

Mine Action in Bosnia's Special District

No, no, don't look at the sky,
They cannot do you any harm from above anymore,
Lower your head because the danger is in your mother earth.
If you have survived the war, try to survive the peace.
- Melisa Dzanovi, schoolgirl, Bosnia and Herzegovina¹

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The Brcko District

The Brcko Municipality, located in northeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, was a fierce battleground during the war from 1992 to 1995. Because of the Brcko District's unique, strategic and symbolic significance to all sides of the conflict, it was the only issue left unresolved by the Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war in December 1995, which had divided the country into two decentralized semi-autonomous 'entities': the Republika Srpska (populated mostly by Serbs) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (populated mostly by Bosniaks and Croats).

Instead, the issue of the Brcko area was referred to an arbitration tribunal, which after three years of deliberation and hearings, determined in 1999 that the territory of the pre-war Brcko municipality would be awarded to neither entity. Instead it would be a "special district"² held "in condominium"³ by both entities, which would delegate "all of its powers of governance" to a new "single, unitary, multi-ethnic, democratic government," called the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴

The new Brcko District Government, established on March 8, 2000, is directly accountable to a continuing international supervisory regime, the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and the common institutions, laws and constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but all powers delegated to the entities are "exercised exclusively by the District government...."⁵

The Landmine/UXO Situation in the Brcko District

Despite the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, the legacies of that conflict continue to cripple the country in real and tangible ways. One of the most obvious is the contamination of enormous amounts of land, up to 4000 square kilometers in all,⁶ by anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Said the U.S. Department of State (DOS), "The effect of residual landmines as a result of heavy mining during the conflicts on Bosnia-Herzegovina's post-war recovery has been staggering."⁷

According to the United Nations, writing at the end of December 2001, "Up to one million mines, mostly anti-personnel, and many types of unexploded ordnance (UXO) still take an unacceptable toll on innocent victims" in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸ Frighteningly, only about "60 percent of mined areas have been identified."⁹

Most landmines in the country are concentrated on the Zone of Separation (ZOS, the four km wide demilitarized zone along the former frontline) and three areas: Sarajevo, Zavidovii and Brcko.¹⁰ Obviously, one of the highest concentrations is where the ZOS runs through the Brcko District, the area from which most refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled or were expelled but where they are now returning.

During the war, the Brcko District formed the narrowest point of the Republika Srpska's (RS) vital supply corridor from Serbia and the western RS to the eastern RS. The Brcko District's

highly strategic location made it an area of bitter and heavy fighting throughout the war. This "has made it one of the most heavily mine contaminated areas of the entire BiH."¹¹

Unfortunately, the landmine situation in Brcko has changed little over the last few years. According to the PRONI Institute of Social Education's Brcko District Mine Awareness Team,

"From 1996 to now, there were 11,000,000 m² of high risk areas and by the end of 2002, only 2,940,000 m² will have been demined, meaning the demining process will take another 10 to 15 more years."¹²

The BHMIC "Demining Strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina," noted in 2001 that 59.6 square km in the Brcko District are "suspect areas"—a total of 12.04 percent of the total Brcko District territory. These numbers contrast with 6.36 percent in the Federation, 1.71 percent in the Republika Srpska and a country-wide average of 4.20 percent.¹³ Of this total 12 percent of territory, there are an estimated 36,700 landmines and 8,100 UXO.¹⁴ Moreover, there have been almost 100 mine/UXO accidents¹⁵ (almost 10 percent of all the mine accidents in the country)¹⁶ and 38 deaths since the war in the Brcko District.¹⁷

■ Only 60 percent of mined areas in the Brcko region have been identified.



These casualties have led the OHR's Brcko District Supervisor (the international community's body that oversees the civilian implementation of the peace process) to declare "demining and civil protection" in the Brcko District as "a crucial condition for sustainability of returns, improving both the economic and social environment."¹⁸

Human Impact

Threat to Food Security

Landmines throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina are a major threat to food security, illustrated by the fact that, "The typical mine victim in the post-conflict period is the male farmer."¹⁹ As stated by the U.S. DOS, "The impact is even greater on the individual farmer, who has only a small farm with a large portion possibly infested by landmines, leaving him unable to support his family."²⁰ Consequently, the United Nations has concluded, "the vision of a mixed and environmentally sustainable rural economy is seriously jeopardised by mine and UXO pollution."²¹

