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Finally, Safe Demining

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Gasimov taught mine-risk education to schoolchildren in affected areas of Azerbaijan. "I used to go to schools conducting mine-risk education in order to prevent incidents such as my own," he remembers.

Gasimov's commitment to his work in mine action helped him receive the promotion to Team Leader, Training and Quality Assurance in 2005. He not only contributes his knowledge and dedication to the field, but he also has taught mine victims that recovery from tragic situations is well within reach.

"It is Gasimov's sense of hope, compassion and unity that makes him a valuable member of the mining community. He not only contributes this knowledge and dedication to the field, but he also has taught mine victims that recovery from tragic situations is well within reach."

Souza and Sa: Finally Safe Demining

Excerpts from "Souza and Sa: Finally Safe Demining" by Vinicius Souza and Maria Eugênia Sa, 2004:

"In addition to having mine-related sports as a border with Ecuador resulting in a conflict related long time ago, Peru currently faces primarily on civilian landmine accidents in the areas surrounding the towers of the power-transmission lines that cross the country. In the mid-1980s, guerrillas of the Sendero Luminoso group launched a strategy to knock down towers with high-tension lines to cause blackouts in several regions, including the capital, Lima. In 1986, in one day—the day before elections—10 towers were knocked down, resulting in a nationwide blackout.

After that incident, authorities decided it was urgent to prepare their power-transmission infrastructure. However, it was not feasible to keep guards around every tower, many of which were located deep in the jungle, in inhospitable areas or at high altitudes. The solution was to employ landmines quickly around those towers, but as with every plan created in haste, many mistakes with fatal consequences resulted.

Charged with the task of removing the landmines, the National Police developed an "explosive device for self-protection," which was basically an adapted army grenade, equipped with a system of pressure activation and assembled in the very area where it was placed. Essentially, the device was nothing more than an improvised landmine. Later, the country's Navy would develop a mine of its own. It was smaller and more powerful, but a little safer in its functioning.

In 1989, a group of 60 police officers was assigned to plant 30 to 50 landmines around each of the 1,711 towers located at strategic spots in the departments of Lima, Junín, Huancavelica and La. Of those 60 professionals, only 23 had had any kind of training and qualification in explosives, and they transferred that knowledge to the others. Worst still, each time one of the towers needed technical maintenance, those professionals were sent ahead to "open a path" to the tower, disarming and removing the landmines from a strip of land where they would be replaced and electrified later.

They had no personal protective equipment and no plan for transportation and rescue if required. There were no suitable maps of mine locations, either, since many of them had to be planted quickly in areas with elevations of over 5,000 meters (16,000 feet) due to the physiological threats posed by high altitudes, or were subjected to possible displacement caused by rain, floods, landslides, vegetation growth, etc.

The lack of proper training and qualifications, personal safety equipment and accurate maps, in addition to the quality of landmines themselves and the
mismatched strategic removal and reinvestment of the landmines, caused dozens of accidents. Eighty-one of the professionals who had worked in the Division of Safety in Lao National UXO-Destruction-Explosive Devices for Self-protection Unit were involved in explosions. Many of them were hospitalized and five died as a result of their wounds. Of the survivors, 41 were injured too badly to return to work, and 35 are still working with mild injuries. Eighteen of them had worked in the Division of Safety in Landmine Activation–Deactivation Committee. Among those, 173 of them in the areas surrounding power-transmission towers by mid-2007, provided there are no interruptions. Each demining squad comprises eight professionals: one squad head, two deminers, two pilots, one expert in explosives, one male nurse and one female member responsible for the campaign of awareness and mine-risk education for the communities living near the affected areas. They use metal detector and protect themselves with proper boots, vests and anti-impact helmets.

Demanding quality assurance for all towers should have been completed by June 2006, but, due to bureaucratic problems, the deadline for the agreement between PETRA and QAS was postposed. Consequently, two of the towers are no longer lethal, but exploded on location with total safety. Each demining squad comprises eight professionals: one squad head, two deminers, two pilots, one expert in explosives, one male nurse and one female member responsible for the campaign of awareness and mine-risk education for the communities living near the affected areas. They use metal detector and protect themselves with proper boots, vests and anti-impact helmets.

Detecting bomb fragments, or four years due to resource constraints and the number of people of the dangers of UXO. A team is only able to visit five to six villages each month and every village once every three to four years due to resource constraints and the number of people involved in UXO work.

Among the accidents in the hospital for only four days, she was unable to move easily for three months following the incident. Lao PDR has more than 11 million UXO, scattered all over 15 provinces. These bomblets are remnants of the second Indochina conflict between 1964 and 1973, known in America as the Vietnam War. Thirty years after the conflict ended, these landmines continue to explode, causing a hindrance to the country’s socioeconomic development.

The Lao National UXO (UXO-LAO) is the National humanitarian unexploded-ordnance-clearance organization. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, protecting children and adults from injury or death. UXO-LAO currently works as a Technical Working Group (TWG) and is a member of the International Network of UXO-Humanitarian Mine Action (INUMA) as a National Implementation Committee (NIC). The Lao National UXO Project (UXO-LAO) is the National humanitarian unexploded-ordnance-clearance organization. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, protecting children and adults from injury or death. UXO-LAO currently works as a Technical Working Group (TWG) and is a member of the International Network of UXO-Humanitarian Mine Action (INUMA) as a National Implementation Committee (NIC). The project’s mission is to eliminate all remaining landmines and UXO, to ensure that no innocent life is lost to the dangers of UXO. The project is currently working in the provinces of Xiangkhouang, Vientiane, Phou Khoun, Phongsali, Luang Namtha, Houaphan, and Bokeo.

See Endnotes, page 111