beyond it. Many initiatives by JRS are actually inspired by what is learnt from refugees themselves and in this case from landmine survivors. Looking back at those days in the Thai-Cambodia border camps, after many years, Fr Ceyrac recalled:

Meeting in Paris some years ago with some 20 young people who had worked with us in the border camps of Thailand, we were evoking some of the great figures we had met there and the joys and sorrows we had shared with them. And we realised, as we were talking, how these joys and sorrows were still deeply alive in us, as a sort of nostalgia in

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our subconscious, as a wound in our flesh—the wound of the border. I hope and pray that this wound will never close up fully, never completely heal.

3.2. Advocacy and action: Sr. Denise Coghlan RSM

A Sister of Mercy from the Brisbane congregation in Australia, Sister Denise Coghlan, RSM, helped found Jesuit Service Cambodia and now leads Jesuit Refugee Service Cambodia. She has worked in Cambodia since 1990 on reconciliation, peace, and justice, and the human development of people hurt by war, oppression, and exile.

Back in Cambodia when refugees repatriated in the early nineties, and knowing that independent mobility went far in ensuring the dignity of disabled peoples, JRS opened its own center to make wheelchairs for those living in rural homes. Sr. Denise recalled the early works of JRS in Cambodia:

We tried to work on and introduce the theme of peace and reconciliation through all of our projects. At the Center of the Dove, we brought together people from all four of the different factions of the Cambodian conflict, to train them and then have them serve as teachers to others in society. For instance, in one case former enemies had come together in our vocational training workshop. In our sculpture class, one man who was teaching looked down at one of his students and said, “You were probably the one that put down the mine that blew off my right leg.” This small example shows how reconciliation was at work in the Center. (Coghlan, 2010)

The legacy of the Khmer Rouge affects, still today, families and society in Cambodia. JRS, besides tangible and material support to people with disabilities, emphasizes projects that aim the rebuild of trust in Cambodia, trust for fellow citizens that was destroyed under the Khmer Rouge regime:

During the Khmer Rouge period, in order to survive you had to steal and tell on others. There still remains today an incredible lack of trust between one Cambodian and another. You actually see this mistrust in NGO staff, as people of that era find it difficult to be governed by other Cambodians. Cambodian NGO staff prefer foreign directors in many ways, because of this legacy of mistrust among Cambodians. It will, however, not be the same for the new generation, as they did not live through that difficult time in history. (Coghlan, 2010)

As Sr. Denise often says, faith-inspired organizations are an important link between the policy and community levels. She stresses that faith-inspired organizations must be experts in their field; faith alone is not always sufficient to make lasting contributions:

When they asked me why I wanted to go to the camps, I said that wherever suffering is present in the world, the cross of Christ is mysteriously present. That was my motivation. [...] I have a very strong belief that the consequence of mercy, charity, and love is justice. I think that the Christian faith is very strong on justice for the poor. If you are working on an issue such as helping the people that have been injured by landmines, justice demands that you also advocate that the cause of the suffering be stopped; that you ban the landmines and call the producers to account. Mercy calls that we serve the poor, the sick, and the ignorant. Some people think the ignorant are the children, but I think

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the ignorant are the people that make the weapons and don't know, or block from their minds, the consequences of what they are making money on. (Coghlan, 2010)

3.3. JRS operating principles: Sr. Virginia Hasson RSM

In the late 1980's many other partners joined JRS in the work with the Cambodian refugees in the Thai-Cambodia border. Amongst these, the Mercy Sisters, in particular Sr. Virginia Hasson, who later continued working with JRS in Africa. Sr. Virginia was a resource person on education and set up many of the expertise that JRS later on built upon her knowledge. But most importantly, people like Sr. Virginia helped set up in practice the *modus operandi* of JRS as envisioned by Fr Arrupe:

I had the privilege of working with JRS on the Thai-Cambodian Border. Here I learned more about the developing *modus operandi* of JRS. I say "developing" because JRS was just a fledgling organisation and those working in it were striving to be true to the vision of Father Pedro Arrupe and struggling to apply that vision in volatile and unpredictable circumstances. (Hasson, 2005)

Sr. Virginia proposed several operating principles that later on were instilled in JRS way of working, including the current humanitarian principle of "do no harm", expressed through the deep understanding of the political situation in all the complexity of refugee work as a must for any humanitarian worker:

Here I saw put into action the principle: Do your best to understand the political situation while endeavoring to serve all the refugees. Site Two was the barbed wire enclosed home of more than 140,000 men, women, and children associated with the Khmer People's Liberation Front (KPNLF). The KPNLF were one of the three factions resisting the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. However, the KPNLF were themselves divided. In order to continue to work with the teachers as a whole, JRS arranged for a "neutral" piece of land where the Teacher Improvement Classes could meet. One incident demonstrated how much the teachers themselves wanted to overcome differences. A group of the teachers decided to apply a lesson they had learned in their Community Building Classes. So, they came early to class one day to rearrange the seating in the way that they had learned gives participants the sense of being equally involved. (Hasson, 2005)

A second operating principle stated by Sr. Virginia referred to the protection and safety of refugees themselves:

The Cambodia situation provides an instance of another operating principle: Refugees are vulnerable until they are safely home. As the Peace Accord was being shaped, JRS became involved in cross-border activity. In Cambodia a team was put in place to advocate for and to assist the returnees once repatriation began. (Hasson, 2005)

Thirdly, the experience and context of the Thai-Cambodia border also gave a key element of what JRS understood as means and not ends, as well as what is needed to envision the future of a JRS presence once the situation of refugees is solved. As the JRS work in Cambodia was clearly a work of development, JRS became the Jesuit Service Cambodia in 1995. JS Cambodia was, and still is, actively involved in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, while faithful to its commitment to serve refugees who arrive in Cambodia:

Put into action the principle: Do your best to understand the political situation while endeavoring to serve all the refugees

In the case of Cambodia, another principle was evidenced: Structure is the means not the end for service. Those working in Cambodia realized that the Jesuit presence would be needed long after resettlement had taken place. So, Jesuit Service Cambodia was initiated and is thriving there even today. (Hasson, 2005)

3.4. Landmine survivors and Kike Figaredo SJ

At a country directors meeting of JRS in Rome in 1994, convened by Fr Mark Raper SJ, Father General Kolvenbach urged that the Society of Jesus be active in eliminating landmines.

Kike Figaredo SJ, had been working from the 1980s until the early 1990s in the Thai-Cambodia border camps and later in Cambodia, when the refugees returned home in 1993. Programmes there were built on many years of experience gained in the camps, particularly with the landmine survivors.

Together with a group of religious sisters, lay people, Jesuit fellows, and especially with the participation of landmine survivors themselves, Fr Kike Figaredo SJ, today Apostolic Prefect of Battambang, in Northwest Cambodia, was actively involved in the birth of the campaign against landmines. Fr Kike shares:

Our presence and work in the Thai-Cambodia border refugee camps consolidated our knowledge of the Khmer culture and strengthened our friendship with the Khmer people. So, in the early nineties, when the security situation improved in Cambodia, we decided, as JRS, to accompany the refugees back home. The country and its people were broken by war and violence. Once in Cambodia, and after some assessment, we started our work there, hand-in-hand with the Khmer people, the handicapped, the orphans, the widows. This closeness to the people has given light and creativity to the apostolic services provided by the Society of Jesus, the style of life and even the type of communities. This, in many ways, is subtly different to the presence of the Society in other places where Jesuits have been present for decades. (Figaredo, 2005)

With the Cambodian survivors, the Jesuits were engaged in the formation and awareness of the risk, mobilizing awareness on these evil arms not only in Cambodia but elsewhere in the world. Fr Kike recalls:

Together with the refugees we have learnt to understand the lives of those who lack everything. We have learnt to accompany them, listen to them and structure services so that hope comes to their lives, their dignity is built and their voices are heard. (Figaredo, 2005)

Anti-personnel mines were banned because many individuals witnessed these evil arms and their consequences in the lives of innocent people, men, women and thousands of children, maimed by this weapon. They were so disgusted that they shouted out, demanding action be taken. They were joined by other individuals, and quickly a movement was born. At that time, it was said that it would take 1,000 years to eradicate landmines. Today, 164 nations have signed up to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, hundreds of millions of mines have been destroyed or their fabrication halted. Multilateral cooperation, is what made this possible.

The immense number of landmines in Cambodia affected the repatriation of refugees to their lands, and still today, after 30 years of the repatriation, Cambodians still suffer landmine

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accidents. As Apostolic Prefect of the Diocese of Battambang, in Northwest Cambodia, Fr Kike reflects:

In Battambang, northern Cambodia, we have now a small center to welcome people with disabilities. These people have suffered years of war. Many of them are landmine survivors. This place is called the Arrupe Center. It reminds us of the person who has inspired us to open our institutions to the little ones and those in need. Srey Mau and Tang are two little girls who had a landmine accident in March 2005. Thanks to the inspiration of Fr Arrupe, who made our presence possible in Cambodia through the creation of JRS, these two girls have a place where they restructure their lives and look ahead with joy and hope. We are very grateful to JRS in this corner of Cambodia. (Figaredo, 2005)

The best advocacy experience is the one offered in the following pages. JRS was an early entrant in the world-wide campaign against the production and use of landmines. Later on, JRS strongly supported—until today—access to education of refugee and displaced girls worldwide, and after assisting victims in so many conflicts, helped start a campaign against the recruitment of children into both rebel and official armies.