This context is intimately connected to the landmine situation in the Brcko District. The Brcko District lies in a thin, but fertile agricultural belt called the Posavina Corridor—well irrigated by three rivers and good rainfall. Before the war, it represented an agricultural and food processing hub in the Former Yugoslavia. As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) points out, "Since 57 percent of ... [Bosnia's] territory is classified as mountainous, there is heavy reliance for strategic food production on the scarce fertile land in the north."²²

In the Brcko District specifically, the climate and soil conditions are particularly suited to the production of cereals, soybean, fruits (especially plums), berries and medicinal herbs.²³

Unfortunately, as noted above, the Brcko District is also one of the most heavily mined areas of the country. According to the ICRC, "Many mines still in the ground have contaminated fertile agricultural land, severely reducing food production while Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to rely on

international assistance to feed its population."²⁴ In the BHMIC "Demining Strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina," it notes that, "There is 0.36 ha of agricultural land per person in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to international estimations, it is the critical minimum necessary for ensuring food for the population. A significant part of such land is contaminated with mines and UXO."²⁵

In the Brcko District specifically, "Some 500 HA of arable land and 350 HA of forest require immediate demining."²⁶ According to the FAO, "The main reason for agricultural land abandonment [in the Brcko District] is the presence of mines (as stated by experts and the local population)."²⁷

This means that the Brcko District's agricultural development, stunted by the landmine crisis, is having a hugely detrimental effect on the food security situation throughout the country. Through demining, Brcko's rural economy can be revived, restoring the District to its position of a food producer for the rest of the country.

Threat to the Return Process

The Brcko District has one of the highest 'rates of return' of refugees and IDPs. While there are many reasons for this high return rate, it is primarily caused by the District's unique legal position as an autonomous region with a multiethnic government and progressive laws. Retired U.S. Ambassador Robert W. Farrand, former OHR Brcko Supervisor, described this cycle as a "microcosm of the peace process."²⁸

The 'right of return' to one's pre-war home was one of the most important stipulations of both the Dayton Peace Accords and the Brcko Final Arbitral Award. However, landmines pose a continued threat to this process. The ICRC point out,

"Pressure on land will grow...as refugees and displaced persons return to their pre-war communities, many of which are situated in the ZOS—the most heavily mined area of the country."²⁹ The UNDP has also acknowledged that "In many situations, mine clearance is a precondition for the safe return of



■ The Brcko District is the most heavily mined area in the country.

refugees and people displaced by war from their homes...."³⁰

The ICRC points out that mines are "making the return of refugees and displaced persons to ... [the north] hazardous, especially since many of these people will inevitably take to farming to meet their dietary needs."³¹ Moreover, since they have been out of the region, many refugees and IDPs "are often unaware of the precise locations of former front-line positions and the local markings used to identify dangerous areas."³² This has led to refugees and internally displaced people making up "approximately 1/3 of total [mine-related] casualties since the war."³³

Therefore, the UN states that "The demining programme must develop links with long-term development programmes to stimulate investment and returns to farms and find constructive solutions to long-term funding issues."³⁴

Brcko District's Current Mine Action

By saying, "It is not so much about mines as it is about people," the United Nations defines Mine Action in a holistic sense that refers to "all those activities geared towards addressing the problems faced by populations as a result of landmine contamination." Therefore, "Its aim is not technical—to survey, mark and eradicate landmines—but humanitarian and developmental...."³⁵

Taking this into account, when looking at the Brcko District's current mine action activities it is necessary to examine not only mine clearance, but also mine awareness and victim assistance.

Mine Clearance

As a result of the Dayton Peace Accords, Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two decentralized entities, the Federation and the Republika Srpska. Up until this year, each entity had its own Entity Mine Action Center (EMAC), which coordinated its activities with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center (BHMIC). As of this year, the EMACs have been integrated into the BHMIC structure. This is then responsible to the central government's Bosnia and Herzegovina Commission for Demining (BHCD).

The BHMIC (and previously the EMACs) coordinate the demining activities, about 20 percent of which are done by the entity militaries.³⁶ However, the situation up until this year has been different in the Brcko District, which as a unique autonomous region, is institutionally separate from the entities and is a demilitarized zone. BHMIC's authority, extensive database and GIS mapping of minefields continue to cover the Brcko area but without an EMAC or military mine clearance, the District was left on its own. This impact continues despite the reformed structure.

