

MINE ACTION SUPPORT GROUP

update



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

UNMAS Updates

Afghanistan. A pilot project directed by UNMAS launched the Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programs, providing briefings and consultations on incorporating gender concerns into the efforts of the mine action program for the country. The program provided emergency assistance and survey activities during recent floods and mine removal around the Kam Air crash site. Additionally, the government of Afghanistan and the U.N. Mine Action Centre prepared for participation in the National Development Forum to ensure that Afghan mine action concerns are integrated into the discussions. Funding from April 2005 to March 2006 has been secured through large contributions from the European Commission and the Canadian government.

Sudan. The U.N. Security Council passed a resolution on March 24, 2005, authorizing the establishment of a U.N. mission in Sudan. The resolution authorized 10,000 military personnel and a civilian component, which will include civilian police. The Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement granted permission for demining efforts in the city of Juba. Training of national deminers will begin shortly. Japan contributed \$7 million (U.S.) in April 2005 for emergency UXO survey, clearance and mine risk education (MRE) in three cities. These areas are predicted to encounter large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people. UNMAS is working to provide MRE information to returnees and ensure that mine clearance is scheduled first for areas along return routes. UNMAS headquarters conducted a technical mission to the national mine action office and mine action offices in the Nuba Mountains, Rumbek and Nairobi, Kenya. Local representatives

responded enthusiastically to MRE and the planned deployment of a UNICEF officer to help with nationwide MRE dissemination.

UNDP Updates

In the interest of brevity, the UNDP contribution to the monthly MASG newsletter will consist of a country update every three months instead of every month. Countries have been divided into three groups, though country offices will update if an achievement, challenge or funding shortfall warrants immediate attention. The following are updates for UNDP-supported country programs. With the exception of the dispatch from Iraq, reports are from the UNDP country office in Africa.

Angola. The National Mine Action Authority has made significant advances in the cooperation between stakeholders and the implementation of comprehensive mine plans at regional levels. The Landmine Impact Survey (LIS), funded by the U.S. Department of State, is 60-percent complete and is expected to end in October 2005. Lack of access and infrastructure remain major impediments to transition and development efforts. Funding agreements with the European Union (EU) and UNDP have been or soon will be finalized and will target four project areas: consolidation of support, improvement of response with the Rapid Response Fund for mine action, implementation of the Ottawa Convention for disposal of stockpiled landmines and support to operators in the country.

Chad. Between September 16, 2000, and February 28, 2005, more than 1.3 million square meters (0.50 square mile) of land were cleared of mines. Almost 4.5 million square meters (1.74 square miles) have seen battle area clearance (BAC). In the same period, 13,247 anti-personnel mines, 5,127 anti-tank mines and 137,201 pieces of UXO were destroyed. A key objective of efforts in Chad is mobilizing resources by obtaining contributions from the government and external donors. Operations in the city of Fada will begin when funding arrives. The government is expecting to begin payment of 2004 contributions; a minimum of \$2 million has to be secured to pur-

sue mine clearance and BAC projects in the country until the end of the year.

Ethiopia. Highly favorable results and productivity have occurred in the past few months, since the integration of mine detection dogs and mechanical implements with manual clearance units. Demining assets have been reorganized, with the clearance accomplishments of the past six months exceeding those of the previous 24 months. Strategic planning and evaluation will continue and plans for 2005 include training and providing equipment for additional clearance assets. These additions will more than double the number of deminers being used in Ethiopia. A key objective in Ethiopia is reorganizing the national Mine Action Coordination Center (EMAC) and deploying additional assets to heavily mined areas for concentrated demining efforts. Personnel in the country will face difficulty during the transition from the Ethiopian Mine Action Office to EMAC for increased efficiency through enhanced command and control of assets. UNDP assistance currently is being funded by contributions from the government of Norway, though proposals have been submitted to the governments of Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Uganda. In Uganda, the Office of the Prime Minister/Department for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees took control of the mine action program's policy branch, the Inter-Agency Technical Committee. Two international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) currently are conducting MRE and victim assistance in four cities; the Association of Volunteers in International Service and Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief are working in Gulu, Pader, Lira and Kitgum. The two groups are working in camps for displaced Ugandans. Additionally, a recent assessment by the Mine Awareness Trust and Anti-Mines Network-Rwenzori in western Uganda identified 57 dangerous areas. Work in Uganda will focus on establishing an integrated mine action program and the introduction of a mine/UXO victim/incident surveillance network. Up to 50 members of the Uganda Peoples Defense Force will begin training in summer 2005 with the

necessary demining tools as provided by funding from the United Kingdom; however, ongoing insurgent activities in northern and northeastern Uganda endanger MRE, victim assistance activities and clearance operations. Budget shortfalls in the northern regions of Uganda total \$750,000; this money is needed to fund five survey/clearance teams during a pilot period and through the end of 2006. If funding needs are not met soon, operations will be delayed, which will slow return/resettlement efforts in the region.

