

WHITHER HMA POLICY?

LINKING HMA AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

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Supporting the U.S. Department of State remove explosive hazards from a public fuel depot near Mosul, Iraq, which helped restore transportation operations critical to agricultural activity.

Photo courtesy of Tetra Tech project photo.

In 1999, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines issued a seminal report entitled *Landmine Monitor: Toward a Mine-Free World*. How prophetic they were on the one hand, and how unbri- dled and unrealistic the Campaign was on the other. Fresh off the 1997 *Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention* (APMBC), the report notes a U.S. State Department 1998 declaration that removal had surpassed plant- ing, and “it appears that we have turned the tide in the battle against mines, and that it is possible to solve the AP [anti-personnel] mine cri- sis in years not decades.”¹ The report, stating that the past decade has focused on the threat to innocent civilians, heralds the emergence of a development assistance oriented approach toward demining, known as humanitarian mine action (HMA),² which is

*an integrated approach to removing landmines from the ground and reducing their disastrous impact on mine-affected communi- ties. Nobody knows how many mines there are in the ground, and that number is not very relevant, despite the attention given to the issue. What is relevant is how many people are affected by the presence of mines, which are obstacles to post-conflict reconstruc- tion and socio-economic re-development.*³

The campaign’s enthusiasm around rapid resolution of the prob- lem was not misguided; after all, parties to the APMBC agreed to clear their contaminated territory within ten years. Two decades later, however, the international community continues to set new clearance timeframes while providing continued assistance.

Around the time of the initial 1999 *Landmine Monitor* report, the UN held the Millennium Summit in 2000 where member nations adopted an agreement known as the Millennium Declaration, which set forth goals and principles geared toward ending underdevelopment and abject poverty, and promoting peace and security. From this agreement, eight broad goals were issued around social-, economic-, and health-based objectives known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The goals covered poverty, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, disease, the environment, and global partnership, and established twenty-one specific development targets along with sixty indicators to be achieved by 2015.⁴ Some states met some objectives, a few achieved many, while many states achieved few, if any, objectives.

The 2015 UN Summit was devoted to the next round of development goals, and the international community discussed the range of challenges and impediments toward lasting development, security, and stability faced by so many countries. The summit also celebrated successes, as broadly measured by quality-of-life gains like positive changes in poverty (those living above the \$1.25 per day standard), access to clean water, literacy improvements, and gender parity in primary education.⁵ Understanding better the success and shortfalls of the MDG process (2000–2015) was critical, and the insight gleaned was valuable for understanding how to meet the new development goals set for 2015–2030, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Unfortunately, the relationships between mines and development were not addressed by policy and programming surrounding the 2000 MDGs, nor during the 1997 establishment of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Moreover, while some policy writing around the last millennium did explore the issue, the SDGs of 2015 still did not address landmines and demining as intermediate variables along the pathway to development. This lack of connectivity will be addressed further, but for now, **the point is that establishing a relationship between HMA and global development goals was not done well previously, and doing so now is critical for the future of HMA.**

THE FUNDING DOMAIN

At a macro level, globalism currently competes with an inward-looking nationalistic populism that is pressing for reduced levels of foreign assistance while demanding greater accountability for any overseas investments based on “national interest.” The argument at hand is driven by concern over value for money, return on investment, and a sustainable, demonstrable impact. Fiscal responsibility is thus the clarion call to which both the global assistance and HMA communities must answer—and with clear substantiation, as both are often considered foreign policy tools.⁶

Donors contribute for varying reasons, depending on amount, cause, beneficiaries, recipients, and timing. While motives may range from altruism to legislative mandate (i.e., the United Kingdom), to unabashed self-interest, countries nonetheless expect a return on their humanitarian assistance—whether it be increased stability, enhanced self-sufficiency, improved relationships, future market access for the donor’s private sector, or all of the above. Regardless of political

ideology, the use of public revenue to support socioeconomic needs in other countries is receiving more scrutiny, along with more consistent and wider expectations for demonstrable results, benefitting both recipient and donor. Additionally, further challenges may yet arise as the vast amount of donor support is concentrated quite narrowly—both in terms of the percentage of support offered by a handful of donors as well as the majority of assistance being provided to just a handful of recipient countries.

According to the 2019 *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*, the three largest mine action donors from 2014 to 2018 (United States, European Union, and Japan) account for nearly 58 percent of all funding. The top seven donors (adding the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands) accounted for \$2.147 billion of the \$2.629 billion in total assistance.

