

# Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

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Volume 14  
Issue 2 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 22

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July 2010

## Mine Action Support Group Updates

CISR JOURNAL

*Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)*

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### Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2010) "Mine Action Support Group Updates," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 14 : Iss. 2 , Article 22.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol14/iss2/22>

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## Mine Action Support Group Updates

by Eric Wuestewald [ Center for International Stabilization and Recovery ]

*The Mine Action Support Group works to share information and increase coordination by the world's foremost donor states and the United Nations for humanitarian mine action.<sup>1</sup> Included are updates on the United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF from the latest newsletter, which covers 19 May to 15 September 2009.<sup>2</sup> The next newsletter is expected to be published in September 2010.*



### UNMAS Developments

**Afghanistan.** Mine operations continued for the Afghan year of 1388<sup>3</sup> (1 April 2008 through 31 March 2009), clearing 16,485,843 square meters (4,074 acres) of minefields and 35,462,830 square meters (8,763 acres) of former battle areas and destroying 21,995 anti-personnel mines, 161 anti-tank mines, and 433,865 pieces of unexploded ordnance. Additionally, mine-risk education was extended to 310,860 people. The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan also increased its activity by issuing four new contracts with a total value of US\$2.5 million to clear 3.3 square kilometers (1.3 square miles) of land. These contracts, when combined with the 12 contracts already issued, total \$12.6 million to clear 12.4 square kilometers (4.8 square miles). Despite the contributions,

an estimated funding gap of nearly \$40 million remains for the 1388 period if Afghanistan is to meet Ottawa Convention and Afghanistan Compact<sup>4</sup> goals.

**Chad.** Following its 2008 establishment, the Mine Action Unit, in coordination with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad and other mine-action partners, implemented a plan to ensure a coordinated response to the threat of explosive remnants of war and to provide mine/ERW-risk education. Investigation of the affected areas revealed projectiles ranging from 12.7-mm machine guns and 23-mm cannon projectiles to 106-mm projectiles. Mortar shells from 60 mm to 82 mm, a large quantity of AP and AT rockets, and 107-mm and 122-mm Multiple Launch Rocket Systems were also found. MineTech International removed 10,349 items, including 1,680 ERW and 8,669 items of small arms ammunition, and confirmed the clearance of 1,012 kilometers (629 miles) of main supply roads as of 30 June 2009. By the end of August 2009, an additional 2,000 ERW had been destroyed. Furthermore, mine/ERW emergency risk education has been provided to thousands of local people.

**Democratic Republic of Congo.** The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre has redeployed three fully operational regional offices within eastern DRC in Goma (North Kivu), Kisangani (Orientale) and Lubumbashi (Katanga) to improve information management and develop a new victim-assistance strategy. UNMACC is also developing mine-action projects to support the U.N. Security and Stabilization Support Strategy in Eastern

**DRC.** Contracted groups The Development Initiative and the *Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap* (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) have continued training and deploying additional survey clearance, mechanical mine clearance, and mine-detection dog teams since April 2009. These groups also completed survey and clearance of dangerous areas. Mine-action operators have jointly cleared 1 million square meters (247 acres) of land, 6,100 kilometers (3,790 miles) of road and demolished 19,900 ERW from May to September 2009 alone.

**Nepal.** The United Nations Mission in Nepal offers management and operational training to the Nepal Army Mine Action Coordination Center as agreed in the Capacity Development Plan. The UNMACC, in return, has deployed two demining platoons, clearing 17 of the 53 Nepalese Army minefields, totaling 34,071 square meters (8.4 acres) and destroying 2,618 AP mines as of September 2009. The United Nations Mine Action Team has further provided a middle management course, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Level 3 training, and improvised explosive device disposal training to Nepalese Army staff. During the reporting period, UNMAT also supported UNMIN in carrying out demolitions in six of the seven Maoist cantonment sites, destroying a total of 28,208 items.

