Mapping Development Organizations: Success Depends on Mine Action

Charles Downs
Downs Consulting

Follow this and additional works at: http://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: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol13/iss1/37

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.
Mapping Development Organizations: Success Depends On Mine Action

Development initiatives around the world stand to gain from stronger collaboration with the mine-action community; however, this relationship is all too often underappreciated in areas where conflict has mandated resuscitating infrastructure, revitalizing the economy and resettling displaced persons. The Survey Action Center’s ongoing project on development organizations’ use (and occasionally misuse) of mine-action information intends to help mend the partnership between mine-action and non-mine-action actors.

by Charles Downs (Downs Consulting)

The development impact of mine action depends on the action of others. If land is cleared for a community to build a school, a farmer to increase a cultivated area, an irrigation system to be rehabilitated, or a power pylon to be installed and the corresponding relocation of a cultivated area, an irrigation system to be rehabilitated, requires effective outreach to potential clients to help them identify planned activities that may require mine-action assistance. If land is cleared for a community to build a school, a farmer may not have demining resources readily available, the project may face delays, higher costs and risks due to the lack of coordination and planning for demining. The ability of mine action to have a positive impact on development depends on its success at facilitating the actions or anticipating the needs of development actors.

The humanitarian role of mine action is becoming less central due to the great reduction in numbers of new victims at the end of the Cold War. Although landmine contamination is still widespread, the overwhelming majority of casualties are now the result of anti-personnel mines. The lack of coordination and planning for demining, which were national programs, four mine-action non-governmental organizations, two United Nations agencies and several key individuals. While the actual range of organizations using mine-action information in any single country is much more limited, the mining of information itself is usually from a fairly standard range of topics: information on the location of landmines and ERW, number of mine victims and survivors in a given area, and the disbursement of mine-action information to organizations and individuals. In some countries, the provincial government is responsible for key local development planning decisions. They may implement decisions based on the Landmine Impact Survey results, and they may prioritize other communities for economic and social projects. In the other hand, these government authorities address landmine problems that interfere with community development plans, or are due to the impact being low. Community development NGOs. International NGOs usually select their communities for intervention for reasons unrelated to landmine contamination, although some may choose to work in communities specifically because of landmine impact. In either case, they should know of those communities face landmine problems, as this may affect their choice, and certainly will affect the cost. Many NGOs look at the implications of landmine hazards primarily at the operational level, and only specify how to be dealt with when it arises in the course of the project and do not pay much attention to the problem until it is encountered.

Private companies exploring for natural resources, Private companies exploring for natural resources, such as petroleum or minerals, are often involved in dealing with geologic conditions and hazards and tend to be alert to the possible risks caused by landmines/ERW. They usually seek information in advance regarding safety of the planned exploration sites and access routes, including contamination data and survey support, and they typically budget for necessary clearance of specific areas.

Investors in industry or tourism. Private companies seeking to re-activate or invest in industry or tourism seek to know whether the old facilities, access to areas for materials and for use associated with the main business have been cleared of hazards.

Private construction companies. Private companies bidding on development projects may run into problems because the necessary mine-action activities must be included in the overall bid. Although the funders may be aware of what is required, the construction companies may not.
Insufficient consideration of the presence of landmine/ERW hazards in their area. While projects may begin with limited awareness of the potential problem, part of all of a project may be brought to a halt when landmines are encountered. This realization may also require that the project reconsiders individual beneficiaries, since the effects of landmines vary greatly. Specific problems could be avoided with better use of information and appropriate planning.

The threat of landmines contamination may affect the specific plans of many sectors, including transportation (roads, bridges and railway), power (electricity generation and distribution), water, agriculture and social services (education, health and social welfare). Sector requirements for mine action are often not clearly reflected in national mine-action plans, and sector development plans often do not reflect sector needs for demining services. With more use of mine-action information, there is a greater chance that the need to resolve potential landmine problems will be incorporated into the national plans.

When landmines and ERW are not considered, the broad mission of a development organization may be compromised. There were not sufficient funds in the program budget. This occurred in most common with programs addressing rehabilitation or investment in a specific capacity (e.g., irrigation, schools and health centers) in which a minority of the candidate communities had landmine problems. When no funds had been allocated to respond to such problems, organizations were more likely to achieve program goals by selecting non-mine-affected communities when landmine information was considered during planning, alternative funds might have been found to resolve the landmine problems.

Mine-action planning is made more difficult when development operations have not considered landmine problems during their own project-planning stage. As new landmine-affected areas are identified, development organizations must be made aware of these areas and given the training and assistance to properly respond. To make effective use of mine-action information is to be aware of the problems are often not aware of the time required to survey and remove the respective hazards. In general, lack of use of mine-action information may be due to the following factors:

- There is lack of knowledge of the mine problem and its relation to development activities.
- Organizations are unaware of the information that exists or where to find it.
- There is much more widespread problem than mine-action organizations realize, in spite of public information efforts.
- Often the total amount of land blocked by landmines is not large even when the countries are highly contaminated.
- Many development organizations consider the full range of their activities and never encounter landmines.
- Community development organizations generally select priorities for reasons other than mine action.
- Many organizations dealing with local infrastructure and services have the option to shift to other sites, rather than rehabilitate a facility or area affected by mines.
- Mine action information may be overwhelming in detail or format and development organizations may not know how to select what is relevant.
- Development organizations may not know how to use landmine information because they do not deal with it frequently enough.
- Many international development organizations assume that it is the responsibility of the national authorities to ensure that any demining required for externally financed projects is done on a timely basis.

Development organizations do not understand the process of prioritizing sites for clearance.

Next Steps

Phase 1 of this project confirmedwide agreement among national mine-action programs that it is important to enhance the use of mine-action information by development partners. It also provided a map of potential client organizations and their information needs. In Phase 2, SAC will work with three national mine-action programs and consult with a range of development organizations. This collaboration will help identify the organizations’ specific information needs and prepare targeted information products to increase the overall availability and usefulness of mine-action information, it will also propose central-government policies to ensure that landmine information is considered in the planning and financing of development projects.

See Endnotes, Page 115

Some organizations avoid working in mine-affected communities until given assurance that it is safe to do so. They are often risk-averse and only willing to work in hazardous areas with the guarantee of full clearance—http://common.lib.msu.edu/journals/erw/vol19/1/erw1917/ which may require expensive clearance assets where they were not otherwise needed. Enhanced use of mine-action information by development organizations would reduce wasteful clearance efforts.

Causes of Insufficient Use of Information

While the range of development organizations that could make sufficient use of mine-action information is large, the set of organizations using such information is much smaller. Several respondents of the SAC survey stated that the landmine problem is widely known by all actors, more indicated that, although there is general awareness of the problem by those working in the mine-affected regions, this does not necessarily mean that they are aware of or consider the specific hazards in the areas where they are planning to work, not that their headquarters are informed. Even organizations reasonably well-informed about the problems often are not aware of the time required to survey and remove the respective hazards. In general, lack of use of mine-action information may be due to the following factors: