July 2007

Needs Assessment in Lao PDR

Jo Durham
Mines Advisory Group

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol11/iss1/28

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
that this aspect of ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System alone is enough to gener-
ate vast quality improvements in an organisa-
tion, purely through the discipline and effect caused by genuine management commitment.

Operations people must realise that they are responsible for quality—good or bad. Quality-assurance/quality-control person-
el are only responsible for reporting on the state of quality, not for generating quality.

Product Realisation
The product realisation process is none other than the core business process of man-
ufacturing its product(s) or service(s). It is self-evident that the best practice dictates that this process should be properly planned and developed to meet the requirements of the product and of the customer. This statement is further supported by Oakland who found in his research that “identify-
ing key-business process” was one of the best practices found among award-winning companies. In demining, all processes in the minefield are described and guided by stan-
dard operating procedures. However, the

The Standard is even more useful for demining organisa-
tions in developing countries, as it can be a framework to
direct the organisation’s activities without having to pur-
chase management expertise from developed countries.

mined field is only the last stage of the product-
realisation process. The process stages before that are very seldom described and audited.

In Integrated Process Management: A Quality Model, Rodger Slater makes the argument that entropy is a "universal force which relentlessly presses all activity in the direction of disorder." He contends further that if discipline (measurement and control) is not applied to key variables, they will move to a state of chaos, even if they are not problematic at the moment.

The Standard encapsulates the essence of those variables in the production/service process and seeks to impose the discipline on them that is required to prevent these as-
pects from drifting into chaos.

Measurement, Analysis and Improvement
Customer satisfaction not only relates to the end user or external customer, it is also applicable for internal customers, i.e., those
various people who develop the product through the different stages of the process. The product must fulfill certain require-
ments before it can be passed on to the next

stage of the process. It must be measured to ensure that problems do not occur further down the process. Oakland calls these internal customer relationships “quality chains,” and claims that if they are not managed properly, they could destroy the value of the product. This is where the product Realisation process. The process stages before that are very seldom described and audited.

Oakland states that “a good quality man-
agement system will not function without adequate audits and reviews.” A further ad-
vantage of audits is that they automatically
review processes and systems and are there-
fore useful for continual improvement. The Standard requires organisations to con-
tinually improve their processes through a range of activities from reviewing noncon-
fomerities to reviewing corrective actions. This should be taken further if the organisation should identify potential nonconformities

Oakland® contends that any organisation, in essence, competes on its reputation for quality, reliability and price. Of the three, quality is the most important. It is extremely difficult to change a reputation from bad to good, but very easy to go from good to bad. The Standard provides a framework to prove to customers that an organisation is serious about its business and takes the customers’ requirements seriously. In a donor-driven en-
vironment, transparency and effectiveness of organisations are the basis on which donors choose to get involved. Organisations wait-
ing to obtain sustainable, long-term donors will only be in a position to compete if the Standard provides donors with confidence and will-
ingness to engage in lasting partnerships.

The ISO 9001:2000 System is fully compatible with and supported by interna-
tional best practice. Any demining organisa-
tion that seeks to improve its standards and achieve world-class recognition should seri-
ously consider taking a strategic step forward and adopting a quality management system based on the ISO 9001:2000 standard.

Conclusion
The ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System requirements are an extremely useful set of tools that cover the full spectrum of management best practice as evidenced cur-
rently. The Standard is even more useful for

demining organisations in developing coun-
tries, as it can be a framework to direct the organisation’s activities without having to pur-
chase management expertise from developed countries.

and their causes in order to take preven-
tive action. Oakland supports this view
and expands it to include a focus on prevention rather than cure. Quality is about preven-
tion—you cannot "inspect" quality into a product. It has to happen before the inspec-
tion process.

Charles Loxton was born in South Africa in 1960 and served in the South African Army for more than 15 years. Building on a strong military and management background as Lieutenant Colonel (retired) serving in the Army, he


Mr. Haewrru
Chief of Staff
United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan
P.O. Box 320
Kabul, Afghanistan
E-mail: hrueaw@unama.org

The ISO 9001:2000—Quality Management System requirements are an extremely useful set of tools that cover the full spectrum of management best practice as evidenced cur-
rently. The Standard is even more useful for
demining organisations in developing coun-
tries, as it can be a framework to direct the organisation’s activities without having to pur-
chase management expertise from developed countries.

and their causes in order to take preven-
tive action. Oakland supports this view
and expands it to include a focus on prevention rather than cure. Quality is about preven-
tion—you cannot "inspect" quality into a product. It has to happen before the inspec-
tion process.

Conclusion
The ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System requirements are an extremely useful set of tools that cover the full spectrum of management best practice as evidenced cur-
rently. The Standard is even more useful for
demining organisations in developing coun-
tries, as it can be a framework to direct the organisation’s activities without having to pur-
chase management expertise from developed countries.

The Standard is a clear way to guide such
organisations to world-class status. There is,
however, a prerequisite to all these state-
ments, and that is management commit-
ment—if the top management team is not to be totally committed and accepted re-
ponsibility for quality improvement, efforts will be short-lived.

The Standard is a clear way to guide such
organisations to world-class status. There is,
however, a prerequisite to all these state-
ments, and that is management commit-
ment—if the top management team is not to be totally committed and accepted re-
ponsibility for quality improvement, efforts will be short-lived.

This article is published posthumous-
ly. Charles Loxton passed away in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in February 2006. The United Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan is proud to pay a tribute to Mr. Loxton in approving the publication of this article, written during his last assignment. Charles Loxton is remembered for his dedication, hard work and joie de vivre.
1973, there is a widespread contamination of UXO, which continues to act as a barrier to socioeconomic development and insecurity for adults and children. These injuries can result in long-term medical and psychological after effects as well as a huge financial burden to affected individuals, families, their communities and health services.

The government of Lao PDR, with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, established the Lao PDR Trust Fund for UXO in 1995 to finance a national programme of clearance and education. A National Survey on the Socio-economic Impact of UXO was conducted9 and reported UXO contamination in 25 percent of all Lao villages. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Lao PDR10 as well as other government and donor documents, identify UXO and the threat it continues to pose to both livelihood security and personal safety as cross-cutting issues in tackling poverty.

As with most other mine-action programmes, the Lao MRE programme aims to promote safety in UXO-contaminated communities and has been primarily underpinned by psychological theories of behaviour change, such as the Health Belief Model.11 More specifically, UNICEF has supported MRE for children in several at-risk communities in 12 of the more heavily contaminated provinces. In preparation for its next five-year strategy, UNICEF commissioned MAG to undertake a risk assessment to ascertain who is currently at risk and why, as well as what can be done to undertake a risk assessment to ascertain who is currently at risk and why, as well as what can be done to mitigate the risk.

Methodology
The assessment took an eclectic approach to the risk assessment combining ecological approaches to health promotion and injury-prevention and risk-management approaches to environmental health. The study was also informed by the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) Mine Risk Education Best Practice Guidebook2, Data Collection and Needs Assessment for MRE12 as well as the other IMAS for MRE Best Practice Guidebooks13 and the UNICEF technical note Children Participating in Research Monitoring and Evaluation – Ethics and Your Responsibilities as a Manager.14

The assessment consisted of four main components: a literature review; development, testing and administration of a quantitative Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) questionnaire; a qualitative assessment; and data analyses. An analysis of the available accident data was also used to inform the assessment, which was conducted by a MAG research team.

The KAP questionnaire was administered in five UXO-contaminated provinces. Multi-stage cluster sampling, probability proportional to size to determine the sampling size and random sampling to identify the sample from each Province. A MAG research team analysed the KAP questionnaire using a statistical analysis software package, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and provided broad contextual information on a level of community UXO awareness, attitudes, behaviours, assessment of risk associated with certain behaviours, and how and where people gained knowledge about UXO.

The results of the KAP were used to develop qualitative survey tools then administered in two provinces using content analysis, the qualitative phase of the research enabled a better understanding of the individual circumstances, motivations and contributing factors which lead to voluntary or deliberate and unintentional exposure to live ordnance. It also allowed for a more detailed understanding of the range of contributing socioeconomic, psychological, cultural, political and legal factors that contribute to risk behaviours and exposure to live ordnance. Qualitative data was gathered from UXO operators—technical staff and programme managers using semi-structured and unstructured interviews to gain an “expert” perspective.

