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## Sudan

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## Sudan

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**By: Leah Hoy [ Mine Action Information Center ]**

A civil war lasting for more than 20 years has caused Sudan's landmine problem to be of great concern. According to UNICEF, Sudan ranks among the top 10 landmine-affected countries worldwide even though the full extent of the problem is largely unknown because no Landmine Impact Survey has been conducted. The greatest concentration of explosive remnants of war is located in the south, where the bulk of the fighting occurred, but exact statistics regarding existing stockpiles and mine-related incidents are unavailable due to a lack of records.

There appears to be hope on the horizon for the people of Sudan. In January 2005, the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and the Sudanese government signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which prohibits the use of landmines. The U.N. Security Council has also taken steps to improve Sudan's situation by establishing the United Nations Mission in Sudan to provide assistance for mine-action activities.

### Background

Beginning in 1983, fighting between the SPLA/M and the Sudanese government cost the country two million lives and incalculable amounts of resources, and it displaced more than 500,000 citizens. Now that the peace agreement has taken effect, these internally displaced persons are expected to return to their villages in great numbers, which is a major problem because their expected travel routes are infested with mines and unexploded ordnance. Unlike many other countries, Sudan has very few formal minefields. Instead, it is suspected large numbers of landmines contaminate areas necessary for citizen use such as bridges and water wells. The landmines were employed by both the government of Sudan and the SPLA/M.

Although Sudan signed the Ottawa



Convention<sup>1</sup> in December 1997 and ratified it in October 2003, nothing has been done as yet to implement it. Under the direction of the National Mine Action Office, it has been mandated that demining organizations complete surveys of medium and highly mine-affected areas by December 2008 and have them cleared by December 2011. Also, the SPLA/M signed Geneva Call's *Deed of Commitment*<sup>2</sup> to ban landmines in October 2001. The group agreed to stop using mines and to destroy any existing landmines and improvised explosive devices.

(click on thumbnail to see larger image in new window)

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement may prove to be more powerful, however, because it blends the aforementioned agreements by the two parties. Not only does the CPA ban the use of mines, but it also requires the SPLA/M and the Sudanese government provide all available information regarding stockpiles. Furthermore, all stockpiles must be destroyed by April 1, 2008. The CPA also addresses the recent conflict in the Darfur region. It mandates the two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement,<sup>3</sup> as well as the Sudanese government make certain all forces under their control comply with the landmine ban.

Figures ranging from 1,750 to 2,000 total landmine/UXO casualties have been recorded, but these estimates are thought to greatly understate actual numbers. The small percentage of surveys taken and the unwillingness of many to report incidents have made it nearly impossible to collect accurate data.

## Mine Action

Due to the seemingly insurmountable division between the north and south, a unified mine-action plan has been difficult to achieve in Sudan. Recent progress has been made to achieve a workable, unified authority for mine action in the country. During a recent e-mail interview, UNMAO's Chief of Staff Paul Heslop said there was no real disadvantage to being without a unified authority: "To date we have been fairly effective dealing with our national counterparts in the north and the south."<sup>4</sup>

Among the responsibilities of UNMAO, Heslop notes three important pillars: peace support as mandated by the CPA, coordination and facilitation of humanitarian demining, and capacity building. These objectives "will be achieved through the use of national and international implementing partners, the creation of a national authority and structure that facilitates mine action, and the effective mobilization of resources from both national and international sources."<sup>4</sup> The Japanese, American, British, Dutch, Swiss, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, German and Canadian governments, along with the European Union,<sup>4</sup> have provided funding.

Another step taken toward unifying the demining initiative in Sudan is the establishment of its database using the Information Management System for Mine Action.<sup>5</sup> This database serves as an information storehouse for all mine-related activities and is expected to be an invaluable source in the coordination of Sudanese mine action.

There are several international and intergovernmental organizations involved in demining Sudan. These organizations have been responsible for much of the clearance and destruction of landmines/UXO. A recent statistic states that a total of 1,307,777 square meters (323 acres) have been cleared and 61,207 pieces of UXO have been destroyed.<sup>6</sup> A few of the organizations involved are the World Food Programme, RONCO Consulting Corporation and UNICEF.

