February 2006

Mine Action and the Millennium Development Goals

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Recommended Citation
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Mine Action and the Millennium Development Goals

The author compares the U.N. Millennium Development Goals with the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and sees that both should be adjusted to assure future success.

A Comparative Analysis

There are many interesting parallels between the clinical dynamics of extreme poverty and the Millennium Development Goals1 and the goals of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Both are fulfilling their first five-year review process and consider the year 2005 to be a milestone regarding the assessment of previous achievements and projection of deadlines of the Convention?

“one child every three seconds” remind us of the way the world’s poorest. This is much better compared to the number of children who die of the consequences of extreme poverty every year,” or “10 million children still die of preventable causes every year.” Shocking catchphrases like “10 million children die of the consequences of extreme poverty every year,” or “one child every three seconds” have become too familiar. The tragic impact of landmines has been depicted on a global scale: “one landmine victim every 20 minutes.” The reports focus on three pillars in order to rid the world of extreme poverty:

The first pillar is international aid and how resources should be best allocated for development. For decades, many billions of dollars have been spent with limited results. Many experts have drawn one main conclusion: when money is spent without the required governmental reform, international efforts are virtually doomed to fail.

The second pillar introduces the tremendous potential of fair trade—likely more important than the first pillar. The trade-instead-of-aid principle has a lot of relevance, but it might only reach its full potential in a world with more equality and less subsidized or protected economies.

The third pillar is security and post-conflict reconstruction. Loss of security or relapse to conflict can cause a loss of decades of development progress. It is evident that mine action can play a vital role in this domain.

With the Human Development Report having a critical role in redacting the debate on development in an unequal world, it manages to link the three essential pillars for development in a more holistic way than the MDG framework. We then have to ask how and if we should (or could) pair mine action effectively with the MDGs. Do we need extra tools or need to pursue a further extension of the development debate to overcome the near absence of security-related goals in the MDGs? To answer this question, we need first to take a closer look at the politics involved.

The Politics of Mine Action

Mine action, as a multidisciplinary and multidimensional activity, is manifestly present at the three different levels of politics: high, medium and low (explicated below). It may seem obvious that at this level require sufficient national and local ownership of the mine problem to be truly effective. National and local decision-making should even have the ability to reprioritize funding originally intended for mine action whenever other more urgent socio-economic or development needs arise.

Having defined the high and low politics of mine action, it is suggested that there are also medium politics. These are the political dynamics within international organizations, regional organizations or the civil society itself—the interactions among non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, the International Committee for the Red Cross and regional political bodies such as the European Union and the Organization of American States, who altogether comprise the medium politics of mine action. Some of the most critical voices might call them the meddling politics of mine action, since phenomena such as funding competition, turf protection and “clubbiness” mentality could sporadically form obstacles between the high and low politics of mine action.

Indeed, to optimize the global results of the politics of mine action, these three levels should act in harmony. This becomes more challenging such as the politics of mine action. When there are high numbers of mine victims, the three political levels of mine action tend to remain well synchronized. However, the views of donors, the United Nations, NGOs, the World Bank and mine-affected states regarding the utility of certain mine action projects—especially when there are many competing demands—quickly diverge and consequently allocate the resources when mine action should be included in development and post-conflict restoration programmes.

On the other hand, mine action has significantly matured over the last years towards an increasingly efficient and effective combined effort to quickly address humanitarian emergencies, reduce security risks and threats, and contribute to development and post-conflict reintegration. However, once beyond emergency relief, an external consultative process becomes essential. It will not only help converge the views of the actors at the different political levels of mine action, but also mobilize an often more-divided-than-unified donor community behind a well-known, ambitious vision for a better world.

Since 2005 is presented as a breakthrough year in reaching the MDGs, mine action should immediately review how it can fit in and benefit from the Millennium momentum. Is this currently happening? Only in a limited extent. The medium politics of mine action’s mainstreaming in broader development goals has been a somewhat slow process. One does not have to go back too far in time to discover that mine action was kept deliberately outside the development debate to promote its humanitarian imperative. This also confusingly led to redundant terminology such as “humanitarian mine action” as if it were in comparison with the MDGs. Why it is still to be seen, especially since the current funding statements might not suffice in today’s strife for clinical dynamics and a more quantifiable, realistic and relatively comparable measurement of socio-economic benefits amongst programmes and projects.

Linking up Mine Action with the MDGs

Having highlighted some aspects of the politics of mine action, how can we facilitate their effective inclusion into the current realm of global development goal-setting? The Millennium goals are focused and concrete, but they do not particularly reach out to the different political levels of mine action, or disarmament activities. Past statements might not suffice in today’s strife for clinical dynamics and a more quantifiable, realistic and relatively comparable measurement of socio-economic benefits amongst programmes and projects.

Consequently, the subordinate planning level of the MDGs likely a much more suitable mechanism since it allows a more substantial and tangible inclusion of national mine action goals and strategic plans into concepts such as poverty-reduction strategy papers, national development plans, sectoral development plans, and/or post-conflict restoration plans.

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planning decisions are also more the rule than the excep-
tion, often giving way to an early loss of momentum
in the process of post-conflict restoration.

