Needs Assessment in Lao PDR

Jo Durham
MAG (Mines Advisory Group)

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
that this aspect of ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System alone is enough to generate vast quality improvements in an organisation, purely through the dominance effect caused by genuine management commitment.

Operations people must realise that they are responsible for quality—good or bad. Quality-assurance/quality-control personnel are only responsible for reporting on the state of quality, not for generating quality.

Product Realisation

The product realisation process is none other than the core business process of manufacturing its product(s) or service(s). It is self-evident that the best practice dictates that this process should be properly planned and developed to meet the requirements of the product and of the customer. This statement is further supported by Oakland who found in his research that “identifying key-business processes” was one of the best practices found among award-winning companies. In demining, all processes in the minefield are described and guided by standard operating procedures. However, the

The Standard is even more useful for demining organisations in developing countries, as it can be a framework to direct the organisation’s activities without having to purchase management expertise from developed countries.

minesfield is only the last stage of the product-realisation process. The process stages before that are very seldom described and audited. In Integrated Process Management: A Quality Model, Rodger Slater makes the argument that entropy is a “universal force which relentlessly presses all activity in the direction of disorder.” He contends further that if discipline (measurement and control) is not applied to key variables, they will move to a state of chaos, even if they are not problematic at the moment.

The Standard encapsulates the essence of those variables in the production/service process and seeks to impose the discipline on them that is required to prevent these aspects from drifting into chaos.

Measurement, Analysis and Improvement

Customer satisfaction not only relates to the end user or external customer, it is also applicable for internal customers, i.e., those various people who develop the product through the different stages of the process. The product must fulfill certain requirements before it can be passed on to the next stage of the process. It must be measured to ensure that problems do not occur further down the process. Oakland calls these internal customer relationships “quality chains,” and demands them vital in being able to meet customer requirements.

Slater refers to measurement activities as “the feedback loop” and further states that without it, any system that seeks to add process control will fail. People need to know how well they are achieving in order to progress. An organisation needs to know the same in order for it to survive and indeed prosper.

Oakland states that “a good quality management system will not function without adequate audits and reviews.” A further advantage of audits is that they automatically standardise processes and systems and are therefore useful for continual improvement.

The Standard requires organisations to continually improve their processes through a range of activities from reviewing nonconformities to reviewing corrective actions. This should be taken further in that organisations should identify potential nonconformities

Oakland’s contends that any organisation, in essence, competes based on its reputation for quality, reliability and price. Of the three, quality is the most important. It is extremely difficult to change a reputation from bad to good, but very easy to go from good to bad. The Standard provides proof to customers that an organisation is serious about its business and takes the customers’ requirements seriously. In a donor-driven environment, transparency and effectiveness of organisations are the bases on which donors choose to give involved. Organisations wishing to obtain sustainable, long-term donors will be better able to enhance their relationships with the Standard will provide donors with confidence and willingness to engage in lasting partnerships.

The ISO 9001:2000 System is fully compatible with and supported by internationally best practice. Any demining organisation that seeks to improve its standards and achieve world-class recognition should seriously consider taking a strategic step forward and adopting a quality management system based on the ISO 9001:2000 standard.

Conclusion

The ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System requirements are an extremely useful set of tools that cover the full spectrum of management best practice as evidenced currently. The Standard is even more useful for demining organisations in developing countries, as it can be a framework to direct the organisation’s activities without having to purchase management expertise from developed countries.

Charles Lakeside was born in South Africa in 1960 and served in the South African Army for more than 15 years. Building on his strong military and management background as Lieutenant Colonel, he then served in the Army. He started a new career in mine action. Between 1996 and 1998, he worked for commercial demining companies in his native South Africa before joining UNMAMCA and the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan in 2004 as Chief of Quality Management. He was certified ISO 9001:2000 in 2001.