**South Lebanon.** Since January 2009, the Lebanon Mine Action Center's Regional Mine Action Centre in Nabatiyeh has coordinated all clearance activity in South Lebanon. The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre has supported the RMAC-N through both financial support and the temporary reassignment of 12 UNMACC employees. UNMACC also acts as a liaison between the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the LMAC. In 2009, UNMACC continued to work with UNIFIL in order to ensure International Mine Action Standards compliance of the clearance assets from the UNIFIL Troop Contributing Countries. UNMACC further continued its work to support UNIFIL demining teams on the Blue Line Barrel marking project, coordinating and managing the clearance of the 4.3-kilometer (2.7-mile) Blue Line Access Road through mechanical assets from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

**Sudan.** The United Nations Mine Action Office in Sudan was able to implement 14 victim-assistance projects and provide support to more than 500 mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities. Additionally, UNMAO's program has opened a total of 31,813 kilometers (19,768 miles) of road, cleared 60,437,560 square meters (14,934 acres) of land, destroyed 17,935 mines and 835,106 pieces of UXO, and provided mine-risk education to 2,790,817 internally displaced persons and people in affected areas. The Pakistani Military Demining Company of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan further released 97,000 square meters (24 acres) of cleared land to the community of Kurmuk in Blue Nile. UNMIS also cleared the Lafon airfield in Central Equatoria, allowing for the establishment of a wildlife national park operations base, the clearance of rice fields in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and the clearance of high priority routes through Southern Sudan. As of September 2009, violence stemming from inter-tribal conflicts and Lord's Resistance Army activities has caused rapid security deterioration and may negatively affect the future deployment of demining teams in Southern Sudan.

**Darfur.** After the suspension on mine-action activities was lifted, three Multi-Tasking Teams resumed work to support the [African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur \(UNAMID\)](#) mandate, conducting general survey, route assessments and demolitions of pieces of UXO in Al-Fashir, Nyala and El Geneina. Two national nongovernmental organizations also continued UXO-risk education activities. Though all deployments must be escorted by UNAMID military personnel, many contaminated areas in Darfur are still unreachable as a result of insecurity, presenting a significant challenge to operations in the region.

**South-central Somalia.** From 18 May to 10 August 2009, 46,988 individuals received mine-risk education across 136 communities in the Bay, Middle Juba and Middle Shabelle regions of South-central Somalia. In June alone 25,057 of these beneficiaries received MRE—a record high since U.N. forces were deployed in 2007. In addition, United Nations Somalia Mine Action continued the MRE training of trainers, reaching 62 community members in Buale, Dinsoor and Ufurow. SOMA also continued support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), conducting two missions to Mogadishu and three missions to Uganda to prepare training for AMISOM EOD teams. However, on 17 September, training was suspended when two improvised explosive devices were detonated in the AMISON Compound, causing fatalities, injuries and damage to the facility. Two EOD teams also began a training process in late June, but their operations were suspended on 20 July after a series of escalating attacks on U.N. compounds forced U.N. activity out of Baidoa. As of mid-September, the situation had not changed.

**Western Sahara.** During the reporting period, the Royal Moroccan Army's mine-clearance project continued in Western Sahara, destroying approximately 200 items of ordnance. Through the UK-based NGO Landmine Action, UNMAS continued support for the execution of mine/ERW survey and clearance activities in the eastern parts of Western Sahara, providing a method for addressing 158 cluster munitions sites and the approximately 400 individual sites contaminated with ordnance. In June and July alone, battle-area clearance was conducted for more than 300,000 square meters (74 acres), with 80 items of UXO destroyed. Unfortunately, as a result of more than three decades of conflict, the contamination of mines and ERW in Western Sahara is widespread, and the U.N. Mine Action Centre and

its partners lack the funds to completely address the mine/ERW issue. If additional funding were available, however, it is estimated that the UXO and cluster-munitions problems could be eliminated in three to five years.

### UNDP Updates

**Albania.** Demining operations in northeast Albania are still being carried out by DanChurchAid through seven local demining teams and one Technical Survey Team under the monitoring of the Albanian Mine Action Executive Quality Management Team. From May to September, 238,755 square meters (59 acres) were released, with 64 AP mines, four AT mines and 215 cluster munitions destroyed in the process. As of mid-September, the remaining contaminated area covered 63,000 square meters (15.6 acres), with 3,000 square meters (0.74 acres) of mined areas and 60,000 square meters (14.8 acres) contaminated with UXO and cluster munitions. Based on the National MA Completion Plan, the clearance of these areas was completed by the end of 2009, placing Albania in full compliance of its Article 5 obligations. Mine-risk education activities have also been conducted under the coordination and monitoring of the Albanian Mine Action Executive by Albanian Assistance for Integration and Development and the Albanian Red Cross. As a collective result of these activities, the last mine accident recorded in northeast Albania was in 2005. On 16 June, Albania ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, becoming the ninth country to do so.

