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MASG MASG

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An Update on the Mine Action Support Group

The following article highlights the recent activities of the Mine Action Support Group (MASG). This includes updates on the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

UNMAS Updates

Policy, Resource Mobilization and Information

The most significant recent policy development is the General Assembly’s adoption of its new Resolution on Assistance in Mine Action. This resolution reaffirms the particular role of the United Nations in mine action coordination and calls for a formal review of UNMAS’s five-year strategy in 2003. Additionally, the UN victim assistance policy is in its final stages of development. The draft policy was scheduled to be circulated by the end of January 2003, after final internal revisions.

Since November 2002, additional pledges within the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (VTF) have been received from Denmark, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The funds received in the VTF for 2002 totaled $24.2 million (U.S.), which came from 16 donor countries. This is more than twice the amount contributed in 2001.

The first Workshop on Landmine and UXO Safety Training was held in Tehran on January 7–8, 2003. Representatives from the government, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and oil companies attended the workshop, which was organized by UNDP Iran. A series of landmine and UXO safety training workshops will be held in 11 mine-affected countries over the course of 2003.

Afghanistan

Key staff from the Mine Action Center for Afghanistan (MACA) visited New York from January 6–11, 2003, for discussions with representatives of UN agencies. One result of this meeting was the decision to conduct a seminar in Kabul in March to produce supporting plans for implementing the multi-year strategy formulated in late 2002. The funding of operations for 2003 remains at a critical level, with approximately $20 million of outstanding pledges from various donors still to be deposited to support activities in the field.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), commercial mine clearance company MECHEM has recently completed a technical survey in Kindu airport to facilitate further deployment of the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC). Funding will only support part of the MACC core costs until the end of June 2003, and an additional $200,000 is required to continue these efforts. Furthermore, there is still an urgent need to deploy a core mobile emergency mine/UXO clearance capacity to respond to humanitarian requirements, which is estimated to cost $670,000 for a six-month period.

Eritrea

Plans continue for the demining work in support of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), including manual clearance, use of mine dogs and quality assurance (QA). A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the United Nations and the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) has been drafted, and a formal request for assistance is being presented by the EEBC. The Mine Action Coordination Center’s (MACC’s) revised Work Plan, following the Presidential Decree, has now been formally approved by the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Working in close cooperation with the Macedonian Mine Action Center, the Mine Action Office (MAO) is coordinating bilateral contributions to provide the national authorities with the full capacity to manage the mine/UXO problem. It is expected that by mid-2003 the Macedonian Mine Action Center will have the capacity to cope with the residual problem, when training of national staff and development of national standards are completed with the technical assistance of the United Nations. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has recently investigated WWII UXO and is considering funding clearance activities.

Southern Lebanon

As of December 2002, “Operation Emirates Solidarity” (OES)—funded by the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—had allowed for more than 21,300 AP mines to be destroyed and over 2,500,000 square meters of land to be cleared and handed over to communities. It is now anticipated that OES will be completed by mid-2003, but efforts are underway to persuade the UAE to allow remaining funds to extend OES and expanding operations north of the Litani River. The UAE agreed to provide some support to the operation of the MACC, to cover the incremental costs related to the OES initiative, in particular those related to QA activities. Current funding for QA will only cover part of the core costs of the MACC through June 2003; an additional $400,000 is necessary to fully support the MACC in this effort.
Sudan

Preliminary planning for mine assessment and clearance is in an advanced stage and funding is required to begin. A national technical and operational liaison team has been established and $1,894,000 is now required to open a key logistics route. The explosive detection dog (EDD) evaluation/coordination area in Kadugli is complete. A small team of Kosovo Albanian deminers has been temporarily deployed to establish the EDD team to an assess area while local personnel are being selected and trained. Danish Church Aid (DCA) was successfully accredited as a mine/UXO clearance organization and licensed to conduct operations on January 9, 2003.

UNDP Updates

Albania

Demining activities in Albania wound down in December 2002. A planning group met on November 28, 2002, to review the current strategy and make plans for 2003. The following are the development objectives for 2003:

- Complete the impact surveys in and around Padesh, where the Albanian border meets the Montenegro border, by June 2003. This will conclude the monitoring surveys started in 2002.
- Complete the technical surveys by November 2003, which will release an estimated six million square meters of land.
- Clear an additional 500,000 square meters of land.

Demining activities will resume in March 2003, beginning with a training course. Clearance activities for 2003 will require $5.42 million.

