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ITF Enhancing Human Security Develops New Strategic Goals

by Dorijan Maršič [ITF]

In response to changing global challenges, ITF Enhancing Human Security broadened its focus from mine action to human security.

The International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance (ITF) opened its doors in 1999 at an opportune moment: The Slovenian government, U.S. policymakers and international donors were all eager to help Bosnia-Herzegovina after the signing of the Dayton Accords. ITF's initial aim was to assist in the implementation of the peace agreement and to provide post-conflict rehabilitation support, more specifically through landmine remediation and survivor assistance.¹

Over the last decade, national authorities in Southeast Europe have nearly developed the capacity to address their own mine-contamination and victim-assistance issues. The cooperative efforts of ITF, mine-affected states, international organizations, donors, implementing organizations and civil society substantially decreased the socioeconomic impact of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Southeast Europe. With less need for humanitarian mine action (HMA) services, ITF broadened its scope to use its expertise in other ways.

ITF perceived a growing need to address other post-conflict and disruptive challenges; to support security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs; and to combat violence and terrorism from the illicit ownership and use of small arms and light weapons. Such challenges endanger human security as much as landmines and UXO.

The concept of human security has gained importance in recent years, as recent armed conflicts occurred within, rather than between, states. In addition to security from threats of violence, human security can also refer to a broader range of threats, including disease, hunger, natural disasters and other disruptive challenges affecting individuals and communities.² The Slovenian government supports policies, organizations, programs and international initiatives that strengthen human security. Slovenia chaired the U.N. Human Security Network in 2006 and 2007, and placed great emphasis on human security during its presidency of the European Union in 2008.

Relatedly, ITF's revised 2009–2013 strategy addressed a broader range of global post-conflict challenges that threaten security of individuals and communities, expanding to areas beyond humanitarian demining. ITF's revised strategy and broader focus led it to change its name from the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance to ITF Enhancing Human Security in 2011. Since 2008, ITF has successfully conducted a wider array of operations, including conventional weapons destruction (CWD) projects, aimed at reducing human-security threats.

Fundraising and New Strategic Goals

With the adoption of its new strategy in 2009, ITF anticipated a funding decrease for mine action and a funding increase for CWD projects, and determined its first two strategic goals accordingly. ITF set a third strategic goal to develop pilot projects to overcome disruptive challenges affecting human security, stating: "ITF is dedicated to promoting human rights and active citizenship, social inclusion, health and well-being of vulnerable groups (disabled, children, and women), building of community resilience, and armed violence reduction and prevention projects."³

