

DANISH DEMINEING GROUP

Danish Demining Group was founded in 1997 and is the Humanitarian Mine Action Unit in the Danish Refugee Council. Based in Copenhagen, Denmark, DDG works in 10 countries. DDG's mission is to foster a safe environment and enable economic and social development in areas that have suffered trauma and conflict due to landmines, unexploded ordnance, and small arms and light weapons.

DDG works diligently to “make a positive difference in people's lives” and strives to fulfill its strategic objectives:¹

- Enhance human security by clearing landmines, UXO and other remnants of war; reducing risks from SA/LW; and providing SA/LW and mine-risk education
- Provide efficient, effective and innovative solutions with partners and stakeholders in conflict-affected areas
- Enable social and economic development by supporting “local structures and institutions in finding sustainable solutions to residual problems.”¹

DDG's main donors are the governments of Denmark, Germany, Holland, Japan, Sweden and the United States, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Refugee Agency and the United Nations Mine Action Service. DDG is a member of the International Committee to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munition Coalition, the Survey Action Center, the IMAS Review Board as well as the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining Advisory Board. In addition, DDG is part of the Expert Reference Group to the International Small Arms Control Standards and is a certified partner of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership.¹

Mine Action

DDG works in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Liberia, Libya, Somalia (including Somaliland), South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Yemen. DDG's mine-action opera-

tions are based on the five pillars of mine action as set out in the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (also known as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention, or APMBC):

1. Mine and UXO clearance
2. MRE
3. Victim assistance
4. Advocacy
5. Stockpile destruction

In addition, DDG educates the public and advises officials on issues related to SA/LW security and destruction.

Mine/UXO clearance: Although DDG has expanded its mission to include risk education and reducing SA/LW threats, the organization still supports and conducts significant mine- and UXO-clearance activities in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somaliland, Puntland and South/Central Somalia, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. In Afghanistan, one of the world's most mine-affected countries, DDG's mine-action program has conducted survey, clearance and MRE since 1998. These operations cleared 1.3 million UXO items and 33,800 landmines, releasing 5,133,000 square meters (1,268 acres) of contaminated land and 21,445,000 sq m (5,299 acres) of battle area. DDG has also covered 3,500 towns in village-by-village explosive-ordnance clearance, an emerging method for safer, more efficient mine clearance based on needs identified by local community leaders.

MRE: DDG conducts MRE programs aiming to educate the population on the exact location of mined areas, addressing how to best avoid them and explaining the consequences of handling mines and UXO. Uganda, where educational training programs are conducted daily, provides an example of DDG's MRE work. These training sessions often target children, as they are at risk of encountering UXO and land-



The Danish Demining Group working in Afghanistan.
Photo courtesy of Charlotte Østervang/DDG.

mines when collecting water and firewood. The program stresses community involvement and gives children T-shirts that read “report to your parents,” encouraging them to inform their teachers and other community members if they come into contact with UXO.²

Armed Violence Reduction

In November 2010, DDG partnered with UNDP to cohost a conference on armed-violence reduction and development in Nairobi, Kenya. Attendees were civil-society members and representatives from various governments and U.N. agencies. The conference focused on armed violence as an obstacle to human development and discussed how to better address the developmental needs of communities suffering as a consequence. DDG recognizes armed violence as a major obstacle for human development and feels that community-based solutions aimed at targeting the source of conflict are the best means for enhancing safety.³

DDG emphasizes local community involvement, implementing community-based impact programs, such as the Community Safety program in Somaliland and the Community Safety and Livelihoods programs in Uganda. The Community Safety programs educate community members in conflict management, provide firearm-safety education, and conduct ERW-disposal operations and MRE. The programs also foster cooperation between local police and communities to improve safety. Both programs strive for cultural sensitivity when uniting communities, and enhancing safety and security in violence-threatened regions.⁴

The Armed Violence Reduction and Community Safety initiatives specifically address SA/LW and ERW problems while also fostering a sense of communal responsibility: emphasizing the role of local communities in identifying and addressing their own safety needs.¹ These DDG strategies also help reduce the risk of violence to its employ-

ees and the local population, as DDG often works in potentially dangerous locations in conflict-affected countries.

Future

DDG continues to expand the scope and efficiency of its work in efforts to promote safety, security and prosperity for people in conflict-affected regions. Its dual focus on human security and local capacity-building allows for immediate but sustainable relief for people in war-torn regions, while its emphasis on efficiency and innovation ensures that all available resources are put to the best possible use.

In the future, DDG hopes to expand its operations in Colombia. DDG first came to Colombia in late 2010 when the country approved Law 1421, which allowed international nongovernmental organizations to participate in humanitarian mine-action activities within the country.⁵ In April 2011 DDG became registered as a humanitarian mine-action organization in Colombia. Though the legal framework remains in discussion, DDG hopes to extend operations to all areas of mine action in Colombia in 2012. 🌐

~Ivy Hensley, CISR Staff

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Contact Information

Danish Demining Group
Borgergade 10, 3rd Floor
1300 Copenhagen / Denmark
Tel: +45 3373 5000
Email: ddg@drc.dk
Website: <http://danishdemininggroup.dk>

Center for International
Stabilization and Recovery
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, Virginia / USA
Email: cisr@jmu.edu