UNDP Management Training Programme for National Mine Action Managers

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NGOs and international institutions may also devise ways and means through which they can fulfil humanitarian goals. They could find a way to advance such goals and help states create a more secure environment at the same time. They could assure states regarding the pure humanitarian purpose of their respective institutions. Furthermore, they could prevent third party abuses of the humanitarian cause for the purpose of intervening or undermining the sovereign rights of the state. In short, establishing an environment of mutual trust between actors is essential to overcoming legal and political impediments. Exploring the criteria and conditions for engaging armed non-state actors to secure their respect for international humanitarian law and human rights standards may, indeed, yield some positive results. However, this exercise cannot be done in a vacuum, turning a blind eye to other relevant factors and developments that shape and at times threaten international security. Otherwise, they will lead to more harm than good in the long run. 

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News Brief

Swiss Exploring Gender in Mine Action

The initiative to understand the topic of gender in mine action has recently generated significant discussion throughout the global community. Specialists exploring this area are shedding new light on the dissimilar practices, behaviors and communications of males and females in order to improve international mine-action activities in the field and office. As part of the Gender and Mine Action Programme, the Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines is currently researching and producing a gender-integrated manual that synthesizes practical recommendations with actual case studies.

Not only will the manual answer the question of why mine-action practitioners should be more cognizant of gender issues, it will also answer the question of how gender-attentive procedures may be implemented. For the latter purpose, the SCBL hopes to integrate legal theory and accessible resources to make progress easily attainable. Practicality is imperative, since the manual is intended for a broad audience of mine-action organizations, governments, donors, civil-society actors, gender-focused organizations and community-based organizations.

The first section of the manual will elaborate on gender as it relates to each of the five pillars of mine action. This section will include an overview of the current state of affairs, real-world illustrations, best practices and unsuccessful enterprises. The manual will highlight recommendations to promote realistic application of the information presented. The second section of the manual will feature five in-depth case studies of Lebanon, Mozambique, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Colombia. Reports for each country will include details about the current mine problem for that country, insight about the regional gender situation, best practices and successful gender initiatives. Recommended topics for further research and piloting will also be incorporated.

The SCBL would appreciate participation in providing diverse personal perspectives for the manual. Though the formal submission deadline of 15 February 2008 has passed, e-mail Marie Nilsen at m.nilsen@scbl-gender for more information or to send comments. SCBL is interested in receiving a broad range of pertinent content: project examples, initiatives, tips, ideas, measures of achievement, successful integration stories, unsuccessful initiatives, problems and relevant photos.

Additionally, the Journal of Mine Action’s upcoming Issue 12.2 will focus upon gender in mine action, and related articles are now being accepted. Please see the “Call for Papers” on the back cover of this magazine for more information.

From 2000 to 2006, 10 Senior Managers and 40 Middle Managers Training Courses were conducted for national staff of mine-action programmes from 42 countries. More than 800 managers (including nearly 200 senior managers and over 400 middle managers) completed these courses initiated by the United Nations Development Programmes. The courses were designed on the basis of a 1999 UNDP-United Nations Mine Action Service’s Training Needs Assessment1, conducted in response to a 1997 United Nations Development Department of Humanitarian Affairs study on the “Development of Indigenous Mine Action Capacity,” which concluded that the absence of management skills was a major obstacle to national ownership of mine-action programs. At the end of 2006, the UNDP’s Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery sought to assess the impact of this training on national mine-action programmes in order to provide a solid basis for further decisions regarding future management training.

In December 2006, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining agreed to conduct a review of the courses and their impact, with the final report to be completed by the end of January 2007. Within this short timeframe, GICHD collected and analysed extensive information about the course providers, course participants, their supervisors and others. It was, however, not possible to conduct country visits to assess the impact on the effectiveness of the national programs from the perspective of key external stakeholders.2

The GICHD study team (led by the author)3 established a work plan to collect and analyse relevant information, including interviews with the UNDP and background documents, site visits to the two prime
Summary of Training Needs Assessment and Course Design

The initial design of the mine-action management training courses was based on the 1999 Global Training Needs Assessment. The study was directed to assess the training needs of national staff, distinguishing among three levels of managers: Executive (National Director), Senior (heads of national departments) and Middle Managers (heads of service delivery units and their sections), to determine the major subject areas in which training was required; to estimate the number of people requiring such training worldwide; and to recommend appropriate organisational options for delivery of the training.

