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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 reforestation of a cultivated area, an irrigation system to be rehabilitated tends to help mend the partnership between mine-action and non-mine-action actors.

On Mine Action

Affairs' Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State. The project's completion will increase the use of mine-action information in support of socioeconomic development in mined-affected countries by increasing the capacity of mine-action organizations to understand the needs of development organizations and to proactively provide appropriate information in the most useful format. The SAC project began with a one-day consultation in the SAC offices with a representative of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining's Landmine and Development project. The governments of Canada, Finland and the United Kingdom funded the GICHD project. Phase 1 was designed to produce a map of development organizations for which use of mine-action information is important to the success of their own activities. In Phase 2, the project will work with three national programs to increase development organizations' use of mine-action information to improve their own success and to thus enable better planning of mine-action activities.

The map of development organizations that can benefit from the use of mine-action information is based on a survey of mine-action programs, the United Nations, aid agencies, and other non-governmental organizations and other actors and to seek their priorities for clearance. For mine action to support development, it must understand the specific needs of development organizations. This requires effective outreach to potential clients to help them identify planned activities that may require mine-action support; it also requires seeing mine action as a service to development actors to reduce obstacles they face and to enable their success.

This article summarizes the results of the first phase of the Survey Action Center's project “Enhancing the Use of Mine-action Information by Non-mine-action Actors.” The project was funded by a grant from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs’ Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State. The project's completion will increase the use of mine-action information in support of socioeconomic development in mined-affected countries by increasing the capacity of mine-action organizations to understand the needs of development organizations and to proactively provide appropriate information in the most useful format. The SAC project began with a one-day consultation in the SAC offices with a representative of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining's Landmine and Development project. The governments of Canada, Finland and the United Kingdom funded the GICHD project. Phase 1 was designed to produce a map of development organizations for which use of mine-action information is important to the success of their own activities. In Phase 2, the project will work with three national programs to increase development organizations' use of mine-action information to improve their own success and to thus enable better planning of mine-action activities.

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Using Mine-action Information

Which organizations regularly use mine action information? There are many possible organizations, ranging from central-government planning and oversight to local community groups, including sector ministries, provincial and local government, media, embassies and donors, U.N. and international organizations, international humanitarian and development NGOs, national NGOs, and private companies. SAC is particularly interested in those organizations that are responsible for designing and/or implementing projects in the field, including investments in infrastructure (schools, factories, markets, roads, power lines, telecommunications, and others) and provision of services to the local population (health, education, elections, etc.). While actual situations vary among countries and organizations, as well as over time, this general mapping exercise provided a more nuanced understanding of organizations that may use mine-action information in planning and implementing their activities.

National development centers. The NMAC establishes operational priorities to respond to landmine impact, which are generally accepted by international donors as the default basis for funding mine-action resources in the absence of other demands. Sector ministries. Ministries are generally concerned with landmines to the extent that their activities are blocked by the presence of mines. They often are not concerned with the extent to which communities are affected by mines. Ministries dealing with route infrastructure tend to be aware of landmines’ effects on their projects, but the social and community-development ministries are often unaware of the importance of using mine-action information in planning and implementing their activities.

National development programs. Similar to the sector ministries, the content of national development programs is not whether villages suffer from high, medium or low impact of mines, but simply that execution of their part of the national development plan will face landmines or obstacles in specific areas. For example, a program estimating the electricity transmission network would need to know where the planned route would cross suspected hazardous areas. They may then plan to reroute the lines, or plan for clearance if that is the best option—with implications for schedule and cost of the program.

Provincial and local government. For many organizations, 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 present other communities for economic and social projects. On the other hand, these government authorities address landmine problems that interfere with community development regardless of whether the impact is high or low.

Community development NGOs. International NGOs usually send their communities for reinforcement reasons unrelated to landmine contamination, although some may choose to work in communities specifically because of landmine impact. In either case, they should know if those communities face mine 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; non-technical personnel must be made aware of what it means 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 accustomed to 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 area, access routes, and infrastructure projects, including contamination data and survey support, and they typically budget for necessary clearance of specific areas.

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Some organizations avoid working in mine-affected communities until such time as a threat assessment and clearance are done on a timely basis.

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

Next Steps

Phase 1 of this project confirmed wide 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 these 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 113

First Workshop on Regional Approaches to Stockpile Reduction in Southeast Europe

Faced with the significant security and humanitarian impacts of stockpiled weapons and munitions, countries and organizations in Southeast Europe met in May to discuss strategies for stockpile reduction. The workshop, held in Croatia, focused on regional approaches to this problem, emphasizing information-sharing and coordination across borders.

by Daniela Ressler [Center for International Stabilization and Recovery] and F. David Diaz and Laurie Freeman [PMWF]

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fter a history of conflicts and the military build-up of weapons and ammunition in Southeast Europe, the region now faces severe challenges to protect its citizens from the presence and need to reduce excess, unstable and loosely secured conventional weapons and munitions. Illustrating the dangers are explosions in recent years of ammunition stockpiles in Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia, which have resulted in considerable damage, in addition to killing scores of civilians and displacing hundreds. In an effort to begin addressing these issues, the first South East Europe Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction workshop was held 5–7 May in Zagreb, Croatia.

This SEE RAS workshop was the first of a series of regional workshops developed to initiate discussions regarding national and regional plans for stockpile reduction and management. This regional approach is a concept born from the Adriatic Charter’s September 2008 Chiefs of Defense Conference, when officials recognized that a regional approach might improve efficiency and extend limited resources to address the dual threats of illicit proliferation and accidental explosion.

Participants

The workshop had more than 50 participants, with senior-level Croatian General Staff and Ministry of Defense officials, as well as representatives from international organizations and stockpile threat policy experts. Representatives from the Ministries of Defense and General Staffs of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia also attended the event. Kosovo and Macedonia were invited to the first RAS workshop but declined to attend, though they may participate in future meetings. Other guest organizations included:

- Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at James Madison University
- Explosive Ordnance Demilitarization Solutions
- International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre
- Regional Centre for Security Cooperation
- Small Arms Survey
- Southeastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons

United Nations Development Programme

Charles Downer is a mine-action consultant. He has worked on international development for more than 30 years and was Chief of the Mine Action Unit of the United Nations Office for Project Services from 1999–2004. He has been part of the Executive Centre for Humanitarian Demining and SAC efforts to encourage governments to incorporate land release in their survey and clearance efforts, and assisted the United Nations Development Programme–Colombia in development of its mine-action strategy. He is also a Professor of International Project Management at New York University, School of Professional Studies.

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U.S. Ambassador Robert A. Bradtke delivers the opening remarks. As former country coordinator in Cuba, he reviewed recent accomplishments.

Government representatives from the U.S. Departments of State and Defense

Government representatives from Germany and Hungary

Topics and Discussions

The first day of the Zagreb workshop focused on threats and responsiveness in the region. The U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Robert Bradtke, offered opening remarks noting that a coordinated regional approach to stockpile reduction is crucial and requires three things: addressing the threat proactively but not overly, deciding where to direct more effort, and being committed to regional cooperation by approaching stockpile reduction as a threat affecting the whole region of neighbors. Per Simunovic, Croatian Ministry of Defense State Secretary, welcomed the workshop attendees, observing that stockpile reduction is significant for a variety of reasons, including security concerns related to international terrorism and national crime, as well as the humanitarian issue of explosives in communities.

The remainder of the first day consisted of speakers and panels addressing threats and responses to stockpiles. Small-arms and explosives-experts discussed the global and regional threats of excess weapons and unstable munitions. A panel of regional representatives examined recent explosions in the region—including