Mr. Kerei Ruru
Chief of Quality Management
United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan
P.O. Box 520
Kabul, Afghanistan
E-mail: kruru@unmaca.org

Needs Assessment in Lao PDR

This article describes the needs-assessment process and findings for mine-risk education in Lao PDR.

Specific issues that arise are identifying those who are at risk, why they are at risk, and what can be done about it.

by Jo Durham | Mines Advisory Group |

M

ine-risk education is an integral component of humanitarian mine action and, as such, with other HMA components, should be a planned intervention. A needs assessment—the process of systematically collecting and analysing information in order to identify who is at risk, why, and what can be done about it—is an essential precursor to programme planning and implementation. A good needs analysis can ensure that your intervention is targeted, tailored, and developed to meet the requirements of systematically collecting and analysing information in order to identify who is at risk, why, and what can be done about it—is an essential precursor to programme planning and implementation. A good needs analysis can ensure that your intervention is targeted, tailored, and developed to meet the requirements of the target population. It is a crucial step in framing an appropriate response to risk reduction.

Recognising the importance of a needs-assessment in preparation for its new five-year strategy for the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and based on an earlier Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining evaluation, UNICEF commissioned Mines Advisory Group to undertake an MNE needs assessment in freeprovinces in the Lao PDR.

The assessment identified a number of subgroups that are at risk and helped bring into focus the myriad of contributing factors that influence behaviour. It highlighted the differences in the ways the mine-action “experts” view UXO risk, make decisions, and structure and solve problems in order to determine an appropriate response. The findings suggest that in a country such as the Lao PDR, where communities have lived with unexploded ordnance infestation for over 25 years, more traditional mine-risk education may not be enough. What may be needed alongside traditional message-based interventions is a more holistic and pragmatic risk-minimisation approach, which may also require a collective paradigm shift in the way different stakeholders view UXO risk. Such methodology would help bridge the current gap between experts’ and laypeople’s opinions and result in more effective MNE. Alongside this risk-minimisation approach, a more complete, integrated style of CBO action and development will help address some of the underlying vulnerabilities of at-risk populations. The assessment also pointed to possible new directions for reaching women and children, including integrating MRE into a broader life-skills approach and parenting guides.

Background to the Assessment

Lao PDR has the distinction of being, per capita, the most heavily bombed nation in the world. 1 As a result of intensive ground warfare and extensive bombing during the IndoChina War, 2 especially during the years 1964–

Hidden threat: almost all people living in contaminated areas are potentially at risk of exposure to UXO contamination.

Published by J.M. Scholarly Commons, 2007

11.1 | winter 2006 | journal of mine action | notes from the field | 77

1

76 | notes from the field | journal of mine action | winter 2006 | 11.1

1

79.6 percent considered UXO to be dangerous, with most of them reporting being afraid of UXO.

Findings

The assessment found overall a high level of UXO awareness and understanding among both adults and children. For example, 82 percent of the adult respondents indicated that no UXO is safe and provided a range of correct responses regarding common events that cause UXO to detonate—of the children surveyed, 99.6 percent considered UXO to be dangerous, with most of them reporting being afraid of UXO.

Despite these known risks however, many people, including women and children, reported continuing to interact with live or potentially live ordnance on an almost daily basis. Respondents rationally defended this apparent inconsistency, even though their view was often at odds with “experts” views. The assessment also found the general categorises often used to characterise at-risk populations, that is, the uninformed, the unaware, the reckless and the intentional, were less relevant to the context of Laos PDR. Instead, the study distinguished between intentional exposure (i.e. voluntary) to live ordnance—where actors aware of the risk purposefully expose themselves to live ordnance—and unintentional exposure (involuntary). Voluntary exposure may include for example, moving an item of UXO to another location or tampering with ordnance for economic gain. Voluntary exposure included groups identified as high risk, for example:

- Adult scrap-metal collectors
- Adults who move UXO out of farming land
- Scrap-metal dealers
- Adults who deliberately dismantle UXO
- Children who collect scrap metal
- Children who play or tamper with UXO
- Adults and children who work on agricultural land
- Out-of-school youth and young children

Unintentional exposure. Unintentional exposure to UXO injury is when a person’s exposure to UXO is unplanned and may include exposure due to inattention or lack of knowledge. While some of the prevention activities may be the same, inattentionality is an important variable and particularly relevant in Laos PDR where UXO injury due to intentional exposure to live ordnance (for example through the deliberate tampering of ordnance for the scrap-metal trade) is known to be increasing.

