

# **HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF IMPROVISED ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IN NIGERIA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The humanitarian impact of improvised anti-personnel mines in Nigeria has been profound, inflicting devastating consequences on civilian populations and hindering socio-economic development in affected regions. These makeshift explosives, often crudely constructed and indiscriminately deployed, pose a significant threat to civilians, particularly in conflict-affected areas such as the North East Nigeria, where the Boko Haram insurgency has been active.

2. The widespread use of improvised anti-personnel mines not only results in loss of life and limb but also creates long-lasting psychological trauma, displacing communities and disrupting livelihoods. Despite efforts to mitigate their impact through demining initiatives and awareness campaigns, the persistence of these devices continues to exact a heavy toll on the civilian population, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis in Nigeria.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. Nigeria has faced prolonged conflicts, particularly in the northeast, due to the insurgency of Boko Haram and other armed groups. Improvised anti-personnel mines are commonly used by these groups as tools of terror and warfare. The infestation of anti-personnel mines in North East Nigeria primarily stems from the prolonged conflict involving Boko Haram, an Islamist extremist group, and the Nigerian government. Boko Haram was founded in the early 2000s, with the aim of opposing Western education and establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria. Overtime, the group escalated its attacks, targeting civilians, security forces and government institutions.

4. The conflict intensified around 2009 when Boko Haram launched large scale attacks, including bombings, assassinations, and raids on villages. The Nigerian governments response included military operations aimed at suppressing the insurgency. Faced with military pressure, Boko Haram resorted to asymmetric warfare tactics including the use of improvised explosive devises

(IED) and anti-personnel mines. These weapons were deployed to target military convoys, patrols, and civilian population perceived as supporting the government.

### **IMPACT OF IMPROVISED ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES**

5. The widespread use of mines and IEDs has had devastating consequences for civilians. They pose a constant threat to civilians living in conflict-affected areas, causing deaths, injuries and displacement. The terrorists often target areas with high civilian traffic, such as roads markets and residential areas. Some of the impacts are discussed below.

6. **Human Casualties.** Mines cause devastating injuries and fatalities, often resulting in amputations and permanent disabilities. Civilians, including children, bear the brunt of these casualties, affecting families and communities profoundly.

7. **Psychological Trauma.** Survivors and witnesses of mine incidents suffer from psychological trauma, leading to long-term mental health issues. Fear of stepping on mines hampers mobility and restricts access to essential services and livelihoods.

8. **Displacement and Economic Fallout.** Mine-infested areas become uninhabitable, forcing communities to flee and exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation. Economic activities are disrupted, hindering development and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

### **EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND IEDs IN NIGERIA**

9. Efforts to address the humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines and IEDs in Nigeria include, mines risk education, clearance operations, victim assistance and rehabilitation, advocacy and policy development and community engagement. These are highlighted below.

10. **Mine Risk Education.** Conducting awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform communities about the dangers of mines and IEDs, how to recognize them and how to avoid.

11. **Clearance Operations.** The Nigerian military in partnership with organizations such as the Nigerian Mines Action Centre (NMAC), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), HALO Trust and the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT) work to clear mines and explosive remnants of war to reduce the threats posed to civilians.

12. **Victim Assistance and Rehabilitation.** The Nigerian government implement programs to provide medical care, rehabilitation services, and psychosocial support to mine survivors as well as reintegration initiatives aim to restore the livelihoods and dignity of affected individuals and communities.

13. **Advocacy and Policy Development.** There are advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the impact of improvised mines and mobilize resources for mine action programs. Policy frameworks are being developed to strengthen national capacities in mine risk reduction and post-conflict recovery.

14. **Community Engagement.** Local communities are engaged in mine action efforts, including clearance operations, risk education and victim assistance, to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed effectively.

## **CONCLUSION**

15. The humanitarian impact of improvised anti-personnel mines in Nigeria is profound, affecting civilians and hindering peacebuilding efforts. Through coordinated action, including mine risk education, clearance operations, victim assistance, and advocacy, stakeholders strive to address these challenges and create safer environments for affected populations. Continued commitment and investment are essential to mitigate the human suffering caused by improvised mines and pave the way for sustainable development and peace in Nigeria.