

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 new school, a farmer to increase a cultivated area, an irrigation system to be rehabilitated or a power pylon to be installed and the corresponding resources are put in place promptly, then mine action complements development. If those resources do not follow promptly, the result is much less significant. Similarly, if a development project is underway, and the workers encounter an unexpected landmine or explosive remnant of war¹ but do 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 in most countries. Support of development is already the main role of demining in many countries. Virtually all mine-action programs have made considerable effort to make landmine information available, to coordinate with 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", 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 mine-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, Denmark 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 could benefit from the use of mine-action information is based on a survey of mine-action program directors, advisers and other knowledgeable individuals during the fourth quarter of 2008. The questionnaires sought information on practical experience, rather than formal policy. SAC received responses from 20 mine-action programs (11 of 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 mapping provides a reference point for any interested mine-action program to strengthen its outreach to organizations and projects that require mine-action support, and to include them in operational planning for resources.

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 multilateral 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, irrigation 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 mine-action center. The NMAC establishes operational priorities to respond to landmine impact, which are generally accepted by international donors as the default basis for tasking 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 concern 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 landmine obstacles in specific areas. For example, a program extending 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 authorities. 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. 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 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 if 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 implementation level as one more specific problem 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 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 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.



An internally displaced persons resettlement in Azerbaijan constructed after coordinated clearance of suspect areas.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Range of Information Used

While there are a wide variety of possible, specific areas for which development organizations request mine-action information, the type of information itself is usually from a fairly standard range of topics:

- Confirmation whether a specific site contains minefields or suspected hazardous areas
- Confirmation whether a specific project route crosses SHAs
- SHAs locations and dimensions (e.g., coordinates, boundaries, map)
- Cost and length of time required for demining
- Expected dates to begin and complete demining
- Number of mine victims and survivors in a given area
- List of priority or planned demining tasks
- Landmine Impact Survey score/ranking for communities in the area of interest
- Socioeconomic activities blocked by SHAs in the area of interest
- Maps at various scales (these are often the best maps available in the country)

Insufficient Use of Information

Several problems arise from insufficient use of mine-action information, including the risk of damage, injury, and death. These complications are related to:

- Individual development projects
- Overall mission of the development organization
- Planning of demining activities
- Resource mobilization for mine action

Individual projects may face unplanned delays and costs due to

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 or all of a project may be brought to a halt when landmines are encountered. This realization may also require that the project reconsider individual beneficiaries, since the effects of landmines can be very specific. Such problems could be avoided with better use of information and appropriate planning.

The threat of landmine contamination may affect the specific plans of many sectors, including transportation (roads, bridges and railways), power (electricity generation and distribution), water, agriculture and social sectors (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 several reports of government and NGO programs covering multiple areas in which mine-affected communities were excluded because there were not sufficient funds in the program budget. This occurrence was 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 resolve such problems, organizations were more likely to achieve program goals by selecting non-mine-affected communities. If landmine information was considered during program planning, alternative funds might have been found to resolve the landmine problems.

Mine-action planning is made more difficult when development operators, having not considered landmine problems during their own project-planning stage, encounter landmine obstacles that must be removed for their project to continue. This discovery often results in an urgent request for demining support. It interrupts planned demining work and could be avoided if such requirements were considered during the development project-planning phase and incorporated into the annual demining planning process.

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—

which may require expensive clearance assets where they were not otherwise needed. Enhanced use of mine-action information by development organizations would reduce wasted 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, nor 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:

- There is a 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—a 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 could carry out 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 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 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. ♦

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