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Hildegard Scheu
Consultant

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Humanitarian Mine Action in Mozambique

Mozambique is a geographically vast country populated by diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. While most areas are not heavily mined, landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) present significant threats to economic, roads, railways and power lines were heavily mined. Both sides have been accused of having used mines to terrorize civilians.

The Peace Agreement that ended the civil war was signed in Rome in October 1992, and a UN peacekeeping force, the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ), was deployed to oversee the two-year transition period until multiparty elections were held in 1994.

Early estimates of the magnitude of the landmine problem in Mozambique have been modified as more data has become available, and the landmine problem is now considered to be much less extensive than reported after the 1992 peace accord. Currently, landmines no longer figure as one of the main obstacles facing the country.

In January 1993, the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (OSRG), now the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), was established to coordinate the UN Mine Action efforts. UNMAS was mandated to work closely with the countries affected by Landmines.

The Landmine Situation in Mozambique

Mine and UXO Contamination

Landmines were first used by the Portuguese during the liberation struggle. In both Mozambique and Angola, the FRELIMO government continued to use landmines as a military weapon.

Mozambique is a country with a large landmine problem. The population of more than 18 million (2002) is composed of different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Mozambique is one of the least developed countries in the world. It has a gross national product (GDP) of $230 (U.S.) per capita and a poverty level of about 70 percent. According to 1999 figures, life expectancy is 39.8 years, the adult literacy rate is 56.8 percent, and the primary school enrollment rate is only 40 percent. HIV/AIDS is becoming a major problem with an overall adult prevalence of about 14 percent of the population above 15 years of age.

The traditional system of governance, which the socialist Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) government sought to abolish after independence, still operates in many villages, but legitimacy, functions and power differ from place to place. "The level of respect given to the traditional versus the government leadership seems to vary a great deal."

Therefore, it is essential to study and understand the governance systems in place in a village and the complexities of community structures if HMA is to be effective and make an impact on the livelihood of those affected by mines.

History of Mine Action

Mine action in Mozambique started in 1993. A preliminary plan of action was developed in January 1993, but approved by FRELIMO and RAMENO only in November. Its emphasis was on clearing roads to facilitate the UNOMOZ peace process. The plan also called for the return of refugees and IDPs. The focus on emergency-oriented objectives resulted in a failure to recognize the need for long-term demining in the country.

In addition, little attention was placed on the needs for comprehensive data gathering and the establishment of sustainable indigenous capacities.

The United Nations wanted to establish a comprehensive strategy to be converted into a national capacity at the termination of the UNOMOZ mission.

But donors did not support this plan and remain committed to serving demining contracts for specific non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or commercial operators. The difference in approaches of the United Nations and the major donors is seen as the major obstacle in establishing a functioning, coherent coordinating mechanism.

The National Demining Commission (Cono), established in May 1995 to coordinate mine clearing and post-clearance operations, was supposed to coordinate operations, maintain a national database, develop strategic plans and set procedures for prioritization. CDIN, however, proved unable to develop the capacity to set national priorities. After the development of the "National Mine Clearance Strategy Approach" (November 1995), following negotiations among the government of Mozambique, the UNDP and major donors, CDIN was replaced by a new body with larger autonomy from ministerial control.

In June 1999, the government of Mozambique established the National Institution for Demining (IND), as mandated by the United Nations Demining Program (UNDP) to take over the management and financial support of the mine action program.

Mine Action Coordination

Since the end of the civil war, mine action operations in Mozambique, be they humanitarian or commercial, have been carried out with a minimum of UN coordination, coordination or planning at the national level. The establishment of an independent NGO capacity in Mozambique, which persists today, can largely be seen as a reaction to the lack of United Nations response.

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Landmines in Africa

23 urban communities, including three with more than 30,000 inhabitants are also affected.

A total of 3,174 Suspected Mined Areas (SMA) were identified. They cover an area of 580,500 square kilometres. Some 41 percent cover areas of less than 1,000 square metres and less than five persons are larger than one square kilometre.

Nine years after the end of the hostilities, landmine accidents still occur: at least 1,145 landmine victims recorded during the MLIS had come to harm during the two years preceding the study.

SMAs most frequently impact agricultural land, roads and non-agricultural land used for hunting, gathering, forestry and other economic and cultural purposes. Blocked access to drinking water due to SMAs is less frequent, but it nonetheless has a serious impact.

In addition to the Mine Impact Score (MIS), 20 communities with 36,000 inhabitants are classified as high-impact, 164 communities with 393,000 inhabitants as medium-impact, and 667 communities with 1.1 million inhabitants are classified as low-impact.

This classification is for priority setting for Technical Surveys (Survey II) and clearance operations in the Five-Year Mine Action Plan 2000-2004.

The MIS is a standardized rating instrument approved by the Survey Working Group. It reflects three aspects of the mine situation as it affects a given community:

- The types of landmines, UXO and unexploded ordnance
- The categories of land, infrastructure and service areas to which landmines or UXO are blocking access
- The number of victims of landmines or UXO in the two years preceding the group interviews of the LIS.

Landmine Victim Data

Reliable data on mine victims is not available. Compared to other mine-affected communities, the numbers are comparatively low and definitely declining over time. A study carried out by HI in 1993 found that 50-60 percent of the mine accidents were fatal because the victims were so-called 'rapid action victims'. In 1996, HI began the systematic collecting data on mine and UXO accidents under its Project of National Coordination of Mine Action Activities for the Population to Prevent Mine Accidents (PEPAM). Between 1996 and 2000, 5,165 mine victims were recorded, specifically 309 men, 84 women and 171 children under 15 years old. Sixty-seven percent of all accidents occurred in the provinces Maputo City, Inhambane and Gaza, and only seven percent in the northern provinces Nampuama, Niassa and Cabo Delgado. The majority of accidents occurred while the victims were engaged in subsistence activities. The fact that men constitute the majority of the victims may be explained by their greater involvement in economic activities like farming, hunting and transportation. An additional hypothesis is that there is also an underreporting bias in the case of women. Children become victims mainly either as a result of manipulating grenades, ammunition and other UXO or parts of unexploded ordnance or when helping with subsistence tasks such as herding animals, collecting firewood, or harvesting and hunting. The study concluded that continued mine risk reduction education (MRRE) is important especially for making children aware of the dangers of mines and UXO.

Inhabitants classified by the LIS.79 identified themselves as mine-affected. Of these, 429 communities reported a total of 2,146 victims since 1964, the start of the independence struggle. This total must be considered a minimum, since 31 communities reported "many" mine victims but could not give an approximate estimate. Generally, as the number of mine victims is low in both absolute and relative terms, their impact on medical, economic, social and psychological levels do not figure prominently in social programmes in Mozambique.

The Socio-Economic Impact of Mines

While the victim rate is used as a major indicator of the socio-economic impact of mines, other aspects of impact have only recently begun to be explored in more detail in Mozambique.

Ananda S. Millard from the Assistance to Mine Victims Project at the International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), conducted an impact study in three mine-affected communities in Mozambique in 2000.

Mine clearance operators work on the assumption that the eight villages identified as having UXO will have an "automatic impact," which is not the case. Also, there may sometimes be negative effects. In Inhambane and Gaza, for example, the operators have to find answers to a number of questions, such as: How will the resources freed by demining affect the dislocation of wealth in a community? How does mine affect power relationships among the population? Who will benefit from demining?

Operators should establish knowledge of land rights, land ownership and local land tenure systems prior to clearance. Similarly, knowledge and understanding of local government structures and leadership is essential, as local leadership structures are significant in mine clearance operations. Respecting the authority (or authorities) in the village and building relationships with the community is a precondition for maximising impact. "The broad issue of community relationships is closely linked to the more specific issue of confidence in clearance." 24 74% confidence was reported by the LIS.79. Ananda Millard found that in many cases, the population did not use the cleared land immediately. Instead it takes a long time before someone starts using the area. When no accident happens, other people might follow. It "seems that this is often linked to confidence in clearance."25

Clearing a minefield according to existing technical standards is simply not good enough. Unless the areas are trusted and tackled on an ongoing basis, the operation has failed and psychological needs do not figure prominently in social programmes in Mozambique.

Humanitarian Action in Mozambique

From 1992 to 2000, a total of 200,169,636 square metres was cleared, including 60,823,650 square metres of demining (90% of which was performed by the Mine Action Team), 68,813,455 square metres of power line conductors and 2,260,080 square metres of railway lines. A total of 71,476 anti-personnel mines, 338 anti-tank mines and 3,186 UXO were removed and destroyed.

In 2001, four major humanitarian organizations were operating in Mozambique: AMAC, HALO Trust and HI. One distinctive feature of mine action in Mozambique has been the extent to which local communities have been involved. By 1997, as much as 45 percent of the total funding had gone to different commercial companies.26

Accelerated Demining Programme

After the civil war, UNOMOZ initiated AID and demobilized soldiers from both sides were treated as deminers. When the peacekeeping mission ended in 1995, ADP became a UNDP project. Without being able to answer the question of "addressing the socio-economic consequences of landmine contamination and supporting national/local capability building," the government and the Minister of Defence and Security of Mozambique requested that a UNDP programme be undertaken.

In Mozambique, ADP operated in the three western provinces Maputo, Niassa and Inhambane. Its annual budget is approximately $35 million. ADP employs approximately 500 Mozambican nationals and five international advisors, who are responsible for managing, operations and quality assurance.

The field operations consist of 10 manual demining platoons, two independent demining sections for smaller clearance tasks, four survey teams and a mine detection dog. The Mine Action Team provides a Mechanically Assisted Mine Clearance capability. The demining platoons are capable of operating in small groups that rapidly respond to priority tasks. The Mine Clearance Training Wing of ADP runs a Demining Training School in Mozambique that provides technical training (e.g., the use of specific mine detectors suited for very highly contaminated soils), refresher
Landmines in Africa

Handicap International (HI)

HALO Trust

Others

Humanitarian Mine Action in Mozambique

Man in a white shirt with a laptop and a map in the background.

