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The Humpty Dumpty Institute Forges Innovative Public-Private Partnerships for Landmine Clearance in the Caucasus

Daniela Kempf
*Humpty Dumpty Institute*

William Rouhana
*Humpty Dumpty Institute*

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The Humpty Dumpty Institute (HDI) is a New York-based, non-profit organization dedicated to establishing effective and innovative public-private partnerships to address the global landmine crisis. The Institute has ongoing partnerships with a variety of public and private organizations. Together, these partnerships have raised over $1.5 million for landmine detection and clearance operations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Mozambique, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Eritrea. To date, HDI’s programs have focused on clearance and subsequent socioeconomic development partnerships with the U.S. State Department (DOS), the International Trust Fund (ITF), the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI), the New York Wine and Grape Foundation (NYWGF), SkyLink Aviation, the One Sri Lanka Foundation, HALO Trust, the Armenian National Mine Action Center, and the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA).

About HDI

Established in 1998, HDI is home to “venture philanthropists” and business leaders who are interested in foreign policy issues. HDI puts its private sector expertise to work in the public sector by turning good ideas into operational programs and by providing its partners with creative content, intellectual capacity, critical venture capital and marketing expertise.

“Our name is intended to be humorous and memorable, our mission is very serious—we try to put the pieces back together,” notes Ralph L. Cremen, President of HDI.

“Our comparative advantage is our ability to identify common interests among governments, corporations and engaged citizens to address cutting-edge issues and form meaningful partnerships.” It is through these partnerships that the Institute has managed to leverage more than $1 million for landmine clearance programs in six countries.

As a result of the Institute’s work in the area of landmine clearance and awareness, the U.S. DOS applauded HDI’s decision to launch a new initiative—the National Mine Action Group (N MAG). N MAG organizes a wide network of corporate executives, foundation directors, private entrepreneurs and other parties interested in supporting worthy projects to eliminate landmines. N MAG looks at seed funding and possible areas of collaboration for programs addressing landmine clearance, mine victim assistance, research and development of new demining technologies, and mine awareness in mine-affected countries.

In Sri Lanka, for example, HDI’s landmine action program focuses on clearing high-priority minefields scattered across the Jaffna Peninsula and the Vanni. HDI has partnered with the One Sri Lanka Foundation to raise funds for HALO Trust mine-cleansing operations in the field. $60,000 has already been raised to fund one demining team for 12 months. Additional funding is planned for the future.

HDI has also sponsored three mine detection dog (MDD) teams in Lebanon, Armenia and Georgia in Armenia—in partnership with the MLL and a number of other organizations. Each team consists of about 400 dogs to purchase, train, transport and sustain for about one to four years. One HDI’s dog teams in Lebanon and Eritrea, operating since 2002, recently reached milestones—the dog teams have now covered over 160,000 sq m of land.

Another example of a successful partnership for landmine clearance in HDI’s programs in Mozambique, which will, with a contribution of $250,000 from the Toronto-based SkyLink Aviation, Inc. and the U.S. DOS, fund advanced training courses for indigenous humanitarian demining personnel in Mozambique and purchase much-needed demining equipment.

HDI’s Involvement in the Caucasus

Landmines continue to negatively affect the economy and threaten the lives of people who live in the mine-contaminated areas throughout the Caucasus. This need for action, combined with the increasingly important geostrategic role of the Caucasus for the United States and the world, prompted the Fund for Action in Partnership (FAP) to work with the U.S. DOS, local governments and a number of other organizations to initiate innovative landmine clearance programs in the region.

In LGBT, HDI and its partners are raising funds to demine approximately one million square meters in the Fizuli District of western Azerbaijan. This part of the country was once a regional center of grape growing and wine production. Currently, landmines are scattered across thousands of hectares of once-productive vineyards in the region. HDI’s goal is to raise sufficient funds to clear the landmines, restore the vineyards and revitalize the wine industry.

In Georgia, HDI is working with the Georgian Government to clean up areas of contamination in the Kakheti region. More than one million square meters in the Kakheti region may be mine-affected, which is some 50 square miles of land (according to the International Mine Action Foundation (IMAF) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) believes that up to 45 of Armenia’s 65 regions may be mine-affected, which is some 50 square miles of land). HDI has secured $175,000 in direct matching grants and is now working with a number of partners to raise the remaining funds.

ANAMA was established by President of Azerbaijan on July 18, 1998. It operates under the State Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconstruction and is responsible for overall management, planning, coordination, resource mobilization and coordination of all mine action operations within Azerbaijan. The organization’s demining priorities include clearing areas with life-threatening dangers, supporting resettlement of IDPs, clearing reconstruction sites as requested by aid and development agencies, and providing food security through the clearance of agricultural and grazing lands.

The second phase of this partnership calls for the restoration of the cleared land to productive vineyards, revitalization of the area’s wine industry and the creation of new jobs for displaced Azerbaijani who
The government of Armenia is developing its humanitarian landmine clearance capacity. The U.S. government began assisting Armenia in 2000 by supplying demining equipment and by purchasing MDDs. Later, the U.S. government helped Armenia to renovate its demining facilities, train staff at the National Mine Action Center, carry out mine risk education and develop survey capabilities. That work culminated on March 16, 2002, when the Armenian National Mine Action Center was officially opened in Echmiadzin.