Also according to the 2019 *Landmine Monitor*, the level of US funding alone over this time frame, \$947.1 million, accounted for 36 percent of total global funding.⁷ However, the US 2017 HMA funding of \$320.6 million was more than double the US 2016 HMA contribution of \$152.4 million. Additionally, more than half of the 2017 funds (\$169.35 million) went to projects in Iraq and Syria alone.⁸ In comparison, these two countries received \$17 million more than the total US 2016 contribution, and of that \$152.4 million, \$106.55 million went to Iraq.⁹

Fortunately, US funding has remained strong for years, with consistent bipartisan congressional and presidential support. Despite recent annual averages of roughly \$200 million from the United States alone, resources fall short compared to need. Overall, while there are approximately sixty contaminated countries, six countries alone received nearly 52 percent (\$1.361 billion) of the total 2014–2018 funding for mine action assistance.¹⁰

With these challenges in mind, a brief look at global development assistance funding is warranted. As noted in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Table 1, total net resource flows for global development assistance steadily decreased in terms of the percentage of cumulative donor Gross National Income (GNI) from 2010 to 2017, with the exception of 2014. Fortunately, the actual dollar amounts of development assistance remained relatively steady, with upticks in 2016 and 2017.

In 2018, overseas official development assistance was \$149.3 billion, though “foreign direct investment to developing countries dropped by around a third from 2016 to 2017, following a 12 percent drop in overall external finance from 2013 to 2016.”¹¹ Additionally, recent assistance levels were weakened by the significant sums spent on Middle East refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) costs—for example, the level of donor assistance expenditures focused on refugee costs alone increased in 2016 by 27.5 percent to \$15.4 billion from 2015 costs.¹²

These financial snapshots suggests several takeaways for the HMA community: (1) overarching development assistance is somewhat unstable, (2) enormous sums, comparatively, flow through development assistance streams, and (3) critical issue areas for Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy include considerations highly connected to HMA—namely, humanitarian assistance funding, cost of displaced persons, and direct foreign investment and other private funding.



Children in a Central Africa Republic community that Tetra Tech was assisting under a USAID illegal mining and conflict diamonds project. Photo courtesy of Tetra Tech.

Most critical, however, is the need to recognize that the HMA community has an important opportunity to better align with, and integrate into, global development assistance objectives. Integration is imperative at this time when many donor countries face internal sociopolitical pressures to focus public spending internally and to better substantiate returns on their investments made abroad. Two of the biggest HMA donors, the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, are each mired in political consternation about reducing foreign assistance spending and reorganizing their national foreign assistance institutions and mandates. While global funding for HMA was at an all-time high in 2017 and 2018,¹³ increased donor fatigue toward HMA and development assistance is a real possibility (particularly should donor assistance disproportionately shift toward global health requirements, and even more so should a global recession emerge as a result of COVID-19), as is the uncertainty associated with changing foreign policy and national security priorities related to assisting conflict-affected countries, peacekeeping missions, and the larger Overseas Contingency Operations (to use a US term). With increased competition for potentially diminishing funds, **strengthening the synergistic HMA-development relationship may help both communities achieve more with less.**

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT: CHANGING THE ETHOS FROM CASUALTY REDUCTION TO SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Much HMA progress over the past two decades has come from a dedicated and consistent higher-order message that was the cornerstone of the initial campaign: *mine action saves innocent lives*.¹⁴ That said, however, the horrors of chronic underdevelopment far eclipse damage caused by mines and munitions when measured in deaths and victims.

The 2019 *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* reported 149 square kilometers cleared worldwide in 2016,¹⁵ when global victims totaled 9,439 (the second highest total in over twenty years),¹⁶ including approximately 2,100 deaths.¹⁷ Typical estimates are that over 80 percent of mine victims are civilian and almost half are children—in many instances because they are working in fields or picking up scrap metal to help earn family income. In contrast, an analysis of global health data indicate that an “innocent victimization” milieu around children in the developing world in 2016 was considerably worse:

- One in twelve children under the age of five in sub-Saharan Africa died, and one in twenty-two died in South Asia; the North American ratio was 1:152 and the European ratio was 1:204.
- 2.78 million children under the age of five in sub-Saharan Africa died, along with another 1.73 million children in South Asia. This contrasts with 28,000 North American deaths and 43,000 in Europe.¹⁹
- Deaths among children aged five to fourteen in sub-Saharan Africa totaled 513, 000, 241,000 in Southern Asia, 10,000 in Europe, and 6,000 in North America.²⁰
- 407,000 people died from malaria in Africa alone.²¹
- 525,000 children died from diarrhoeal diseases, with over 1,400 deaths per day.²²
- 1.4 million children under the age of five died from acute lower respiratory infection, more than 95 percent of whom were from low and middle income countries.²³

The main point of these examples is not to suggest the horror and outrage associated with munitions contaminants should lessen, but rather the emphasis on how mines/munitions preclude development outcomes should concurrently sharpen. For instance, **all** of the above mortality categories are considered preventable—if the levels of national development were improved.²⁴ Perhaps the policy orientation of HMA needs to include the alignment between mine action and the SDGs, and toward the contributory impact mine action success or failure has on social, political, and economic well-being.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Official Development Assistance and Private Flows*	512,792	504,701	477,702	450,382	587,731	315,651	317,435	422,968
Only Official Development Assistance **	128,484	135,111	127,030	134,847	137,539	131,563	144,921	147,160
Total Flows as % of GNI	1.25	1.14	1.07	0.99	1.26	0.72	0.71	.89

* This includes bilateral and multilateral institutional assistance, along with other official public investment, as well as all private direct investment and private grants.

** Only governmental bilateral and multilateral institutional assistance is included.

Table 1. OECD Global Development Assistance Trendline (in millions).

Figure courtesy of OECD International Development Statistics, Volume 2018 Issue 1.



With support from the U.S. Department of State and other donors, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has linked UXO removal to its National Development plan, where female demining teams play an important role in UXO Lao's efforts to clear land for economic development. Photo courtesy of Tetra Tech project photo.

Although the *sine qua non* role of mine action in post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization countries is generally understood, undertaking more specific causal pathway mapping exercises does not seem widespread. Much like modelling used to measure the impact of donor and foreign direct investment on post-war reconstruction to help guide economic growth, algorithmic models could highlight the potential impact of appropriate, timely, and sufficient HMA on development objectives and the corresponding impact on resulting economic growth forecasting. Likewise, and conversely, models should run the potential impact of insufficient or non-existent munitions response.²⁵

This should not be an overly onerous task, given a twenty-plus year applied policy and programming research base from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD, established in 1998), *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction*, and the Peace Research Institute Oslo's (PRIO) project: *Assistance to Mine-Affected Communities*, which ran from 1999–2009. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also works closely with the GICHD and PRIO (and others), co-sponsoring events and research, and the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) has long had between twelve and fourteen members whose mandates include some aspect of mine action as well as development assistance.

In spite of some efforts to create bridgeheads on each side, the spans connecting HMA and development assistance communities have not been adequately built. For example, no references to economic growth and development were made in the original 1999 Maputo Declaration nor in the ensuing 2014 Review Conference. Similarly, the 2016 *Convention on Cluster Munitions* had just one reference to

victim assistance and development. Neither demining nor HMA were associated with the 2000 MDG efforts, or, more sadly, in the literature and conversations surrounding the 2015 SDGs, including the UN publication *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.²⁶

Perhaps more important, however, IMAS Series 14 (*Evaluation of Mine Action Programmes* 14.10 and 14.20) makes scarce reference to development.²⁷ Neither document even raises the idea of exploring measurable connections between HMA activities and development outcomes and impacts. Although Series 14 is overdue for an update (all IMAS publications are *scheduled* for updates every three years), **it is possible that the task and imperative before us will be better served by a new IMAS series focused on aligning and measuring the relationship between mine action and development. At the very least, an IMAS 14.30 should be considered.**

Most important though, the November 2019 Oslo Review Conference does make clear that mine action is a “key enabler for development, humanitarian action, peace and security”²⁸ and that the corresponding Action Plan for 2020–2024 includes focal points for HMA to further the achievement of the SDGs. The time is indeed right for HMA to evolve as a significant component of this development/security equation—one more widely and publicly seen and understood, and one better articulated in terms of evidence-based input, with HMA becoming an intervening variable contributing toward a larger series of ends, namely the SDGs. This evolution will require demonstrating return on investment in terms of both the technical aspects of HMA, e.g., monitoring and evaluating current key performance indicators (KPIs),²⁹ and on a new set of impact analytics that measure how HMA serves as an intervening variable on a range of development objectives and outcomes.

INCREASING THE *BANG FOR THE BUCK*: DEMONSTRATING VALUE, SUBSTANTIATING RETURN ON INVESTMENT

HMA donor support has tended to be tied more toward a given foreign policy or national security platform rather than a development assistance agenda. The United States, for example, has provided more than \$3.7 billion dollars of total conventional weapons destruction assistance to over 100 countries from 1993–2019, making the United States the single largest donor by far. However, just under \$1.6 billion was spent on only five countries (Iraq, Afghanistan, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam).³⁰ This pattern of linking mine assistance to national security and foreign policy is consistent with other large donors. The point is this approach will have to change if HMA is to play a significant contributory role in achieving the global SDGs. A wider country distribution pattern is one approach; however, integrating HMA more widely into development assistance policy and programming ought to enable more countries to provide more support to HMA efforts.

Similarly, development assistance is increasingly becoming more of a foreign policy and/or national security tool. In terms of additional

similarities, the intent of both HMA support and development assistance is to lessen suffering, fear, risk, and both physical and economic insecurity, and to improve human and community well-being. Also, the performance and impact of both communities should be held accountable.³¹ Although both communities ought to be exploring their relationship more explicitly, perhaps the onus falls on the HMA community to better demonstrate its value to development assistance.

If mine action is to receive the support needed to accomplish the larger HMA mission, it will likely need to adopt a value-for-money orientation, defining and operationalizing a performance-based management approach toward development outcomes. The sector must be able to both articulate and substantiate evidenced-based policy, programming, and budgeting capabilities and results. Demonstrating value is particularly important as Stanley Brown (U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State) recently noted, the “global need for HMA programs continues to outstrip available resources.”³² Moreover, in the post-COVID-19 economy, resources for both HMA and development assistance writ large may be further challenged.

Although the HMA community will likely be better served by taking the initiative, defining, tracking, and reporting on development and outcome-based KPIs will require cooperation and collaboration with the development assistance community. Ideally, both communities will be able to articulate how the presence or absence of HMA affects development goals from the immediate to the long-term (including the policy and programming distinctions between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development). Noting that we are already one-third through the fifteen-year SDG performance period, such an outcome will require immediate action on the part of both communities to increase dialogue in earnest, to better and more fully frame and initiate operational research agendas, to pilot targeted programs, and to develop and execute a monitoring, evaluation, and learning regimen focused on HMA-SDG relationships.

This process will require widespread recognition of the need for policy, programming, and budget evolution/maturation associated with mainstreaming HMA into development assistance (see endnote 25). The joint GICHD and UNDP report “Leaving No One Behind” provides a solid foundation on which to build, as does the 2019 Oslo Review Conference report.³³ Illustrative areas where over a half century of relevant development assistance expertise can be applied to existing HMA include:

- Assistance with improving assessments, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (to include knowledge and data management systems)
- Enhancing sustainable land management and use—including strong return on investment estimating to prioritize actions (including a focus on critical infrastructure and resumption of economic activity)
- Institutional strengthening of national mine action authorities—including improving transparency and accountability, and management/leadership capabilities
- Helping national authorities develop a whole-of-government orientation, working more effectively with other national ministries, including integrating HMA into national development plans³⁴

- Assisting contaminated countries with preparedness and resiliency related to environmental and climate-oriented changes that might increase explosive ordnance hazards
- Helping define and promote public-private partnerships

The HMA and development assistance relationship should have different degrees of connectivity or alignment in different circumstances, as Gasser noted.³⁵ There are instances where

1. **No formal linkage** can or should be made, such as when political and/or security considerations supersede development efforts.
2. **Coordination** should be the objective when development priorities focus on jobs and anti-poverty objectives while the political-military imperatives are weapons removal and abatement and clearing ground.
3. **HMA leads** and is an enabler of development assistance when munitions prioritization takes precedent and development activities require clearance a priori before they can begin.
4. **Active integrated planning and execution** is prioritized, and HMA efforts and objectives are viewed as part of an overall development strategy—in other words, mine action impact is a formal part of a development impact assessment such that a low-priority mine action area might be cleared first to help accomplish development objectives.

In the end, if actionable correlations between HMA and the SDGs can be framed, supported, and communicated, the value for money argument becomes easier in terms of attracting resources from both public and private sources, including increased direct foreign investment.³⁶ This alignment and integration of HMA and development will not only enable more effective and efficient targeting of whatever resources are available, but will also improve investment risk mitigation, which may in turn generate more sustainable post-clearance investments. As HMA activities are better framed as *enablers and catalysts for development* as opposed to separate *precursors to development*, the value for money argument is strengthened, further justifying sustained mine action expenditures. 🌐

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