**Cambodia.** On 24 August 2009, Cambodia submitted its final draft of an Article 5 Extension Request to the President of the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. The Request estimates that 678.8 square kilometers (262 square miles) of land still remain affected by landmines and require clearance. To help with this clearance, in 2009, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), the Cambodian Mine Action Center and The HALO Trust started a Baseline Survey, conducted under the overall coordination of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, to evaluate the remaining landmine problem. Unfortunately, the UNDP Mine Action Programme in Cambodia needs an additional \$1 million to cover the BLS costs in 2010.

**Colombia.** Because of the proportional rise of Colombian civilian casualties and the reported laying of new mines by non-state armed groups, Colombia remains the country with the highest number of new mine victims in the world. To help reduce the number of landmine casualties, the *Programa Presidencial para la Acción Integral contra Minas Antipersonal* is attempting to initiate a legal framework that would allow for civilian demining. Furthermore, PAICMA has requested U.N. technical support for tasking and quality assurance so that multiple operators may be available to demine. Unfortunately, the preparation of the annual Mine Action Portfolio for Colombia has revealed funding gaps through all sectors in 2010, particularly as the European Commission's current support for PAICMA comes to an end. As a result, even as UNICEF continues to support MRE and risk reduction, UNDP is in the process of re-establishing its mine-action program. To this end, UNDP plans to give a particular focus to supporting victim assistance and monitoring of mine accidents through the existing public-health surveillance system.

**Ethiopia.** During the reporting period, the Ethiopian Mine Action Office released an additional 2,358,552 square meters (583 acres) of land, clearing a total of 4,560,813 square meters (1,127 acres) from January to June. Between April and June, 175 AP landmines, 63 anti-vehicle mines and 3,679 items of UXO were destroyed. During the same period, MRE and community-liaison services were provided to 11,201 people in and around EMAO's operational areas, with MRE provided to a total of 30,091 people from January to June. EMAO, with the support of UNDP and the European Commission, has further developed a new humanitarian-demining and MRE project to be implemented from 2010 to 2011. Unfortunately, with an estimated budget of EUR 7,850,000 (\$9,387,818), the plan is still EUR 3,000,000 (\$3,587,701)<sup>5</sup> short of the necessary contributions. Therefore, donor support is essential from 2010 to 2011 if Ethiopia is to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals and its Article 5 obligations.

**Guinea-Bissau.** A National Mine Action Plan was developed for 2009–2011 to conclude Guinea-Bissau's Article 5 obligations. The plan is intended to focus on the development of a national Technical Survey, the clearance of all known minefields, the provision of medical care and assistance to landmine and ERW victims, the establishment of an effective management system, and a significant reduction of UXO-related risks. However, limited funds and government support have slowed progress in providing victim assistance. Despite two support visits by the *Centro Nacional de Coordenação da Acção Anti-Minas* to focus the VA direction of the program and its countrywide MRE initiatives, the national authority does not have the appropriate procedures to monitor the effectiveness of these programs. As a result, CAAMI is planning to implement a monitoring system that would provide feedback on MRE activities. However, the funding required to fully implement the National Mine Action Plan has a current shortfall of \$5,400,000.

**Iraq.** In 2008, the Ministry of Defence banned humanitarian-demining activities within Iraq. UNMAT sent a Technical Assistance Mission from 15–20 May 2009, to determine solutions for resuming demining operations. During that time, the Technical Assistance Mission also contributed advice for structuring a governing system for mine action. From 9 to



28 May, UNDP gave training to deminers from the national NGO Rafidain Demining Organization in Sulaimaniyah and assisted in providing Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining Mechanical Demining and Accreditation Training. On 1 July, UNDP also launched a highly publicized joint report with UNICEF entitled "Overview of Landmines and Explosives Remnants of War in Iraq."<sup>6</sup> On 31 August, UNDP received word that three civilian demining organizations, including two Iraqi companies and RDO, had received security clearance and will be allowed to resume work once they receive approval for their operational accreditation from the Directorate of Mine Action. Unfortunately, to meet the obligations of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, an additional \$10–20 million will be required to support further demining efforts in central and southern Iraq.

