Becoming Part of the Hope

Tracey Begley

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Johan van der Merwe's job entails a number of responsibilities, but he remains willing to assist and help anyone. He has put all his efforts toward the UNDP, van der Merwe states, “I have been fortunate to be involved in most of the major advances that have been made in mine action since 1996. These have included the United Nations Mine Action Strategy and the Framework for Rapid Response, both of which I helped to develop. I also helped to write the UN Mine Action Framework, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1997. I have also been involved in developing and implementing mine action policies and strategies, and in providing technical assistance to governments and non-governmental organizations.”

Working for the United Nations—van der Merwe hopes to continue the fight against landmines and upholds the standards of past and current mine action practitioners. “In my current position, I try to represent the many thousands of international and local mine action practitioners out there,” he says. “As a member of the IMAs Review Board, I try to ensure that the standards are written in such a way that they provide guidance for those that have to work with them and that they are the best possible guidance.”

van der Merwe feels that the mine action community should deal with each country differently depending on the magnitude of its mine problem. “Countries with larger landmine problems will have to spend more time in capacity-building of both government institutions and local operational capacities and will need an agreed long-term funding to do so.”

Additionally, van der Merwe has a number of suggestions that he feels could improve mine action. “I would like to see a greater cohesion among all stakeholders to work toward a common mine action goal. We need to set aside plans instead of using template solutions that are applied from country to country. Another important activity would be to continue the training of mine action practitioners at all levels.”

Although there is much to be improved upon, van der Merwe feels that other mine action practitioners have made a lot of progress and helped to guide the way for future success.

van der Merwe’s experiences in mine action over the last ten years have given him a wealth of unforgettable memories. Meeting celebrities and public figures was not something he expected when he entered the mine action field. “An event that stood out as being very special,” van der Merwe says, “was hosting the arrival of Princess Diana to the UN Mine Action Centre in Sarajevo in August 1997. That week was a highlight of my professional life and a testament to the dedication and commitment of all involved.”

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Humanitarian Demining as a Precursor to Economic Development, Landberg [from page 53]

Endnotes


The Road to Mine Action and Development: The Life-Cycle Perspective of Mine Action, Paterson and Filippino [from page 55]

1. This phrase 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 such periods 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 Bonomo. “The Mining Link in Strategic Planning: ALARA and the End-state Strategy Concept for National Mine Action Planning”), which was developed independently in 1998 by Chip Bonomo to illustrate the “End-state Strategy” approach to development

3. The PRB M409 is a plastic-bodied, low metal content, circular anti-personnel mine. For more information, visit http://www.halotrust.org.

4. Steel wheels in Mozambique, Van Zyl [from page 60]


4. ROSMANN manufactured anti-personnel mine that contains a large amount of explosives, and the site it inflicts on even feet. It is designed in such a way that it is practically impossible to australians. http://philm.homes.com/mine.html. Accessed Oct. 12, 2005.


6. The PRB M129 is a plastic-bodied, low metal content, circular anti-personnel mine. For more information, visit http://www.halotrust.org.

7. When considering the terms “mine-safe” and “impact free” as conditions of landmine clearance, it is important to remember that the terms are not synonyms. Each contains a condition that all landmines have been cleared, whereas the terms “mine-safe” and “impact-free” refer to the condition in which landmines no longer pose a credible threat to a community or country.


9. Conventions on the Prohibition of the Use, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.


11. From Interventions to Integration: Mine Risk Education and Community Liaison, Durham [from page 80]