Findings
The assessment found overall a high level of UXO awareness and understanding among both adults and children. For example, 82 percent of the adult respondents indicated that no UXO is safe and provided a range of correct responses regarding common events that cause UXO to detonate—the children surveyed, 99.6 percent considered UXO to be dangerous, with most of them reporting being afraid of UXO.

Despite these known risks however, many people, including women and children, reported continuing to interact with live or potentially live ordnance on an almost daily basis. Respondents rationally defended this apparent inconsistency, even though their view was often at odds with “experts” views. The assessment also found the general categories often to be characteristic at-risk populations, that is, the uninformed, the unaware, the reckless and the intentional, were less relevant to the context of Lao PDR. Instead, the study distinguished between intentional exposure (i.e. voluntary) to live ordnance—where actors aware of the risk purposefully expose themselves to ordnance—and unintentional exposure (involuntary). Voluntary exposure may include for example, removing items of UXO to another location or tampering with ordnance for economic gain. Voluntary exposure included groups identified as high risk, for example:

- Adult scrap-metal collectors
- Adults who move UXO out of farming land
- Scrap-metal dealers
- Adults who deliberately dismantle UXO
- Children who collect scrap metal
- Children who play or tamper with UXO
- Adults and children who work on agricultural land
- Out-of-school youth and young children

Unintentional exposure. Unintentional exposure to UXO injury is when a person’s exposure to live ordnance is unplanned and may include exposure due to inattention or lack of knowledge. While some of the prevention activities may be the same, inattention is an important variable and particularly relevant in Lao PDR where UXO injury due to deliberate tampering of UXO is known to be increasing.

Involuntary exposure, such as exposure to sub-surface UXO while farming, is generally feared due to the lack of control people have over the situation. People have reported voluntarily exposing themselves to UXO—for example, removing items from farming land—in order to avoid possible unintentional exposure later.

Contributing factors to involuntary exposure include the inability of clearance agencies to respond to the needs of farmers and a lack of alternative agricultural land. The following quote expresses a view shared by many UXO operators who are not safe to move, when UXO are discovered in their fields, or in their pastime, the UXO operators have to move them, otherwise the following year when we farm again we don’t know where they are.

Unintentional exposure. The assessment identified a number of perceptual, cognitive, pragmatic and economic market factors that informed respondents’ rational defence of voluntary risk-taking behaviour. Respondents reported weighing bene-

Terms of Use | Privacy Policy | Contact Us | © 2023 Journal of Mine Action
plicked it up and moved it out from the bomb crater to a nearby area. I was afraid when moving the bomb but I needed the money. In one clear crater I could get 60 kilograms (88 pounds) of scrap metal.” Currently, scrap metal is approximately 1,700 kip per kilo (approximately 23 cents). Historically, all UXO contamination is in rural Laos where most people—about 80 percent of the population—are subsistence rice farmers and have limited options for generating a cash income if they stay within their communities and home base. Almost all respondents who reported voluntary exposure potentially live ordnance were able to provide examples of the risk-reduction strategies they took. These indigenous risk-reduction strategies are often at odds, however, with expert views of safe handling of UXO. Indeed, some respondents also recognized that their strategies might still result in injury and tried to learn more by watching village experts and experimenting. Observing UXO clearance teams to learn the way they handle UXO. Scrap-metal collectors, including men, women and children using locally-pressed metal detectors also had a number of risk-reduction strategies included in the one described in the following statement: “I feel safer when digging, more confident in dealing with UXO when I hear the small beep.” The system of the detector is that if we find a small piece of metal, we get a loud sound.”