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Landmines in Africa

Landmine victims accounted for 29 percent of the 45,000 war casualties in 1997, they accounted for only nine percent in 2000. POWER still provides technical support to the MINSAU for running the orthopaedic services.

The Mozambican Red Cross, in cooperation with Jaaper Lindh Campaign (JLC), established an orthopaedic centre in Manica region, Gaza province, in 2000. Most beneficiaries are victims of landmines. A plan for a mobile centre could not yet be implemented for lack of funds.

The Ministry for Women and the Coordination of Social Action developed a Policy for Disabled Persons, which was approved by the Council of Ministers and published in 2000.18 HI, POWER and other donors support the Ministry at various levels in the implementation of the policy. But a lot has still to be done to reach the objective of social and economic integration of disabled persons.

Complaints about the lack of concern regarding victim assistance on the part of the government and government employees were rampant. POWER is working closely with local disability organisations, specifically with the Association of Disabled People of Mozambique (ADEMO), the main association for disabled Mozambicans. ADEMO runs a community school for disabled children in Maputo and is developing a training program for vocational training (bakery, metal works, carpentry and probably leather works at a later stage) as well as a pilot project to provide rural disabled people with disable cars as an alternative means of transport in order to enhance their mobility and livelihood.

Mine Action Funding

According to the Landmine Monitor Report 2000, mine action funding totalled some $17 million in 2000. Of this, $6.6 million was allocated to the UNDP, and $10.6 million was provided to mine clearance organizations.20

Major donors are the UNDP and funds from Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, and Ireland, as well as the individual countries of Canada, Norway, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and the United States, which fund mine action activities directly.

Conclusion

Although most areas in Mozambique affected by landmines and UXO are not heavily mined, the presence of mines and UXO continues to represent an impediment to development.

Landmine action in the country is primarily carried out by a number of foreign humanitarian NGOs and a host of different commercial companies contracted by donors and international humanitarian agencies. The military plays a very limited role.

Although precise data on mine victims in Mozambique is not available, their numbers appear to be comparatively low, if anything falling over time. It seems relatively clear that the needs of mine victims are poorly attended to and that even demining programs do not proceed heed to the requirements of the local population concerned.

Due to limited resources and a challenging socio-economic environment, the adoption of participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches would not be an easy task. The most promising line of approach is the introduction of pilot participatory monitoring and evaluation projects in collaboration with the major humanitarian NGOs already active in the country and in conjunction with IND. Preliminary inquiry suggests that HI, NPA and ADP would be willing participants in the establishment of such projects.

Endnotes

1. The author wishes to thank the many players in Mine Action and related circles in Mozambique for their valuable comments on an earlier draft.

2. UNDP/World Bank/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."

3. World Bank/ IDA/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."


5. World Bank/ IDA/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."


7. World Bank/ IDA/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."

8. Michael Gachew, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."

9. S. Milla & J. D. B. MacDonald, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."

10. World Bank/ IDA/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."

11. World Bank/ IDA/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."

12. Ibid. pp. 199

13. UNDP/World Bank/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."


15. Ibid. pp. 199

16. Ibid. pp. 199

17. World Bank/ IDA/004292, "Mozambique: A country which has no time for global challenges and disasters."


by Tim Carstairs, MAG

A recent interview at the May International Standing Committee Experts (ISCE) meeting in Geneva was paraphrased in this way: "The humanitarian impact of landmines must guide the priorities of donor countries." This statement made by the representative of Norway goes directly to the point and presents us all with the real problem of ensuring that our resources are used most wisely and effectively to address these needs. This article seeks to briefly explain how MAG conducts the process of prioritisation of an integral mine action response.

What seems clear to us is that mine action is in need and should not be allowed to remain a "stand-alone" discipline. Mine action is an integral part of wider rehabilitation and development. As the opening quote says, we have to deal with the impact of mines on people. In this case, the impact of mines and UXO is most often to be considered within a wider context of economic, social and political recovery from conflict. Prioritisation and appropriate action are therefore to be taken at the same level. Furthermore, the individuals and groups in the equation are not passive and helpless but active parts of the process and worthy of respect.

In the mid-1990s, MAG developed the practice of applying a CL model to mine action situations in Angola. We believe in working together with all actors to find the best way to protect people. The human subject—the communities that live in mined areas or that have been driven from mined areas and wish to return—become key players within the prioritisation process. This is good developmental practice that has been encouraged since the late 1980s. The concept of CL is being mentioned more frequently now in relation to mine action, and we hope that this short article will help explain how we understand it.

The Global Impact Survey process enables us to understand the impact of landmines and UXO on basic human needs and on the longer-term developmental process and economy and thus is a baseline in establishing the long-term priorities for humanitarian mine action. That being said, the survey process is not designed to cope with the immediate needs of communities faced with life-threatening mine/UXO contamination. We also need to provide mine action to those that need it now; at the same time placing that action firmly within the development sphere, working...