"Our mission is to remove the tens of thousands of landmines scattered around Armenia, provide its people with an opportunity to work the land again and help rebuild the region's economy by creating jobs and reviving its agriculture," says HDI President Ralph Conway. The Institute established a partnership with the COAF in December of 2002. Founded by Dr. Garo Armen, Chairman and CEO of Antigens, a leading biotechnology firm, COAF/HID successfully raised more than $100,000, mostly from the Armenian-American community, to procure, train and deploy a team of six MODs in Armenia.

The partnership is the result of collaboration between the Institute, the COAF, the JTF, the MLI, and the U.S. Department of Mine Action Initiatives and Partnerships (PM/MAIP). The PM/MAIP wholeheartedly supports this multi-partner initiative to provide additional MDDs for Armenia's humanitarian mine action program and agrees that MDDs can be a tremendous, cost-effective asset in most demining programs. In Armenia, for example, the average area cleared to date is 18.04 acres per MDD, the climatic conditions, for most of the year, are conducive to the use of MDDs, which are already accelerating demining operations in Armenia, particularly in the areas where landmines impede everyday life and economic opportunities.

These funds are dedicated to purchasing, training and transporting six dogs. However, sustained financial funding is needed for these teams to cover additional costs of food, veterinary services, medicine, kenneling and arrangements for the dog handlers. Over a period of several years, these ancillary costs amount to about $300,000 for a team of six dogs. This is where HDI's partnership with the DOS becomes especially instrumental. The funds raised by HDI and COAF trigger the release of additional monies from a special DOA program funded by the U.S. Congress. The FTE of a non-profit Slovenia-based organization dedicated to removing landmines, also participated in this project. The dogs from the FTE were then matched, thereby enabling the entire amount of approximately $600,000 to be allocated for Armenian dog teams.

In the current phase of the partnership, HDI is working with the MLI and the U.S. DOS to bring the dogs to Armenia. MLI is working with the international humanitarian organization focusing on assiting nations in building affordable and sustainable programs to free their land of the devastating effects of landmines. MLI has previously partnered with the HDI to bring teams of highly trained MODs to severely mine-contaminated countries, such as Lebanon and Eritrea. Perry Baltimore, Executive Director of the MLI, says of this joint venture: "The HDI/COAF/MLI partnership in Armenia is an exciting opportunity to extend both organizations' vision of a mine-free world into the Caucasus. As a result, the MODs, the Department of Mine Action and the Department of State will be working together to remove landmines that still harm the lives of thousands of Armenians."

The keynote speaker of the opening event was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Sara Bae, who emphasized the role of the MODs and shared her personal involvement and commitment to eradicating the landmine problem. "The first time I visited a landmine-affected area was in Sri Lanka," remarked Deputy Assistant Secretary Bae. "I was surprised to see that I was being introduced into the heart of a town. I had always envisioned that emplaced persistent mines were contained in remote, marked fields, away from the places where people live and worked. To see landmines next to a school building, landmines in a soccer pitch or near the busiest parts of a town is to understand that emplaced mines have the ability to affect every aspect of civilian life. I am proud to say that the Department of State's MODs is dramatically reducing the impact of persistent landmines through its humanitarian mine action demining programs and public-private partnerships with organizations such as the Humpty Dumpty Institute and Children of Armenia Fund."

Lincole P. Bloomfield, Jr., special representative of the President and Secretary of State for mine actions, addressed the participants in a video speech, prepared and taped especially for this occasion. "The landmine problem affects public health, hinders economic growth, threatens social stability and colors Armenia's relations with its neighbors. Fortunately, you're in good hands with these non-governmental organizations—the Humpty Dumpty Institute and the Children of Armenia Fund. I think and I can as we are in the best company of all by joining forces with mine-detecting dogs—true friends of the MLI, women's and children's best friends—such as the focus of your initiative."

On June 18, the HDI celebrated this success with its partners in the humanitarian time at the Raisin U.S. DOS. This event commemorated innovative private-public partnerships that will facilitate demining efforts in Armenia. Secretary Bloomfield hosted the ceremony and said of HDI's partnership with the U.S. DOS: "The Department of State and the Humpty Dumpty Institute have worked together for five years to develop additional partnerships that engage the private sector and civil society in humanitarian mine action. As Secretary of State Powell has said, governments cannot solve the global landmine problem by themselves. Today's presentations are the latest examples of a productive Humpty Dumpty Institute/State Department collaboration to remove landmines throughout the development of public-private partnerships. Through the Humpty Dumpty Institute/State Department Partnership, more than $1.5 million has been leveraged for mine clearance efforts around the world. The Humpty Dumpty Institute was instrumental in helping to inspire today's donations."

Contact Information
Daniela Kempf
Mine Action Program Officer, HDI
29 W. 46th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10036
Tel: (212) 944-7111
Fax: (212) 398-6304
Website: www.humptydumpty.net

William J. Roubian, Jr.
Co-Founder and Co-Chair, HDI
29 W. 46th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10036
Tel: (212) 944-7111
Fax: (212) 398-6304
Website: www.humptydumpty.net