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Aid Effectiveness in Insecure Areas

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Aid Effectiveness in Insecure Areas

The issue of aid effectiveness in conflict-affected and insecure areas is receiving increased attention within the development community. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness1 posed unique challenges to aid-effectiveness principles, including continued insecurity, limited capacity, competing agendas, corruption, lack of coordination, and lack of clarity among military, humanitarian and development interventions.

1. Ownership: Developing countries set their own development policies and strategies, while donors support capacity development and institution building.

2. Alignment: Donor assistance should be consistent with the national priorities outlined in developing countries’ development strategies.

3. Harmonization: Donors coordinate their aid activities.

4. Managing for results: Developing countries and donors focus more on the impact of aid on people’s lives and create better ways to measure impact.

5. Mutual accountability: Developing countries and donors are more transparent in the use and impact of aid to their citizens and parliaments.

The Paris Declaration established five principles to shape aid delivery:

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The Paris Declaration recognized that aid-effectiveness principles apply to conflict-affected and insecure areas but require adaptation, particularly where local ownership and capacity are weak. A recent report by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit4 reinforces this message. It concludes that the Afghan context poses unique challenges to aid-effectiveness principles, including continued insecurity, limited capacity, competing agendas, corruption, lack of coordination, and lack of clarity among military, humanitarian and development interventions.

In 2007, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation Development Assistance Group released Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations1 and the recent Accra Agenda for Action2 signal donor and recipient commitment to improve the effectiveness of aid. Conflict-affected areas present aid-effectiveness challenges that require special attention—but what does this mean for countries affected by mines and explosive remnants of war? This article examines recent developments, highlighting some implications for mine action.

Aminefield in Bosnia prevents land use long after the conflict has ended. (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GICHD)

In March 2005, over 100 donors and developing countries convened in Paris to reform the international aid system and make it more effective in addressing global poverty. The previous aid system, in place since at least the 1960s, had changed over time, mainly because of its problems and lack of effectiveness. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness3 was issued in an attempt to rectify the flaws and emphasize the need to “increase the impact of aid . . . in reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity, and accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”

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In order to maximize contributions to relief, recovery and stabilization efforts, donor coordination and harmonization are vital in mine/ERW-affected countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Sudan. Where possible, support for mine action should be aligned with national government plans and procedures.

During and immediately after conflicts, mine action often plays an important role in facilitating peacekeeping and humanitarian access, as well as enabling the delivery of essential goods and services. It can also make important contributions to building peace, reducing armed violence and strengthening the capacity of state institutions. In such contexts, donors should ensure that support for mine action contributes to broader peace-building, armed-violence reduction and institution-building processes, where appropriate.

One example of how mine action played an important role in building confidence was between the government of Sudan and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army in 2002 when a locally-brokered ceasefire was negotiated, leading to a tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding among the government of Sudan, the SPLA and the United Nations. Following 30 years of conflict, this was the first time leaders from opposing sides in Sudan signed a nationwide agreement. The MoU allowed for emergency demining of key routes between North and South Sudan in the Nuba mountains. The United Nations Mine Action Service, in association with DhanChurchAid and two Sudanese nongovernmental organizations—Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines and Operations Save Innocent Lives—jointly trained 15 people from both sides as deminers. Community members from both sides were involved in assisting the deminers with clearing vegetation in exchange for food through a World Food Programme food-for-work scheme.

The value of humanitarian weapons abatement was apparent in 2008 when Mines Advisory Group started working with the Burundian police, Police Nationale Burundaise, in support of Burundi’s civilian disarmament campaign. A mixed MAG-PNB mobile team collected and destroyed small arms/light weapons previously handed over by the population or seized by the PNb. As part of Burundi’s implementation of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa,3 MAG conducted a survey of the PNb SACLW sites in June 2009. This survey led to an comprehensive physical-security and stockpile management project in 2009 with MAG and the PNb which, parallel
to the marking of weapons, focuses on collecting and destroying surplus and obsolete SA/LW, as well as improving the physical security of police weapons stores. It also focuses on strengthening the capacity of the PNB in weapons and ammunition accountability and safe storage. The project is ongoing with completion expected in April 2010.

A final example of the aid effectiveness is seen with Danish Demining Group’s active involvement in efforts to reduce armed violence. In Somaliland, DDG is working with local communities and peacebuilding organizations to reduce the demand for SA/LW and enhance community safety. As previous attempts to forcibly disarm communities and the police have failed, DDG is focusing on training local communities in conflict-management and conflict-resolution techniques, safe storage of SA/LW and ammunition, undertaking mine/ERW clearance and de-mining.

Conclusion
Donors face increasing challenges in delivering aid effectively in countries affected by mines and ERW. Recently, several strategies including the Paris Declaration, the Principles and the AAAs have encouraged donors to take a wider look at the unique issues encountered in delivering aid to conflict-affected and insecure areas. In order to maximize the benefits of relief, recovery and stabilization efforts, donors are encouraged to conduct joint assessments, promote flexible funding modalities, work in harmonization with local government and communities, and look at the wider agendas of conflict prevention, state-building and peace-building in war-torn areas. In maximizing effectiveness, donors can make valuable contributions toward peace-building, strengthening local government institutions, reducing violence, countering poverty and facilitating the coordination of humanitarian access in communities affected by mines/ERW.

Making aid effective in conflict-affected countries is clearly challenging. However, enhanced donor coordination, harmonization and support for broader peace-building, armed-violence reduction, and institution-building initiatives are all vital, and they can go a long way to improving safety and reducing poverty in communities affected by mines/ERW.

See Endnotes, Page 77

Regional Cooperation: MDDC for SE Europe
As the refinement of mine-detection methods becomes more important, the Mine Detection Dog Center for South East Europe is answering the call, training dogs and handlers for effective detection. Working with animals is not easy, but the MDDC has been very successful in its operations. The organization focuses on regional cooperation, and has worked in areas such as Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq, where it has proved to be an effective asset to mine detection and clearance.

by Marija Trlin [Mine Detection Dog Center for South East Europe]

Regional Training Projects
The Global Training Academy, located in San Antonio, Texas, United States, provided initial training to MDDC with the sponsorship of a grant by the Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs in the U.S. Department of State (now the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement) in 2003. The U.S. State Department also funded the operational costs of the MDDC and facilities construction/improvements through the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance in Slovenia until the MDDC became financially self-supporting in 2006. Cooperation with the JTF and the Marshall Legacy Institute in the United States has resulted in many successful projects. It is worth mentioning a few of the most important regional training projects, including those at the Austrian National Agency for Mine Action and the Lebanon Mine Action Center. The MDDC has trained a total of 16 mine-detection dogs and teams from March 2006–June 2009 for ANAMA, along with 10 mine-detection dog teams for the LMAC; the Marshall Legacy Institute provided the majority of the funds for purchasing and training the dogs.

The MDDC is heavily contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance. Many mine-action centers in the region were established immediately after conflicts ended in the SEE countries. Mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina started in 1996, and 13 years later, demining authorities there have grown into highly respectable organizations with the knowledge and ability to assist mine-action centers outside the region of Southeast Europe. Still, demining is a continuous effort requiring constant development and improvement.

To improve demining methods, specifically the use of mine-detection dogs, the members of the South-Eastern Europe Mine Action Co-ordination Council agreed that, due to the extensive and pioneering use of mine-detection dogs in Bosnia since early 1996, it would be appropriate for Bosnia to host a mine-detection dog center for the Balkans region.3

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