Recommendations

Due to its complexity and cross-cutting character-
istics, mine action will have to continue to firmly make
its case to improve its mainstreaming into development
activities in mine-affected states. This should not cause
concern but rather acceptance of a broader prioritization
process, whereby no scarce funding should go to the
"denying of mountaintops or deserts" while the popu-
lation in the valley is suffering—or worse, dying, from
the consequences of extreme poverty. There is no ratio-
nale that can justify this—neither a humanitarian, nor
a development or even an Ottawa Convention one. The
straightforward rationale to prevail should be the pri-
oritization of those humanitarian and/or development
activities in mine-affected states. This should not cause
a development or even an Ottawa Convention one. The
number of highly volatile factors makes it a daunting
task to indicate reliable, long-term socio-economic
benefits. To maintain its credibility, the mine action
sector should avoid overstating the beneficial develop-
mental impact of mine clearance, such as automatically
calling the majority of their projects "high priority" if
land can have any use in the future or referring to im-
pressive socio-economic benefits that were "calculated" years
ago.

As a closing note, it is important to continuously un-
derline the real human costs and human faces behind
all the figures, goals or deadlines. Human development
is still much more than the MDGs, Poverty Reduction
goals and banquets.

The author takes a look at the environmental impact of demining and shows
how demining not only affects the environment but also bears heavily on
development and economics.

Environmental Applications in Demining

The author takes a look at the environmental impact of demining and shows
how demining not only affects the environment but also bears heavily on
development and economics.

by Ian McLean | Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining |
The Road to Mine Action and Development: The Life-Cycle Perspective of Mine Action, Paterson and Filipino

Mine Action and the Millennium Development Goals, Van Der Linden

Mine Action and the Millennium Development Goals

Endnotes

1. This phase is from The World Bank, which has been in the forefront of planning, managing and financing post-conflict reconstruction since the wars arising from the break-up of Yugoslavia. The central role played by The World Bank is one of the defining features of post-war reconstruction efforts, and during each period the Bank may be an important source of financing for demining.

2. Regular readers will notice a strong similarity to Figure 1 in the article from Issue 9.1 (Chip Brownes, “The Missing Link in Strategic Planning: ALARA and the End-state Strategy Concept for National Mine Action Planning”), which was developed independently in 1998 by Chip Brownes to illustrate the “End-state Strategy” approach to developing a national mine action strategy for Cambodia. GICHD personnel developed the life-cycle perspective to illustrate not only that the size of a programme would eventually diminish, but also that the principal purposes and partnerships for a mine action programme will evolve in a manner that can be understood and planned for.

3. Raw data does not help decision-makers unless it is “analysed” into information. Information is the right data presented in the right format at the right time to the right people.

4. To meet EOD level-three qualifications, a deminer must have specific training in disposal by detonation of larger UXO and artillery ammunition up to 240 mm.

5. USSR-manufactured anti-personnel mine that contains a large amount of explosive, and the injuries it inflicts are often fatal. It is designed in such a way that it is practically impossible to neutralise. http://www.english.hongkong.com/mines.html. Accessed Oct. 17, 2005.

6. Weapon developed for mechanised infantry, adapted for service with the Soviet army in 1949. For more information, visit http://www.ang.warwick.ac.uk/DTU/pubs/wp/wp60/appendixe/mineundermined.html.

7. Conventional tank that has been used on more than any other type of tank since World War II. For more information, visit http://www.ang.warwick.ac.uk/DTU/pubs/wp/wp60/appendixe/mineundermined.html.


9. Hungarian-manufactured AP mine mice cloud-removing the PMN. For more information, visit http://www.ang.warwick.ac.uk/DTU/pubs/wp/wp60/appendixe/mineundermined.html.


11. US-manufactured fragmentation bounding mine whose bouncing blue shatters into more than 1000 metal splinters. For more information, visit http://www.ang.warwick.ac.uk/DTU/pubs/wp/wp60/appendixe/mineundermined.html.


Learning Takes Many Forms During Mine Action Managers’ Course, Nitezy [from page 72]

Endnotes


Sustainable Demining Mission, Ruan [from page 73]

Endnotes


2. The PRB M69 is a plastic-bodied, low-metal content, circular anti-personnel mine.


4. Editor’s Note: Some countries and mine action organizations are urging the use of the term “mine free”, while others are opposing the term “mine safe” or “impact free”. “Mine free” connotes a condition where all landmines have been cleared, whereas the term “mine safe” and “impact free” refer to the condition in which landmines no longer pose a credible threat to a community or country.


7. Mine detailed information on the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000, the eight MDGs, its related 18 targets and 46 indicators, can be found on the United Nations’ Peacebuilding in New York.


Environmental Applications in Demining, McLean [from page 60]

Endnotes


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10. Van Der Linden: Mine Action and the Millennium Development Goals

Chris North, Dombrower [from page 62]

Endnotes

1. To meet EOD level-three qualifications, a deminer must have specific training in disposal by detonation of large USO and artillery ammunition up to 240 mm. A level-three deminer should be qualified to render safe UXO for safe removal from the demining worksite and to undertake their final destruction.

2. These books can only be purchased by contacting Chris North at Chrisnorth669@hotmail.com or through his publisher, The Old Port House.