

Study of the contemporary types of cluster munitions with self-destruct mechanisms and their impact in the field

1. Background and rationale

In 2007, Norwegian People's Aid, together with C King Associates Ltd (CKA) and the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) conducted a landmark study on the reliability of the M85 submunitions, which informed the 2008 negotiations on the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The findings challenged the effectiveness of cluster munitions with self-destruct mechanisms claiming to ensure low failure rates and minimizing post-conflict contamination and civilian harm. The study concluded that M85's failure rates in real-life conditions, i.e. in combat, significantly exceeded the failure rates based on test results under strictly controlled and unrealistic conditions and manufacturer's claims. As a result, the submunitions caused far greater post-conflict contamination and civilian harm than anticipated.

In recent years, however, several states and commentators have increasingly asserted that "significant advancements" have been made in cluster munition technology since the adoption of the CCM in 2008 which "minimize humanitarian concerns" associated with the use of cluster munitions. These assertions have re-emerged in political debates and contributed to policy shifts. In 2024, Lithuania [withdrew](#) from the CCM, and certain other European states are reportedly considering similar steps. In February 2026, the US Department of Defense was also [reported](#) to have purchased "advanced" cluster munitions from an Israeli state-owned company, claimed to have a failure rate of under 1 percent to reduce long-term danger to civilians.

While some development of new submunition types with self-destruct mechanisms has taken place since then, most notably in Russia, there is currently no comprehensive mapping of the types of these systems in production or use. Nor is there an independent, publicly available analysis of how these new mechanisms function in real-life conditions. This gap in knowledge has significant humanitarian and policy implications. Assertions about new "low-failure" or "self-destruct" submunitions remain unverified, yet they are increasingly shaping political decisions related to the CCM and broader humanitarian disarmament efforts.

2. Purpose of the Study

NPA therefore seeks to commission a methodologically rigorous study to:

- **Map** existing types of “advanced” submunitions reportedly equipped with self-destruct/self-neutralisation/self-deactivation mechanisms, including those currently in production, stockpiled, transferred, or used by states in the period from 2006 to date.
- **Analyse** the technical design and claimed performance of these mechanisms as per manufacturer’s claims, as well as based on available documentation, expert consultations, and publicly or commercially accessible sources.
- **Collect, analyse and evaluate** available evidence of real-life performance of the same submunitions, including documented battlefield use, observed failure rates, and resulting contamination or humanitarian impact
- **Draw comparative conclusions** based on the analysis of the claimed and real-life failure rates and their potential humanitarian consequences

This study is intended to provide evidence-based analysis and contribute to a report aiming to inform humanitarian disarmament policy, public debate, and civilian protection efforts.

3. Deliverables

The selected researcher(s) will be expected to produce:

- **A comprehensive final report**, including methodology, findings, analysis, and conclusions.
- **A mapping annex** summarizing identified submunition types and their technical characteristics.
- **A short (2–3 page) executive summary note** highlighting the most relevant findings for non-technical audiences.

4. Timeline and Budget

Timeline: Work should begin as soon as possible, with preferable completion **by 31 July 2026**, in order to support the preparations for the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munition in Vientiane in September 2026. Should this not be feasible, the timeline may be extended to the end of 2026, with presented preliminary results.

Estimated budget: Up to **500,000 NOK**, inclusive of all fees, taxes, research costs, and other expenses. The estimated budget may be adjusted based on the scope of deliverables proposed by the bidders.

