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Norwegian People's Aid

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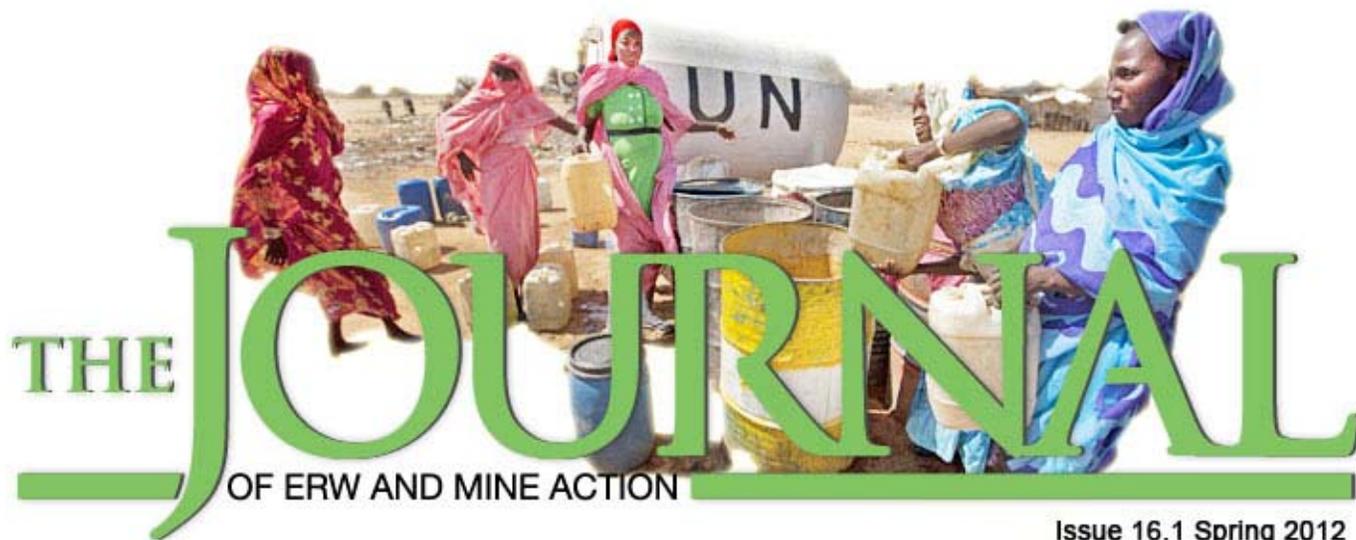


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Norwegian People's Aid

Norwegian People's Aid is the humanitarian organization of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (also known as LO). NPA is a politically independent organization but often takes political stances internationally in an effort to meet its strategic goals of "the just distribution of power and resources" and "the protection of life and health for all."¹

LO founded NPA to aid in recovery after the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and to improve the public health of the Norwegian people. In order to provide aid to Finland after the Winter War (1939–1940) with the Soviet Union, NPA's establishment was expedited to December 1939. In the past 70 years, NPA has provided extensive assistance throughout the globe: aiding in the recovery of Central and Eastern Europe after World War II (1939–1945), participating in the global fight against tuberculosis in the 1950s, rebuilding Vietnam in the 1970s and running Norwegian refugee-reception centers today.²

NPA has four main working areas to help embody its vision of "solidarity in practice."¹ Nationally, NPA engages in rescue, first-aid services and refugee resettlement. Internationally, NPA focuses on mine clearance and development. NPA emphasizes that it does not provide charity but works in equal partnerships for sustainability.¹

International Mine Action

Currently, NPA works in 20 countries worldwide that are contaminated by cluster munitions and landmines.³ As of 2010, on average, its 1,107 mine-clearance workers have cleared more than 105 square kilometers (65 square miles) each throughout the globe.⁴ According to NPA's acting Secretary General Orrvar Dalby in 2010, "It's a major victory every time we can tick off a country on the list of those finally able to declare themselves free of mines and cluster munitions."⁴ NPA played a key role in the work to achieve the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (also known as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMBBC) and the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (2010).⁴

NPA uses the APMBBC and the CCM as frameworks for its international efforts. Spending more than US\$40 million on work annually, NPA implements humanitarian demining and clearance programs, supports national mine-action



structures and does advocacy work for efficient humanitarian aid. A sampling of NPA's international work in Angola and Lebanon provides an overview of its efforts throughout the world.

Angola. After achieving independence from Portugal in 1975 until peace accords in 2002, Angola was plagued by a civil war that left behind severe contamination from landmines and explosive remnants of war. NPA worked with partners to conduct extensive surveying and clearance work throughout Angola and was put in charge of clearing five provinces. Today, as donor funding for mine-clearance declines in Angola, NPA only maintains one base out of its original five and focuses on working with local authorities on land-release policy and capacity-building. NPA still employs 100 locals to continue mine-action and related work in Angola.⁵ NPA also carries out extensive development work in Angola, supporting the work of civil-society organizations to strengthen women's rights, combat gender and sexual violence, promote human rights and involve young people in civil society.⁶

Lebanon. Lebanon has extensive landmine and unexploded-ordnance contamination from 15 years of civil war (1975–1991) and 22 years of Israeli occupation (1982-2000). NPA and regional partners initiated victim-assistance and mine-risk education programs in southern Lebanon in 2001. Through these continuing programs, NPA provides microcredit to survivors and organizes community meetings about the dangers of cluster munitions. After the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War, in partnership with the Lebanese Mine Action Center and local authorities, NPA organized the Battle Area Clearance Project to clear submunitions. Its BAC project has 69 staff members.⁷ NPA also supports local organizations working with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, providing vocational and rehabilitation services and advocating for human rights.⁸

Organization

Secretary General Liv Torres oversees NPA's 51-member board of trustees and nine-member management group at its main office in Oslo.⁹ Volunteers divided into more than 100 chapters throughout Norway complete most of the work.³ Globally, NPA has 37 external offices spanning four continents.⁹ NPA and its projects are funded by individual and international donors, from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) to the United Nations. Through its website, NPA also accepts personal donations for a variety of urgent-need programs, including worldwide mine and cluster-munitions disposal. ↕

~ Rachael Weber, CISR staff

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Endnotes

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