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Mine Action Support Group Update

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The Information Management System for Mine Action is a globally used and internationally accepted data-base and software system that allows mine-action programs to efficiently control and evaluate information. In addition, IMSMA provides powerful tools to rapidly disseminate information on hazardous areas and other important aspects of mine action by providing digital as well as printed maps and manuals. All U.N. mine-operation offices and Protection and Quality Assurance Officers in Sudan are equipped with an IMSMA system capable of receiving, analysing and displaying many types of data ranging from minefield locations, clearance operations and mine-risk education activities to agricultural development plans and movements of internally displaced persons. Following the successful establishment of an IMSMA facility at the United Nations Mine Action Office in Khartoum in April 2002, the Northern Regional Mine Action Office in Khadgi in August 2002 and the Southern Regional Mine Action Office in Juba in March 2003, a substantial amount of data concerning suspected and actual mined areas, mined roads and landmine victims was collected and entered. A large amount of information on cleared areas, unexploded ordinance locations, ammunition dumps and the opening of squares has been collected and recorded during the last two years of operations.

Subsequent evaluation and analysis of the information demonstrate how the landmine threat in Sudan has a significant and negative impact on human activity by restricting the access routes of the U.N. Mission in Sudan and also access of humanitarian aid and populations.

Mine-action operations in Sudan have been enhanced by the development of the potential for adding support tools to IMSMA. Support tools for capturing data on road assessment, road clearance/verification, quality assurance, victim assistance and MRE were designed in-country. Some of these tools have been shared with other countries such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Mozambique. The data captured has enhanced the information flow and increased the pace of the mine-action activities.

The information-management policy documents, specifically tailored to the nature of Sudanese mine-action operations, is a document supporting the systematic and methodological procedures of information management in the mine-action programme. This document explains the modules used in IMSMA and its supportive tools, the information flow in the Sudan Mine Action Programme, responsibility of the individual for information flow and other relevant data-management issues.

A training curriculum for the operational use of IMSMA has been developed for the Sudan MAF. The training curriculum includes all the topics that are used for data management at the operational level, such as planning and other management issues.

IMSMA is used in Sudan as an actual operations tool. To this end, comprehensive training was conducted in two sessions, one in Khartoum in October 2005 and the other in Rumbek in February 2006, for the Operations and Quality Assurance Officers on the use of IMSMA. The training brought greater changes in the information flow and reporting procedures. IMSMA is widely used within the programme in day-to-day operational activities, planning and other management issues.

All mine-action offices in Sudan can produce IMSMA output, such as maps, graphic presentations and data for planning, to educate people about the impact of landmines/UXO and to reduce the risk associated with mines, an interest broadly shared by the U.N. community, aid organisations and other interested parties.

The information-management section is working closely with United Nations Mission in Sudan, the World Food Programme, the International Organization for Migration, the U.N. Joint Logistics Centre and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to develop a common system (not IMSMA, but compatible with it) that can facilitate integrated planning for humanitarian interventions in Sudan. In this context, this system could assist with tracking internally displaced persons/refugees and anticipating their movements and proximity to known/suspected mined or dangerous areas. See Evaluation, page 112

Information Management System for Mine Action in Sudan
by Mohammad Kabir [United Nations Mine Action Programme in Sudan]

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Mine Action Support Group Update

This article contains excerpts from the United Nations’ third quarterly newsletter, which highlights the activities of the Mine Action Support Group from July to September 2006, including updates from the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF.

excerpted by [Stacy Davis [United States Department of State]
reported $15 million in confirmed and unconfirmed pledges through the Voluntary Trust Fund, which does not include funding for OGE 2 projects.

Update from UNICEF

The Mine Action and Mine-Victim Assistance Workshops hosted by the UNDP in Jordan and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) in Beirut were attended by 75 participants from 15 countries, including representatives from the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Mine Action Group of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Cyprus Institute of Science.

In order to accomplish this goal, the following must be achieved:

- Support for a national mine action strategy, both nationally owned and executed with a focus on management capacity and planning, including a phased exit strategy for U.N. and other international assistance.
- Project cost-effectiveness, achieved in part by categorizing and bringing together related functions to better track and effectively manage these costs. Cost-effectiveness will also be partially achieved through the national Technical Survey and institutionalization enhancement planned by the National Demining Office.
- Focus on management and coordination capacity of the National Demining Office and the International Support Group to integrate mine action with other sectors and to generate resources.

Key challenges included the eruption of conflict in July 2006 in Lebanon, which has escalated the mine problem. At the time of writing, the number of UXO items was not yet fully estimated. UXO has caused more victims in the first six weeks after the creation of hostilities (August 14, 2006) than in the previous four years combined.UXO clearance in Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon has been placed on hold while national assets have been diverted to undertake clearance in southern Lebanon.

The funding situation in Lebanon is as follows:

- Explosive and explosive accessories are in short supply due to their rapid use during the UOZD clearance campaign. 
- $300,000 is needed for the capacity-building program to create a fully national mine-clearance structure by the end of 2007.
- Funding for mine clearance outside of southern Lebanon and for UXO clearance remains low.

Colombia

Key achievements in Colombia were as follows:

- The national mine action strategy and its MRE teams have been trained in disposal and coordination and technical assistance to national technical surveys.
- The National MRE Team has been working with the Ministry of Health and the UNICEF Colombia Mine Action Programme to implement a strategy for helping victims and survivors. The workshop concluded with a plan of action for integrating mine-risk education/UXO awareness programs in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the NMAA. The participants of the workshop also agreed to pilot the surveillance system in three governorates, two from the south and one from the north. This pilot is expected to start in early 2007.

Victim assistance is a pillar of mine action that has been neglected in post-conflict situations. UNICEF is working with the government and affected communities to establish a national strategy for assisting mine-affected people and to provide required information to stakeholders and service providers for assistance to victims and survivors.

