November 2006

Effects of Landmines on Sri Lanka

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Most of the losses and injuries of civilians arise due to negligence and carelessness. Civilians involved in non-military activities accounted for 103 of 145 cases with loss of an arm or hand, eyeight or hearing and 43 of the 192 cases of lower limb amputations. In some cases, civilians were tampering with explosive devices and in other cases they were crossing into restricted areas. It can be concluded that in a number of cases civilian casualties resulted from treating explosive ordnances carelessly.

Recommendations

The main recommendations derived from the survey are as follows:

- Further coordination of mine-victim-assistance activities: Activities of various governmental and nongovernmental entities should continue their joint efforts within the MVA working group, ensuring constant efforts toward sensitizing society to the problems of mine victims and persons with disabilities in general.
- Development of MVA projects and identification of implementing agencies: For projects developed using the needs-assessment-survey data, the emphasis should be on projects empowering the community, e.g., through establishment of associations for mine/UXO victims.
- Establishment of a charitable fund for MVA: Acting within the Azerbaijani legislative framework, a charity should be established to attract money from national and international organisations and individuals to fund various MVA projects.
- Monitoring of the level of mine/UXO victim assistance: For each victim, the level of medical care and physical rehabilitation measures, together with the degree of social reintegration and professional rehabilitation, should be evaluated over the course of a year using various methods. Articles about MVA should be published in international and national journals, newspapers and magazines whenever possible to continue educating the public on mine victims in Azerbaijan.

Effects of Landmines on Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, statistics show people between the ages of 20 and 45 are the most likely to be injured by landmines. When they are disabled, they become a burden to the country's economy, requiring assistance instead of contributing to the country's growth. This article discusses how landmines affect Sri Lanka and the efforts being undertaken to lessen their impact.

by K.T. Marquita Udayanga Hemapala | University of Genova

The Tamil people moved from the southern part of India to Sri Lanka around the 14th century and they struggled with the kingdom of Sri Lanka on and off throughout history. Since 1983, a Sri Lankan separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, has fought with the central government of Sri Lanka for a separate homeland for minority Sri Lankan Tamils. The decades of conflict have resulted in the destruction of large areas of fertile agricultural lands, commercial areas, residential areas, roads and water resources. Later, as people tried to reculture these areas, they encountered landmines and many became disabled.

Mine Ban Convention

The Sri Lankan government has not signed the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention. Both the government and Tamil Tigers formally committed to a ceasefire in 2002, but thereafter there has been a sharp increase in violence. Since President Mahinda Rajapakse came to power in November 2005, government security forces are currently engaged in a limited operation in Trincomalee to reopen the Mawilaru area that was closed by the Tamil Tigers. It provides water to over 15,000 families and approximately 30,000 acres of paddy lands in the Seruwila, Muttur and Ekalampattu areas in the Trincomalee district. According to government sources, the Mawilaru area was heavily mined by LTTE forces in an attempt to slow Army progress. According to the Landmine Monitor Report for Sri Lanka, there are still over 700,000 anti-personnel mines in the ground.

Mine Clearance

Mine-clearance activities have expanded greatly since the February 2002 ceasefire. The HALO Trust, Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation's Humanitarian Demining Unit, Mines Advisory Group, Norwegian People's Aid, Fondation Suisse de Déminage, the Sri Lankan Army and BONCOS Consulting Corporation are engaged in demining work in Sri Lanka. Currently there are three main approaches to humanitarian mine clearance in Sri Lanka:

1. Manual clearance—an effective but slow process.
2. Manual clearance with support of mine-detecting dogs—a good method but very difficult in some areas, because the dogs can become confused if they smell explosives coming from several sources at once.
3. Mechanical clearance—the fastest method, but less effective. The speed of manual demining is approximately 25 square meters (30 square yards) per hour. Using explosives-detecting dogs is also a rather difficult process because the effectiveness of the dogs depends entirely on their level of training and the skill of their handlers. Also, all EDDs are brought from foreign countries and are not used to the Sri Lankan climate, so they tire quickly. Mechanical mine clearance is the fastest method employed in Sri Lanka. The MVS-4 Mini Flail System has an average speed around 2,000 square meters (2,400 square yards) per hour for light soil and 1,000 square meters (1,200 square yards) per hour for heavy soil. The Bozena 4 clears around 2,500 square meters (3,000 square yards) per hour for light soil and 500 square meters (620 square yards) per hour in heavy soil.

The Bozena 4 can clear about 2,500 square meters per hour in light soil and 120 square meters per hour in heavy soil.

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Published by JMU Scholarly Commons, 2006

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Mine-action Society Formed in Kurdistan

Although a Mine Action Process began in Iraqi Kurdistan more than a decade ago, a considerable threat from landmines and unexploded ordnance remains in the region. Committed and qualified professionals have been working to reduce the impact of this threat, often at their own peril, but a vacuum remained in terms of formal collaboration among these parties.

To address this need, the Fria Society for Mine Action Professionals was formed with the support of national and international organizations. The Mine Action Strategic Framework that was developed and agreed upon the United Nations and Partners 2006 Work Plan for Sudan. Based on these processes, stakeholders developed the 2006 Annual Operational Plan using the logical framework analysis.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall process followed in Sudan to develop three separate but interrelated documents for mine-action planning. The preparation of these documents is as follows:

1. The Mine Action Strategic Framework was developed before the work plan was developed.
2. The National Mine Action Project Plan and the 2006 Work Plan are developed after the STRIPS.
3. The Mine Action Annual Operational Plan for Sudan is the final output for the overall mine-action planning process. The processes are listed in the centre blocks of the figure (e.g., input from stakeholders, Portfolio and Work Plan, and regional priority development and priority setting). The final products of the three processes were the 2006 MAP document, the Work Plan for 2006 and the 2006 Annual Operation Plan.

The Mine Action Strategic Framework was developed in 2004 by the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme jointly led this process, which involved the authorities from both North and South Sudan.

Input from:
- National authorities and international NGOs
- National and international donors
- UN agencies and NGOs
- The Southern Sudan government

In June 2005, the UN Country Team started work on the Work Plan for 2006, developing U.N. Strategic Priorities for Sudan. The United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme jointly led this process, which involved the authorities from both North and South Sudan. The government of Sudan (GoS) and the United Nations Mine Action Service both agreed upon and approved the MAF. The document was developed before the GoS and the SPLM signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and consequently was revised in 2006, therefore the MAF was used to guide the planning process. The development of the Portfolio and the 2006 Work Plan should be guided by the overall strategic priorities identified in the document.