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The HALO Trust

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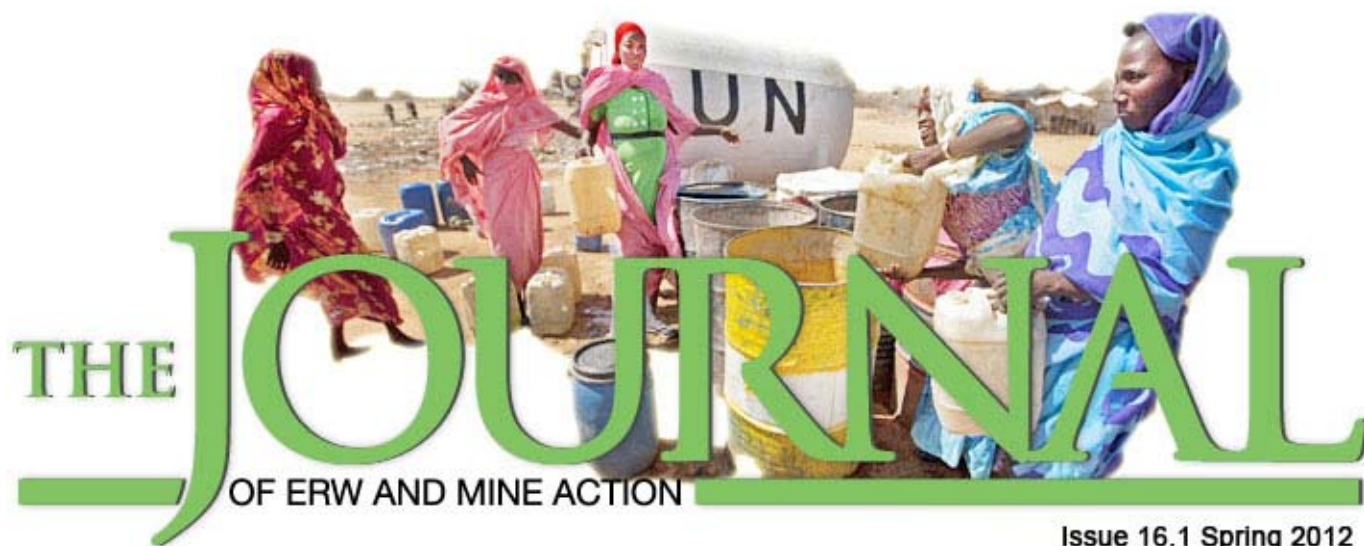
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The HALO Trust

In 1988, following the withdrawal of Soviet Forces from Afghanistan, Guy Willoughby established The Hazardous Area Life-support Organization Trust—commonly known as The HALO Trust—a nonprofit organization dedicated to clearing explosive and hazardous remnants of war.¹ Twenty-four years later, the organization is one of the world's largest humanitarian demining organizations. HALO employs more than 8,000 full-time staff in numerous mine-affected areas across Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa and Eastern Europe.² HALO also recently signed an agreement to begin work in areas of Colombia where violence has subsided. The organization's operations include landmine removal, unexploded-ordnance destruction and weapons-and-ammunition disposal (known as WAD).¹ HALO also provides sustainable economic development for local populations. HALO currently has just 28 expatriate staff based overseas—giving a ratio of 1 expatriate to 285 local staff. This is achieved by an organizational ethos of genuinely developing local management skills.



Ongoing Projects

In 2011, HALO completed surveys and clearance of all 336 known mined areas in Abkhazia, Georgia and announced that the region is now mine-free. In these efforts, HALO employed 530 local deminers and destroyed 9,788 landmines and 48,998 UXO items. The organization continues supporting the Abkhazia Mine Action Office, which will handle any remaining spot tasks to remove UXO found later and maintain records and data on the history and progression of Abkhazia's mine-action efforts.⁴

Following the end of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009, HALO dramatically increased local staff to greater than 1,000 deminers, including more than 700 recently returned internally displaced people and 200 females.⁵ This emphasis on local employment offers an important economic boon for war-torn Sri Lanka, providing an opportunity for Sri Lankans uprooted by the conflict to earn a living while rebuilding their communities. Over the past nine years, HALO has cleared more than four million square meters (988 acres) of mined land in Sri Lanka, including playgrounds, medical facilities, paddy fields, roads, homes, temples and fishing jetties. In a press release dated 20 August 2011, HALO announced that its deminers had cleared the 100,000th landmine in Sri Lanka, a mark of major progress in the struggle toward a mine-free Sri Lanka.⁶

In Afghanistan, HALO's mine-clearance program is the oldest and largest in the world. Since its inception in 1988, HALO Afghanistan has expanded to employ in excess of 3,750 Afghans, including more than 200 demining teams focusing on battle-area clearance, WAD and explosive-ordnance disposal, as well as an operational support staff.

Through regime changes and occasional heavy fighting in the 1990's, HALO continued operation, clearing more than 736,000 mines and destroying 10 million items of large caliber ammunition and 45.6 million bullets.⁷ HALO calls on the international community for continued focus on the scourge of Afghanistan's landmines, noting that the country had 4,270 mine and explosive remnants of war victims between 2004 and 2009, and will continue to have such losses in years to come if mines and UXO are not cleared.⁸

Current Situation

HALO also conducts mine clearance and other post-conflict recovery efforts in Angola, the Nagorno Karabakh Region of Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Colombia, Georgia, Kosovo, Mozambique, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Somaliland. In October 2007, HALO completed its clearance operations in northern Mozambique and is now expanding its staff and services to the southern provinces for the creation of 20 new demining sections.⁹

Although HALO receives substantial support from the public, it also receives support from many governments, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan; institutional donors, including the European Commission, UNICEF, the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme; and private organizations.¹⁰ HALO hopes to continue expanding its operations to other mine- and UXO-contaminated regions. ↴

~ Jeremiah Smith, CISR staff

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Endnotes

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