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# Building Mine-action Capacity through Management Training

The Cambodian Mine Action Centre is Cambodia's largest demining organization, established in 1993 to clear Cambodia of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.<sup>1</sup> With funding from the New Zealand government, Quality Solutions International has worked for the last 12 months to rebuild and strengthen CMAC's management and training capacity. Part of the project was the delivery of three two-week middle-management courses, designed to provide CMAC's middle managers with a basic grounding in management theory and application.

by Ben Anderson [ Quality Solutions International ]

Historically, national demining organizations have suffered from a lack of focus on the development of core management skills. This is often the result of a primary focus on output and an overreliance on international technical and management support. Although understandable during the first few years of an organization's founding, the ongoing success of any organization is dependent on the development of a management structure capable of achieving its goals effectively and efficiently. As funding for mine-action activities becomes scarcer, such organizations must be able to demonstrate effective internal managerial capacity and transparency to secure funding.

## CMAC Staff Attend Training

CMAC currently has a strong management structure in place and a number of highly qualified staff in both managerial and technical disciplines. The organization has sent employees to the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery's Senior Managers' Course for ERW and Mine Action at James Madison University, which were most recently funded by the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA), and to Cranfield University's Middle Manager Training Courses, which were funded by the United Nations Development Programme. Upper-level CMAC administrators have also attended managerial courses administered by QSI. However, CMAC recognizes that further training and professional development, particularly at middle and senior-management level, is necessary if CMAC is to effectively meet current and future challenges. It was in support of this requirement that the New Zealand



Participants from the third and final middle-management course following the closing ceremony.  
Photo courtesy of the author.

Agency for International Development provided funding for the delivery of three two-week middle-management training courses.

## QSI Training

QSI, a provider of operational risk-management services to clients operating in challenging and remote locations, delivered management training at CMAC's training center in Kampong Chhnang, approximately an hour and 20 minutes' drive from Phnom Penh. Each course was attended by 20 students with varying levels of management responsibility and experience. Two QSI consultants facilitated the courses, as well as two guest lecturers, comprising CMAC's Director of Training and the U.N.'s Advisor to the Cambodian Mine Action Authority.

The aim of the course was to provide students with an understanding of management-theory best practice

and its application, focusing on the key functional areas of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. The training-needs analysis conducted at the outset also determined that specific attention must be paid to the topic of change management, a current area of concern as CMAC begins to integrate mechanical clearance equipment and methods into its organization.

Course delivery heavily emphasized student participation. By integrating international best practices with scenarios specific to mine action in Cambodia, students were better able to visualize the practical application of theory. Group discussion and practical exercises were also used to help students consolidate the information given them. Subjects such as social responsibility and ethics were particularly effective in generating lively debate, highlighting the subtle differences in opinion and approaches between cultures.

Another significant course component was the subject of leadership. In most hierarchical organizations, leadership styles are quite directive or authoritative. While a place for this style certainly exists, especially in demining organizations, managers of all levels must be able to adapt their approaches to different situations. The ability to involve members of one's team in the planning process is as important as the ability to authoritatively direct action in a crisis situation. For the CMAC students, comparing their individual leadership experiences against a best-practice framework was a great opportunity to better understand the results they had achieved to date. It also gave them the opportunity to explore and adopt new leadership tools for their management toolbox.

So how does this learning contribute to an increase in organizational capacity? A strong management capability is critical to an organization's success. The ability to effectively plan, lead and control organizational functions is fundamental to the delivery of effective and efficient outputs. A number of different methods teach these skills, including on-the-job training, mentoring/coaching and structured training, with each having a specific place and purpose. To ensure the right people have the right training, it is important that organizations have a training plan in place that both addresses and meets specific skill requirements. Furthermore, a successful organizational plan retains existing management skills while assimilating new ones.

Post-course evaluation indicated the middle-management course was effective in introducing new knowledge and skills to the students, as well as demonstrating how this learning could best be applied to the workplace and the organization as a whole. Feedback received by CMAC management indicates capacity has increased in key functional areas such as project and operational planning, organizing and staffing, decision making, leadership, and quality management. Personal skills such as report writing and presenting also noticeably improved.

## Conclusion

Despite these positive results, room for improvement remains. Using external training providers is a good way to bring new skills into an organization, but this approach should ideally include the development of an internal training capability. A train-the-trainer course run for selected CMAC instructors prior

to conducting management courses was suggested. These instructors could then have assisted QSI in delivering the courses, with a decrease in active involvement from QSI as the courses progressed. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, this was not possible.

QSI consultants have been involved with CMAC since its formation. With a great deal of pride, we continue to work alongside this dedicated and professional group of people. Facilitating a course to truly engaged and motivated students was pleasurable and rewarding. CMAC students regularly impress with their enthusiasm to learn new skills, contributions to class discussions, and an attitude toward learning that is reflective of the organization as a whole. ♦

see endnotes page 82



Ben Anderson is QSI's Operations Manager. He has seven years' experience as a security and mine-action consultant working in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. He is a former New Zealand Army Officer and holds a Master of International Relations from Victoria University in Wellington, Australia.

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