To counteract these problems, an EU funded project of the German NGO HELP, facilitated the reorganization and retraining of the Civil Protection team—an emergency citizen response team that is part of the communist-era emergency services. The Brcko Civil Protection team, created from teams in the Republika Srpska and Federation parts of the District, were retrained to act as the principle mine action and emergency mine/UXO response mechanism within the District (as were Civil Protection teams from around the country).³⁷

On January 1, 2003, as part of HELP's localization scheme, the Civil Protection team was incorporated in the Brcko District Government structure as the Brcko District Office of Civil Protection (CivPro), an 11 person office headed by Demining Coordinator Asmir Tatarevi. Most of its staff came from the HELP project.³⁸ CivPro is mandated with coordinating the mine action process in the Brcko District, including emergency response, civilian calls, mine clearing, explosive disposal and all administrative

matters. According to the person responsible for mine action at OHR Brcko, William Thomas, the Brcko CivPro is competent and well trained.³⁹ From June-December 2002 they destroyed over 5000 mines/UXO in clearance activities and 49 mines/UXO in response to civilian calls.⁴⁰

Last year (before the CivPro was consolidated into the government) due to good weather conditions, there was much mine action activity and almost one million square meters were cleared.⁴¹ In contrast with the Federation and Republika Srpska, which met 45 percent and 21 percent of their 2002 targets for mine clearance respectively, the Brcko District cleared 76 percent of its targeted areas for 2002.⁴²

This progress has also been encouraged by the falling costs of demining due to a proliferation of private commercial demining companies. The average price for demining a simple, non-forest, flat field is now approximately \$1-\$1.50.⁴³ For safe budgeting purposes, according to OHR, one should budget \$2 per square meter when estimating costs.⁴⁴

In 2002, before the establishment of CivPro, the vast majority of the demining in the Brcko District was done by NGOs, especially local NGOs—due to specific restrictions last year's donors placed on their funds. Table 1 shows the different organizations that were involved in demining in the Brcko District in 2002 and the total area demined by them and certified by BHMIC.⁴⁵

Organization	Type of Org.	No. of Tenders	Total Area (Sqr. Meters)
BH Demining	LNGO	4	154,166
PROMAK	LNGO	1	151,981
STOP Mines	LNGO	4	140,866
IMI	INGO	3	124,960
UniPak	Local Commercial	2	118,921
NPA	INGO	3	61,085
Federation Civil Protection	Civil Protection	1	39,801
UG ZOM	LNGO	2	39,283
PROVITA	LNGO	1	28,322
HELP UDT	INGO	2	9,831
RS Army	Military	3	8,721
Detektor	Local Commercial	1	4,469
UXB International	International Commercial	1	2,178
TOTAL		28	884,584

■ Table 1: Demining in the Brcko District, 2002.

In addition to cleared areas, the suspected area was reduced by 75,000 sq m through improved BHMIC surveying methods employed in 2002.⁴⁶ These general and technical surveys also clarified and more accurately defined the mine risk area. Though the demining practice in Bosnia and has been overwhelmingly oriented to military and commercial deminers, the Brcko District shows that there is the alternative of working with humanitarian demining NGOs. International humanitarian deminers often follow higher standards (the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)) and are motivated by humanitarian concern rather than by profit.

For this reason, it can often be cheaper to use NGOs as an implementing partner, as a donor could just offset the cost of the NGO's salaries for a period of time in return for collaboration on their projects. The biggest and most notable humanitarian deminer in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the NGO Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), followed by HELP, which operates through the structures of the local Civil Protection teams.

The practice of framing mine action in commercial tenders and government principles of open competition for contracts sometimes makes it difficult for governments to contract humanitarian deminers, but private donors can sometimes work around these restrictions.⁴⁷

Approximately 80 percent of the funding for demining in the Brcko District comes from the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine

Victim Assistance (ITF),⁴⁸ an organization set up by the Slovenian government which "is a favored funding vehicle for international donors"⁴⁹ as all funds ITF raises are matched by the U.S. DOS. Moreover, ITF operates by matching the funds of other donors who fund demining in the region. Last year, ITF funded the clearance of 700,000 square meters of contaminated land in the Brcko District, costing \$1.2 million.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, ITF funding to Bosnia and Herzegovina is slowly declining. In 2000, ITF allocated 52 percent of its total funds to the country whereas in 2002, it allocated only 28.6 percent.⁵¹

Another possible issue with ITF is that some people believe its mode of operation tends to favor the commercial method of tendering contracts for mine clearance. They argue the organization is not really set up to encourage humanitarian NGO demining.⁵² However, it may be possible for private donors to specify the exact conditions in which they want their and ITF's matching funds to be used in a project.

