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 fulfill 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 abuse of the humanitarian causes 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.

See Endnotes, page 112

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 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, insights 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 MarieNilsson at m.nilsson@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, 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 600 middle managers) completed these courses initiated by the United Nations Development Programme. 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 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 programmes.

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 of the effectiveness of the national programmes from the perspective of key external stakeholders.

The GICHD study team (led by the author)2 established a work plan to collect and analyse relevant information, including interviews with the UNDP and background documents; site visits to the two prime

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Downs UNDP Management Training Programme for National Mine-Action Managers

The current training programmes for National Mine Action Managers are examined to determine the advantages of the courses as well as areas in which the programmes can be improved.

by Charles Downs [ Downs Consulting ]

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Senior Managers Course participants enjoyed a metal detector demonstration at TI, Belvoir while studying at James Madison University.


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Humanitarian Affairs study2 on the “Development of Indigenous Mine Action Capacity,” which concluded that the absence of management

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UNDP Management Training Programme 2

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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 all 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 participant evaluations. The report did not review the detailed content of individual class sessions, although it did pay close attention to graduate comments on specific areas.

Although the graduate survey was prepared in English, it was translated into Arabic, Dari, Khmer, Portuguese and Serbo-Croatian and subsequently sent out in the third week of December. The surveys of NPDs and CTAs were sent in English at that same time. Unfortunately, the period to complete and return the surveys overlapped with year-end holidays for most respondents, likely reducing the level of return. A total of 184 graduates provided questionnaire responses, representing 27 percent of the total overall, including 54 of the 184 SMC graduates (29 percent) and 130 of the 509 MMC graduates (26 percent) of the total overall, including 54 of the 184 SMC graduates (29 percent) and 130 of the 509 MMC graduates (26 percent) of the total overall, including 54 of the 184 SMC graduates (29 percent) and 130 of the 509 MMC graduates (26 percent) of the attempted contacts.

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 management-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 financial and cost-control skills.” The TNA also strongly urged training to develop procurement and supply chain management as critical needs, as 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 volunteers. The conclusion was later recommended and these subjects were reduced, especially in the Senior Managers Course, as the course participants insisted that what was left was not sufficient to do the job.

The Global TNA sought to estimate the number of people who should be appropriate candidates needing each type of management-training course. Based on the existing 16 national mine-action programmes of various sizes, the estimate required 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 need of the service” be the only factor for further general training once the initial round was completed.

The Senior Managers Course was designed to cover “Managing Complexity and Change,” “Outsourcing,” “Leadership, Team Building and Group Dynamics,” and “Strategic Planning and Management.” The Senior Manager’s Course was aimed at those people ready for the next step in their careers.

The Middle Managers Course was aimed at people who had completed the Senior Manager’s Course and were ready to assume the responsibilities of a Middle Manager.

Key Conclusions of the Review

Impact of the courses. Graduates and their National Directors are convinced the courses enabled them to be better managers and strengthen their organisations. The SMCs and MMCs are valuable in improving the general management level of mine-action programmes, in the establishment of a common understanding of mine-action issues and in the development of a common language that makes communication and cooperation more effective within national programmes and organisations, among national programmes, and between the various stakeholders, and maintains visibility and support throughout the mine-action community. Further, it has provided this common language to National Directors so they are less dependent on international advisers to access the mine-action world. This independence has increased the confidence of National Directors and enhanced their profiles in international fora.

The management training courses have had a significant impact on networking and cooperation among country programmes and with staff in related organisations who do not directly work together. The MMC graduates affirm that the exchange of experience with senior managers of other countries was one of the greatest benefits of the course. Most graduates remain in contact with one another for some time after the course, although this was more often a social contact than work-related. The MMC graduates strongly advise that the contacts and opportunity to work with staff of other units and organisations were equally as useful as the course content or learning about mine action and its international context. This natural indirect benefit of the course experience could be encouraged and supported, perhaps through a Web-based forum for the SMCs graduates and periodic in-country gatherings for the MMC graduates.

Course content and organization. Both the SMC and MMC are of good quality and managed professionally by the prime delivery partners. Both courses have evolved over time, reflecting feedback from course graduates and improved course content and delivery. The SMCs and MMCs are valuable in improving the general management level of mine-action issues, courses and exercises.

Increasing interest by United Nations agencies and international stakeholders to present to the Senior Managers Course has reduced the time available for core management subjects. On the other hand, the SMCS and MMCs are of good quality and managed professionally by the prime delivery partners. Both courses have evolved over time, reflecting feedback from course graduates and improved course content and delivery. The SMCs and MMCs are valuable in improving the general management level of mine-action issues, courses and exercises.

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in the meantime. National programmes often state higher numbers of middle managers than the estimate used in the TNA. The need for MMCs should be determined at the level of the respective national programme, through a more specific national TNA developed within the framework of a strategic assessment of the capacity development requirements of the national programme.

Coordinators should design future training efforts within a strategic framework, coordinating them with other actions to enhance the performance of the national mine-action programme. Among these facilitating actions should be guidance to international Technical Advisors to support capacity development of national staff.

Need for more frequent evaluation. More than six years elapsed between the first of the SMCS and MMCs and the initial overview of each course. The delivery partners wrote completion reports with each course or contract and the UNDP submitted completion reports to donors. However, while the desirability of assessing impact was recognized, an inappropriate long period transpired without evaluation, given that the UNDP spent some US$1.3 to 82 million, and others spent double that amount on this UNDP supported training programme.

The impact of the management training should be assessed more regularly at both the global and, more importantly, the national level. This review should include:

- Follow-up on each course to assess its impact and the use of materials (at roughly three and 12 month intervals following the course) to recommend steps within the national programme to make better use of the learning, and to provide feedback regarding possible adjustments to the training.
- Assessment of the impact of training on the performance of the national mine-action programme, especially from the perspective of the stakeholder groups who are dependent on the services of the mine-action programme.

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, improvement of UNDP efforts to strengthen national capacity to manage projects of the Global Fund against AIDS, TB and Malaria, advisor to UNDP/Government of Iraq in the design of its own mine-action strategy and professor of international project management at New York University Wagner School. E-mail: charles.downs@gmail.com

News Brief

Oso Process Meeting 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 munitions 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 seek a total ban on all cluster munitions, some countries called for exceptions 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 Lima, Peru. 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.

The VA Information System in BiH

Because of the conflict there in the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been plagued by landmines, exploded remnants, explosive remnants of war and all of the problems associated with them. With so many victims, the need for an organized system to help these people was imperative. In this article, the author describes how the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center and other organizations helped establish an information system in BiH to help inform landmine victims about what they can do to help themselves and their families.

by Zoran V. Gruijić [Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center]

A ccording to the Landmine Impact Survey, conducted in 2002 and 2003, mine- and UXO-contaminated locations directly impact the security of an estimated 1,378,000 people, 100,000 of whom live in highly impacted communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the beginning of the conflict until the end of 2006, there were 4,822 mine/UXO casualties in BiH. In the period from 1996 until the end of 2006, there were 1,577 mine casualties, out of which 463 persons were killed. The period 2000–2005, there was an increase compared to the period of 1998–2003 of mine accidents with 55 victims, including 18 deaths.

Donating has been taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 12 years. Landmine victim assistance in BiH is even older—the first landmine victim-assistance activities started in early 1994. Naturally, the state had institutions that were expected to take care of the task, but it was unreasonable to expect them to contribute significantly in the initial days. This system will ensure timeliness and consistency of programs and projects, and donors, and its existence will provide full transparency of all

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