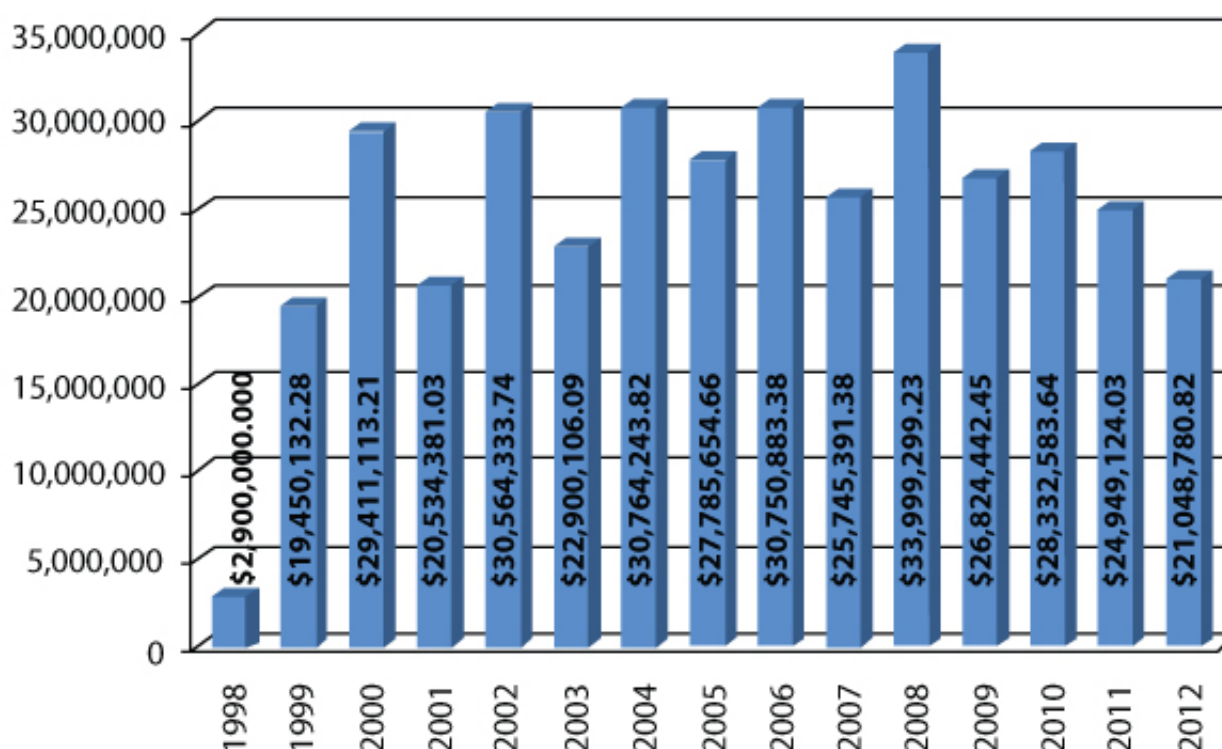


Figure 1. Comparison of donations by years in US\$.
All graphics courtesy of the author.

Figure 1 shows that ITF retained yearly funding for the period of 1998–2012, while Figure 1 illustrates changes in distribution of funds from 2009–2013. The decreased funding for HMA supported clearance, victim assistance, mine risk education and training projects in countries such as Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and reflected declining donor interest to fund HMA projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia due to more pressing issues

worldwide. The comparison shows that from 2010 to 2013 ITF raised US\$74.24 million, of which \$16.9 million was implemented for multiple CWD projects and \$4.7 million to address disruptive challenges.

CWD Programs

ITF's new strategic goals related to CWD enabled it, along with its partners, to develop training that covers a wide variety of topics ranging from physical security and stockpile management to international standards and clearance after unplanned explosions. From 2012 to 2014, trainings occurred in Serbia and Kyrgyzstan, and focused on capacity building for regional Ministry of Defense branches, including Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro. ITF training corresponds with U.N. International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, International Mine Action Standards, national and international military standards, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Handbook of Best Practice on Conventional Ammunition, among others.

In addition to providing training, ITF works with countries, including Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania and Montenegro, that possess aged ammunition, particularly ammunition produced in the Soviet Union, and assists in implementation of modern standards, which consists of ammunition codification in accordance with the U.N. classification system. ITF can propose surveillance methodology and procedures to evaluate ammunition conditions, determine ammunition surpluses, and to store and transport potentially hazardous ammunition.

Based on regional experience in ammunition demilitarization, ITF offers expertise in a wide range of demilitarization technology from the simple open-burning, open-detonation procedure to more sophisticated concepts like reverse engineering. ITF also offers expertise on R3 philosophy (recover, recycle and reuse) for various types of ammunition.

One of ITF's first CWD projects using

demilitarization technology was clearance at Chelopechene storage facility in Bulgaria, which blew up in 2008.⁴ On 26 April 2011, ITF signed a grant with the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) for more than US\$2.8 million to implement the second phase of the cleanup operation.

ITF subcontracted Sterling Global (then Sterling International) in May 2011 for a 14-month surface and subsurface clearance to safely recover and remove all UXO. During this project, more than 102,400 live UXO items were turned over to the Bulgarian armed forces explosive ordnance disposal team for destruction. These UXO items were found over a 33,000-sq m (8-ac) area surrounding the munitions depot.

In addition to surface and subsurface clearance within the blast area, ITF subcontracted the Regional Center for Underwater Demining (RCUD) in Montenegro to clear the surrounding waterways. RCUD cleared 226,431 sq m (56 ac) of water surface and found 2,623 kg (5,783 lb) of UXO and explosive remnants of war (ERW): 1,180 kg (2,602 lb) of UXO and 1,443 kg (3,181 lb) of ERW. A total of 18 RCUD team members, consisting of 16 professional divers and two supervisors, worked in harsh environments from 26 September to 26 October 2011 and spent 10 hrs underwater. Water temperatures varied from 7 C (44 F) to 16 C (61 F). Visibility underwater was poor, often less than 0.5 m (1.6 ft). High vegetation on riverbanks and ponds created additional difficulties for team members. The lowest dive was achieved at a depth of 21 m (23 yd). Independent supervisors from Slovenian firm P.E.D. Sava d.o.o. supervised and confirmed underwater activities.

Human Security

Introducing integrated telemedicine and e-health to the central Atlantic islands of Cabo Verde is one of ITF's most important programs under its third strategic goal related to human security. Through a combination of specific features and major healthcare needs, Cabo Verde was an ideal place for program implementation that will improve accessibility, efficacy and quality of healthcare services for citizens and tourists visiting this nine-island country. The multiphase program fell within the development cooperation program between Cabo Verde and Slovenia, implemented in June 2012 in collaboration with the International Virtual e-Hospital Foundation and the Ministry of Health in Cabo Verde.