Additional funding for Brcko District demining came from the Czech Republic, the Government of Japan (through the German NGO HELP, which withdraws from the country this February), BHMIC and the Brcko District Government, which covers salaries, insurance, office space and some small amounts of equipment.

While the Government of Japan has funded a great deal of mine action in the Brcko District and is well noted for its flexible funding conditionalities, it unfortunately froze all funding to the Brcko District indefinitely⁵³ apparently due to alleged financial irregularities and misuse in a local demining project.⁵⁴

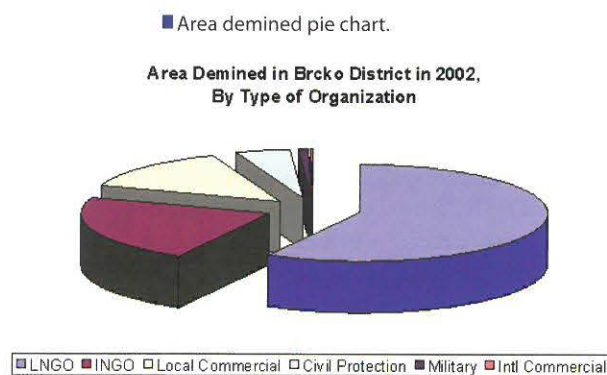
In its planning for 2003, CivPro has prioritized 39 minefields totaling 2.19 million square meters, most of which is agricultural land, rural returnee housing or river banks (see matrix at end of document). The prioritization process is less a political decision than a bureaucratic one. Priority areas are selected by

a team of representatives from OHR, CivPro, the Brcko District Department of Agriculture and BHMIC,⁵⁵ based on the following criteria:

- Priority 1: Locations in regular civilian use; repatriation of refugees and displaced persons; renewal and reconstruction of infrastructure.

- Priority 2: Areas in the immediate vicinity of Priority 1 areas, and areas which enable people to make a living such as agricultural land and forestry.

- Priority 3: All remaining areas.⁵⁶ BHMIC records estimate that 17.7 square kilometers, or 30 percent of the mine areas in the Brcko District, are Priority 1, 17.7 square kilometers or 30 percent are Priority 2 and 25.5 square kilometers or 41 percent is Priority 3.⁵⁷



One should be aware that BHMIC has its own priority list for the Brcko District, which differs somewhat from those of CivPro because BHMIC covers the whole country rather than just the District. Thus, some minefields may be high priority compared to others in the District but low when compared to the whole country.⁵⁸ When designing a mine action project, both priority lists should be taken into account, although NPA believes that when doing humanitarian demining in a local community, local priorities should trump national concerns.⁵⁹

A clearer and more effective analysis of priorities will be available at the end of the year with the completion of the "Bosnia and Herzegovina Landmine Impact Survey," a project funded by ITF and headed up by Handicap International in partnership with BHMIC and the

Survey Action Center.⁶⁰ This survey "will provide a clear picture of the social and economic impact of minefields on communities." Based on this information, "rational priorities can be established. High-impact areas, as defined by the national authorities, can be cleared immediately, with medium- and low-impact areas assigned to mid-term and long-term treatment."⁶¹ This survey, which will include the Brcko District, will try to integrate both the technical and human effects of landmine contamination through using both quantitative and qualitative data in a strict framework. Consequently, the survey will be a significant improvement in determining priorities.

The approximate cost of clearing the 39 minefields prioritized by CivPro for 2003 will be \$2.5 million. CivPro will handle small manual demining jobs (up to 5000 square meters) itself, but larger and more complicated tenders will be contracted to BHMIC accredited contractors—mostly commercial companies and possibly some NGOs.

Unfortunately, by their own admission, it is unlikely that CivPro will accomplish even half of its goal of 2.19 million sq m this year. They are terribly understaffed, underfunded and have little equipment. They received cold-weather clothing (coats and thermal trousers) from the NGO HELP and have the basic equipment for manual demining (one dog), but are lacking face shields, a jeep and mechanized demining machinery (they may receive a donation of equipment, including a jeep, from the NPA this year).⁶² One of the highest costs and most difficult to fund in mine action is the capital expenditure necessary for the expensive equipment used in clearance programs.⁶³

The program is also having problems raising funds for this next demining season. According to William Thomas of OHR-Brcko in May 2003, CivPro had still not raised any money for this year's demining season. They have about \$20,000 left over from the Czech government, but are struggling to find

additional funds.⁶⁴ As of June 2003, Counterpart International, a humanitarian and development NGO based in Washington DC and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was the only organization developing a possible project funding demining in 2003.