5. Application requirements

Bidders are requested to submit a proposal of no more than 5 pages, including the following points:

a) **technical proposal** including:

- Brief explanation about the lead and associate consultants with particular emphasis on previous experience in similar assignments.
- Understanding of the terms of reference for this assignment in line with the overall and specific objectives.
- Illustrative methodology and workplan for the time period

b) A **financial proposal**;

- Presented in NOK and should include the consultancy fees only. The number of consultants/researchers to be engaged in the assignment and their costs.

c) **Qualifications and previous experience with conducting similar studies**;

- Examples of previous work conducted that relate to this assignment
- Organizational capacity statement
- Resume of the lead consultants/researchers

6. Evaluation criteria

The applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

a) Extent of experience conducting research and evaluations in similar thematic areas (30%)

b) Extent of technical capacity and experience with diverse methods and approaches of collecting, analyzing, presenting and reporting quantitative and qualitative data (40%)

c) Capacity to deliver within the given timeline (15%)

d) Cost efficiency (15%)

7. How to apply

Interested applicants should submit applications by email to tenders@npaid.org with the subject "Study of the contemporary types of cluster munitions" on or before 16th March 2026 at 4.00 PM CET time. Any applications submitted after this date and time will not be considered.

Questions regarding this call may be directed to Kristina Duric, Head of Section Policy and Advocacy (KriDur717@npaid.org), before the submission deadline.

Annex 1:

NORWEGIAN PEOPLE'S AID ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR PROCUREMENT, INVESTMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Approved by the Board of Norwegian People's Aid on 31st May 2013; revised on 20th September 2014, 10th June 2016, 24th September 2021 and 24th March 2023.

I - Introduction

These ethical standards are approved by the Board of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and apply to our own employees, suppliers, investment managers, business partners and donors.

The standards are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ILO Conventions, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, as well as the Transparency Act and other conventions on fundamental human rights and decent working conditions.

NPA considers responsible procurement practice to be one of our most important tools in working for sustainable business practices. NPA therefore adapts its own

procurement practices to strengthen, and not undermine, suppliers' ability to deliver on the requirements we set to ensure good conditions for people, society and the environment. Long-term supplier relationships, with suppliers that demonstrate a particular willingness and ability to work for positive developments in the supply chain, shall be facilitated.

Any cooperation between NPA and an external partner must comply with our overarching principles and statutes, and not undermine, or be detrimental to, NPA's core values, goals or projects. Expectations of compliance with the ethical standards shall be referred to in all contracts with external partners.

In the event of a breach of the ethical standards, NPA reserves the right to publicly criticise partners. Furthermore, NPA cannot be held responsible for, or used to legitimise, decisions made by partners on a commercial or political basis.

NPA will at all times take into consideration the exclusion lists of fund managers who are leaders in ethics and sustainability, as well as the company databases of organizations and institutions that monitor business, human rights and international law. NPA shall give priority to

companies that are not included in these lists and company databases in their procurement, investment or fundraising activity. The same applies to companies that are subject to global campaigns, in which NPA participates, or companies that NPA, independently or as a result of assessments made by our partner organizations, believes to be contributing to violations of human rights or international law.

NPA shall give priority to companies that have collective agreements, and shall not use companies that do not respect the right of workers to organize and negotiate.

Supplier means the contractual partner responsible for the product, process or service provided to NPA.

Subcontractor means the business unit in the supply chain that directly or indirectly supplies the supplier with goods or services.

II - Principles

NPA's suppliers and business partners shall deliver goods and services that are produced in accordance with our ethical standards. Enterprises shall carry out due diligence in accordance with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. This includes the following:

- A) Embedding accountability in company policies;
- B) Mapping and assessing actual and potential negative impacts on fundamental human rights and decent working conditions that the business has either caused or contributed to, or that are directly linked to the enterprise's business activities, products or services through supply chains or business partners;
- C) Implementing appropriate measures to cease, prevent or limit negative impacts, based on the enterprise's priorities and assessments pursuant to subparagraph (b);
- D) Monitoring the implementation and results of measures pursuant to subparagraph (c);
- E) Communicating with affected stakeholders and rights holders about how negative impacts have been dealt with pursuant to subparagraphs (c) and (d);
- F) Providing or facilitating remedy where required.

Due diligence shall be carried out regularly and in proportion to the size of the enterprise, the nature of the enterprise, the context in which the activity takes place, and the severity and likelihood of negative impacts on fundamental human rights, decent working conditions and the environment.