The program focuses on establishing a telemedicine network by providing necessary equipment to preselected hospitals and training the workforce to operate and maintain the network to ensure its integration and sustainability. From July 2012 to the end of 2013, the main accomplishments of the first two phases were:

- Integration of 10 telemedicine centers—two of which are located in regional hospitals, four in local hospitals and four in health centers—into one network connecting the facilities of Cabo Verde's nine inhabited islands
- Introduction of medical teleconsultations, virtual education programs and an e-library
- Training of a technical workforce through on-site and virtual training/coaching
- Training of healthcare personnel—half of the country's healthcare employees took part in ITF programs—through international, in-country conferences, seminars and virtual education programs

According to the internationally recognized Initiate-Build-Operate-Transfer approach, the project is still in the building phase. Equipment installation was completed at 10 sites but training is ongoing.

The network will be used for medical teleconsultations and related assistance for remote locations in Cabo Verde; medical education and research with sophisticated virtual equipment; and international collaboration with renowned institutions worldwide. Notably, regional telemedicine networks may also be useful in mine-affected countries to support landmine survivors in hard-to-reach areas.

Vision for the Future

In the past five years, ITF shifted focus from HMA to CWD and addressed challenges to human security. Recent successful projects include trainings throughout Southeast Europe, underwater demining and expansion into telemedicine. After completing pilot projects in human security, one challenge will be securing sustainable funding for future work. ITF also may further expand its scope to embrace other human-security issues, which will require flexibility and creativity from the organization and staff. For the near future, projects will focus on the Caucasus, Central Asia, Southeastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. 

Biography

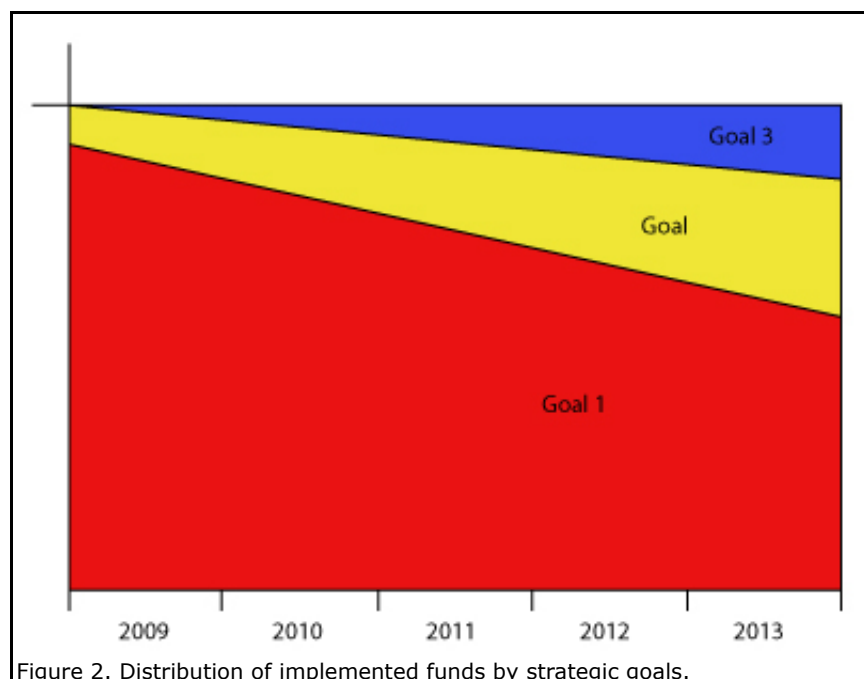


Figure 2. Distribution of implemented funds by strategic goals.



Dorijan Maršič served as the director of ITF Enhancing Human Security for seven years. He was also a member of Parliament, vice chairman of the Defence Committee at the Slovenian Parliament and a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Maršič previously worked at NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (1999–2000), as the head of the Regional Headquarters for Civil Protection in Slovenia (1995–2000) and at the University of Primorska (2005–2007).

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Endnotes

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3. "What we do." ITF Enhancing Human Security. Accessed 23 May 2014. <http://bit.ly/1odI4jx>.
4. "Bulgaria." *To Walk the Earth in Safety*. The Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. 1 August 2013. <http://1.usa.gov/1r1yhz5>. In 2008, an ammunition depot near Chelopechene exploded, destroying the depot, polluting the surrounding area with UXO, damaging nearby homes and forcing the international airport in Sofia to briefly close.

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