The workshop concluded with a plan of action for integrating mine-risk education/UXO awareness programs into the curriculum of the Ministry of Health and the NMAA. The participants of the workshop also agreed to pilot the surveillance system in three governorates, two from the south and one from the north. This pilot is expected to start in early 2007.

With regard to victim assistance, the workshop discussed the need for mine risk education, identifying medical care; physical rehabilitation; psychological support; social and economic reintegration; and laws and policies. A plan of action was developed during the workshop, which is expected to be finalized in the coming months. The guide will be used with a package of other instructional materials to assist in reintegration efforts. UNICEF is coordinating this field test of a facilitator’s guidebook for MRE with community facilitators and other organizations, which it hopes to finalize in the coming months.

UNICEF continues to provide technical support to the National Mine Action Programme and the National Mine Action Agency to implement and expand the national injury surveillance system.

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The majority of the victims are between 14 and 49 years old, and most of them were holding when the accident happened. Of the 582 contaminated communities, 41 percent have primary schools in the vicinity of contaminated areas, indicating that children are still at risk of landmines and UXO. The project was implemented by the General Directorate of Mine Action, which is the regional mine-action center for South Asian governments.

Luo PDR. UNICEF has been working closely with Minas Advisory Group since June 2006 to conduct a UXO risk-assessment study. A stakeholders meeting was organized at the end of September to discuss the findings and recommendations.

In total, 1,312 adults completed a Knowledge Attitude Practice questionnaire, of which 54 percent were men and 46 percent were women. UNICEF and MAG selected a research team to have focus-group discussions with 14 groups of men and 12 groups of women. A total of 720 adults over eight years of age completed the KAP questionnaire (495 boys and 225 girls), and the research team held 38 focus-group discussions with children, using UNICEF ethical guidelines.

The study distinguished between intentional (i.e., voluntary) exposure to live ordnance, in which actors aware of the risk purposefully exposed themselves to live ordnance, in which actors aware of the risk intentionally (i.e., voluntary) exposure to live ordnance (for example, through the deliberate tampering of ordnance for the scrap-metal trade) is increasing. The assessment found a generally high level of UXO awareness and knowledge of risk-taking and risk-reduction behaviors; however, the assessment also found that many people, including women and children, continue to voluntarily interact with live, or potentially live, ordnance on an almost daily basis.

The findings from the study will be used in close collaboration with the recently established UXO National Regulatory Authority to inform MRE strategy development as well as the development of new messages for at-risk populations—especially children—who are attracted to scrap-metal collection. The UXO Needs Assessment data provides a unique opportunity to assist the government in taking the next strategic steps to develop appropriate messages and responses that more effectively target areas and people.

Upcoming activities include four-day UXO Risk Education Strategy Planning Workshops to be conducted by staff from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, UNICEF and the Laos Youth Union. In addition, finalization of the UXO Risk Assessment as well as translation of the IMAS Best Practice Guidelines will continue. UNICEF will also give support to the Community Awareness Technical Working Group of the NRA for the first technical working group meeting. The UNICEF office is seeking new funding to expand support in its collaboration with the UXO NRA and the development of new risk-reduction strategies.

Davis M: Mine Action Support Group Update

The recently released Portfolio of Mine Action Projects 2007 published starting figures concerning funding shortfalls for groups and organizations tackling the international threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance. More than 100 nongovernmental organizations, national authorities and United Nations agencies reported a total shortfall of U.S.$375.5 million for 29 countries or territories.

The 2007 edition of the report reviews more than 300 proposals with a combined budget of $429 million. Only $213.7 million in funding for these proposals has been secured, leaving 75 percent of these projects unfunded.


P rominent programs have evolved considerably since the first program for humanitarian demining, the Mine Action Program, was launched for Afghanistan, begun in 1988. Likewise, the legal bases for dealing with the problem of landmines have developed substantially from the 1980 Protocol II to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (the 1997 AP Mine Ban Convention). The 1980 Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is an important variable and particularly relevant in the context of the AP Mine Ban Convention, since the latter bans the use of a weapon that is typically a single action where no distinction can be made between the actor and the beneficiary of the action (e.g., pulling the trigger on a gun). However, with anti-personnel mines, the weapon is designed with a time-lag—a person may lay the mine, another may use it tactically. Hence, would a military unit that moves into an area where mines were laid and avoids it for its defense permanent violate the prohibition on use if the unit in question was that of a State Party?

For no-insignificant questions such as this one, we are fortunate to have Stuart Madden’s contribution to the prestigious Oxford Commentaries on International Law series, edited by Professors Philip Alston of New York University and Vaughan Lowe of Oxford University. This work, the first volume of a projected line of commentaries on arms-control treaties, offers a comprehensive article-by-article interpretation of the Mine Ban Convention as well as a thorough overview of the Convention as a whole and the unusual fast-track negotiation—the “Ottawa Process”—that led to its adoption. Likewise, very useful is the inclusion of a long introduction describing the development and use of anti-personnel mines, assessing their military utility and reviewing the historical and legal antecedents to the Convention.

While jurists will undoubtedly quibble at the margins with particular about this paragraph or that parenthetical, Madden knows his material well—he was a member of the UNICEF delegation to the First Review Conference on the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (1995–1996), as well as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation to the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which adopted the AP Mine Ban Convention—and is clearly passionate about the subject (he is donating all royalties from the volume to a nongovernmental organization that provides financial and technical support to local organizations rehabilitating victims in mine-affected countries). Although it is neither an easy read (but not a difficult one either) nor an inexpensive book, this work deserves an honored place on the shelf of every scholar of international humanitarian law as well as that of mine-action centers worldwide.