Iraq. The UNDP Mine Action Team continued providing institutional management and technical expertise to the Iraqi NMAA, while the Danish Demining Group cleared 8,278 square miles of battle area. The LIS team leader continued surveys in the Sulaymaniyah governorate, where, in early March 2005, 13 of the 138 villages visited were discovered to be contaminated. In southern Iraq, the same survey program found 128 farms in 146 villages suffering from surface contamination. An updated picture of the mine action situation and other activities in Iraq was provided during meetings and conversations between mine action partner agencies in the country. The meetings also focused on the implementation of mine action efforts and enhancing coordination of the organizations. The security situation in Iraq remains a principal obstacle to mine clearance; it is not always possible to work in high-

priority areas. The mine action Technical Advisor made trips to Kuwait and Basra, Iraq, to attend the reconstruction and coordination group meeting in Basra and to meet with counterparts in Kuwait. Reports indicate that security has improved in Basra; however, roadside improvised explosive devices constitute a principal threat and kidnapping is ongoing, especially in Basra City. Additionally, the NMAA faces a \$2.5-million need for institutional development and support. Plans have been made to better coordinate efforts in the country with monthly meetings scheduled for groups working or providing support in Iraq.

UNICEF Updates

Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF members in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) continue providing financial, technical and logistical support to the BiH Mine Action Center (BHMAC) and actively assist in the implementation of MRE and landmine victim assistance. In March 2005, UNICEF supported Genesis Project, a local NGO, in conducting 152 peer-education workshops in 20 primary schools. All of the schools are located near suspected contaminated areas. Over 400 trained peer-educators gained knowledge and skills and now will educate their peers about safer behavior around mines. AMI, a UNICEF-

supported local NGO, implemented a field test in March 2005 on the development of a system for planning MRE at the community level. The planning would focus on training, workshops, collection and analysis of information, and liaison with other mine action groups and local authorities. The implementation began by creating MRE plans for the communities of Grebnice, Brvnik, Domaljevac and Samac. Furthermore, UNICEF supported INTERSOS, an Italian NGO, as it implemented MRE and community liaison activities in six municipalities. BHMAC also hosted technical meetings with MRE NGOs in late March 2005 regarding the training of community representatives. A targeted curriculum for the MRE community representatives was formed in the second half of March 2005, taking into consideration the MRE strategy for BiH and training

The MASG is an informal forum of 27 members that meets monthly to exchange information between donors and the U.N. Secretariat on mine action activities and research. Representatives from mine-affected countries, NGOs and experts are invited to report on the status of mine action in their countries. The MASG also works to achieve greater donor coordination and facilitate funding.

needs of community leadership. The course is intended to allow local community leaders to develop the basic skills necessary for planning and implementing basic MRE campaigns and educational activities for endangered communities in rural areas. A toolkit for the MRE community is currently being developed.

Cambodia. At the end of February 2005, the Cambodia Mine/UXO Victim Information System reported 131 casualties in the country. This figure reflects a 14-percent increase over the 115 casualties in February 2004. Fifty percent of the casualties during February 2005 were men, 38 percent were children and 12 percent were women. Mines were responsible for 40 percent of the deaths and UXO for the remaining 60 percent. Among the 131 casualties, 84 percent had received MRE, while 16 percent had not. Tampering with UXO caused 30 percent of these casualties. High casualties rates were linked with UXO tampering and risky activities taken by a growing population because of economic necessity. Contaminated areas along the Cambodia-Thailand border are of particular concern because clearance operations are not allowed for fear of a Thai invasion.

Russia, northern Caucasus region. UNICEF continues its MRE campaign in Chechnya

through the local implementation group Voice of the Mountains (VoM), Let's Save the Generation (LSG) and the Chechen State Drama Theatre. The groups are trying different tactics to raise civilian awareness of existing mine/UXO problems and to change unsafe behavior in mine- and UXO-affected areas. The campaign distributed 120 posters, 40 pens, 20 T-shirts, 300 fairy tales and 800 stories about survivors during the reporting period. Members of the groups work for regional administrators, hospitals, religious institutions and youth institutions. VoM reported the creation of MRE focus groups in four districts of the Chechen capital of Grozny. The preparation of prosthetic devices and follow-up treatment for disabled children is now handled by the Republican Clinical Hospital in Grozny. Fourteen disabled children have completed inpatient treatment at the facility and

17 have used physiotherapeutic procedures offered with UNICEF equipment. More extensive rehabilitation services are being offered by UNICEF to children through the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Center operated by LSG. In March 2005, about 35 children were involved in the program.

Sri Lanka. A set of three specific MRE trainings in March 2005 provided a total of 625 students with MRE. In February 2005, UNICEF began integrating MRE into the formal education system and establishing a monitoring system by which the level of MRE knowledge among student is gauged. The new process will allow education directors to better tailor MRE. The new tool will be discussed further by provincial directors of education and by UNICEF before a full integration into the education system occurs. Additionally, UNICEF Sri Lanka is drafting the framework for a survivor assistance program that will ensure access to rehabilitation services for landmine survivors and others with disabilities. ♦

**The full text of the MASG Newsletter as well as subsequent issues are available at http://www.eda.admin.ch/newyork_miss/el/home/masg.html*

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