While a number of respondents were able to describe strategies they use for distinguishing between safe and unsafe ordnance, respondents identified accurate recognition skills as an area in which they felt they needed more knowledge, according to one scrap-metal dealer. “Without knowing it, I have bought many things from villagers—BLU11 with explosives, hand grenades with no pins, bullets, mortar shells with speed.” The survey also identified a number of contradictions. For example, scrap-metal collection on the one hand is thought to be potentially risky but on the other hand is not necessarily considered a threat. This may be due to a cognitive coping strategy whereby the risk is explained away as being exaggerated or a belief that the person has the necessary skills to remain in control.

Conclusion
The assessment found UXO risk-takers, including women and children, are generally aware of the risk and engage in some form of risk-assessment process, which they use to make rational and deliberate decisions regarding acceptable risk. However, from other stakeholders’ perspectives such as humanitarian mine-action experts, regulatory bodies, educators and decision makers, there are different views on acceptability and rationality of local risk-assessment processes. This conflict is largely about a divergent definition of risk, differences in how problems are structured and solved, differences in judgments about the probability of an accident, and different kinds of knowledge.

While awareness is an important prerequisite to change and ongoing awareness campaigns may be essential for children, the assessment did not identify it as a major determinant of risk behaviour. Focusing on traditional message-based approaches to MRE is likely to miss key intervention that does not address the major underlying determinants of behaviour. Traditional messages on expert-perceived positive behaviours common in MRE programmes may include “Don’t touch UXO” and “If you see UXO, report it to a mine-action agency!” However, this approach could undermine risk reduction amongst MRE planners falling into the common pitfall of developing an intervention that does not address the major determinants of high-risk behaviour.

To be effective, the MRE programme will have to take into account the determinants of behaviour identified in the assessment. Such an approach may include life skills and communication training. It should also take into account the information and skill-development needs of at-risk communities as identified by respondents in this assessment. In this sense, it represents a paradigm shift from current “exporters” HMA practice and message-based MRE. With its emphasis on standards, safety, technical expertise, and zero- or minimal risk, implementing such an approach, which actively engages high-risk populations and builds current coping strategies and knowledge, is likely to be challenging. Such an approach will require a change from zero-risk to risk minimization and recognition of the often valid risk-assessment processes and risk-reduction strategies indigenous communities employ. It may also involve a more meaningful and useful transfer of knowledge from experts to laypeople. As M. Worden noted, speaking in the field, “it is crucial in dangerous areas how to minimize the threat of explosive remnants of war.”

Clearance Goals
The vision of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency is to rid Kurdistan of ERW. Currently the mission is to reduce the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance in the affected communities of Kurdistan. This will be achieved through the demining process (survey of contaminated communities, mapping, marking, of hazardous areas, and destruction of mines and UXO), mine-risk education and victim assistance. It is a great challenge to clear mines from Kurdistan due to the difficulty of the demining process, the large areas that were contaminated and the approximate quantity of emplaced mines numbering in the millions.

Achievements
There are 3,512 registered minefields in Kurdistan. From the beginning of the demining process in Kurdistan early 1993 to the end of 2000, 567 minefields and battle areas have been cleared and returned to their economic, social and physical well-being. The previous Iraqi governments systematically contaminated Kurdistan’s land with mines. Since the initiation of the Kurdish freedom revolution and other Kurdish struggles, this practice was continuously applied to Kurdistan lands and was prolonged when the former Iraqi regime came to power in February 1963. An “Arabisation” strategy was used in an attempt to change the demographics of northern Iraq whereby the Iraqi government displaced Kurdish families from their land and replaced them with Arab families from other areas of Iraq. In addition to dealing with this, during the consecutive conflicts that consumed all of Iraq and Kurdistan, huge areas of Kurdish land were heavily contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war. This led to thousands of Kurdish citizens being killed or facing lifelong handicaps.

The Mine-action Process in Iraqi Kurdistan
The Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency has been working to clear Kurdistan of landmines and unexploded ordnance that were placed by the former Iraqi government over the past 40 years and the Iranian Army during the Iran-Iraq War from 1980–1988. The Agency is overcoming many challenges and has cleared a vast number of minefields so the land can be handed back to the owners. Casualties from explosive remnants of war are extremely high but a new mine-risk-education program will inform people who live in dangerous areas how to minimize the threat of explosive remnants of war.

by Jamal Jalal Hussein [Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency]