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The Survey Action Center

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The Survey Action Center

The Survey Action Center (SAC) serves as the executing agency for Landmine Impact Surveys (LISs), which will allow for greater prioritization of demining efforts and further integration of the various mine action sectors.

by David Hartley, MAIC

Background

The Survey Working Group (SWG), which consists of leading international NGOs and UN agencies in mine action and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), created the Survey Action Center in 1998. The SWG asked one of its members, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA), to serve as fiduciary and management body for the SAC. At the end of 2001, the SWG authorized the creation of an independent Board of Directors. The SWG remains the advisory body for SAC. The SWG is responsible for the protocols that have been established through the SAC that define and maintain the high international standards of the LIS. The goal of an LIS is to provide information in order to improve priority setting by donors and mine action agencies.

Operations Update

In Africa, SAC's surveys are progressing as planned. After completing an advanced survey mission in Angola, Mike Kendellen and Bob Eaton—the Director for Survey and the Executive Director, respectively—met with various mine action leaders and representatives to discuss plans for the survey.

As a follow-up, Mr. Kendellen returned to Angola in December to draft survey implementation plans with UN and NGO partners for the LIS. In addition, the director of the National Inter-Sectoral Commission for Demining and Humanitarian Assistance (CNIDAH) signed a letter voicing support for SAC's operations. The German government is funding this preliminary phase of the LIS. The data collection itself will take

approximately 10 months to complete.

SAC is working with the Danish Demining Group (DDG), the Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) and Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO) to organize and conduct a survey in Ethiopia. Three field offices have been established for the implementation of the LIS: (1) Mekele in the Tigray region, (2) Dire Dawa in the Somali region, and (3) Awasa in the southern region. Also, interviewer recruitment and training commenced recently, and the first batch of results from the Expert Opinion Collection have been delivered. Final arrangements (permissions and logistics) are being made with the communities selected for the pilot test.

At the end of February, SAC's survey of Somalia was completed. As of December, 238 communities had been surveyed, including the Sahil region and all accessible districts of the Togdheer region. Security concerns in the eastern Sool region that borders Puntland had temporarily halted data collection, but a complete assessment of the security situation and its impact on the survey was completed in early January. To date, LISs have also been completed in Chad, Mozambique, Thailand, Yemen and Cambodia.

In Eritrea, SAC is providing technical and training support to the UN-sponsored LIS, which is being implemented through the Eritrean Solidarity and Cooperation Association. Senior staff training by the SAC team was conducted in December, and Expert Opinion Collection is in progress. The start of data collection is scheduled to begin in April and continue through the end of June 2003.

SAC, the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) and the United Nations Demining Program (UNDP) in Kabul are presently preparing the working agreement to begin the LIS in Afghanistan. This survey was recently approved by the European

Commission and should be completed in 2004. SAC's Azerbaijan survey began last September, and Expert Opinion Collection has been finished. The results: 435 communities, in 27 administrative districts and cities, have been identified as suspected of being affected by landmines and/or UXO. The survey pilot test was conducted in 29 villages in the districts of Terter and Geranboy, and data collection began in December. SAC has approved the methodology for sampling for false negatives in conflict areas and military installations, in an effort to continually improve efficiency and accuracy.

Also, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, planning for the Expert Opinion Collection has begun in the 148 official local municipalities. Following senior staff training by the SAC team of Saeed Ahmad and Tom Haythornthwaite, the main portion of the in-field data collection is scheduled to begin mid-April and will continue through the end of June 2003. A team consisting of Ted Paterson, Sara Sekkenes and Greg Wickware was in Sarajevo for the Task Assessment and Planning pilot project. These individuals brought valuable and varied experience to bear on the issue of task selection within high- and medium-impact communities. Alastair McAslan from Cranfield Mine Action (CMA) also visited during this time to begin work on the strategy-planning module of the survey. ■

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