July 2009

Identifying Synergies Between Mine Action and Small Arms/Light Weapons

Eric Filippino
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol13/iss1/24

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Identifying Synergies Between Mine Action and Small Arms/Light Weapons

Over the last few years, there has been considerable discussion around linking small arms/light weapons with mine action, although, to date, there has been little concrete exchange between the sectors at an operational level. Accordingly, the U.S. Department of State commissioned the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining to look at areas of possible synergy, resulting in the study Identifying Synergies Between Mine Action and Small Arms/Light Weapons.

by Eric M. Filippino \: Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

Building on available evidence, there are few examples of existing synergy between the small arms/light weapons and mine-action sectors. What does exist generally occurs as a result of the daily realities of mine and exploiter-ordnance clearance and SA/LW mitigation in a post-conflict environment.

At the international level, many mine-action donors also contribute to SA/LW programs; however, the study could not find donors actively seeking to link mine action funding with SA/LW funding beyond a recognition that both issues are concerned with human security, and therefore may compete from the same funding stream. The exception is the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, which has extended its original focus of providing financial support and technical assistance for the decontamination of anti-personnel mines to include the destruction of SA/LW and stockpiled munitions.

Mine-risk and SA/LW Awareness

Three areas have significant potential synergy: mine-, explosive-removal (ERW) - and SA/LW-risk awareness. Joint awareness projects can increase public understanding of legal statutes, improve confidence for weapons-collection initiatives, and raise awareness of the destabilizing effects of SA/LW on society. These projects can also build cooperation between local population, civic authorities, security authorities and civil-society organizations on issues of SA/LW and security.

Several Ministries of Education—Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Vietnam, for example—that offer risk-education/risk-reduction programs as part of national curricula have already combined SA/LW awareness and mine-risk education. In addition, they readily include road-accident prevention and fire safety with programs under which JHERI and SA/LW awareness have been delivered.

Coordination and Management

Evidence from mine-action and SA/LW interventions around the world suggests there are real savings from coordinating program-management structures. SA/LW-mitigation practitioners have in some cases drawn explicitly from best practices in mine action over the past decade. In some cases, convergence has been opportunistic and ad hoc. In others, SA/LW practitioners have established coherent protocols following lessons learned in mine action.

Standards

Over the past 10 years or so, the mine-action community has developed a set of comprehensive standards governing virtually every aspect of its work. Known as the International Mine Action Standards, these documents form the normative framework of the industry. In a recent move, the United Nations has been a pioneer in developing international small-arms-control standards. The EMAP development process, as well as upwards of 25 percent of the individual standards themselves, for example, standards dealing with themes such as risk education, quality management, ammunition management and safety, etc., are directly applicable to the emerging small-arms standards. It has even been suggested that the two processes merge into one over-arching mine and small-arms standard.

Technical Support

The area with the most potential for future synergy is the provision of technical expertise to manage the explosive threat through mine/ERW clearance, SA/LW collection programs and ammunition-stockpile reduction, including destruction and demilitarization. Numerous mine-action actors—Mines Advisory Group, The HALO Trust and Danish Demining Group, to name a few—have already reconceived their mine-action role as part of a wider weapons-control program. This expansion has manifested itself in the form of weapons-collecti- tion and destruction as well as community-security projects that explicitly address threats posed by both explosives contamination and SA/LW proliferation. To our knowledge, the mine-action projects have always been established first, allowing an expansion into SA/LW programming.

Victim Assistance

There is very little deliberate programming that addresses the needs of SA/LW survivors in joint efforts with the well-developed mine-affected persons disability-focused sector (although their needs are not ignored in general programming on disability). Despite this fact, one observer has claimed there is a potential relationship between mine-action and SA/LW victim assistance, both of which need to be integrated into the health-care system. Areas of synergy include medical and personal training, coordinated funding opportunities and reinstatement of the victim to include employment and rehabilitation.

Mines Action Standards, these documents form the normative framework of the industry. In a recent move, the United Nations has been a pioneer in developing international small-arms-control standards. The EMAP development process, as well as upwards of 25 percent of the individual standards themselves, for example, standards dealing with themes such as risk education, quality management, ammunition management and safety, etc., are directly applicable to the emerging small-arms standards. It has even been suggested that the two processes merge into one over-arching mine and small-arms standard.

Technical Support

The area with the most potential for future synergy is the provision of technical expertise to manage the explosive threat through mine/ERW clearance, SA/LW collection programs and ammunition-stockpile reduction, including destruction and demilitarization. Numerous mine-action actors—Mines Advisory Group, The HALO Trust and Danish Demining Group, to name a few—have already reconceived their mine-action role as part of a wider weapons-control program. This expansion has manifested itself in the form of weapons-collec- tion and destruction as well as community-security projects that explicitly address threats posed by both explosives contamination and SA/LW proliferation. To our knowledge, the mine-action projects have always been established first, allowing an expansion into SA/LW programming.

Victim Assistance

There is very little deliberate programming that addresses the needs of SA/LW survivors in joint efforts with the well-developed mine-affected persons disability-focused sector (although their needs are not ignored in general programming on disability). Despite this fact, one observer has claimed there is a potential relationship between mine-action and SA/LW victim assistance, both of which need to be integrated into the health-care system. Areas of synergy include medical and personal training, coordinated funding opportunities and reinstatement of the victim to include employment and rehabilitation.