CivPro (and other demining organizations) are currently not working on any actual demining, as it is now the off-season. The temperature must be over 0° Centigrade and there cannot be any snow on the ground before demining can start. Therefore, the season runs approximately from the beginning of April to the end of November. The winter months are used for administrative work and planning.

Mine Awareness

A common method of raising mine awareness is clearly demarcating minefields with high barbed wire fences and signs. However, there has been considerable debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the appropriateness of this method. Due to the relatively low cost of demining in the country (as compared to other countries), demining areas does not cost much more than marking them properly.⁶⁵

Instead, some agencies have marked the minefields with cheaper fence posts and signage. Unfortunately, these are often stolen and used for other purposes (reports include seeing fenceposts used for training vine plants or signs placed on houses to prevent burglaries). In addition, some fear that by marking minefields, it will make people assume that unmarked areas are safe. For this reason, in many areas, including the Brcko District, minefields are marked just before and during clearance activities.

Taking these factors into account, according to the 2000 *Landmine Monitor Report*, "the Demining Commission chooses instead to focus on mine risk education through schools and local media."⁶⁶

At the country level mine awareness is greatly increasing, indicated by the falling number of casualties. According to the ICRC, "between 1996 and 2002 the mine incident rate fell from an average of 52 casualties per month to just over seven casualties per

month."⁶⁷ Moreover, a UNDP study in 2001 found a "measured increase in the level of awareness of the dangers posed by mines and UXO in the target population in both BiH entities as a direct result of the media campaign."⁶⁸

At the national level, the ICRC has probably been the most active and effective organization raising awareness of mines and UXO through their local partner, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Red Cross Society. According to their literature, "In 2001 alone, a total of 4,398 presentations were held and 5,604 'discussion groups' conducted with 170,644 adult and child participants throughout the country."⁶⁹

The methodology employed in the ICRC Community-Based program (as opposed to their media campaigns) is to train volunteers from the local Red Cross chapters and pay them a small stipend of about \$115 a month to carry out presentations and discussions. The ICRC program has two volunteers in the Brcko District, one on the Federation side of the Inter-Entity Boundary Line and one on the Republika Srpska side. They focus their efforts on children. However, as of a result of evaluations conducted last year, the ICRC has determined it must refocus its mine awareness program on "the highest risk groups" such as farmers, hunters and returnees.⁷⁰

In addition to the ICRC's efforts, the government does assist with mine awareness in a variety of ways. For instance, "All primary schools in

BiH are supposed to conduct six mine awareness lessons each school year" and "In December 2000, the EMACs ran a five-day training course for policemen in Brcko, who qualified to work as mine awareness instructors."⁷¹ The NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) and UNHCR have also conducted such work sporadically.

The most effective mine awareness program in the Brcko District, however, is the program operated by the Swedish/Northern Irish NGO, the PRONI Institute of Social Education. It has been operating a mine awareness program since May 2000 with funding from the Japanese Government and U.S. Embassy Sarajevo Office of Public Affairs. According to the 2002 *Landmine Monitor Report*, "In 2001 six [PRONI] mine risk education instructors gave 186 presentations to 6,990 people, and distributed 906 posters, 600 leaflets, 7,200 brochures, 1,700 badges, and 50 t-shirts."⁷² They have also hosted two mine awareness summer camps in cooperation with UNICEF and WorldVision and participated in UNDP's national media campaign.

As of early spring 2003, PRONI is a fully accredited member of the BHMIC Implementation Group for Mine Risk Education and a member of the BHMIC Mine Risk Education Coordination team. At the time of writing they were negotiating for 2003 funding from the U.S. Embassy and from UNICEF.

Unfortunately, it is much easier to raise the awareness of children (while in



■ Dragan Vukovic, Counterpart International's agronomist points to UXO that is next to the access road used by villagers.

school they are a captive audience) than of adults. It is difficult to change the habits of adults and in the Brcko District specifically there are problems with hunters, often former soldiers, paying little attention to mine demarcation.⁷³ Therefore, the PRONI team has a multisectoral approach, using different methods to reach different sectors of the population. A recent project focused especially on high-risk groups such as hunters and fishermen.⁷⁴

One major problem with mine awareness in Bosnia and Herzegovina to which no organization seems to have found a solution, is that mine awareness projects have generally taken the form of media campaigns and presentations/lectures about the dangers of mines. While this method is especially useful right after war, when a population may not be aware of the mine danger, it grows more ineffective as people begin to understand the danger, but engage in high risk behavior anyway either for economic, psychological or social reasons.⁷⁵ According to the ICRC, "Over the years, we can see an increase of the percentage of people injured in known dangerous areas."⁷⁶

Nathalie Prévost, UNICEF adviser to BHMIC for Mine Risk Education says what is needed is a participatory, community-based approach, modeled after agricultural extension work, that engages with local communities working with them to develop locally-based decisions on how to manage the mine/UXO contamination problem.⁷⁷

Victim Assistance

Concerted efforts at victim assistance in the Brcko District, like in many parts of the country, are not conducted on a large scale. Asmir Tatarevi, Coordinator for Demining in the Brcko District says this is a "huge problem."⁷⁸ Landmine Survivors Network (LSN), the leading NGO involved in mine victim assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has an outreach worker (a landmine survivor) based in Bijeljina (a town about 40 km east of the Brcko District) whose area includes the Brcko District.

This LSN outreach worker visits mine victims in their homes, offering peer support and assists them in dealing with

the deep trauma that often afflicts survivors. In addition, LSN helps them to deal with practical issues (such as health, housing, food or income issues) by referring them to relevant agencies. If there are no agencies in the area covering these issues, LSN will provide direct assistance in the form of grants for housing, small business start up, prosthetics, medical assistance and others.⁷⁹ In 2002, LSN provided immediate assistance to nine victims in the Brcko District.⁸⁰

However, this program appears to be the only effort at victim assistance in the Brcko District. While valuable, it is part of a wider program that is not really focused on the Brcko District. Landmine survivors' problems are exacerbated by the fact that it is "particularly difficult for mine victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina to find work"⁸¹ and many mine victims are poor and without health insurance.⁸²

Brcko District CivPro have been having discussions with Handicap International, a leading French/Belgian NGO involved in victim assistance. The PRONI Mine Awareness Team has also considered getting involved in victim assistance. However, neither of these possibilities was concretely arranged at the time of writing this article.

However, Handicap International asserts that mine victims should not be isolated from the larger context of the social support system and rights of all persons with disabilities.⁸³ As UNICEF Mine Risk Education Advisor Nathalie Prévost said, "Why should mine victims be treated as more special than, for instance, someone who becomes disabled by a car accident?"⁸⁴

In this light, one can take encouragement from the grassroots organizing and public consciousness raising efforts of the Brcko District Paraplegic's Association. A multiethnic association established in 1997, the association has over 150 members (many of whom are mine victims) and is self-sustaining through a printing cooperative. They are engaged in social support, medical support, political advocacy and public consciousness-raising activities.

Last year, with 6000 Euros of funding from the European Union, the Brcko District Paraplegic's Association

hosted a sports gathering of such associations from all over the country—the first of its kind in 15 years. They held a wheelchair basketball tournament and a chess competition. The event was covered in both local and national media and raised the community's awareness of the issues facing persons with disabilities.⁸⁵ The association plans to make this an annual event, and their efforts are a vital part of building a civil society network for disabled persons that will form a natural, local support system for mine victims in the Brcko District.

Conclusion

As one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most heavily mined areas, Brcko District mine action is somewhat held back due to the unique geo-political circumstances that place it outside the jurisdiction of military deminers and beyond the close attention from the EMACs up until this year. On the other hand, this geo-political significance has also piqued the interest of international donors and NGOs, which means that despite the obstacles, the Brcko District has managed to create a relatively well developed mine action sector.

However, there is still room for improvement. Firstly, Brcko District CivPro should take a stronger role in coordinating efforts, as well as a more proactive approach in insisting the Brcko District Government appropriate more funds for integrated mine action and developing foreign donors, which should occur naturally as CivPro finds its feet and becomes more established.

Making the Brcko District a mine risk free zone is a seemingly intimidating but wholly possible task if about \$5 million were appropriated for mine action per year for the next five years. All that is needed is for the Brcko District Government (which has had large budget surpluses for the last two years) to make demining a priority and for foreign donors to sustain interest. The examples of highly successful mine action programs in Kuwait and Kosovo should serve as examples of the speed with which demining can be done when the political will and resources are there.

Finally, mine action in the Brcko District has not really been approached holistically. No organization has attempted to integrate the different elements of mine action into a more innovative approach that sees the human impact on mine-affected communities as the central issue. ■

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