**Lao People's Democratic Republic.** The UNDP-supported National Regulatory Authority expanded in the second quarter of 2009 with the inclusion of Solidarity Service International and Norwegian People's Aid. With SODI and NPA joining the Mines Advisory Group, Handicap International Belgium and the *Fondation Suisse de Déminage*, the NRA is now partnered with five NGOs in clearing Lao PDR of UXO. Additionally, Lao PDR signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and voted positively at the last two U.N. General Assemblies on universalization of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. In addition to the NRA, the organization UXO Lao also actively contributes to the clearance of Lao PDR. Unfortunately, UXO Lao faces a funding shortfall of some \$2 million on a \$7 million work plan and the NRA a shortfall of nearly \$200,000 on a \$1 million work plan.

**Lebanon.** The Lebanon Mine Action Center plans to implement an MRE system throughout all impacted areas, provide assistance to mine/UXO victims, and address all high- and medium-impacted communities within five years. Lebanon's main goal is to clear the remaining 12 million square meters (2,965 acres) of area affected in the 2006 conflict by 2012. Lebanon was also the third nation to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions and is attempting to finalize a long-term plan to address the removal of cluster munitions. Of the more than 190,000 cluster munitions removed since August 2006, national assets are responsible for 65 percent of the clearance. UNMAS and bilateral agreements are responsible for the rest. Unfortunately, more than 50 percent of the actors working to clear Lebanon have been forced to stop work from a lack of resources.

**Mozambique.** Mozambique has set a goal of clearing all known mined areas by March 2014. The Mozambique Mine Action Programme intends to focus on the remaining six provinces in southern and central Mozambique while supporting socioeconomic development in the rural population. As part of this process, the *Instituto Nacional de Desminagem* (Mozambique National Demining Institute) continued monitoring demining operators in the six provinces and established quarterly meetings to summarize activities with cooperation partners. With demining activities carried out by The HALO Trust and Handicap International, 57 minefields totaling 700,547 square meters (173 acres) have been cleared and handed back to the public since the beginning of 2009. Though there is a known monetary gap, additional funding would ensure a mine-free Mozambique by 2014.

**Sri Lanka.** Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Programme is directed by the National Steering Committee on Mine Action, which provides policy guidance and consists of representatives from stakeholders, the donor community and various demining groups in quarterly meetings to resolve policy issues. NSCMA/UNDP also supports mine-action project goals to start a National Mine Action Centre for more efficient coordination and management. To this end, the UNDP Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery put together a draft NMAC Terms of Reference in May 2009, which, once validated, will allow for the establishment of the NMAC. Between 1 May and 31 August, more than five square kilometers (1.9 square miles) of land were cleared by the Sri Lanka Army Humanitarian Demining Unit and handed over to the government for release. Many demining operations have been suspended in northern areas, however, and to meet the demands for demining, the UNDP Support to Mine Action Project is in the process improving human-resource and technical-resource capacities.

**Sudan.** In an effort to begin national mine-action development, on 9 June, the re-instituted U.N. Mine Action Steering Committee held its first meeting, which UNMAO, UNDP and UNICEF attended. The members agreed to work with the Government of National Unity and the government of Southern Sudan to establish a joint U.N./National Authorities Mine Action Steering Committee as soon as possible. UNDP and UNMAO also provided assistance to the National Mine Action Authority in organizing a donor conference on 15 September. Thirteen embassies and U.N. agencies attended the conference in addition to representatives from 20 local NGOs and the private sector. Four members of the National Mine Action Centre also continued training with staff of UNMAO and UNDP in Khartoum. In May and June, UNDP further assisted an EOD team from the Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service. This team was able to improve the technical skills of five personnel as well as destroy more than 1,000 items of UXO in 75 areas and provide MRE to 2,480 people in Magwi and Loa.

## UNICEF Updates

**Bosnia and Herzegovina.** From May to September, UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to provide technical, financial and logistical support to the BiH Mine Action Centre and other agencies involved in MRE. BHMACE continued activities for management and quality assurance of MRE, provided assistance to mine-action organizations and NGOs, and made recommendations on MRE project implementations. In September, UNICEF support to the NGO Genesis Project allowed for a second school-based project on landmine- and small arms-risk education to reach 10 landmine-affected areas in BiH. By December, the project will have given sustainable MRE and SA education to 300 school teachers and 200 children directly, as well as 1,600 children indirectly.

**Colombia.** UNICEF continued supporting PAICMA in victim assistance, information management and institutional development. UNICEF also provided support to national partners for developing MRE programs in Colombia, with particular attention to the local population and farming communities. To this end, UNICEF has committed itself to standardizing MRE Institutional Education Plans with teacher training packages and finalized a range of materials for all population groups. Preparations also continued for the Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention to be held in Cartagena. A series of regional workshops with NGOs and mine survivors were also held across Colombia in preparation for a document on the situation in Colombia and to determine civil-society activities around the conference.

**Eritrea.** Eritrea remains among the top 24 countries worldwide in terms of the extent of the mines and ERW threat. To help end this problem, the Eritrean Demining Authority is educating all age and gender groups about the dangers of mines and ERW. Since May, 74,407 individuals received MRE, with 65 percent of them children. With support from UNICEF and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in early 2009, an Injury Surveillance System was put into place within Maekel. Information from 1,400 injuries has already been collected, including mine/ERW related incidents. In addition, UNICEF has hosted public and community events on mine action and MRE capacity-building activities, distributed MRE information through radio, newspapers and television, and combined MRE and EOD teams for more efficient UXO destruction.

**Nepal.** UNMAT supports the ongoing Informal Sector Service Center surveillance on victim-activated explosions to prioritize mine-action activities at national, regional and local levels. UNMAT also supports the Ministry of Education's MRE activities, which reached more than 1,000 teachers from 1,000 schools in the 20 most affected districts. In addition to the trained teachers, 6,000 more teachers from the same districts will also receive MRE orientation. Additionally, the national emergency mine-risk education network has the capability to deliver MRE activities within 68 affected districts in the event of an emergency. UNMAT signed a Special Service Agreement with Handicap International to develop a national strategic workshop for victim assistance and a booklet for landmine, IED and ERW victims. The project includes the location of medical services and the creation of a handbook that would outline how to benefit from social protection schemes in Nepal, as well as information on administering first aid.

**Senegal.** UNICEF Senegal continued technical financial support to the *Centre National d'Action Antimines du Sénégal*. CNAMS, in turn, put together 3,853 notebooks with MRE messages to be distributed to schoolchildren at the start of the school year. CNAMS also conducted two awareness missions to *Sédhiou* and Kolda in late July in order to collect information on suspected hazardous areas and to establish regional coordination committees. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, trained teachers in Casamance on mine-risk education and trauma prevention.

**Sri Lanka.** UNICEF, in collaboration with national NGOs, a volunteer children's animation network and the Ministry of Education, supported MRE in six northern and eastern districts affected by mines and ERW. Additionally, a community liaison has been provided in areas with continuing NGO demining efforts. Community-based approaches to MRE reached around 34,000 people in the first quarter alone. While most war injuries being treated in Vavuniya come from shelling, there has been a confirmed account of at least 27 recent mine victims. As a result, victim-assistance funding is urgently needed in the area. UNICEF, UNDP, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and other organizations are currently determining ways to launch a Sri Lankan Campaign to Ban Landmines.

**Sudan.** During the reporting period, 85,803 people received MRE, while six people were killed and 12 injured. The government also lifted its suspension on mine action in Darfur, allowing UNICEF to deploy three MRE teams within weeks of the suspension's end. Mostly funded by international NGOs, 21 teams have been working in the south to provide community-based MRE. Unfortunately, the unavailability of local NGOs has posed a problem to nationalizing MRE operations in some key states. To address this issue, UNICEF and UNMAO are training the staff of NGOs who have previously worked with Child Protection International. UNICEF also continues to support school-based MRE through the training of teachers in the north and south. UNICEF and UNMAO are now exploring the possibility of child-to-child MRE through the use of materials, games and stories with illustrations. ↴

## Biography



**Eric Wuestewald** has worked for the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery since May 2009 as an Editorial Assistant for *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*. In May 2010, he graduated from James Madison University with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in creative writing. He is currently pursuing a career in journalism.

## Endnotes

1. "The Mine Action Support Group." U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/wra/c17719.htm>. Accessed 8 June 2010.
2. The Mine Action Support Group Newsletter, May 19, 2009–September 15, 2009. U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/wra/130194.htm>. Accessed 8 June 2010.
3. Afghanistan uses the Iranian calendar (also called the Persian calendar or Jalali calendar), which relies on astronomical observations from Tehran to calculate the vernal equinox, the starting point of its solar calendar.
4. The Afghanistan Compact was created after The London Conference on Afghanistan in 2006, facilitated by the government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community. The Compact emphasizes reliance on Afghanistan's own institutions for reconstruction and acts as a political commitment for participants.
5. Currency conversion as of 8 June 2010.

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ISSN 2154-1485

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