

# IMPACT OF EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE ON CHILDREN IN SYRIA

## CAUSES OF CHILD CASUALTIES <sup>3</sup>



**54%**  
AIRSTRIKES



**17%**  
SHELLING



**9%**  
EXPLOSIVE  
ORDNANCE

## KEY TERMINOLOGY



### Child

Every human being below the age of 18 years.



### Explosive Ordnance (EO) or Explosive Hazards

Are related to all munitions count and all similar or related items or components explosive in nature. Each hazard poses its own risks and requires different measures for mitigation <sup>1</sup>.



### Children Victims of Explosive Ordnances

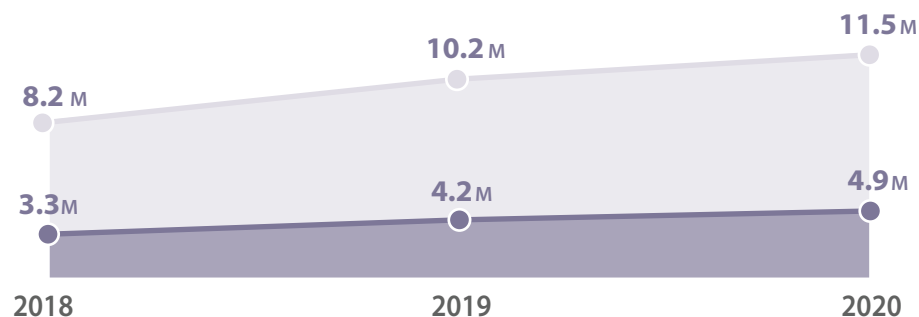
Children can be both direct and indirect victims of explosive ordnance. **Direct** refers to children injured or killed by explosive ordnance, also known as casualties. **Indirect** refers to family members of children injured or killed, as well as children living in areas affected by explosive ordnance.

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*Contamination from explosive hazards affects the community, because people fear from going out or going to school. We are all exposed to death or injury because of explosives but mostly children as they might play with remnants of a previous bombing*

*Female adolescent girl taking part in a focus group discussion (FGD)  
Aleppo Governorate, August 2020*

## CHILDREN LIVING IN AREAS CONTAMINATED WITH EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE <sup>2</sup>



- Estimate number of people living in areas contaminated with explosive ordnance
- Estimate number of children living in areas contaminated with explosive ordnance



On average **9 children** per month have been verified as killed or injured by explosive ordnance between March 2011 and December 2019 <sup>4</sup>.



**8 out of 10** child victims are boys. Young adolescence (12-15 years) is the age at greatest risk for boys. For girls, the casualty rate is highest between 6 and 11 years old.

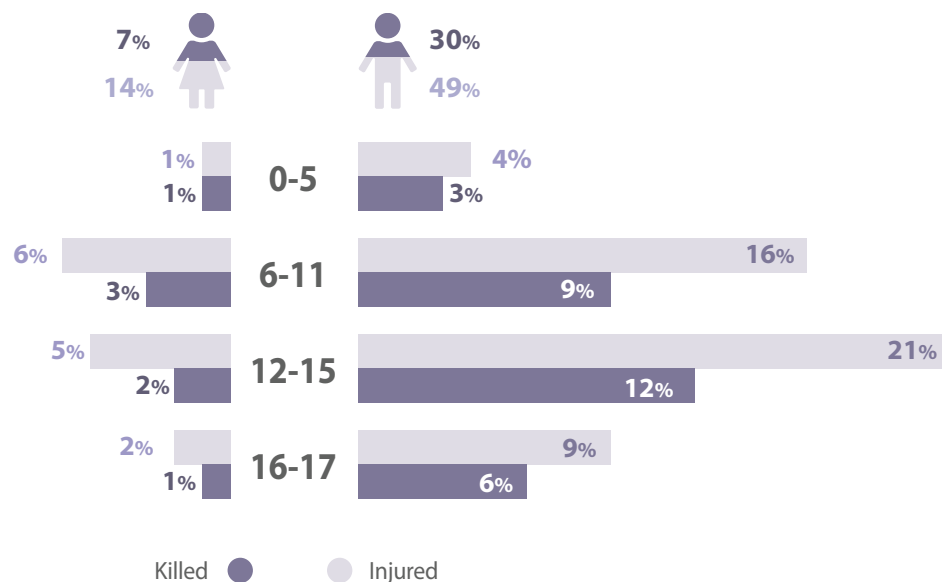


On average, **4 out of 10** child victims are killed, and 6 out of 10 child victims are injured <sup>5</sup>.