4. The context of landmines worldwide

Despite widespread use of anti-personnel mines in the Second World War, the 1949 Geneva Conventions only addressed issues of mine clearance, prohibiting expressly the forcible use of prisoners of war for such purposes. In the mid-1970s, a series of three meetings convened by the ICRC to discuss a variety of conventional weapons identified landmines (in general) as a means of warfare deserving particular legal regulation.

It had been hoped that the use of certain conventional weapons would be specifically restricted by the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, but final agreement remained elusive and, as a consequence, a separate conference was convened under the auspices of the United Nations to negotiate a distinct legal instrument. The result was the adoption in 1980 of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as amended on 21 December 2001 (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons), one protocol of which (Protocol II) governed “mines, booby-traps and other devices”.

During the Cold War, numerous internal armed conflicts and civil wars incited by the legacy of colonialism and as a result of the withdrawal of colonial regimes developed into “proxy wars.” Landmines were used extensively; they were a cheap, easy-to-deploy weapon that could terrorize populations. Besides Cambodia, the countries most affected by landmines throughout the 1990s were Angola, Mozambique and Somalia.

In Angola, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) was established to facilitate the restoration of peace and the process of national reconciliation in the country. As part of UNAVEM’s mandate, demining schools were established to train and aid in the process of disarmament and arms control.

In 1991, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA) and NGO Medico International (MI) launched an advocacy campaign to call for a global ban on anti-personnel mines. Within two years more than 350 supporting organizations had joined the campaign.

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In Cambodia, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was the first large peacekeeping operation undertaken by the UN. Established in 1992-1993 following Security Council Resolution 745, UNTAC supervised and implemented the necessary procedures to support stability and peace in the country. Key activities included disarmament and mine clearance.

Sr. Denise Coghlan RSM recalls how JRS was involved in the repatriation and reintegration of Cambodians:

The Jesuit Refugee Service helped people to repatriate and reintegrate into society as they returned from the camps. This had two aspects. The first was the purely physical assistance—providing shelter and material items. The second was designed to build relationships in the villages, so that the people could work together and rebuild trust. At that time, you were a refugee or a non-refugee, a distinction that had grown out of a period when they were throwing bombs at each other. Families accepted returnees for the first year because they brought food rations, but after that time life became difficult for the returnees. (Coghlan, 2010)

Testimonies and detailed accounts on the landmine crisis appeared in medical journals thanks to the doctors and the surgeons of the ICRC. Doctors expert in emergency operations and prosthetic medicine saw the number of amputees growing at an alarming rate and were compelled to act. Indeed, the ICRC played a pivotal role in the lobbying arena, stressing the importance of upholding international humanitarian law. Cornelio Sommaruga, then President of ICRC, was a prominent figure in building momentum. He argued extensively on the humanitarian impact of landmines compared to their limited military utility, participating in diplomatic conferences in Geneva and providing abundant empirical medical evidence of the devastation caused by landmines. In 1994, he raised awareness alerting about the effects of landmines and the need for it to be widely known. It, would undoubtedly shock the conscience of mankind—the same public reaction that led to the banning of chemical and biological weapons. He highlighted the need for an international agreement on a total ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

In 1993, as international concern escalated over the impact of anti-personnel mines on the civilian population in many conflict-affected areas, France called for a review conference of the Convention. After three years of difficult negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, the States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons adopted an amended Protocol II, which placed tighter controls on the use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. The 1996 Amended Protocol II, however, fell short of the total prohibition that civil society, the United Nations Secretary-General, the ICRC, and an increasing number of governments were advocating. At the meeting that adopted the amended protocol, Canada announced that it would convene a meeting to discuss how to achieve an international ban on anti-personnel mines.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was the first Secretary-General of the United Nations to address explicitly the humanitarian crisis of landmines. In his Agenda for Peace, submitted to the General Assembly in 1992 he stated:

Increasingly it is evident that peace building after civil or international strife must address the serious problem of landmines, many tens of millions of which remain scattered in present or former combat zones. (An Agenda for Peace, A/47/ 277 [1992])

In 1991, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA) and NGO Medico International (MI) launched an advocacy campaign to call for a global ban on anti-personnel mines. Within two years more than 350 supporting organizations had joined the campaign

5. The unique Ottawa process and the history of negotiations

It is in the above context that the so-called Ottawa process began, leading to the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty. This has been described as unorthodox, historic, and unique multilateral process — which will be described in the following pages. The treaty was the product of an unusually cohesive and strategic partnership between governments, international organizations and civil society.