## Survivor Assistance

As part of its commitment to the Nairobi Action Plan,<sup>7</sup> Sudan has developed an extensive plan for survivor assistance, which details several objectives for 2005 through 2009. These goals include establishing a comprehensive national injury surveillance mechanism; improving access to emergency medical care and evacuation facilities; strengthening the capacity of physical-rehabilitation services and improving accessibility; developing psychosocial support services; and developing education, vocational training and socioeconomic reintegration programs in mine-affected areas.<sup>8</sup> Sudan aims to fully achieve these objectives by 2009.

Though the government has not fully implemented its survivor-assistance program, several other organizations have been involved in survivor assistance. Medair, an organization dedicated to victims of disaster situations,<sup>9</sup> provides emergency evacuation to Al-Obeid and Khartoum and operates a network of health centers, a mobile health clinic to remote communities in the Nuba Mountains, and a mobile response team in Southern Sudan. The International Committee of the Red Cross supports two referral hospitals and other primary healthcare facilities. Assistance consists of in-hospital training programs for medical personnel and technical and medical support. The National Authority for Prosthetics and Orthotics and Medical Care Development International provide physical rehabilitation services, including production and fitting of prostheses.

### Sudan's Future

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has given new hope to the people of Sudan. The agreement and the establishment of the National Mine Action Office have set objectives for demining organizations working in the country. As progress continues toward these goals, the people of Sudan will be safer from landmines.

The Sudanese have repeatedly met obstacles in recent history, but they are finally able to move in the direction of progress. The civil war is over, and, although those returning home face great dangers, demining organizations are working tirelessly to make Sudan a safe homeland for all.

### Biography

Leah Hoy is a sophomore at the University of Virginia and is majoring in nursing. She enjoys running, reading and visiting her hometown, Carlisle, Pa. Leah worked at the Mine Action Information Center for three months while a student at James Madison University.



### Endnotes

1. Formally known as the *Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects*, Geneva, Switzerland, Oct. 10, 1980.  
<http://www.ccw-treaty.com/KeyDocs/ccwtreatytext.htm>. Accessed June 5, 2006.
2. Geneva Call is an organization with the goal of involving non-state actors in mine action. Signatories of the *Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* agree to end their use of landmines and begin the process of demining. See <http://www.genevacall.org/about/testi-mission/gc-04oct01-deed.htm>. Accessed May 1, 2006.
3. In January 2006, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement merged to form the Alliance of Revolutionary Forces of West Sudan.
4. E-mail Interview. Paul Heslop, Chief of Staff/Deputy Programme Manager, United Nations Mine Action Office. Feb. 7, 2006.

5. "Information Management Overview." Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining. <http://www.gichd.ch/35.0.html>. Accessed March 20, 2006.
6. *Sudan*. PowerPoint Presentation for the United Nations Development Program Senior Managers Course. Mine Action Information Center, James Madison University. Summer 2005.
7. For more information on the Nairobi Action Plan visit [http://www.gichd.ch/fileadmin/pdf/mbc/MSP/6MSP/Nairobi\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.gichd.ch/fileadmin/pdf/mbc/MSP/6MSP/Nairobi_Action_Plan.pdf). Accessed March 22, 2006.
8. "Sudan." *Landmine Monitor Report 2005*. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2005/sudan>. Accessed Jan. 19, 2006.
9. Medair International Humanitarian Aid Organization. <http://www.medair.org>. Accessed April 19, 2006.

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1. "At a Glance: Sudan." UNICEF Web site. [http://www.unicef.org/protection/sudan\\_24361.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/sudan_24361.html). Accessed Jan. 20, 2006.
2. "Sudan." *E-MINE: The Electronic Mine Information Network*. U.N. Mine Action Service. Last updated Jan. 11, 2006. <http://www.mineaction.org/country.asp?c=25>. Accessed Jan. 23, 2006.
3. "Sudan: Landmines Taking Heavy Toll on Population." *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) News*. Jan. 11, 2006. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=51029>. Accessed Jan. 23, 2006.

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