Information Management System for Mine Action in Sudan

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United Nations Mine Action Programme in Sudan

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The Information Management System for Mine Action in Sudan is a globally used and internationally accepted database and software system that allows mine-action programmes to efficiently correlate and evaluate information. The Information Management System for Mine Action (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 data.

All U.N. mine-action offices and Operations and Quality Assurance Offices 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 Kaudubi in August 2002 and the Southern Regional Mine Action Office in Juba in March 2003, a substantial amount of data concerning suspected and actual mine areas, mined roads and landmine victims was collected and entered. A large amount of information on landmines, UXO and unexploded ordinance locations, ammunition dumps and the opening of square kilometers has been collected and recorded during the last two years of operations.

Subsequent submission and analysis of the information demonstrate how the landmine threat in Sudan has a significant and negative impact on the capability of the local population to engage in productive and economic activities by restricting the access routes of the U.N. Mission in Sudan and also access of humanitarian aid and agricultural populations.

Mine-action operations in Sudan have been enhanced by the potential for adding support tools to IMSMA. Support tools for capturing data on road access, road clearance efforts, population density, landmine and UXO risk areas, landmine victims 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, responsibilities 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 Map. 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 operational tool. To this end, comprehensive training was conducted in two sessions, one in Khartoum in October 2005 and the other in Rabak in February 2006, for the Operations and Quality Assurance Officers in the country on the use of IMSMA. The training brought great 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 Mine Action 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 particular, this system could assist with tracking internally displaced persons/refugees and anticipating their movements and proximity to known/ suspected mined or dangerous areas.

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The Mine Action Support Group meets four times a year to facilitate discussion between donors and U.N. mine-action partners. The MASG has 27 members and invites representatives from mine-affected countries, experts and nongovernmental organizations to share information about mine action in their countries. The group’s goal is to simplify donor coordination and ease funding. The United States shared the group in 2006 and will continue to do so through 2007.

Developments in UNMAS Programs

Afghanistan. Over the summer, an excess of 6.5 million square meters (1,606 acres) of minefields and 29 million square meters (7,166 acres) of former battlefields were cleared, while 7.4 million square meters (1,829 acres) of minefields and 3.95 million square meters (976 acres) of former battlefields were surveyed for performance since 1989 to 420 million square meters (103,784 acres) of minefields and 630 million square meters (157,076 acres) of former battlefields surveyed, and 369 million square meters (91,181 acres) of minefields and 759 million square meters (186,070 acres) of former battlefields cleared. Under the supervision of 23 quality assurance teams directed by the United Nations Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, 125 manual-clearance teams, 44 mechanical teams, 33 mine-dog groups, 76 survey teams and 60 explosive-ordnance-disposal teams implemented this work. Ninety-nine mine-risk-education teams operate nationally including community- and clinic-based personnel. Civilian and military citizens and encampment centers, and from January to September 2006 the teams reached over 720,000 people in direct campaigns. As of September 30, 2006, there were over 360 persons injured and 60 killed according to statistics, but such incidents are considered to be under-reported.

Security is a problem in the country, with operations in the south and east disrupted both by security incidents and Afghan and international military force operations. Mine-action teams and personnel have suffered a number of direct attacks, including hijackings, thefts and kidnappings. UNAMACA continues to monitor the security situation and adjust operations to ensure security of personnel and assets.

Funding for the programme is unstable, with confirmed resources for humanitarian mine action identified only through the end of 2006, and a remaining shortfall of US$1.7 million before full support of the existing capacity can be achieved. Additional funding for 2007 will be critical to enable continued operations and assist in the transition to full government responsibility, and the group has been hampered recently by changes in government personnel.

Lebanon—Rapid Response. The 34 days of hostilities between Israel and armed elements based in Lebanon resulted in extensive unexploded-ordnance contamination in southern Lebanon, mainly in the form of unexploded cluster bombs and submunitions, with more limited contamination in other parts of the country. The U.N. Mine Action Team involved the Inter-agency Rapid Response Plan to support Lebanon’s authorities (namely the National Demining Office) in addressing clearance and mine-risk-education needs, supporting humanitarian agencies and deploying an expanded United Nations Inter-agency Force in Lebanon. The Mine Action Support Group, including U.N. agencies and implementing partners, was formed and convened monthly on July 27 and August 9. In addition to holding a donor meeting at UNMAS on August 10, the Mine Action Team utilized the Mine Action Support Group network to issue letters updating donors on the scope of the problem, the operational response and funding requirements.

The National Demining Office, working in Beirut with UNDP Technical Advisor and an UNMAS Coordinator and in coordination with the UNMAS-managed Mine Action Centre, South Lebanon, planned and described the response. The National Mine Risk Education Steering Committee, with support from UNICEF, launched a mass media awareness campaign for refugees in Syria and for people throughout Lebanon.

While the total amount of UNDOF in southern Lebanon is unknown, as of October 10, 2006, 770 individual cluster-bomb-strike sites have been identified. Reported casualties total 126, with 18 killed and 108 injured. Civilian and military casualties and material damage have been hampered recently by changes in government personnel.

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