Afghanistan

The mine action program is focused on providing assistance to the populations of Nangarhar, Laghman, and Jowzjan provinces through a combination of mine clearance, demining, and mine risk education. The program is being implemented by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in close collaboration with the Afghan Mine Action Organization (AMAO). The AMAO has a mandate to implement the Afghan Mine Action Plan, which was endorsed by the Afghan Government in 2002. The program is coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which provides technical and financial support.

Estonia

UNICEF continues to support the national mine awareness NGOs in Estonia, with a focus on Mine Action Program management. New disabled people are added to the program at three-month intervals.

Thanks to sizable contributions through UNDP from the governments of Italy and the Netherlands, UNDP funding, and significant bilateral contributions from the governments of Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom, the UNDP's Mine Action Support Program is fully funded for 2003. The Strategic Mine Action Plan is ahead of schedule going into the third year of the five-year plan.

UNICEF Updates

Headquarters Team

The UNICEF Landmines Team has recently completed surveys at the New York headquarters. Some of the new officer's duties will be to develop MRE materials for use by UNICEF and others. Developmental notes and other guidance for UNICEF country offices in relation to MRE and mine risk education of the MRE components of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). UNICEF released its Mine Action Strategy in Geneva on February 6, 2003, during the work of the Standing Committe.

Afghanistan

UNICEF has acquired a national and regional MRE capacity. The new staff will work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Mine Risk Education (MRE) to implement the MRE program. This will be the second phase for the implementation of the MRE action plan for Sri Lanka.

Yemen

Eighth of Yemen's 16 high-impact mine-affected communities identified by UNICEF in the 2002 Mine Action Program (MAP) have been cleared and declared mine-free. The remaining 15 minefields have been cleared and are not operational. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health have been working closely with UNICEF to implement the mine risk education program. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health have been working closely with UNICEF to implement the mine risk education program. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health have been working closely with UNICEF to implement the mine risk education program.

Burundi

A survey on mine victims has been completed. A team composed of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defense, and members of the Burundi Red Cross, has been working on victim data analysis and mine risk assessment. Furthermore, UNICEF has deployed a TA to Burundi to support the technical assistance provided by the Government of Burundi in implementing the Mine Action Program.

The DRC

The UNICEF Country Office has started recruiting a TA for the period of February 8 to March 16, 2003. The role of the advisor will be to identify and prepare project proposals regarding the UNICEF Country Office's role in mine action activities. The advisor will work closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the MCC are currently working on an MRE project for Burundian refugees in the DRC, which should be reported to UNICEF in 2003.

Eritrea

A UNICEF MRE TA has arrived in Asmara to develop the new mine action technical assistance program in support of the Eritrean Demining Agency. Joint planning activities with UNDP continue to re-orientate the program.

Ethiopia

UNICEF continues to support the development of EMOA, working closely with UNDP. Engagement with a national NGO, the Rehabilitation and Development Organization (RADO), is under review, as the focus is now on support to the government. Discussions on how to best develop the RADO Regional Mine Network in the Tigray region to EMEO responsibility are ongoing. Funding is urgently required to support EMOA capacity building.

Guatemala

UNICEF has been updating MMSA and indicators' reports on a monthly basis. A study that aims to identify inequalities in terms of gender, socio-economic status and health status among landmine survivors' families is being developed. Also, UNICEF recently opened three counseling centers to provide support to landmine survivors.

Iraq

UNICEF has recruited a consultant to develop MRE programs. Contingency planning is being developed with UNICEF. UNICEF will work through the government and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society to ensure the delivery of assistance to Iraqi victims affected by landmines. UNICEF will work closely with the Ministry of Health to support the implementation of the Mine Action Program.

Sudan

The mine action program in Sudan is now fully functional in Khartoum with the establishment of the MRE Advisory

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Group consisting of the government of Sudan, the Sudanese Red Crescent Society and two national NGOs. The terms of reference for a needs assessment and analysis have been developed. The assessment will analyze at-risk groups and their locations. It will help focus MRE activities and will also strengthen the capacity of local national research institutions and will commence in the Nuba Mountains, Juba and Kassala state. Work is ongoing to adapt IMSMA forms to the Sudan context and to translate them into Arabic.

*The above information was compiled from the January MASG Newsletter. Further details on the above projects can be found in the latest MASG newsletter, posted on www.mineaction.org under "Documents."

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