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U Weyl

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Opportunities for an Integrated Demining Strategy in Rural Areas

By Dr U. Weyl

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Dr. Weyl is the Principal Advisor for the Malawi Border Zone Development Project for the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and Coordinator for Regional Sub-Saharan Africa International Humanitarian Demining Development (IHDD)/Community Mine Awareness Development (CMAD)

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[Editor's note: The following paper was presented at the Conference on Integrated Humanitarian Development and Community Mine Awareness for Development at the Hanns-Seidel-Foundation, Brussels, on February 22-3, 1999. It is an attempt to show the comprehensive and integrative nature of an effective mine awareness campaign.]

Introduction

As early as 1993, GTZ was one of the first organizations to recognize the importance of community mine awareness within the framework of mine survey and clearance operations. GTZ also recognized that there needs to be a partnership between the development organization and mine clearance operator. It is this partnership, which is the foundation upon which the IHDD concept has been built, modified and adapted. The CMAD concept has been developed for those communities that are deemed low priority for mine action support. The process of modification and adaptation has been continuous. It has spanned every facet of the concepts, from planning and coordination; to implementation, technological research, and adaptation; to the modification of techniques in the field, quality assurance and control; and to monitoring and evaluation.



This young girl lost an eye because of a mine explosion

Development, planning, monitoring and evaluation techniques have been adapted to mine action planning and implementation. Faced with inaccurate Level 1 survey information, we have introduced a Rapid Assessment

Methodology to confirm Level 1 information before committing to a costly Level 2 survey where there may be no real mine/UXO threat. Conventional Level 2 survey has been adapted to meet development and planning needs, and to include confidence building activities within the communities. Technically, surveys has been extended to monitoring and testing soil conditions in minefield sites, since these affect technology selection. Mine Detecting Dogs (MDD) and light mechanical ground preparation equipment have been introduced where required, obtaining greater efficiencies in terms of cost and safety. Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) has been tested and evaluated as a mine action "tool." Quality Assurance/Control (QA/QC) has been introduced at all operational levels, and as part of cost monitoring and evaluation.

Mozambique: A Starting Point

Mozambique has provided us with an excellent base from which to develop and adapt IHDD and CMAD. It is a typical example of the phases many developing countries go through following a very long period of warfare, which results in a widespread mine and UXO threat. The IHDD was created from experiences during what can be described as the emergency relief phase. It has developed through the initial reconstruction phase, and into the extended reconstruction phase. This is still ongoing, even as the country moves into the development phase. Reconstruction of the national infrastructure is advancing at a good pace. At the same time there is new investment in tourism, agriculture, oil and gas exploration, power supply, and even heavy industry.

Despite such investment, in a country whose economy is based on agriculture, rural micro-economies must underpin the national or macro economy. The development of rural areas, the opening of access for inputs and outputs, and the freeing of land for increased agricultural activity are critical. It is in these areas that IHDD and CMAD have made, and will continue to make, their contribution. These are the steps toward national economic stabilization, growth, food, security and poverty alleviation. There are many practical examples where IHDD and CMAD can be applied.

Gorongosa District, in Sofala Province, Central Mozambique, was once the breadbasket of a diverse and varied provincial economy, and a net exporter of maize. Before the Mozambique Liberation War, and subsequent Civil War, Sofala enjoyed a prosperous economy. Tourism thrived in Beira, a cosmopolitan coastal city, three hour's drive away. Within the area was the Gorongosa National Park, considered to be among the best wildlife areas in Central Africa. Gorongosa Mountain, with its specific microclimate and rare hardwood forests, was an ecological haven. Cattle ranching flourished in the northern part of the district. All this was destroyed during the war years. It will take years to rebuild. But, the first signs of restructuring are there. Gorongosa National Park is slowly being rehabilitated, with IUCN

assistance. In the two previous agricultural seasons a small agricultural surplus has been produced in the district. There is one major drawback. Gorongosa District has a serious mine and UXO problem. Plans are underway to rehabilitate major roads in Sofala Province, but the access roads within Gorongosa District are mined, as are bridges and settlement areas. Unless these are mine-cleared, the fragile improvement to the district's economy will remain tenuous. Gorongosa is a classic example of the opportunity to uplift an area so that it becomes a contributor to the national economy.



Newly installed water source has become a focal point for informal gatherings

Sussendenga District, in Manica Province, shares a common boundary with Zimbabwe, to the West along the Chimanimani mountain range. Within Zimbabwe is the Chimanimani National Park. Strong ethnic, religious and cultural ties exist between the people on both sides of the border, who are of the ChiManyika Tribe. As part

of a World Bank-funded Trans-Frontier Conservation Project there are plans to link the two areas, and to extend projects similar to Campfire (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) into Mozambique. There are, however, local reports of a minefield presence on the Mozambique side. If this information is correct, the project will be threatened and an opportunity for development in Sussendenga District may be lost.