Involuntary exposure, such as exposure to sub-surface UXO while farming, is generally feared due to the lack of control people have over the situation. People have reported voluntarily exposing themselves to UXO—for example, removing items from farming land—in order to avoid possible unintentional exposure later.

Contributing factors to involuntary exposure include the inability of clearance agencies to respond to the needs of farmers and a lack of alternative agricultural land. The following quote expresses a view shared by many people and helps to illustrate the farmers’ plight as well as highlighting the higher level of fear that surrounds involuntary exposure: “No clearance team comes and helps us, so even though it is not safe to move, when we can see UXO on this farmland, we need to move them, otherwise the following year when we farm again we don’t know where they are.”

Intentional exposure. The assessment identified a number of perceptual, cognitive, pragmatic and economic factors that informed respondents’ rational defence of voluntary risk-taking behaviour. Respondents reported weighing benefits and costs of UXO risk activities compared with other household risks. A key household risk, for example, is basic food insecurity, which is often a motivating force in the decision to engage with, or at least potentially engage with, UXO.

In trying to meet basic needs such as food security, individuals and households also consider the costs and benefits of alternative income-generating options, sometimes preferring activities that may expose them to UXO, such as scrap-metal collection. Where other options had more perceived advantages than scrap-metal collection, however, people reportedly abandoned scrap-metal collection for alternative, more legitimate, income-generating activities, such as farming or trading. This may be a rational decision-making process involving weighing the potential costs and benefits of a range of available options. The most common ways in which people voluntarily expose themselves to UXO risk is through collecting or dealing in scrap metal, moving UXO from farmland and dismantling UXO. The following quote from one of the female respondents illustrates how contamination levels combined with the need to uphold basic food security and
gunpowder inside.”

with no pins, bullets, mortar shells with necessary skills to remain in control.

may be due to a cognitive coping strategy necessarily associated with accidents. This selection on the one hand is perceived as being contradictions. For example, scrap-metal collection on current coping strategies and knowledge skills as an area in which they felt risk-reduction strategies they took. These contradictions and skill-development needs of at-risk cognition skills as an area in which they felt risk-reduction strategies they took. These contradictions and skill-development needs of at-risk respondents identified accurate rec-

ition and capability of an accident, and different kinds of knowledge.

While awareness is an important pre-requisite to change and ongoing awareness campaigns may be essential for children, the assessment did not identify it as a ma-

jor determinant of risk behaviour. Focusing on traditional message-based approaches to MRE is likely to result in developing activities and the people are aware of the threat and engage in some anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-tank mines and 273,404 pieces of UXO destroyed. Throughout 2005 and 2006 a total of 100,083 people have directly benefited from anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-tank mines and 273,404 pieces of UXO destroyed. Throughout 2005 and 2006 a total of 100,083 people have directly benefited from anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-tank mines and 273,404 pieces of UXO destroyed. Throughout 2005 and 2006 a total of 100,083 people have directly benefited from anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-tank mines and 273,404 pieces of UXO destroyed. Throughout 2005 and 2006 a total of 100,083 people have directly benefited from anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-tank mines and 273,404 pieces of UXO destroyed. Throughout 2005 and 2006 a total of 100,083 people have directly benefited from anti-personnel mines, 890 anti-tank mines and 273,404 pieces of UXO destroyed. Throughout 2005 and 2006 a total of 100,083 people have directly benefited from.