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Organization Profile: Humanitarian Peace Support School

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Kenya has been a State Party to the Ottawa Convention since 2001,¹ but the presence of the Humanitarian Peace Support School in Embakasi, on the outskirts of Nairobi, shows that the country's commitment to promoting peace in East Africa goes beyond its obligations to this convention. Through a partnership with the United Kingdom, the ever-expanding HPSS (formerly the International Mine Action Training Centre), offers various courses in tactical peace-support operations, disaster management and response, and demining and disarmament.²

In February 2005, the International Mine Action Training Centre was established near Nairobi as a joint venture between the U.K. and Kenyan militaries. The two countries had previously worked together to train Kenyans for a U.N. demining mission in nearby Eritrea, and the success of this endeavor led to the creation of a permanent center for primarily military³ mine-action training. The U.K. government provided the £3.5 million (US\$6.7 million⁴) required for construction of the IMATC facility, while the land, chosen for its neutral location, was provided by the government of Kenya.⁵

A Center of Excellence

The accomplishments of the initial IMATC were impressive. From 2005â€”2008, the center trained 6,434 personnel in demining and explosive-ordnance disposal, mine awareness, and other mine-action-related topics.⁶ The courses, each of which lasted around four weeks, all adhered to established International Mine Action Standards.¹ The IMATC provided demining equipment along with training, benefiting countries such as Rwanda and Uganda.⁷

In 2006, the nongovernmental organization Mines Awareness Trust teamed with the IMATC to establish the Dog Detection Training Centre—the first of its kind in East Africa—within the IMATC.⁸ In 2007, the British military awarded the prestigious Firmin Sword of Peace to the IMATC, in recognition of the center's remarkable humanitarian contributions in its first two years of existence.⁹

Need for Restructuring

As successful as the IMATC has been, it is currently undergoing a reorganization to better fit the current demands of East Africa. Instead of focusing solely on mine action, the newly renamed Humanitarian Peace Support School will now offer a variety of U.N./African Union pre-deployment courses for military observers, U.N./African Union police and civilians, as well as adding a Disaster Management and Response Training Wing.⁷ In short, the HPSS offers a wider range of peace “enabler” training to complement the “decision maker”

training provided by its new partner institution, the Peace and Conflict Studies School located in nearby Karen, Kenya. The HPSS and Peace and Conflict Studies School both fall under the umbrella of Kenya's International Peace Support Training Centre, established in 2001.¹⁰

Mike Liddicoat, Programmes and Plans Officer for the HPSS, explains, “The demand and international funding for military demining has dried up in Africa. Civilian demining NGOs are now the preferred operators. That, combined with a drive for wider African peacekeeping capabilities, has led us to widen our scope of activity.”¹¹ While this

restructuring may stem partially from financial limitations, those involved see it as an opportunity to create synergy between existing institutions, and more efficiently and effectively support peace operations in East Africa.¹⁰

Thinking Regionally

As part of the International Peace Support Training Centre, the HPSS aims to be a regional training and education institution. Aware that "the effects of conflict either intra- or inter-state are felt across a region," the leadership of the International Peace Support Training Centre feels "that there is a distinct advantage to having a center dedicated to the regional level that exists outside the direct influence of national interests, but at the same time responds to national peace-operations training requirements."¹⁰ In addition, the International Peace Support Training Centre is creating a research branch, the Peace and Security Research Department, to support the HPSS and Peace and Conflict Studies School by attempting to better understand conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict recovery in the East African context through original research.¹²

Financial Support

Funding has always been the greatest challenge for the IMATC/HPSS. The British government has funded most of the humanitarian- demining and peace-support operations courses thus far, with Canada, Japan and Norway now providing funds to aid in the expansion of the HPSS.⁷ Much more support is needed, though. For example, the creation of a new, state-of-the-art peace-support-operations training village on the HPSS site, a four-phase project, has currently only secured funding for phase one. In addition, the Demining and Disarmament Training Wing that would encompass the former mine-action training capabilities of the IMATC faces significant funding challenges.¹¹

Conclusion

From 8 June–12 July 2009, the HPSS trained a team of 30 workers from the African Union Mission for Somalia. Prior to deployment, these civilian AMISOM staff members were introduced to international humanitarian law, HIV/AIDS issues, mine awareness, weapon recognition and hostage-survival techniques, among other topics.¹³ This is just one recent example of HPSS's immense potential for positive regional impact. With support from the international community, the HPSS, part of an ambitiously restructured International Peace Support Training Centre, can expand upon a tradition of excellence as an effective center for training peace enablers in East Africa. ↴

Biography



Katie Monroe worked for *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* as an Editorial Assistant from May–August 2009. A native of Harrisonburg, Virginia, she is a sophomore at Haverford College in Pennsylvania and has not yet declared a major.

Endnotes:

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