Victim Assistance in Iraq

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Mine Awareness in Iraq

Following the U.S.-led war in Iraq, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are saving lives by doing what they can to raise awareness about the country's serious landmine/UXO problem.

by Kristina Davis, MAIC

Introduction

Due to the massive amounts of mines and UXO littering post-war Iraq, the country has arguably become one of the most dangerous places in the world. The main problem areas are around Iraq's borders and military bases, where unfortunately, many local villages are situated as well. Many organizations are well aware of the landmine problems facing the Iraqi civilians and are currently implementing thorough mine education programs throughout the region.

Mine Awareness Programs

Handicap International (HI)

While it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of landmine victims, the HI team reports landmine and UXO accidents occur at the rate of "several times a day in Baghdad and more than a dozen a day in the rest of the country." Hoping to spread awareness, HI has collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to print at least 200,000 leaflets as their first step in educating the Iraqi community about the dangers of landmines. In order to present the messages in a way that would be understood by all, the images were tested on a sample of the Iraqi refugees currently in Jordan — coming from different regions of Iraq and Kurdistan and comprised of men, women and children, both Muslim and Christian. Two main areas have been targeted for distribution thus far: northern Iraq, in collaboration with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and southern Iraq, in collaboration with UNICEF in Lamaka.

Baghdad will also be targeted with 100,000 leaflets for distribution as certain areas of the city are also polluted with mines and UXO. HI will use the community network, including mosques, the Red Crescent Society and women's organizations to facilitate their mine risk education (MRE) programs. Posters, seminars and radio and television messages will be used in coordination with the leaflets in order to successfully reach the largest number of people.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC has been working in Iraq since the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980. The ICRC mine awareness programs outline the three pillars of the community-based awareness concept: information collection, community involvement and integration with other programs. In the Middle East, the ICRC is starting up an emergency program with five awareness delegations based in the countries surrounding Iraq. The main aim is to reach the civilian population as quickly as possible with safety messages in order to avoid any unnecessary accidents. Posters, printed material and radio spots will be individually designed for appropriate target groups.

MAG

The Data Coordination Unit (DCU)/MAG has a database that holds records of more than 3,782 minefields in the most heavily contaminated areas of Iraq. MAG's mine awareness program seeks to minimize the risk of mine accidents among local populations by implementing diverse programs suited to many different types of people. From 1997 to June 2003, MAG trained over 30,000 teachers and school supervisors and was the first NGO to implement "child-to-child" techniques to mine action, including MRE. In addition, MAG visited mosques and munahil to distribute information with messages from the Holy Koran in order to reach a broader spectrum of mine-affected persons.

The United Nations

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has managed the northern Iraq Mine Action Program (MARP) since 2002. The United Nations Mine Action Program (UNMAPP)

by Kimberly Kim, MAIC

 Victim Assistance in Iraq

Large numbers of UXO and mines left behind from the continuing conflict in Iraq have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of victims. This article was written while the coalition forces were still engaged in conventional combat prior to the fall of Saddam Hussein.

By the end of 2002, civilian landmine casualty rates in Iraq were believed to be about 32 per month. Since conflict began in March of 2003, however, no one knows for certain exactly how many Iraqi civilians have been injured or killed. "The number of civilian victims is very high but cannot be calculated accurately," said Kristina Davis, Central Region Manager for Handicap International (HI). During the first few weeks of conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that over six thousand Iraqis died in the first month of April in Baghdad alone. Today the number of injured and dead is estimated by many to be around 1,000 to 1,500 per day. Within a single week in April, the Mine Action Group (MAG) reported 52 killed and 63 injured by UXO in Baghdad alone at the hospital in Kirkuk.

Before the conflict, a handful of NGOs had been working in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) through the UN Mine Action Centers, directed by Handicap International (HI). HI is currently implementing rehabilitation and vocational training services in Dohuk, Kirkuk, and Kirkuk.

The UNOPS victim assistance program in Northern Iraq is currently functional and operational. It was efficacious by recent conflict because of its northern location. Its goal for the next few months is to complete the implementation of the district emergency program, raise funds for the program after the termination of Oil-for-Food, make a master plan for victim assistance in northern Iraq, and to expand the program to central and southern Iraq. In April 2008, UNOPS began a program to provide victim assistance services to northern Iraq and to prepare for the extension of their program to central and southern Iraq. Their vision is to provide general care, to re-integrate victims into society and to establish a sustainable victim assistance capacity. They address the topic of military casualties, as well as the needs of those wounded by cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices.

The HI staff in Iraq has encountered several problems providing aid to victims during this conflict. Working in and around Baghdad, HI teams have been under attack, unable to provide medical supplies, water,
Iraq

The socio-economic impact of landmines, UXO and stockpiled munitions continues across multiple areas, including:

- Accessing public areas
- Salving material from mines/UXO
- Accessing land for agriculture
- Repairing infrastructure

The indirect impact of landmines includes malnutrition/starvation and the spread of infectious diseases, in part due to the inability to water purification systems and to provide public health services in regions isolated by mines and UXO. Mines and UXO are claimed lives, disabling future generations, creating insecurity and fear, and hindering the return to normalcy.

Socio-Economic Impact of Landmines in Iraq

Years of war and internal conflict have left Iraq littered with landmines, UXO and stockpiled munitions. Mr. Johan Van Der Merwe of the United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) and Colonel Lionel Dyck, MineTech chairman, describe the hazards Iraqis face that threaten normal activity and disrupt socio-economic redevelopment.

by Jennette Townsend, MAIC

Background

The socio-economic impact of landmines, UXO and stockpiled munitions continues across multiple areas, including:

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The indirect impact of landmines includes malnutrition/starvation and the spread of infectious diseases, in part due to the inability to water purification systems and to provide public health services in regions isolated by mines and UXO. Mines and UXO are claimed lives, disabling future generations, creating insecurity and fear, and hindering the return to normalcy.

Accessing Public Areas

Johan Van Der Merwe, Technical Advisor with UNMAS, and Colonel Lionel Dyck, chairman of MineTech International, a leading mine clearance contractor, were recently in Iraq. Johan Van Der Merwe observed, "In the south, one of the biggest problems is stockpiled munitions. Wide ranges of munitions are stockpiled everywhere—

in schools, hospitals, in defensive positions and in normal military installations. The munitions ranged from small arms to missiles and even to complete vehicles. Thousands of projectiles, unexploded bombs, cluster sub-munitions and other ordnance turn streets, mosques and even some homes into hazardous areas and restrict or endanger normal social activities. For example, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) recently found a stockpile of approximately 500-700 AP mines stored in a mosque. The Area Mine Action Coordination Team

Colonel Lionel Dyck

Numerous reports of death and injury associated with UXO and landmines confirm that children are especially at risk. For example:

- In May 2003, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) reported an eight month baby died in a blast in the living room of her family's hut in Baghdad. She was crawling on the floor and bumped an unexploded bomb brought into the house by her young cousin.
- Johan Van Der Merwe observed "kids playing with propellant in small arm shells. They light the propellant used to fire mortar rounds, creating an instantaneous flame. Many sustain flash burns from being too close when they individualize the propellant."
- In the streets of Baghdad children are reportedly playing soccer among explosive remnants of war, landmines, grenades, stockpiles of ammunitions and even abandoned armored fighting vehicles. On April 27th, three children were killed while playing with a mortar shell.

Amnesty International delegates saw children playing around landmines located immediately next to the homes of university students. The staff told the delegates that they had asked for help in removing landmines, but no such assistance had been received.

Colonel Dyck met a young girl who lost an arm at the site of a dumping
Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

Victim Assistance in Iraq

continued presence in central and western Iraq since the first Gulf War in 1991. During their first few years in Iraq, they provided field food, storage and logistics to over 300,000 people per month. They also provided logistical support and assistance to other U.N. Agencies. CARE's work in Iraq began in the northern Kurdish regions of Duhuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and in parts of its central and southern regions such as Anbar, Arbil, Diyala and Najaf. As humanitarian need became more widespread in central and southern regions during the mid-90s, CARE's focus began to narrow toward providing these services with basic health care, clean water and proper sanitation.

Conclusion

As expected, the recent conflict brought the need for humanitarian assistance to the civilian population of Iraq. Large amounts of explosive remnants of war (ERW) such as artillery shells, grenades, mortar bombs, cluster bombs and othermunition, rockets and missiles left in residential areas cause the number of victims to increase daily. Those dedicated to helping these victims must first create a means of keeping track of the number of victims and the nature of their injuries. Their second concern is finding a secure way in which to deliver or administer

public of Tajikistan to establish a sustainable, National Mine Action Program. For continued support from the FSD and OSCE, Tajikistan is hoping to become mine-free in the near future.

References

3. Information adopted from written report by Ian Clarke, Director of FSD, June 2003.

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Hierarchical Approach to Mine Action in Croatia

For successful demining operations to occur, detailed data collection, planning and assessment of priorities must be made in order to meet the expectations of the many stakeholders involved in the demining process. This article discusses the hierarchical approach of priority assessment for demining, using a multicriteria analysis and geographic information system (GIS) support.

by Nenad Mandic and Snezana Knezic, Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Split and Damir Gorata, SEEEM

Introduction

The Republic of Croatia is one of the 10 most mine-contaminated countries in the world. There are almost 7,500,000 mines and 1,630 sq km of mine-suspected areas. About 170 sq km are actual minefields, while the rest of the area is contaminated with individual explosive ordnance. Mine-affected areas have not been used for years, pose a huge economic problem and obstruct infrastructure development, reconstruction and return of displaced persons to their normal lives. They also pose a significant safety problem. In particular, any activities carried out in mine-suspected areas significantly threat- en human lives and material assets. It is estimated that removing all the mines in the Republic of Croatia would cost approximately $1.437 billion (U.S.) and would take 20 years to complete.

Recent experiences indicate that the demining process is a "complex, slow and expensive job". Nevertheless, efforts have been aimed at increasing the efficacy of demining activities, while still avoiding human casualties. Even small demining time-reductions present big savings, in an absolute sense, and on numerous occasions, overvalue investment and cost-benefit methods were insufficient to support the management process.

A good example includes an initiative for implementing a new methodological approach based on GIS and multicriteria analysis for planning and operation of human demining. Lack of finances influences the definition of priorities for mine removal-assessing which territories offer the greatest potential benefit if the mines are removed. Clearly, such territories should be de-contaminated first.

The international community noticed that humanitarian mine action in Croatia presents a huge problem and has been a major concern. The United Nations Mine Action Center (UNMAC) has been working with the Croatian Government, and the ICRC, in designing and executing a comprehensive mine action strategy, and collecting data on detected and suspected minefields. By the end of 1998, the mandate of UNMAC in Croatia ended, although almost immediately the Croatian Mine Action Center (CROMAC) was established. CROMAC developed in an efficient and cost-effective manner. By the end of the 1990s, Croatia became the primary donor for humanitarian mine action operations. It contributes almost 80 percent of total funds for annual operation. "Demining Plans" with its own finances from the state budget and World Bank loans in order to satisfy ever-growing humanitarian needs and satisfy international law. It achieves its goals by defining priorities for demining operations. CROMAC's management was forced to divide demining projects. At that time, the lack of priority coordination and the failure to meet the needs of stakeholders was noticed, namely the lack of a single strategic direction that could allow sufficient motive to start research for new methodological approaches.

Hierarchical Approach to Mine Action in Croatia

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