**80%** of child victims are boys <sup>6</sup>. Boys and girls are both exposed to the risk of explosive ordnance in Syria. Data suggests that their level of risk varies depending on the child's age, sex and location, for example, it may be more common for older boys to be outside of the house to socialize or support household tasks such as going to the bakery or market, thus heightening their risk outside of the home.

## CHILD VICTIMS REPORTED KILLED OR INJURED - DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND SEX



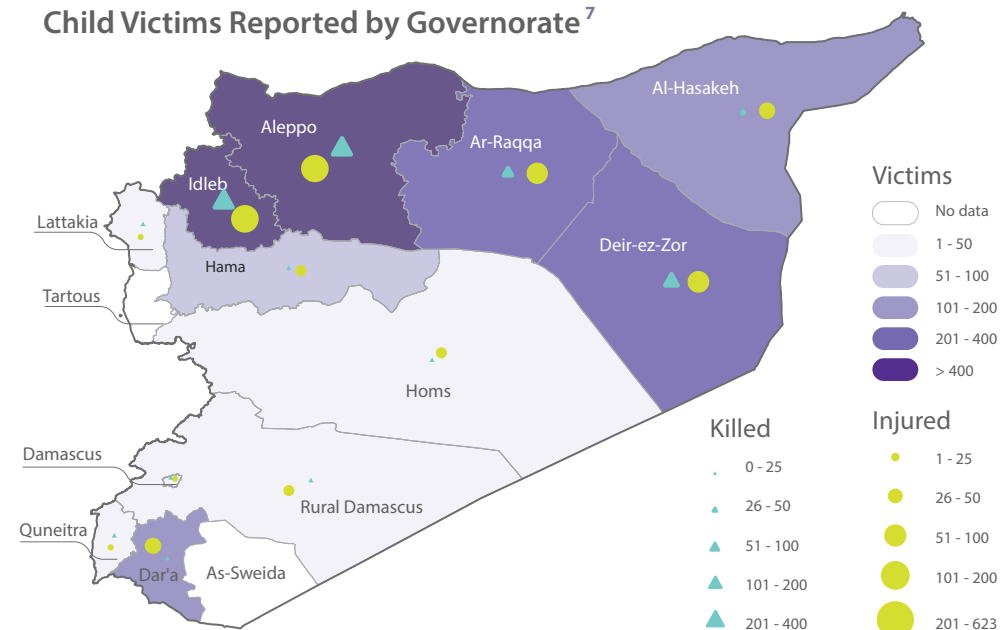
## Why are children at heightened risk?

- Children are exposed to threats while playing\* such as by mistaking unexploded ordnance for toys, often unaware of the risks. In other situations, children – particularly adolescent boys – may understand the risks and deliberately ignore them. The appeal for children of the intriguing shapes and colours of unexploded ordnance is a well-documented problem. According to data collected 40% of all recorded children casualties occurred while playing, including inadvertently playing with an explosive item, is among the most commonly reported activities at the time of accidents by key informants. Travelling to schools is also equally indicated as a common activity at the time of accident<sup>6</sup>.
- Children are exposed while scavenging for valuable waste to sell and while working in agricultural fields. According to data collected, 20% of all recorded children casualties occurred while farming<sup>6</sup>.
- Blast injuries from explosive ordnance may cause particularly severe injuries to young children and increase risk of death because of their smaller bodies<sup>6</sup>.



