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Opportunities for Regional Cooperation in Mine Action in Southeastern Europe

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Opportunities for Regional Cooperation in Mine Action in Southeastern Europe

by Ian Mansfield, Operations Director, GICH

Introduction

At many of the international conferences held over the past years dealing with landmine issues, the meeting conclusions invariably contained a call for a greater regional approach to address landmine problems. In most cases these were just words, and at first glance there was little evidence of regional cooperation in mine action, or that such an approach would bring any immediate benefits to mine-affected communities. The reason for this lack of a regional approach is partly due to the nature of the landmine problem itself. In general, the mines that have been deployed are buried in the ground and do not move over national borders. This is in contrast to other serious humanitarian crises such as drug wars, political or religious wars, or natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, which move across sovereign boundaries and can affect entire regions.

In addition, UN resolutions dealing with landmines and the UN Conference on Disarmament have focused on a national basis. In this context, the US President has proposed the development of a “national strategy” for the clearance of landmines that includes the following elements: a national strategy for the clearance of landmines; a national strategy for the elimination of landmine contamination; and a national strategy for the prevention of landmine contamination. The US government has also proposed the establishment of a national authority to coordinate the implementation of these strategies.

As a result, a significant proportion of the landmine problem has remained unaddressed, with the majority of cases occurring in countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, and Iraq. In many of these countries, the threat of landmines remains a significant obstacle to development and peacebuilding, and the lack of a regional approach has hindered progress in addressing this issue.

Areas of Concern

A regional approach is necessary for two primary reasons. First, the landmine problem is a transnational issue, with mines being deployed across national borders. In the case of the Balkans, for example, mines have been deployed in countries such as Serbia and Montenegro, but also in countries such as Kosovo and Albania. A regional approach is necessary to address this issue, as it allows for the coordination of efforts across borders and the development of joint strategies.

Second, the lack of a regional approach has hindered progress in addressing the landmine problem. In the case of the Balkans, for example, the lack of coordination across countries has resulted in fragmented efforts and the duplication of resources. A regional approach is necessary to address this issue, as it allows for the coordination of efforts across borders and the development of joint strategies.

Operational Level

For mine action to be successful on a regional basis, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the specific needs of each country. This strategy should take into account the political, economic, and social factors that contribute to the landmine problem in each country, and should be developed in consultation with the affected communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the lack of a regional approach has hindered progress in addressing the landmine problem. A regional approach is necessary to address this issue, as it allows for the coordination of efforts across borders and the development of joint strategies. This approach will require a commitment from all affected countries and international organizations to work together to address the landmine problem in a comprehensive and effective manner.

Little Hand

That little hand, that busy hand
That played in sand and tossed a stone
That slept beside your weary head
That grasped your father's hand so tight
As you walked through the loud bazaar.

Little hand, busy hand!

Do not be sad that toy
That looks so strange, just lying there
While only boring reddened stones
Are found around the blasted nuts.

On little fingers, busy fingers!

Find other things to touch today,
Remember what your father said
About those curious, metal things
That you so want to show your friends.

Little Hand

Little hand, small brown hand!
That touched your mother's gentle face,
Reach up to climb another rock
Leave curious things where they lie,
And wonder not at strange delights.

On little hand, where are you now?
A dried, brown bandage took your place,
Where have and gutt the fingers
No, no my son, it won't show back
That curious thing took it away.

On little son, my little boy,
We loved that little hand too much
And all the games it used to play
But I have you and you have me
At least for one more hungry day.
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by Ian Mansfield, Operations Director, GICHD

Introduction

At many of the international conferences held over the past ten years dealing with landmine issues, the meeting conclusions invariably contained a call for a regional approach to address landmine problems. In most cases these were just words, and at first glance there was little evidence of regional cooperation in mine action, or that such an approach would bring any immediate benefits to mine-affected communities.

The reason for this lack of a regional approach is partly due to the nature of the landmine problem itself. In general, the mines that have been deployed are buried in the ground and do not move over national borders. This is in contrast to other major regional security threats such as illegal drugs or diseases, which easily move across sovereign boundaries and obviously cross national borders.

In addition, UN resolutions dealing with landmines and the UN Policy states that “the primary responsibility for taking action against the presence of landmines lies with the concerned state.” Most donors have policies that reflect the UN response, and they do not fund projects on a country-by-country basis. Lastly, although nations may exist in the world in which cooperation can be achieved among states, or when they are large and have economic and cultural differences that make cooperation difficult. For example, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam are all in the same region, but they have different languages.

The response to the landmine problem in Central America is one example of a regional approach. It has been coordinated by the Organization of American States (OAS), and has tended to be mainly directed by its countries in the same region, there may have been pre­

visioned by the Organization of American

lands mines lie s with rh e conce rn e d stare."

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) was established in 1998, the ITF has been able to serve as a conduit for other donor funds to the region—mainly due to the dollar-for-dollar matching arrangement with the United States. The fact that the ITF is located in Slovenia (a non-mine country in Europe) has affected the region’s ability to take advantage of an air of neutrality about its operation.

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