Norwegian People's Aid

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Profile
Operating on the principles of solidarity, unity, human dignity, peace and freedom, Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) is one of Norway’s leading non-governmental organizations. Originating in 1939 as a result of the Norwegian labor movement, NPA quickly assumed an active role in Norway, performing rescue, first aid and public health services, assisting the elderly and disabled, offering services during natural disasters and operating reception centers for asylum seekers.

NPA soon became an international figure and expanded its services to include agricultural, environmental, healthcare and psycho-social and human rights activities. NPA also offers emergency assistance, shelters, conflict prevention and resolution and, lastly, mine-clearance and mine awareness programs. By extending this spectrum of services, NPA has secured its position as a vital force on the international humanitarian aid level and is presently involved in 400 projects in 30 countries. NPA also advocates that cooperation only enhances a humanitarian organization’s fight against inhumane behavior. It works closely with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is a member of Eurostep and SOLIDAR.

Although NPA accomplishes much from a national perspective, its mine clearance and mine awareness programs highlight its dedication to ridding the world of landmines and improving safety for all human beings. It has established a tradition of assisting African countries in their liberation movements, supporting each individual’s right to freedom and justice, and has contributed to rebuilding and development efforts in recently liberated countries. NPA categorizes its efforts in Africa into two divisions: short-term emergency relief and long-term development cooperation, with Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa comprising its two prime geographical areas of concern.

Landmine Activities
NPA's landmine projects have taken it to Angola where the organization focused on battle area clearance, mine clearance, survey and GIS database and mine awareness. It has pioneered projects in Angola and Boysia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Kosovo, Laos, Mozambique, Northern Iraq, Kurdistan and the Western Sahara. In Boysia-Herzegovina, NPA surveyed the land, established mine clearance and mine awareness programs and deployed 150 deminers and five mine detection dog teams. To assist the refugees in Cambodia, NPA offered local community development programs and supplied technical guidance to the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC). NPA also incorporates indigenous populations in its projects to promote cordial working relationships between the countries and NPA and to establish a competent mine clearing team to further mine clearance efforts once NPA is no longer a presence in the country. In Kosovo, NPA trained 100 local deminers and dog teams to clear the affected land. As mine awareness constitutes a significant portion of the landmine problem, NPA created mine awareness programs for returning refugees in the Western Sahara and trained approximately 30,000 people in refugee camps.

To optimize its efforts, NPA also focuses on the research and development of mine clearance technology, as there is always a need to improve safety, speed and cost concerns for mine detection and removal methods. NPA also emphasizes the need to approach all new technological advancements with a degree of caution, as there is never an easy solution to a problem this severe.

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Donations and Support
Without the monetary assistance from various concerned persons and organizations, MgM could not function at its current level. The German government and the Netherlands’ government helped to fund MgM’s Angolan project. MgM has formed partnerships with a variety of private and public companies and to offer the most cost-efficient and clearance effective services to mine-affected countries. MgM works in cooperation with deminers to manually clear the land. The MaM system is followed by a Mad system, which consists of mine-detecting dogs. The last phase of MgM’s layered technique is the QaM, an armored grader that scrapes the ground surface of cleared areas for passive quality control. MgM favors a layered approach to demining to guarantee the safety of its staff and people returning to their homes.

MgM Projects and Activities
MgM focuses on measuring the social impact toward mine clearance and the rehabilitation of infrastructures to permit the safe return of displaced persons. Its activities include demining work in Angola and Namibia. German Ambassador to Angola Helmut van Edig requested MgM’s assistance to reconstruct numerous mined roadways, bridges and community areas in the Bengo Province of Angola to facilitate Angolan refugees’ return to their country. Because of MgM and other humanitarian organizations’ efforts, 50,000 displaced persons returned to Angola after seven years spent in refugee camps.

Presently, MgM is in the planning stages of preparing survey operations in Africa and Central America and urges people to remember "with all [the] pride and joy about these hybrid and low-tech products and projects, it must (be) kept in mind that the purpose of both are to clear landmines and UXOs."

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