A Harvest of Hope: Roots of Peace Celebrates 10 Years

Heidi Kuhn

Roots of Peace

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Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine-action programmes and operators, creates and disseminates knowledge, works to improve quality management and standards and provides support to instruments of international law.

by Ian Mansfield [Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining]

Land Release Workshop

On 20 and 21 June 2007, a workshop focusing on the topic of “Land Release” was held at the GICHD and attended by experts from all sectors of the mine-action community—national, United Nations, nongovernmental organizations and commercial.

The workshop drew on the diverse experience of the attendees to develop a clearer perspective of the issues related to land release policies. This relates to land that had previously been thought to be suspect, but upon further investigation, can be released without full clearance. Government officials and practitioners who have already developed and implemented clear methodologies for use in their countries, as well as those with political, operational and implementation experience, shared their knowledge with the workshop participants. The subject was discussed in the context of risk management and its applicability to these processes.

The consensus was clear that more efforts need to be made to speed up and legitimize methodologies and principles for land release. These may assist mine-affected countries to improve their processes and provide a more effective environment in which to undertake clearance. A handbook documenting best practices was released in late 2007, and the GICHD will continue to work in these areas to provide further guidelines.

New “Guides” Published

In April 2007, the GICHD published its revised and updated Guide to Mine Action and ERW. Building on previous editions, this latest version includes references to explosive remnants of war and also includes new chapters on development approaches to mine-action planning, as well as evaluation. The Guide was released in Arabic at the Eighth Meeting of States Parties in Jordan in November 2007, and the French and Spanish editions will be available in early 2008.

The GICHD also released the Guide to Cluster Munitions in November 2007. This new booklet explains in plain language the types and characteristics of cluster munitions, their implication for clearance programmes and the needs of victims. It also addresses the current, ongoing efforts in international law to ban or restrict the use of cluster weapons.

Linking Mine Action to Development

In June 2007, the GICHD co-organised a two-day workshop in Cambodia, in cooperation with AusAid and the United Nations Development Programme, bringing together around 40 mine-action and development practitioners from the region. A similar workshop was held in Yemen in November. The aims of the meetings were to:

- Deepen understanding of the rationale for and benefits of linking mine action with development cooperation
- Share experiences and lessons learnt from relevant programmes and projects in the region
- Discuss what is needed to strengthen those linkages further and to examine the feasibility and opportunities for replication and expanding the projects
- Identify the main obstacles for successful cooperation and linkages in the past
- Identify what needs to be changed, improved or done differently in the future, and how
- The discussions and presentations at the workshops emphasized the need for having decisions on evidence and the importance of demonstrating and advocating for greater linkages between mine action and development to key target audiences. A couple of specific regional issues were also identified. Full details of the Linking Mine Action and Development project can be found on the GICHD Web site at www.gichd.org.

See Endnotes, page 112

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Kuhn: A Harvest of Hope: Roots of Peace Celebrates 10 Years

Roots of Peace focuses on clearing mined farming areas and specializes in rebuilding these areas for farmers. To aid this process, the organization promotes the growing of sustainable and high-value crops. This article describes some of the organization’s successful efforts in Afghanistan and argues the effectiveness of its approach for future mine-action efforts.

by Heidi Kuhn [Roots of Peace]
in 1996, the frontline was established just north of the city at Puli Soffian because landmines prevented farmers from returning to their land. The famous Thompson seedless grapes that American children enjoy in their native livelihoods for farmers. Roots of Peace has removed landmines taking in a whole string of villages. One of the front was pushed further north and finally settled just short of Bagram commander, led the forces that were being pushed north by the Taliban during the years of civil conflict, the world changed. Afghan products that were ideal for sun-dried raisins—a good business 30 years ago. But water wells and irrigation canals. As soon as a house or patch of land was cleared, farmers and their families eagerly moved back in, great deal of landmines to reclaim their homes and restore their livelihoods. When Roots of Peace began working with grape farmers in the Shomali Valley in 2004, the majority of farmers were growing grapes that were ideal for sun-dried raisins—a good business 30 years ago. But during the years of civil conflict, the world changed. Farmers emerged from their tents and herded their sheep along the Silk Road riddled with divots. Quietly, I prayed that our tires would not hit an anti-tank mine. Farmers emerged from their tents and herded their sheep along narrow paths marked by hundreds of red and white painted rocks indicating forbidden ranges in the mine-riddled area. The loss of an animal that strays into a minefield can mean an entire family starts to starve, so the Afghan sheep herder must be aware of his surroundings at all times.

Nearly an hour later, our four-wheel drive vehicle headed up a winding road riddled with divots. Quietly, I prayed that our tires would not hit an anti-tank mine. Farmers emerged from their tents and herded their sheep along narrow paths marked by hundreds of red and white painted rocks indicating forbidden ranges in the mine-riddled area. The loss of an animal that strays into a minefield can mean an entire family starts to starve, so the Afghan sheep herder must be aware of his surroundings at all times. As we drove north on that October day, we saw the silhouettes of mujahedeen. We left the village of Shakeradara and continued on our journey through the Shomali Plain. The elders of the Qula Bayazid village were greeting us in the village of Shakeradara, thanking us for our support. Shamim Jawad later communicated to me indicating forbidden ranges in the mine-riddled area. The loss of an animal that strays into a minefield can mean an entire family starts to starve, so the Afghan sheep herder must be aware of his surroundings at all times.

The concept of restoring vineyards to war-torn lands was expanded through the Shomali Plain. Cuttings from these varietals were now available. Roots of Peace, began the orga-As we drove north on that October day, we saw the silhouettes of mujahedeen. We left the village of Shakeradara and continued on our journey through the Shomali Plain. The elders of the Qula Bayazid village were greeting us in the village of Shakeradara, thanking us for our support. Shamim Jawad later communicated to me indicating forbidden ranges in the mine-riddled area. The loss of an animal that strays into a minefield can mean an entire family starts to starve, so the Afghan sheep herder must be aware of his surroundings at all times.

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