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Public-Private Partnerships Paving the Way for Success in Sri Lanka

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enced HMA technical expert every six months, VVAF will ensure that a wide and varying range of knowledge is made available to the HDTC faculty.

The first NGO Faculty Chair at HDTC is Mr. David Armitt. Armitt is a seasoned, highly experienced deminer and IMSMA Technical Advisor. He followed his retirement from the Canadian Armed Forces with entry into the HMA arena in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and has served in Eritrea, Iraq (several tours for the United Nations and VVAF), Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and several other country programs. During his tenure, Armitt will focus upon bringing his IMSMA expertise to the HDTC faculty, as well as sharing his knowledge of establishing technical demining programs.

Further, cooperation between VVAF and HDTC has not been limited to the classroom. During 2003, staff members of both organizations comprised sections of the U.S. Department of State's Emergency Mine Action Team (EMAT) that responded to the

post-war crisis in Iraq. Together, they provided a substantial amount of support in the effort to establish the National Mine Action Authority and the Iraq Mine Action Center (IMAC) in that country.

Strong Support

VVAF wishes to thank the past director of HDTC, Mr. Paul Arcangeli, under whose tenure the original concept of NGO support to HDTC was conceived, developed and funded, and the present interim director, Mr. Rodney Robideau, who guided the concept to its implementation phase. VVAF also wishes to express great gratitude to the team at the Defense Security Cooperation Activity, who provide the necessary funding to support this important project, as well as the International Emergency and Refugee Health Branch of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for providing the administrative and financial framework that is allowing this project to proceed.

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2002, a ceasefire between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government brought an end to heavy fighting but still left Sri Lanka with the arduous task of cleaning up the mines left behind. Both the government and the LTTE support demining and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work in LTTE-controlled areas with the blessing of LTTE, including the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO). The TRO is also a member of the National Steering Committee for mine action and provides liaison officers at the district level.

Early efforts focused on clearing mines around heavily populated areas—near schools, public buildings and places of worship. The U.S. DOS's Quick Reaction Demining Force (QRDF) was deployed to Sri Lanka in 2002 after the ceasefire and was able to return an estimated 32,500 square meters of land to productive use and enable over 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes and farms. However, additional funding was requested to help speed up the rate of mine clearance being conducted, especially in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, where the majority of landmines were laid.

Sending a Helping Hand to "Human Angels"

People to People International

Mary J. Eisenhower, granddaughter of President Eisenhower and President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PTPI, was deeply affected by the children she met at orphanages as well as the beautiful beaches that were desolate because of the mines planted during the war. She was also impressed by the deminers, whom she calls "human angels," who put themselves at risk daily despite the dangers and modest wages in order to allow others to live better lives. Overall, she was touched by the Sri Lankan people, who despite living amid difficult circumstances greeted her with warm smiles.

PTPI began its partnership with the U.S. DOS in 2002 in hopes of alleviating the landmine crisis in Sri Lanka. Mary Eisenhower and PTPI were anxious to help clear the minefields through fundraising efforts. They duly raised enough money to finance a demining team to be deployed to Sri Lanka. PTPI teamed up with HALO Trust, who provided



Representatives of the Sri Lankan Association of Greater Washington, the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI), the U.S. Dept. of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA), the U.S. Army Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate's Humanitarian Demining Program (NVESD HDP), Campbell-Crane and Associates, RONCO Consulting Corporation, and senior Sri Lankan army engineer officers in front of the brand-new MDD kennels on the Jaffna Peninsula, funded by PM/WRA, which now house the privately donated MDDs.

the technical expertise necessary in training the Sri Lankan locals to help remove landmines and UXO.

Marshall Legacy Institute

MLI, in partnership with the embassy of Sri Lanka, the American embassy in Colombo, SLAGW, the schoolchildren of Wyoming under the Children Against Mines Program (CHAMPS), Billic and Don McCoy, Hilda Davis, the Martin Trust Family Foundation, concerned citizens in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, Caterpillar Incorporated, the Chubb Corporation, and the Galleon Group and with the assistance of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) in the DOS's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, raised money to provide six MDDs, which are currently being trained in Sri Lanka. The dogs, valued at about \$120,000, will help to safely speed up the demining process, facilitate the return of land to farmers and advance the peace process among the civilian population, the government and non-state actors (NSAs).

With the assistance of Diana Enzi, wife of Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyoming), MLI helped raise funds for this initiative through a program called CHAMPS, which started in September of 2003. Through CHAMPS, schoolchildren throughout the U.S. state of Wyoming learned about the global landmine problem and then contributed money to help

sponsor an MDD, ultimately named "Wyoming." Wyoming is now in Sri Lanka, preparing to detect mines on the Jaffna Peninsula. MLI plans to extend this successful CHAMPS program to several additional states in the United States.

Sri Lanka Association of Greater Washington

SLAGW, an NGO comprised of expatriate Sri Lankans living in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, was one of MLI's major partners and helped contribute \$20,000 in support of an MDD for Sri Lanka. Members of SLAGW are proud to help restore Sri Lanka and have a great interest in the well-being of their countrymen. The President of SLAGW, Nihal Goonewardene, met with MLI's President, Perry Baltimore, in 2003 to determine what role SLAGW could play in helping demining efforts. After hearing about the need for MDDs, Goonewardene decided that his organization would raise money to pay for a demining dog (\$20,000) to be deployed to Sri Lanka. Within a year, Goonewardene and SLAGW had raised the \$20,000. Because the success of the initial fundraising drive and the response of members to the humanitarian cause, SLAGW aims to raise another \$20,000 in order to send another MDD to Sri Lanka as part of a second MDD "six pack" that MLI is coordinating.

Public-Private Partnerships Paving the Way for Success in Sri Lanka

*"Most young people, including those in their 20s in Sri Lanka, have never seen a day without war because of the fighting that has lasted for the past two decades in Sri Lanka. For them to see new construction underway, schools reopening, and for locals to be able to move out of refugee camps back onto their land—these all come as welcome sights."*¹

— Mary Eisenhower, President, People to People International

U.S. Citizens Take Action

Three groups of concerned private citizens, People to People International (PTPI), the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI) and the Sri Lanka Association of Greater Washington, D.C. (SLAGW), are helping to sponsor demining projects in Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State (DOS). In



Sri Lankan villagers and their new homes on a former minefield cleared by the U.S. Department of State's Quick Reaction Demining Force.

late June 2004, PTPI announced that its fundraising efforts had raised enough money to sponsor a demining team, scheduled to be deployed to northern Sri Lanka along the Point Pedro mine belt after training is com-

pleted. Meanwhile, MLI has raised enough money in partnership with SLAGW and other private and corporate backers to donate six mine-detecting dogs (MDDs) to help the Sri Lankan army continue humanitarian mine clearance efforts. The U.S. government has also been instrumental in funding humanitarian mine action in Sri Lanka, contributing more than \$9.2 million (U.S.) through 2004 to assist Sri Lanka in mine action efforts as well as to advance the peace process there.

Returning Land to the People

Two decades of intense civil war in Sri Lanka between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government left Sri Lanka with an estimated 700,000 mines that pose a major threat to civilians. In February of

by Margaret S. Busé and
Kevin Dunsereau, MLI/C

Home Coming June 2004

In early June 2004, during a Program Assessment Visit to Sri Lanka, U.S. DOS and Department of Defense mine action officials joined representatives from NGOs and private donors to see the six MDDs as they and their Sri Lankan army handlers graduated from an intensive training course at the Sri Lankan Army Engineer School. The final phase of intensive training for the MDDs and their trainers is now taking place under the direction of RONCO Consulting Corporation, under contract to the DOS, in order for the dogs to become acquainted with the conditions in the Jaffna Peninsula. The Jaffna Peninsula is in the northern region of Sri Lanka, where the climate, vegetation and soil are somewhat different from the terrain the dogs and their trainers experienced in the southern part of Sri Lanka during training. The bulk of this training was completed in August 2004 at which time the dogs were sent into low-risk minefields for final testing.

During the visit to Sri Lanka, delegates also had the chance to visit one of the sites cleared by the U.S. QDRF in 2002 immediately after the ceasefire. Construction of houses had already been completed on some of the land. Delegates were also able to speak with mine survivors who had been fitted with prosthetic limbs, all of whom happened to be farmers. Even with prostheses, the farmers found it difficult to eke out a living. Like these survivors, many Sri Lankans rely on subsistence farming in order to earn a living—a living made even harder and riskier by persistent landmines.

While many areas of Sri Lanka remain heavily mine affected, some villages are seeing promising signs as landmines are cleared. Delegates were also impressed by the Sri Lankan army, a disciplined, professional organization that takes pride in its humanitarian demining, working to International Mine Action Standards. With the help of the MDDs, the Sri Lankan army will be able to demine even more quickly and thoroughly.

Coordination and Cooperation

Coordination at the local level has been critical to the success of mine action in Sri Lanka. Prioritization of mine action activities is set by a combination of stakeholders within the local districts in Sri Lanka. According to



A Sri Lankan villager emerges from her new home built on a former minefield that was cleared by the U.S. Department of State's Quick Reaction Demining Force.

PM/WRA Program Manager for Sri Lanka Deborah Netland, "the prioritization system at the district level is handled by the office of local government agents (GAs). The GAs are responsible for departments and projects in their respective districts and head the District Steering Committees. The committees include representatives from all stakeholders in the affected district (i.e., NGOs, government agencies) developing the order in which mine contamination is tackled.... Clearance, technical survey, marking, mine risk education and all other elements of mine action at the ground level are carried out by the District Steering Committee."²

Ms. Netland continues, "The first step is when task locations are put forward by the Divisional Secretary (DS) for what is considered to be the highest priority for mine action in their respective divisions. This is based on the number of beneficiaries, accidents, infrastructure and services blocked by the presence of landmines. The DS priorities are consolidated into a single district-wide list and compared to existing mined area surveys. The District Steering Committee then reviews and decides on the district priority lists, which are then allocated to the various agencies involved in all aspects of the humanitarian mine action program. These agencies (e.g., various NGOs, Sri Lankan army humanitarian demining



One of the ambulances procured by the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement for use by Sri Lankan army humanitarian deminers.

units, etc.) then commence work in these areas. The priority list is constantly being reviewed and refined to keep it current and reactive to events."²

Project Goals Through 2006

"With the expectation that the present peace process continues and that donor funding for capacity building and operations meets the current demand for expansion, the government of Sri Lanka vision is to have all high-priority areas in Sri Lanka (north/east area) cleared by the end of 2006," says Ms. Netland. She continues, "This incorporates



So that it may be safely farmed, a Sri Lankan army sapper looks at a minefield being cleared. Many mined areas in Sri Lanka are even more overgrown and can benefit from mechanical brush cutters.

those projects directly impacting resettlement and related reconstruction projects... [and] can be viewed as the first phase. The outstanding concerns will include medium- and lower-priority impact areas. The High Security Zones presently occupied by security forces are not included in this estimate, and should the peace process continue, the time required to prepare those areas for civilian use will need to be calculated. This is the second phase."²

Overall, the fundraising efforts and contributions by all organizations involved are allowing for more than simply demining to occur in Sri Lanka. More importantly, the public-private partnerships between the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program, the government of Sri Lanka, and visionary organizations like People to People International, the Marshall Legacy Institute, and SLAGW are helping to save lives, return displaced persons to their homes, clear land for farming and advance the peace process so that Sri Lankans can look forward to a bright future.

* Photos clo Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement.

Endnotes

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