Rule of Law

The rule of law is one area that is applicable to both mine action and SA/LW. International and national legislation controlling the production, transfers, possession and use of SA/LW, however, is a very different issue from that of landmines. Legislative control of anti-personnel landmines is relatively simple for many coun-tries, as they are banned under the Ottawa Convention, and proscriptive domestic legislation on production, export and posessionlogically follows. This is not the case for SA/LW, which are legal in many countries and require a more complex and contextualized set of legislative controls.

Information Management

The process of comprehensive field-oriented data management that has been the cornerstone of mine action is equally applicable to SA/LW. The Information Management System for Mine Action (specifically the new release) and other such database systems can easily be adapted to include SA/LW-related data.

Export-control Legislation

The export of AP mines is either banned or restricted by documents of international law. SA/LW are subject to several regional documents, including the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, which also bans the exporting of landmines. It therefore follows that strategies of export-control officials and capacity-building of national export-control institutions should include references to both landmines and SA/LW.

Linking SA/LW with Development

The mine and ERW threat has come to be understood as a development issue as well as a humanitarian one. Greater development will reduce the numbers of people who now put themselves at risk because of economic hardship. Demand insur-ance on “integrated mine action” projects and programs with equal parts of clearance and development can further push national efforts in this direction.

In countries and regions scarred by the legacies of war, and in which einfurth-and-weapon-related violence is a daily occurrence, there would seem to be value from this development perspective in linking SA/LW and development more systemati-cally. In similar manner, linking SA/LW and development an ap-proach that is increasingly seen as critical to progress on both.

Community-based Programming

The orientation of mine action and SA/LW toward community-based ownership provides a solid basis for future activity. Providing an important foundation and legiti-mization of this approach is the “Seila” approach, adopted by the Cambodian government as part of its development programming. The aim of this initiative is to establish national programs to promote local economic-development activities through disinvested SA/LW inventories.

This basic “bottom-up” approach to national development planning is a fundamental part of mine-action programming and has shown how community-based approaches have also been part of the emerging SA/LW sector. This decentralized
approach to development planning and ownership would seem to provide a very strong foundation for future development in complementary and mutually supportive approaches.

Mine Action, SA/LW and DDR

Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration refer to procedures designed to smooth the process of transitioning combatants back into productive civilian life. Analysis has shown that much of the informal demining taking place is conducted by ex-military and ex-military. These former combatants represent both a problem and an asset for post-war countries. The combatants are trained and armed, and could be employed in projects including engineering, transportation and demining. They could also become restless and have a negative impact on the community. Unfortunately, the mine-action and SA/LW communities have yet to integrate this issue systematically to any real extent. This area is one in which the mine-action and SA/LW communities might be more successful if they jointly undertook analysis and strategic planning.

Conclusion

Though previous research has shown the management of SA/LW and mine-action programs require quite different skills, supporting analysis from other contexts and widespread expert opinion gathered from within the mine-action and SA/LW sectors show a number of areas at the project level that could offer opportunities for synergy. Accordingly, the integration of mine action and the management of SA/LW has been significant in some countries (Bosnia, Cambodia and Tajikistan, to name a few), and is accelerating on a global level.

See Endnotes, Page 113

This article was extracted from the GGDRI study Identifying Synergies between Mine Action and Small Arms and Light Weapons released in October 2006.

SA/LW and the OSCE Response

The illegal dissemination of small arms/light weapons has recently come to the forefront of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s agenda. Through security forums and the provision of literature and physical assistance to affected countries, the OSCE is working to rid Europe of SA/LW that may potentially spread to more militant nations. Working with other international organizations such as the United Nations, the OSCE aims to encourage implementation of its Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, drafted to address the spread of SA/LW and related issues, and to completely rid the area of dangerous arms.

by Jernej Cimperšek | Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the OSCE

W

hy are small arms/light weapons an issue for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and in the OSCE area? The problem began when huge amounts of military hardware, such as tanks, combat planes, armored personal vehicles, etc., were dismantled and dismantled in Europe during the 1990s; SA/LW and ammunition, however, were not significantly reduced or disposed of. They were instead placed in huge depots in much of the former Soviet Union and borders. Many of these depots are reportedly vulnerable to the elements and inadequately secured or guarded by security agencies with histories of corruption, including instances of reports abuse and sales. Some depots are not secured or watched at all. NATO and the Ukrainian Military estimate that Soviet soldiers left more than seven million rifles, pistols, mortars and machine guns in Ukraine, along with 2.3 million metric tons (2.76 US tons) of ammunition. War in the former Yugoslavia also saw the collection of huge numbers of SA/LW and ammunition. Typically, a lot of this now-unnecessary military equipment finds its way to the illegal market. Illicit trade of SA/LW from areas of the former Soviet Union and the Western Balkans poses a security threat for all states of the OSCE. SA/LW from these areas can be found in Africa, Afghanistan, and the South Caucasus. SA/LW are the weapons of choice in contemporary regional conflicts. There is a higher probability that a peacekeeper in Africa or in Afghanistan will be killed by illegally traded SA/LW from the Western Balkans or the former Soviet Union than by any other weapon. This situation is unacceptable to all countries participating in peace operations all over the world, and to the states of the OSCE in particular.

OSCE Reply

The objectives of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation4 adopted the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons5 in 2000. This document is a cornerstone of the OSCE response to the extreme growth and spread of SA/LW to the global community. It is also an important tool in combating threats caused by terrorism and organized crime, while underlining the importance of further strengthening its implementation. With this document, the OSCE sets norms, principles and measures, while simultaneously mandating participating states to keep the implementation of these norms, principles and measures under regular review. The need for the document was acknowledged by the OSCE’s Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century.

In addition, while adopting the Document on SA/LW, the OSCE also saw an opportunity to provide a substantial contribution to the process underway in the United Nations.