

# The European Commission: The Future of Mine Action From A Donor's Perspective



An interview with Daniela Dicorradò-Andreoni, Principal Administrator of the European Commission, highlights the goals of the European Commission and the role and future of donor funding.

By Margaret S. Busé, Editor

**Margaret Busé (MB):** What is the current policy for the European Commission (EC) when it comes to funding mine action?

**Daniela Dicorradò-Andreoni (DA):** The EC is a very unique body. It is an executive body that launches and carries out processes of legislation. The EC community competence manages a large part of the budget of the European Union. The budget for landmines is under the community pillar, therefore under commission responsibility. The legal basis of this budget is a specific APL regulation, which was initiated as a follow-up to Ottawa.

In 1996, in the wake of the Ottawa process, the European Parliament created, on its own initiative, an APL budget line. Before then, demining was done by the commission through development or rehabilitation projects. Demining was considered a prerequisite for other major policies. Mine action was not considered for its own specificity and did not benefit from tailor-made policies and measures. Since July 2001, this gap has been bridged; a legal instrument and a reinforced budget will thus allow the European Union to play a stronger role. The Ottawa process has the merit to establish a target and ambition and therefore to coagulate the wheels of all the States' Parties and donors and integrating institu-

tions towards one common goal.

We think that now the moment is ripe to focus on the mine-affected countries and to make efforts to empower the local authorities to properly manage their mine problems (e.g., to make their own plan, develop their own program and establish their own priorities).

**MB: Do you encourage countries to develop and establish their own priorities through the setting up of Mine Action Centers (MAC), or do they have a centralized body to help them with their decision making process for that specific country? Can you take it from a broader perspective that an organization like the UN or the EC can give them the parameters to follow similar to the Organization of American States (OAS) and South America?**

**DA:** I would say both ways and neither way, because each country really needs a specific recipe sometimes. You can have some basic building blocks, that can be a priority, but it should be avoided to have institutions governing the infrastructure development. What we would like to provide is best practices and know-how in capacity to manage mine action in response to bottom-up-defined needs. Good practices do not necessarily imply the build-up of institutions. It is possible to have lean structures with high-impact skills. We want to avoid supporting

cathedrals in the desert, institutions set up for the sake of establishing long-term ventures. Therefore, MACs, yes, if these mean flexible capacity aimed at getting rid as quickly as possible of the problem. The donors are keen to make the approach to mine action more efficient and measurable. We would like to help a wider distribution of information creation and management capabilities. This aim will be pursued in cooperation with international players like the UN, the U.S. and Canada on the basis of the priorities defined at local level. In this process of empowerment, the international donors must act like facilitators.

I would like to propose a "hands-off" process whereby you provide all ingredients that are necessary for the mine action program to run properly and provide the financial aid that can support the best practices for each mine action field. Donors can provide the financial aid to let the countries create their instrument by themselves and to tell the donors, "This is the situation, our needs, and you can help us in these areas." Measurement of the operations and related Performance Indicators is another area where the commission wants to play a leading role. Assessment systems are being elaborated in order to provide the donors with a clear understanding of how the money has been used and if the money has been used properly.

**MB: How do you show donors that the money is used properly? How can that be measured completely? We do know that if certain amounts of farmland are cleared that's put**

**back to productivity – you can have a measurable item to show to donors, but what about if it's just something as simple as an access road or water access or something that's not so measurable in terms of economic benefit but improves the quality of life?**

**DA:** Impact Assessment Surveys are based on a number of indicators that allow both the local decision-makers and the donors to identify how the priorities have been set in the country. The indicators are of different natures: humanitarian, political, security-related, economic, social, educational, etc. Donors can evaluate whether the priorities selected by the beneficiary countries appeal to their own criteria.

In parallel, further parameters are under investigation to measure the performance of a variety of mine action on the ground. The EC has launched a feasibility study that should soon result in a report. It is premature to talk about this.

**MB: Is it possible to get donors interested in funding an area where there's still instability?**

**DA:** Well, as far as the European Community or the European Union is

concerned, we are more and more committed to post-conflict measures and in-conflict prevention. However, the safety of the humanitarian operators is always a key concern of the donors.

**MB: Do you think the funding priorities have changed in the last five years? You mentioned that now donors are very interested in funding capacity building or mine action towards capacity building.**

**DA:** In the past, the European Community has spent an incredible amount of money for demining, but without a rationale. We have only a few years ahead of us to "eradicate" APL. Financial resources will not increase. We can only increase efficiency and improve the use of limited resources. Donors' coordination at local level is one of the challenges we are faced with if we want to make a quantum leap in efficiency and rational use of resources. It might be useful to have some regional coordination mechanisms built-in in existing coordination mechanisms for development policies.

After years of "mine action practice," lessons have been learned. I think that the culture of mine action is changing. The Kosovo example is a leading light.

## The European Commission

Its example should be followed in other mine-affected regions of the world.

**MB: What is ahead for the EC for funding mine action? Are there specific funding goals?**

**DA:** The EC is preparing a Multi-annual Strategy for Mine Action 2002-2004 and a related Multi-annual Programming. This strategy has been closely coordinated with the UN and the U.S. and takes into consideration the portfolio of possible cooperation activities between the EC and Canada. The Strategy further foresees a budgetary envelope of EUR 40 million per year for mine action.

**MB: Do you expect donor funding to change?**

**DA:** I have some concerns on the continued funding level of a few donors, but in general, I do not expect any visible drop before the Mine Ban Treaty revision conference. ■

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## Fourth Mine Detecting Dog (MDD) Advisory Group Meeting

A group of mine dog experts were hosted by the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in Lubango, Angola, in January continuing their work on standards, studies and assessment of global mine detecting dog programs, policies and procedures. The Advisory Group is administered and chaired by the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and is composed of mine dog users, trainers, animal behaviorists, working dog specialists and a small group of specialty advisors. This meeting focused on an update of the MDD Sub-Studies being administered by the GICHD and a report on those completed projects, those underway and those being added such as the parallel look at African Pouch

Rats by the Belgian-funded project APOPO in Tanzania. The participants visited the NPA training facility outside Lubango and also visited the Remote Explosive Scent Tracing (REST) vapor sampling test facility. Terms of reference were also approved for an Assessment Committee to represent the mine dog community and enhance the credibility and professionalism of MDD teams and organizations. A more detailed report of their activities will appear in the next issue of the *Journal of Mine Action* that will focus on Landmines in Africa. For more information about the Advisory Group, contact Conny Åkerblom at the GICHD at c.aakerblom@gichd.ch or Tel: +41-22-906-1660.

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■ A Vapor test demo. c/o MAIC