International Humanitarian Demining Development and Community Mine Awareness Development and International Replicability

There is a tendency for people to put situations into neat "boxes." To say that what works in one situation or country cannot work in another. What IHDD has achieved, and can yet achieve in Mozambique, can be accomplished in other rural areas.

Africa, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, South America, and Sri Lanka are countries with a mine and UXO threat. They also rely on rural agriculture as their economic base. Cynics may say that the IHDD/CMAD concept developed in Africa cannot be replicated elsewhere in the world. Community-based concepts are based on a worldwide development experience and are strengthened by international mine action experience. Because of this they can work in other parts of the world where rural

communities are affected by mines and UXO. If an Angolan or a Somali or can be trained, technically, in mine and UXO removal, why not a Sri Lankan? If a Mozambican or a Zimbabwean can grasp the precepts of CMAD and apply them successfully in the field, the same can be achieved elsewhere. There is no significant difference between a rural farmer in Sri Lanka and his/her counterpart in Angola, or Laos. There are cultural, religious and social differences. Commonalties between these groups can transcend nationality.

IHDD and CMAD can be replicable internationally, wherever sufficient international commitment is available, and the need is perceived as a priority. An excellent example exists in Zimbabwe, in the area of the country's common border with Mozambique and South Africa. Here, during the Liberation War in Zimbabwe, a 61-kilometer stretch of barrier minefield was laid by Rhodesian Forces to prevent guerrilla incursions. A large part of the Sengwe Communal Land area was evacuated to accommodate the minefield, with an effective loss of some 24,150 h.a. of agricultural land and over 12,000 h.a. of traditional cattle-grazing area. The area, within Zimbabwe, borders the Gonarezhou National Park, itself a growing tourist attraction that also forms part of the Trans-Frontier Conservation Project. The minefield directly affects some 24,000 people, as well as traditional cross-border ethnic linkages.

Estimates are that upwards of Euro 1.5 million in potential income generated through agriculture is lost annually to rural farmers. As mentioned earlier, traditional cattle farming has ceased, with an attendant loss to the community of Euro 95 000 in herd-wealth. Three Campfire projects in the area are affected, with only one generating a minimal annual income. Traditional game migration routes have totally been disrupted, and there has been a massive loss of wildlife species. Finally, because traditional migration routes have been so disrupted, the Gonarezhou National Park has a serious over-population of elephant threatening the park's ecology. These human and natural disasters could be stabilised through an IHDD/CMAD operation in tandem with development support complementary to the needs of the area, benefiting both Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In terms of conservation, South Africa would also benefit.

International Humanitarian Demining Development as a Global Strategy

There are two thrusts in global mine action. The one thrust is towards national priorities, primarily major infrastructure and facilitation of investment. The other thrust is towards rural mine action. Recognizing the importance of rural communities, and their agricultural contribution and potential in terms of stable micro-economies contributing effectively to national or macro-economies is also a priority.

Sometimes these two thrusts are poles apart. Post-conflict reconstruction

needs a focus on infrastructure and investment. At the same time, donors and national governments can not ignore the base of the national economic triangle, rural agriculture and development. A country can not live off the "fat" of national assets in the form of high value commodities such as, for example, oil and diamonds, while the bulk of the population are dependent on subsistence agriculture and are living in poverty. The inevitable result is internal disillusion and a return, at some stage, to internal strife. Angola is a classic example. There must be a balance between national and rural reconstruction and development. Hence, mine action has to be balanced between the two, and the needs of both must be harmonized.

The pressures and demands on donors in trying to meet both ends of the spectrum are appreciated. There is general agreement for the need for rural reconstruction, development, and the need for a coherent, transparent, and effective mine action strategy which is also cost-efficient. This is needed for national infrastructure rehabilitation, and for the rural areas. Such a strategy must be replicable, accommodate widespread donor interests, facilitate development and underpin the national effort. It must also be a strategy which recognizes the importance of local institutions and communities as key participants to solving the mine and UXO threat. The IHDD and CMAD approaches can provide the basis of that strategy globally.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the suitability of the IHDD, and CMAD, as a complementary strategy within the framework of national reconstruction in mine and UXO affected countries, and to place it within a global context.

Donors are becoming increasingly aware that ill-planned and uncoordinated mine action becomes like a bottomless pit into which money is poured with seemingly little result. We contend that this is due, largely, to the absence of mine action strategies that recognize the importance of a bottom-up approach in a rural context. Such an approach must be complementary in every way to the top-down national infrastructure reconstruction and development planning. Accordingly, a tried and tested concept for mine action, the IHDD concept can be considered a solution. This can be expanded to include the CMAD concept, which seeks to address the reality that it is unlikely that there will ever be sufficient funding to accommodate total mine and UXO removal in affected countries. Both concepts present a pragmatic strategy and solution to this problem, focussing on rural reconstruction and development issues in which all key players, communities, local institutions, and donors can be accommodated in a meaningful way. IHDD, and its complementary concept, CMAD, present a realistic and cost-effective opportunity to add a new dimension to development-oriented mine action.