The founding organisations of the Campaign in Cambodia included Jesuit Refugee Service, ICRC, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF), Handicap International (HI), and Mines Advisory Group (MAG), strongly supported by the NGO Forum and the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation.

The JRS Country Directors meeting in Rome in 1994, convened by Fr Mark Raper SJ, JRS International Director at the time, was when Father Kolvenbach committed the Society of Jesus to support the landmine campaign. Sr. Denise Coghlan had asked Fr Raper to advocate for this.

Sr. Denise Coghlan, one of the strongest activists and advocate in ICBL, until today, recalls:

We became deeply involved in the landmine campaign in 1994. The three pillars of the landmine campaign are first, to ban the production use, export and stockpiling of landmines; second, to clear the mines; and third, to help the victims/survivors. (Coghlan, 2010)

Sister Patricia Pakpoy RSM of Australia, served with JRS from time to time and was the pioneer pusher for a ban.

JRS was involved in the ethical reflection around the impact of landmines. Besides Sr. Denise Coghlan, notable contributors were Jeff van Geerwen SJ, Eddy Jadot SJ, Andy Hamilton SJ, Frank Brennan SJ. JRS then outlined how its contribution would be in the International Campaign. Sr. Denise explains:

1. It would ensure the voice of those injured by landmines was heard. They would speak for themselves.
2. It would operate as part of national campaign networks.¹
3. It would engage Jesuit scholars to reflect on the ethical dimensions.
4. It would ensure assistance to vulnerable survivors as part of its programme. (Coghlan, 2023)

When states failed to achieve real progress on an antipersonnel mine ban at the Convention on Conventional Weapons Review Conference in 1996, Canada hosted a meeting of like-minded states in Ottawa to work towards a real ban. This conference was named “The International Strategy Conference: Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines” (the 1996 Ottawa Conference) and was held in the Canadian capital from 3 to 5 October 1996. At the closing session of the Conference, the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, called for the negotiation and signature of a treaty outlawing anti-personnel mines by the end of 1997. He challenged states to negotiate the treaty within a record time of one year, launching the Ottawa Process that resulted in the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty in September 1997 (Maslen, 2010).

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¹ JRS was a leading member of the national campaigns in Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines, and worked actively in Europe and USA, Japan and where we worked in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Negotiations took place outside the UN system, and the treaty negotiation conference relied on voting, rather than consensus procedures. Governments were also required to “opt in” — meaning that governments attending the treaty negotiation conference in Oslo, for example, had to agree on the text beforehand. This, together with strong leadership at the negotiating conferences, ensured that the treaty remained focused and strong and prevented a few governments from watering down the treaty or slowing down the negotiations.

The Austrian delegation to the 1996 Ottawa Conference already had a first draft of an anti-personnel mine ban convention with them, but although they referred to it in their remarks, they did not circulate it formally. The draft, with only minor alterations but now entitled “the Austrian draft text”, was sent out worldwide in November 1996. To support what was now called the Ottawa Process, a “core group” of friendly States was assembled, bringing together, initially, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa and Switzerland.

For the first time, small and medium sized powers—most notably Canada and Norway, but ranging from Australia to Zimbabwe—came together and decided on a course of action to ban antipersonnel landmines rather than being held back by traditional powers that were not committed to banning landmines —such as China, Russia, and the US. Most former mine producers and many users, including Belgium, Cambodia, Italy, Mozambique, and South Africa, joined the process (Cameron, Lawson, & Tomlin, 1998).

By 1996, the United Nations General Assembly had already adopted a number of resolutions relating to anti-personnel mines. A call for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines was contained in the first operative paragraph of resolution 48/75K, adopted without a vote on 16 December 1993. On 10 December 1996, resolution 51/45S, which attracted 115 co-sponsors, was adopted by 155 votes to none, with 10 abstentions. Its first operative paragraph urged states “to pursue vigorously an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible” (Maslen, 2010).

The ICBL played a major role in the actual drafting of the treaty, from its earliest stages. They were given a formal seat at the table in all of the diplomatic meetings leading up to the negotiations, and then during the negotiations themselves.

The Expert Meeting on the Text of a Convention to Ban Anti-Personnel Mines, held in Vienna, Austria, from 12 to 14 February 1997 provided states with an initial opportunity to comment directly on Austria’s first draft of the Convention. Based on the comments received, Austria prepared a second “tentative” draft of its treaty text on 7 March 1997 and circulated it to the core group. The second Austrian draft was completed on 14 March 1997.

The International Expert Meeting on Possible Verification Measures to Ban Anti-Personnel Landmines, the second formal follow-up gathering to the 1996 Ottawa Conference, was held in Bonn from 24 to 25 April 1997. Views remained divided between States who believed that detailed verification was essential to ensure that any agreement was effective, and others that argued that the proposed agreement was essentially humanitarian in character and stressing the overriding importance of a clear norm prohibiting anti-personnel mines. Austria circulated its third draft on 28 April 1997 to the core group and then, after revision, especially concerning compliance issues, issued the text on 14 May 1997 (Cameron, Lawson, & Tomlin, 1998).

Negotiations took place outside the UN system, and the treaty negotiation conference relied on voting, rather than consensus procedures. Governments were also required to “opt in”

The treaty was negotiated within a year, which is unprecedented for an international agreement of this nature. Also, it took only nine months for 40 states to ratify the treaty, thus facilitating its entry into force. In contrast, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) for example was adopted in 1980 and came into force in 1983 (Williams, Goose, & Wareham, 2008).

6. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The International Conference for a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines, held in Brussels in June 1997—the Brussels Conference—provided a selection process for participation in the forthcoming diplomatic conference, and formally identified the third Austrian draft as the basis for its negotiations. Ninety-seven of the 156 states attending the Brussels Conference signed the Brussels Declaration, which affirmed that the essential elements of a treaty to ban anti-personnel mines were: 1) a comprehensive ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines; 2) the destruction of all stockpiled and cleared anti-personnel mines; and 3) international cooperation and assistance in the area of mine clearance in affected countries. The Brussels Declaration also referred to the convening of the diplomatic conference to adopt the treaty and confirmed that the third Austrian draft would be the basis of negotiations at the conference.

The Diplomatic Conference on an International Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Land Mines—the Oslo Diplomatic Conference—convened by Norway, opened on 1 September 1997, and was chaired by Jacob Selebi, the South African Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. On 18 September 1997, after three weeks of negotiations, the Convention was formally adopted. The Mine Ban Treaty is sometimes referred to as the Ottawa Convention, but is officially titled: The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It was adopted in 1997 and it entered into force on 1 March 1999 (Williams, Goose, & Wareham, 2008).

As part of ICBL, Jesuit Service Cambodia, through the robust leadership of Sr. Denise Coghlan, was very involved in this process, as Sr. Denise recalls:

We have worked hard around the world, visiting popes and princes and emperors and governments (including Princess Diana and Desmond Tutu), and got the treaty ratified in 1997. (Coghlan, 2010)

From JRS's perspective, it should be noted, as Sr. Denise explains:

The huge support given by Fr Mark Raper SJ and the JRS international office in Rome regarding publications, awareness-raising and signature collection. JRS staff Anthea Webb, from Australia, even got Mother Teresa to sign on. Part of the campaign's success was due to its popular appeal through stories and message that small groups could influence governments and outwit military fear of losing prized weapons.

6.1. Universality and implementation of the Convention

A total of 122 States signed the Convention when it was opened for signature in Ottawa on 3 and 4 December 1997. It entered into force on 1 March 1999, after the requisite number of ratifications or accessions (40) were deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General. By 2009, 156 states—more than three-quarters of the world's nations—had become parties to it. Certain major

We have worked hard around the world, visiting popes and princes and emperors and governments and got the treaty ratified in 1997 (Coghlan, 2010)

military powers, however, including three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America—have not joined the Convention, although they are *de facto* respecting many of its provisions.

On 2 December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 64/56 on the Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 160 in favour to none against, with 18 abstentions—including the Russian Federation and the United States. Among those voting in favour, 19 states, including China, were not parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (see report of the First Committee, A/64/391).

Two major obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention are to destroy stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and to destroy anti-personnel mines in mined areas under the jurisdiction or control of a state party. At the 9th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention in November 2008, fifteen states parties requested and were granted an extension to their deadlines for destruction of anti-personnel mines in mined areas under article 5 of the Convention. At the Second Review Conference of the Convention, held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 30 November to 4 December 2009, a further four states parties requested and were granted an extension to their article 5 deadlines (Maslen, 2010).

As Sr. Denise Coghlan explains, the implementation and monitoring phase was really the key towards real success:

Now, it is very good that we have the treaty, but it needs to be monitored. We are involved in landmine monitoring in Cambodia. Every year, a book on the progress of 110 countries is issued, and every five years there is a review of the treaty. The first review was held in 2004 in Nairobi, and we finished the 2009 review in Cartagena, Colombia. From the review meetings, specific action plans are set forth. The 2004 action plan was to get governments to make a national plan on landmines. In 2009, the action plan is implementation, implementation, implementation! Get the mines cleared! Cambodia is in the middle of a ten-year mine clearing program, and it is working to ensure that the money earmarked for landmine survivors actually gets to the people, and is not just caught up in plans on how to get the money to the people. (Coghlan, 2010)

Two major obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention are to destroy stockpiles of anti-personnel mines and to destroy anti-personnel mines in mined areas under the jurisdiction or control of a state party

6.2. The 1997 Nobel Peace award

In 1997, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to ICBL and Jody Williams for their diplomatic achievement and commitment to a total ban on landmines.

Many in JRS still remember the iconic 1997 photos of Tun Channareth (Reth) in his wheelchair receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the ICBL and the Ottawa Treaty on behalf of Cambodian civil society.

Sister Denise Coghlan goes back to the early days reminding us of this success story:

Starting from our time in the refugee camps (because of the horrific cases that we saw), we became very interested in the campaign to ban landmines. The Cambodia anti-landmine movement has been very influential in the international campaign to ban landmines. It began with a letter from four soldiers in the Center of the Dove. The letter

said, “Before we were soldiers that laid the mines that blew off the arms, legs, and eyes of one another; now, we work together in the Center of the Dove and we beg the world to stop making mines, stop laying mines, begin clearing mines, and to work so that our communities and people with disabilities can live a full life once again.” One of these former soldiers, Reth, then went to the Pope and asked him if he would stand by the ban on landmines, which he did. In 1997, this same individual rode his wheelchair onto the stage in Oslo and received the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the campaign. He is working with me in Siem Reap, continuing his crusade against landmines. We have the Nobel Prize on display in our office.

25 years later, in November 2022, Reth attended the 20th Meeting of States Parties in Geneva and campaigned as vigorously as he has over the last 25 years. Reth’s own experience as a landmine survivor has been key in making the campaign a meaningful movement. The Ottawa treaty continues to be of vital importance in addressing disability issues. It continues to be a model for a rights-based approach for other disarmament processes.

6.3. The influence of the Convention on subsequent legal developments

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has served as an important point of reference for subsequent negotiations on weapons. In particular, many of the provisions included in the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), adopted in Dublin in May 2008, are drawn from, or inspired by, those set out in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

The similarities between the so-called Oslo Process on cluster munitions and the Ottawa Process on anti-personnel mines are notable. Both were launched by a single state, supported by a core group of other states committed to a prohibition—i.e. a return to the traditional approach of elaborating new rules of international humanitarian law—and both resultant treaties were adopted by a diplomatic conference convened outside the United Nations (Borrie, 2009).

Sr. Denise Coghlan RMS refers to this positive influence:

In 2007, we also began another campaign to ban cluster bombs. This process was energized when the Israelis dropped bombs in Lebanon in 2006. The Cambodian government was one of the leaders in this campaign. The treaty was passed in December 2008 in Oslo. Cambodia did not sign, so we have a lot of work to do with them as well. Related to this is a new convention recently signed for the rights of people with disabilities. We are trying to connect the dots between the three treaties I am working on. (Coghlan, 2010)

The CCM entered into force on 1 August 2010, six months after it was ratified by 30 states. As of December 2023, a total of 123 states are committed to the goal of the convention, with 111 states that have ratified it, and 12 states that have signed the convention but not yet ratified it.

In December 2023, Peru completed the destruction of all of its remaining stockpile of cluster munitions. Following the completion of cluster munitions stocks destructions by Bulgaria, Slovakia and South Africa earlier in 2023, all cluster munitions stockpiled by CCM States Parties have been destroyed (ICBL, 2023).

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention has served as an important point of reference for subsequent negotiations on weapons

7. 25th year anniversary of the Ottawa Convention: what remains to be done?

The treaty did make a difference in the global landmine crisis. Today, over 80% of the world's states have joined the treaty. Its disarmament and humanitarian achievements are unique: vast tracts of land have been cleared and put back into productive use; over 53 million antipersonnel mines have been removed from arsenals and destroyed, meaning they can never destroy a life; and the international norm against use—where use anywhere by anyone is considered abhorrent—is very strong.

However, this is still a “success in progress” and much remains to be done. Although the annual rate of injuries and deaths caused by antipersonnel mines is diminishing, slow progress on mine clearance means the absolute number of mine survivors keeps growing each year, and many of their needs are still not being met.

Today, countries like Myanmar or Ukraine are experiencing the use of landmines and cluster munitions, which impact innocent people years after a peace agreement is signed. In JRS, we listen to many stories of people who suffer from this impact. For example, Chin refugees from Myanmar in India recently shared with JRS accounts on their stories, such as 23-year-old Zawthing, who lost both his hands and his right eye to an explosive during the military conflict on the Myanmar-Mizoram border in 2022.

