Mine-action Program in Southern Sudan

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Southern Sudan Demining Authority

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Socioeconomic rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine and ERW victims remains a high national priority. Furthermore, North Sudan has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Since 2007, 22 community-based projects have been implemented for the socioeconomic rehabilitation and reintegration of the landmine and ERW victims in various parts of the country with generous contributions from Canada, Japan and the state budget. The North Sudanese authorities, UNDP and the UNMAO have embarked on a broader and more practical partnership in various areas of mine action in support of the implementation of the mine-action transition plan, and look forward to further expanding this cooperation and partnership in the future.

Future of Mine Action in North Sudan

From August 2010 until April 2014, the key challenge for North Sudan will be to clear known-mined or suspected-mined areas under its Article 5 obligations. In the future, North Sudan envisions producing an experienced mine-clearance staff capable of fulfilling its local role of mine clearance while offering support to other countries through sharing experiences and lessons and deploying trained staff.

With the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, a mine-action transition plan was concluded in November 2008. In 2009, based on the provisions of this plan, the national authorities made significant progress toward transitioning by strengthening and consolidating their institutional and management capacities. As part of its long-term planning process, North Sudan’s National Mine Action Authority, together with the UNMAO, UNDP and other stakeholders, has developed a three-year operations plan, covering 2009–11 to implement the Cartagena Action Plan. North Sudan aims to clear 80 percent of all known high- and medium-priority affected areas by the end of 2011 at an estimated cost of US$129 million.

Conclusion

North Sudan is committed to fully implementing the Cartagena Action Plan. As it reaches the Article 5 mine-clearance deadline, North Sudan will put all necessary measures in place to achieve all the goals and objectives set forth in the action plan. To fulfill its Article 5 obligations, North Sudan’s national demining teams, which are the nation’s most cost-effective and sustainable assets, need continued and generous support from the donor community. This will enable North Sudan to realize the goal of being mine-free by 2014. See endnotes page 81.

Mine-action Program in Southern Sudan

The 21-year north-south civil war in Sudan that killed an estimated two million people, uprooted four million and caused 600,000 to take refuge outside of Sudan has left Southern Sudan littered with landmines and explosive remnants of war. The contamination poses a serious challenge to the Government of Southern Sudan’s development plans and is considered a serious threat to the successful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005 and ending in 2011. In 2011, in accordance with the CPA, a referendum will determine whether Southern Sudan will remain a part of a united Sudan or become its own separate entity. Based on the CPA, in 2005, Southern Sudan gained the right to self-determination in 2011. In 2011, in accordance with the CPA, a referendum will determine whether Southern Sudan will remain a part of a united Sudan or become its own separate entity. Based on the CPA, in 2005, Southern Sudan gained the right to self-determination in 2011.

Following more than two decades of civil war between Northern and Southern Sudan, much of Southern Sudan has been left contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war. As a result, the Southern Sudan Demining Authority, along with the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Mine Action Office and other organizations, have been diligently working toward clearing 80 percent of the mines in Southern Sudan by 2011.

by Margaret Mathiang [Southern Sudan Demining Authority]

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The Sudan Joint Integrated Demining Units go to a field at Babanusa-Waw for a railway clearance project.

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Achievements

Since 2004, when mine-action operations started in Sudan, Southern Sudan has met a number of milestones, including the establishment of the SSDA and its substructures, drafting of the mine-action bill, inclusion of mine action in the state budget and the training of more than 80 management staff in different technical and specified fields. Additionally, five senior personnel from SSDA completed the James Madison University Senior Managers’ Course in Mine Action, thereby contributing to improved managerial performance. Furthermore, Southern Sudan is supporting the Joint Integrated Demining Units (national landmine/ERW clearance support) and has provided 120 deminers and technical staff to the JIDU. As of June 2010, 4,206 of the 4,733 recorded mines and ERW have been cleared of landmines and ERW in the central and southern parts of Sudan. The clearance of railway lines has been extremely important in restoring safe passage between Northern and Southern Sudan as the Babanusa-Wau railway line is the only all-season land link between the northern and southern parts of the country. In addition, the clearance and reconstruction of railway lines and roads has enabled the safe return and resettlement of IDPs and refugees.

Socioeconomic rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of landmines/ERW continues to be a priority on the national agenda. Sudan has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Over the past three years, 22 community-based projects have been implemented for the socioeconomic rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of landmines and ERW in various parts of the country with generous contributions from Canada, Japan and the state budget.

Challenges

Southern Sudan is working toward becoming “impact free” as soon as possible, as achieving the status of “landmine free” is very much debatable. One of the key challenges for Southern Sudan is the clearance of known mined/suspected mined areas to provide a safe environment for returning IDPs and refugees. In addition, the SSDA in Southern Sudan faces challenges from the long rainy seasons, logistical complications and lack of enough data to determine the level, type and locations of contamination.

As UNMAO is operating under UNMIS’s mandate, a reduction in international support is also expected during the forthcoming referendum period. This loss of funding calls for more financial support to national mine-action capacities, which remains a challenge for the GOSS, as it must confront conflicting development priorities in the post-war rehabilitation period.

As part of SSDA’s long-term planning process and in its implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan, UNMAO, UNDP and all other stakeholders have developed a three-year operations plan covering 2009–11. With the implementation of the plan, Sudan aims to clear 80 percent of all known high- and medium-priority affected areas by the end of 2011 at an estimated cost of US$120 million.

Southern Sudan Demining Authority has developed a three-year strategic plan that aims to strengthen national capacities in mine-action activities and to meet the vision of freeing the country from the effects and threat of landmines and ERW. Southern Sudan also envisions itself to one day be active regionally and globally supporting other countries with an exchange of lessons learned and deployment of trained and experienced staff. In the meantime, Southern Sudan continues to address its landmine/ERW contamination. It is in need of ongoing generous support from the donor community to all mine-action operators working in the region. 9

9. See endnotes page 81.

References

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After receiving her Master’s Degree in development training and education from the U.K.’s University of Wolverhampton, Margaret Mathew Mathiang became the Deputy Director of the Southern Sudan Monitoring Authority in Juba, Southern Sudan in 2003. Today, she is the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, a position she has held since September 2010.

credit: David Gauthier (April 2010).