*"The son of our neighbors played with a bomb like a ball and then kicked it in to his mother, causing the death of the whole family"*

**FGD with adolescent girls in Idlib Governorate**

Child Victims Reported by Governorate<sup>7</sup>

- Colour code represent the highest number of incidents reports. Lighter colours do not necessarily indicate few victims, rather fewer reported incidents.  
- Highest number of children reported as killed or injured by explosive ordnance have been recorded in Idlib and Aleppo governorate.



Playing, including inadvertently playing with an explosive item, is among the common activities at the time of an accident, together with traveling to schools/being on route to school<sup>8</sup>.



Proportionally, girls are more exposed in residential areas compared to boys. 57% of EO accidents involving girls occurred at/near home or in/near schools, compared to 45% for boys.



43% of explosive ordnance accidents involving boys occurred in open areas related to agricultural activities (cropland, rangeland, pasture, grazing, forest, mountain, etc...) against 24% for girls\*.



*"Because of these explosives the people do not trust to send their children to schools or gardens and lock them in the houses without any education".*

**FGD with adolescent girls in Idlib Governorate**



Children who lose a family member, or who are living in a family with an adult survivor, also face considerable challenges from the loss or impairment of a caregiver or the household breadwinner. Educational opportunities may be lost due to the burden of school fees or the child's need to work to support family income



Death and injuries, with injuries leading to life-long impairment. Impairments among children are most commonly related to the loss of upper limbs (25%), hand and fingers (33%) and eyesight (29%), this comes with an additional financial burden on the family.



1 out of 10 key informants indicate schools not being accessible to children with disabilities among main barrier to access services for survivors of explosive incidents



Children's injuries are aggravated by the psychosocial, socio-economic and protection consequences of an accident, as child victims confront lifelong difficulties accessing education, health, social services and livelihood opportunities, that are already extremely limited in many parts of the country, and may be difficult to access to due to high levels of contamination in residential areas.

## CONSEQUENCES



Like many vulnerable children with disabilities, child victims of explosive ordnance are at heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, as well as stigma and discrimination.



Families may impose movement restrictions on children to limit their risks while moving around contaminated communities, this coping strategy may also limit children's opportunities to access services as well as to socialize etc.

## CHILD PROTECTION AND MINE ACTION AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE COLLABORATING TO:

- Improve visibility of, and advocacy for, children victims of explosive ordnance through improving the quality of victim data collection, data analysis and communication.
- Provide explosive ordnance risk education, including disseminate awareness materials, tailored to boys and girls.
- Improve access to services for a better quality of life through a twin-track approach:
  - Provide targeted assistance to children with disabilities, including children victims of explosive ordnance accidents.
  - Promote disability inclusive approaches in the humanitarian response.
- Improve referral of children victims of explosive ordnance to key assistance services
- Advocate for a better coverage of child survivors' specific needs and a better inclusion of boys and girls with disabilities across the country.

- 1 [https://www.mineactionstandards.org/fileadmin/MAS/documents/standards/Glossary\\_of\\_mine\\_action\\_terms\\_and\\_abbreviations\\_Ed.2\\_Am.10.pdf](https://www.mineactionstandards.org/fileadmin/MAS/documents/standards/Glossary_of_mine_action_terms_and_abbreviations_Ed.2_Am.10.pdf)
- 2 OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, 2019 and 2020; calculations based on population estimates for the HNO (i.e. % of population that is under 18 years)
- 3 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) for Syria. The MRM only includes data verified by the UN through primary sources (EO victim/survivor or a primary witness such as parent, first responder, doctor, etc.) and vetted and corroborated the information with other sources. The actual numbers are likely to be much higher.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 More than 3800 Child Victim reports have been analyzed between MRM and IMSMA sources, both datasets report an average ratio 40% killed and 60% injured.
- 6 IMSMA (IMSMA and MRM methodology are similar, including direct interviews in both cases)
- 7 Data collected as part of the 2020 multi sector needs assessment (MSNA)
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