Sr. Denise Coghlan MS, JRS country director in Cambodia, continues to work tirelessly to end the use of landmines and cluster munitions. Sister Denise, one of the strongest activists during the Ottawa process, explains how their collective work meets the needs of the mine survivors still today:

Jesuit Service has programs to restore and create a more dignified life for people living in rural communities. People with disabilities devised a 12 point plan that sets out what they think are the things the poorest Cambodians need most, and they cover all of the areas that we are working in: 1) a house that shields them from the weather 2) sufficient food 3) water within a short distance of their housing 4) prosthetics and wheel chairs 5) access to education 6) access to affordable health 7) jobs and income 8) roads to the village and to market 9) clearing of landmines 10) participation in decisions that affect their lives 11) participation in cultural and sporting events 12) land titles.

We also have a center to make wheelchairs, and in the villages, we have established 215 farmer solidarity groups. The solidarity groups address their own needs, as well as focusing on the needs of the poorest in their communities. On education, we work primarily in small village schools in grades one and two, and then provide students with access to scholarships so that they can attend government schools. We have a program for deaf people, making hearing aids and administering hearing tests. Also, we have six centers for disabled children that have not had access to schools, where they can stay and study, and then enroll in government schools.

Sr. Denise recently met with the prime minister of Canada with a group on Women Peace and Stability, where addressing the challenges of mines was an important topic. Jesuit Service staff like Mr. So Not and other survivors have been prominent advocates at a series of meetings with the government. Moreover, 88 campaigners, many with disability, run in the Marathon in Siem Reap on December 2023, led by Bishop Kike Figaredo SJ. Sr. Denise explains:

Recently, Cambodia celebrated 30 years of mine action and at the campaign booth Ms. Sok Eng was able to present Prime Minister Hun Sen with the 2022 Landmine Monitor.

Today, over 80% of the world's states have joined the treaty. Its disarmament and humanitarian achievements are unique: vast tracts of land have been cleared and put back into productive use; over 53 million antipersonnel mines have been removed from arsenals and destroyed

Later, during his speech, the Prime Minister said Cambodia and Thailand had agreed to remove all mines from the border even before addressing border demarcation issues. This is a huge progress and 2025 is looking more possible for the completion of mine clearance.

With regards to mine clearance, unfortunately there are no new technological developments to date which provide a solution. Clearance continues to rely on a tried-and-true “toolbox approach,” which includes survey, manual and mechanical demining, and the use of mine detection dogs or rats. Fencing and marking contaminated areas, and mine risk education, can also play an important role in preventing or minimizing casualties. Research and development are welcomed particularly where it improves the speed, safety, and efficiency of existing clearance methods. But it needs to be focused on real operational needs and working environments.

It is regrettable that countries like China, Russia or the US, as well as all other states not parties, remain outside of the treaty. However, this does not take away from the importance of the treaty, nor weaken its achievements as one of the few current success stories in International Humanitarian Law and multilateral diplomacy. 80% of the world's states have joined the treaty, and even without China, Russia, and the US, great progress is being made in implementing and promoting its provisions.

As part of its advocacy on Mine Ban Treaty universalization, the ICBL continues to urge all states not party to accede to or ratify the treaty, challenging the international community to reinvestigate its commitment to reaching a mine and cluster munitions-free world, and to recognize civil society as an indispensable partner and driving force behind these efforts.

Regarding the respect by states parties to their commitments, their record of compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty has been generally good. States parties are required to develop “national implementation measures,” such as domestic legislation implementing the treaty's prohibitions. Annual transparency reports are sent to the UN Secretary-General on the type and quantity of mines in stock, the progress of mine destruction programmes (stockpiles and clearance), details of all mined areas, and national implementation measures, among other issues. Meetings of states parties and the intersessional work programme are important occasions for reviewing and monitoring progress on the treaty.

The treaty aims to promote transparency and trust amongst states parties. NGOs like JRS therefore have an important role in monitoring and encouraging compliance. The ICBL's Landmine Monitor systematically reports on the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty.

The Landmine Monitor is an innovative initiative by the ICBL to monitor implementation of and compliance with the treaty, and more generally to assess the efforts of the international community to resolve the landmines and explosive remnants of war problem. The Landmine Monitor report has become the *de facto* monitoring mechanism for the treaty and an essential tool in holding governments accountable to their legal obligations and political commitments.