The TNA identified a "strong need for training to develop planning skills, leadership, performance measurement, and control, particularly in the financial and cost-control skills." The TNA also strongly urged that course delivery partners (Cranfield University and James Madison University) for interviews and additional background documents, a visit to the final week of the Middle Managers Course held in Amman, Jordan, in December 2006; preparation and issuance of survey questionnaires to past course graduates, National Programme Directors and Chief Technical Advisors; follow-up interviews with selected graduates; and interviews with other knowledgeable U.N. agency staff.

The study team reviewed the final reports from 10 Senior Managers Courses, as well as the reports from over a dozen Middle Managers Courses, with particular attention to subjects covered, allocation of time to subjects, use of guest lecturers and participation of time to subjects, use of guest lecturers and participation of the course. They did not anticipate the loss of trained staff nor the need for further mine-action employment to be desirable and stable with low turnover, and that management training efforts should not be limited to training just for the need for further general training once the initial round was completed. The study team noted that survey respondents identified procurement and supply chain management as critical needs, they were included in the training area of the study. At the time, these functions were not included because they were primarily handled by international staff and were only added to the study because procurement and supply chain management were expected to become important with the departure of the advisor. This conclusion was later reconsidered and these subjects were reduced, especially in the Senior Managers Course, as the course participants insisted that what was presented was not relevant to their work.

The Global TNA sought to estimate the number of people who would be appropriate candidates needing each type of management-training course. Based on the existing 16 national mine-action programs of various sizes, the study estimated there were between 80 and 175 candidates for the Senior Managers Course (which includes up to 15 Executive Managers) and between 120 and 325 candidates for the Middle Managers Course. Furthermore, as the study authors considered mine-action employment to be desirable and stable with low turnover, they recommended that the management-training effort should not be limited to training just for the need for further general training once the initial round was completed.

The respective reviews considerably strengthened both courses. They involved key stakeholders (UNDP, UNMAS, DoS, Department for International Development, donors and representatives from key national programmes) to guide the overall direction of training. A pedagogic committee was created to involve individual staff and key stakeholders and individuals willing to review the substance of the training courses.

The management training courses have had a significant impact on national mine-action management skills organized in five substantive areas plus a core management subject area. The courses have been thoroughly reviewed in 2005, acting directly on a country-specific basis. The management training courses have been through national programmes of various sizes, the study estimated there were between 80 and 175 candidates for the Senior Managers Course (which includes up to 15 Executive Managers) and between 120 and 325 candidates for the Middle Managers Course. Furthermore, as the study authors considered mine-motion employment to be desirable and stable with low turnover, they recommended that the management-training effort should not be limited to training just for the need for further general training once the initial round was completed.

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Oslo Process Makes Progress in Banning Cluster Munitions

Representatives from 138 nations and 140 civil societies concluded the third major international conference on cluster munitions in early December 2007, noting that a cluster ban treaty will likely be signed in 2008. The conference, meeting in Vienna, Austria, reported that important progress was made on issues like victim assistance, clearance, stockpile destruction and international cooperation and assistance.

Members of the civil societies came from more than 50 countries and praised the progress made at the conference. The need for standardized and monitored victim assistance was particularly important to these organizations, which sought consensus on assistance to victims and their families and communities, as well as on obligations to clear contaminated areas and stockpiles.

Survivors of cluster munition accidents also participated in the conference.

The most contentious part of the conference concerned the prohibition and definition of a cluster munition. While some representatives wanted to see a total ban on all cluster munitions, some countries called for exemptions to certain weapons with self-destruct capabilities and failure rates of a certain percentage. Other countries called for a transition period in which banned weapons still could be used. Despite disagreements over certain parts of a possible treaty, the conference ended optimistically.

The Vienna meeting was preceded by a similar meeting at the end of May 2007, with more than 60 countries meeting in Oslo, Norway. The Oslo Process continued in February 2008, and will conclude in Dublin, Ireland, in May. African countries met in March in Uganda to consolidate their position as a region. A treaty signing ceremony in Oslo, Norway, is expected for later in 2008.

News Brief

Charles Downs has worked in mine action since 1993 when he became the Chief of the Mine Action Unit of the United Nations Office for Project Services, a position he held until 2004. Current assignments include Survey, Action Center Technical Advisor of the Angola Landmine Impact Survey, and advisor to UNDP/Government of Angola to design in their strategic planning and implementation of mine action programs at the international level.

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