Boycott of individual countries

NPA will follow up all international sanctions that are part of Norwegian law or that are expected from our donors. NPA will also avoid procuring goods and services from countries where there is broad international agreement to boycott trade because of the country's human rights situation.

Corruption and bribes NPA does not accept the use of bribery in any form to provide unfair benefits to customers, agents, contractors, suppliers, employees or government officials. Reference is made to NPA's guidelines for anti-corruption and whistleblowing routines available on our website www.npaid.org.

III - Ethical Standards

WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

1. Forced labour/slave labour (ILO Conventions 29 and 105)

1.1 There shall be no form of forced labour, slave labour or involuntary work.

1.1.1 Workers shall not be required to submit deposits, identity papers or passports to the employer and shall be free to terminate the employment relationship with a reasonable notice period.

2. Trade unionism and collective bargaining (ILO Conventions Nos. 87, 98 and 135 and 154)

2.1 Without exception, workers shall have the right to join or establish

unions of their choice, and to bargain collectively. The employer shall not interfere with, obstruct or oppose the establishing of local trade unions or collective bargaining.

2.2 The employer shall not discriminate against trade union representatives, or prevent them from carrying out their union work.

2.3 If the right to free organisation and/or collective bargaining is limited by law, the employer shall facilitate and not impede alternative mechanisms for free and independent organization and negotiation.

3. Child labour (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Conventions Nos. 138, 182 and 79, ILO Recommendation No. 146)

3.1. The minimum age of workers shall not be less than 15 years and in line with

(i) the national minimum age for employment, or

(ii) the minimum age for compulsory schooling, with the highest age as applicable. If the local minimum age is set at 14 years in accordance with the exception in ILO Convention 138, this may be accepted.

3.2 New recruitment of child labourers in contravention of the aforementioned minimum age shall not take place.

3.3. Children under the age of 18 shall not perform work that is detrimental to their health, safety or morals, including night work.

3.4. Action plans shall be established for the speedy phasing out of child labour that is in contravention of ILO Conventions 138 and 182. The action plans shall be documented and communicated to relevant staff and other stakeholders. Support schemes shall be facilitated where children are given the opportunity to study until the child is no longer of school age.

4. Discrimination (ILO Conventions Nos. 100 and 111 and UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)

4.1 There shall be no discrimination in terms of employment, remuneration,

training, promotion, dismissal or retirement based on ethnicity, caste, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, trade unionism or political affiliation.

4.2.1 Protection shall be established against sexually intrusive, threatening, abusive or exploitative behaviour, as well as against discrimination or dismissal on unfair grounds, e.g. marriage, pregnancy, parenthood or HIV status.

5. Brutal treatment

5.1 Physical abuse or punishment, or threat of physical abuse, shall be prohibited. The same applies to sexual or other abuse and other forms of humiliation.

6. Health, safety and environment (ILO Convention No. 155 and Recommendation No. 164)

6.1 Efforts shall be made to ensure workers a safe and healthy working environment.

Dangerous chemicals and other substances shall be handled properly. Necessary measures shall be taken to prevent and minimise accidents and damage to health as a result of, or related to, conditions in the workplace.

6.2 Workers shall receive regular and documented training in health and safety

measures. Health and safety training must be repeated for new employees and relocated workers.

6.3 Workers shall have access to clean sanitation facilities and clean drinking water. If relevant, the employer shall also provide access to facilities for the safe storage of food.

6.4 If the employer provides lodging, this shall be clean, safe and adequately ventilated, and with access to clean sanitary facilities and clean drinking water.

7. Wages (ILO Convention No. 131)

7.1 Wages of workers for a normal working week shall at least be in line with national minimum wage regulations or industry standards, whichever is the highest. Wages shall always be sufficient to cover basic needs, including some savings.

7.2 Salary conditions and payment of wages shall be agreed in writing before work commences. The agreement should be understandable to the worker.

7.3 Deductions from wages as a disciplinary action shall not be allowed.

8. Working hours (ILO Conventions 1 and 14) 8.1 Working hours shall be in accordance with national laws or industry standards, and not exceed working hours in accordance with applicable international conventions. Normal working hours per week shall usually not exceed 48 hours.

8.2 Workers shall have at least one day off in every 7 days.

8.3 Overtime shall be limited and voluntary. The recommended maximum overtime is 12 hours per week, i.e. total working hours of 60 hours per week. Exceptions to this may be accepted if regulated by a collective agreement or national law.

8.4 Workers shall always receive overtime pay for working hours over and above normal working hours (see section 8.1 above), minimum in accordance with applicable laws.

9. Regular appointments

9.1 Obligations to workers, in line with international conventions, national laws and regulations relating to regular employment shall not be circumvented through the use of short-term contracts (such as the use of contract workers, casual workers and day labourers), sub-contractors or other labour relations.

9.2 All workers are entitled to an employment contract in a language they understand.

9.3 Any apprenticeship programme shall be clearly defined in terms of duration and content.

CONDITIONS OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE

10. Marginalised populations

10.1 Production and use of natural resources shall not contribute to the destruction of resources and income base for marginalised population groups, for example, by seizing large areas of land, irresponsible use of water or other natural resources on which the population groups depend.

10.2 Every business partner, subcontractor or its subsidiaries shall, in their own production, activity, investment or commercial projects, respect the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) which states that an indigenous community has the right to give or withhold its consent to proposed projects that may affect the land it normally holds, occupies or otherwise uses.

11. Environment

11.1 Measures to reduce negative impacts on health and the environment throughout the value chain. In line with the precautionary principle, measures shall be implemented to continuously minimise greenhouse gas emissions and local pollution; the use of harmful chemicals; pesticides; and to ensure sustainable resource extraction and management of water, oceans, forests and land and the conservation of biodiversity.

11.2 National and international environmental legislation and regulations shall be complied with and relevant emission permits obtained.

12. Supplier routines and follow-up

Management systems are central to the implementation of ethical standards. NPA emphasizes the importance of suppliers having systems that support their implementation. Our expectations are made clear by the following:

- Suppliers should designate a responsible person, central to the organisation, for the implementation of the ethical guidelines in their own operations;
- The supplier shall make the guidelines known in all relevant parts of its organisation;
- The supplier shall obtain consent from NPA before all or part of a production process is outsourced to a subcontractor/contractor where this has not been agreed in advance;

· The supplier must be able to explain where goods ordered by NPA are produced.

13. Respect for human rights and international humanitarian law

In line with these principles, NPA expects all suppliers to respect internationally recognised human rights. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights specifically state: "Moreover, in situations of armed conflict, businesses should respect standards of international humanitarian law." NPA expects our suppliers to respect the standards of international humanitarian law in situations where these apply.

14. Corruption

Any form of bribery is unacceptable, such as the use of alternative channels to ensure illegitimate private or work-related benefits to customers, agents, contractors, suppliers or their employees, as well as any government officials.

15. Animal welfare

15.1. Animal welfare shall be respected. Measures should be taken to minimise negative impacts on the welfare of farmed and working animals.

15.2. National and international animal welfare legislation and regulations shall be complied with.

IV – Audits and Monitoring In order to assess suppliers' compliance with these standards, NPA will make use of audits, either conducted by its own employees or by approved third parties. We reserve the right to monitor compliance with the standards by means of systematic, unannounced or announced inspections, conducted by NPA personnel or independent auditors. Any known censurable conditions can be reported via the website of NPA.

V - Corrective Action and Non-Compliance NPA is committed to adhering to the highest standards of ethical behavior. Failure to comply may result in termination of business relationships. NPA recognizes that its own business practices may also have potential negative impacts on people, society and the environment, and undertakes at the same time to implement its own corrective actions and remedy damage caused by its own activities.