The EU and the U.S. Provide Grant to Lao PDR

News Brief

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Challenges

Although CBD reduces some of the security threats, it does not eliminate them. In fact, the program has been experiencing some challenges. Although there have been some incidents, including two prominent kidnappings in December 2010, the deminers were soon released safely with the intervention of community elders because most members of the CBD teams were from the mine-affected communities.

Alternatively, the kidnapping of 32 CBD project members in Farah province, Afghanistan in July 2011, which resulted in the killing of four of them, shocked the local community, MACA, and has remained with MACA since, where it is Operations Program Manager. He is also a member of the Afghanistan Mine Action Standards review board and a graduate of James Madison University's 2011 ERW Senior Managers Course.

Abdul Qudos is the Operations Program Manager for MACCA. He graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at Kabul University in 1997. Qudos joined MACA in 2000. He worked as a demining surveyor for the Mine Clearance Planning Agency in Afghanistan before becoming a training officer in 2004. In 2006, he joined the United Nations Mine Clearance Programme of Afghanistan (later MACCA), and has remained with MACCA since, where he is Operations Program Manager. He is also a member of the Afghanistan Mine Action Standards review board and a graduate of James Madison University's 2011 ERW Senior Managers Course.

The Future

The bottom line is that a continuation of such events will seriously damage the normal demining operations of CBD projects and will consequently result in the increase of civilian casualties in the communities located in insecure parts of Afghanistan. Ongoing insurgency and an unstable security situation not only continues to hinder mine-action assistance, but also exposes the lives of innocent people to the danger of mines and ERW.

However, strengthening communication with influential community elders and convincing them of the importance of demining operations for the safety and security of the local populations can help to minimize the risks to deminers. Educating the community on the benefits of demining operations and demonstrating these benefits is the best insurance against attacks on deminers. Further, bringing money and jobs to mine-affected communities through CBD will help to minimize resentments and hostility toward demining groups. By using CBD, and thereby benefiting the local community, MAPA hopes to continue to expand its operations to other mine-affected regions currently inaccessible to demining teams. 

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MAG (Mines Advisory Group) has recently been tasked with a new project to collaborate with the UXO sector in Lao PDR to clear UXO from Boualapha, Mahaxay and Xatbuathong of Khammouane province. Valued at 700,000 euro (US$976,026), the European Union and the United States cosponsor the project, with the EU contributing 600,000 euro (US$835,613) and the U.S. Government granting USD142,721 (102,442 euro). In addition, the EU plans to launch another UXO program in 2012. The EU promised the Lao Government a grant for this clearance project if it fulfilled its UXO obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

On 8 July 2011, the EU issued its first funding disbursement for the new MAG clearance project; this is the fourth partnership between the EU and MAG, and it builds on previous funding by the European Commission. From 2000 to 2010, the EC and various EU member states provided roughly 29 million euros (US$39,438,046) in assistance to Lao PDR. During that same time period, the U.S. dedicated more than $36 million (25,844,700 euros) to UXO action in Lao PDR. In 2010, the United States contributed $5,102,000 (3,662,687 euros) for mine-action support to the country, of which $1,400,000 was used to fund MAG operations.