Civil society, through their monitoring and advocacy activities, continues to play a crucial role in encouraging full implementation of the treaty. They help strengthen the international norm against any use or possession of antipersonnel mines by anyone, which is essential for the successful implementation of the treaty. The ICBL serves as the watchdog of the treaty by monitoring states' progress, highlighting general and state-specific challenges, and stigmatizing

Clearance continues to rely on a tried-and-true “toolbox approach,” which includes survey, manual and mechanical demining

and publicizing any breach of the treaty. This happens during Intersessional Meetings or annual Meetings of the States Parties.

Sr. Denise Coghlan continues to put in practice the operative principles which shaped JRS way of proceeding as explained above, namely, the advocacy work rooted in the experiences and voices of the survivors. An example is JRS's work in monitoring implementation of the both the Ottawa and the Cluster Munitions Convention, as well as the new international framework to protect and assist people with disabilities:

Monitoring, working with government on implementation, and direct service to the survivors is key to our work on all three treaties. Particularly, we have survivors and victims running seminars for others, including one recent seminar on women with disabilities. Next, we will be working with youth. (Coghlan, 2010)

2024 marks 25 years since the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force. In November, the treaty's 5th Review Conference will be held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, gathering campaign members from around the world. Until then, the plan of ICBL is to outreach at national and global level to push for further universalization and implementation of the treaty and its Oslo Action Plan, while feeding into the next Siem Reap Action Plan to ensure it provides a focused and strong basis for the following five years. The ICBL-CMC will be also undertaking strategic review to develop and adopt new ICBL-CMC Strategy for the next several years.

8. Pope Francis: The Ottawa process, an example of multilateralism

Besides the influence of the Ottawa Convention on subsequent legal developments, namely the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Ottawa process is a good practice of multilateralism for our world today.

Pope Francis's recent exhortation *Laudate Deum* calls, with the utmost urgency, for a new and true multilateralism, that is, governance frameworks capable of managing our enormous environmental problems and implementing effective global rules for "global safeguarding."

In point 37 of his Apostolic Exhortation, when speaking about the need to reconfigure multilateralism, Pope Francis refers to the Ottawa process as an example to reconfigure multilateralism:

More than saving the old multilateralism, it appears that the current challenge is to reconfigure and recreate it, taking into account the new world situation. I invite you to recognize that "many groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, and its lack of attention to fundamental human rights. For example, the Ottawa Process against the use, production and manufacture of antipersonnel mines is one example that shows how civil society with its organizations is capable of creating effective dynamics that the United Nations cannot. In this way, the principle of subsidiarity is applied also to the global-local relationship. (Pope Francis, 2023)

By quoting the example of the landmine campaign in his recent letter on the environment, Pope Francis talks about the power civil society has to change the world. Moreover, Pope Francis calls for inclusive and participatory spaces where all countries have a role to play; where the voices of civil society, especially the excluded, can be heard; and where the common good is

Pope Francis's recent exhortation Laudate Deum calls, with the utmost urgency, for a new and true multilateralism, that is, governance frameworks capable of managing our enormous environmental problems and implementing effective global rules for "global safeguarding"

the compass and not “a world authority concentrated in one person or in an elite with excessive power” (LD §35).

The Holy Father poses a challenge to governments in personal terms:

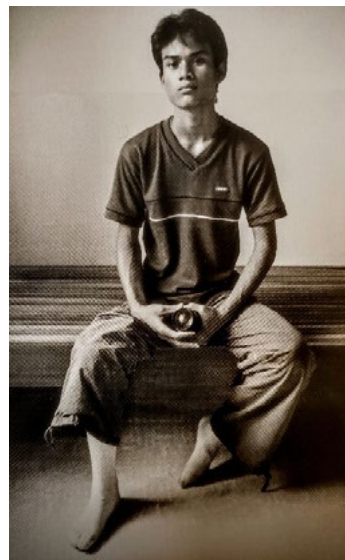
To be strategists capable of thinking of the common good and the future of their children, rather than the circumstantial interests of some countries or companies... To the powerful I dare to repeat this question: “Why do you want to preserve today a power that will be remembered for its inability to intervene when it was urgent and necessary to do so?” (LD §60 quoting LS §57)

Jesuits and friends had the privilege to be part of this historic process. It is perhaps this lesson learnt which Kike Figaredo SJ explains:

The Ottawa process and the involvement of the Society of Jesus and many friends in the ICBL was an opportunity for us to learn how to work together with others. As Pope Francis says, it is only through this model of collaborative effort, where the voices of the excluded can be heard, when we can indeed offer a meaningful contribution for peace, justice and the common good.

Acknowledgment

This article is dedicated to Men, a young landmine survivor who died in a car accident in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 12th March 2024. Men actively advocated for the cause of mine survivors, and worked as a peer counselor, also with left-behind migrant children.



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