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Making it personal

Zach Wall used with the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery as an Editorial Assistant for The Journal from September 2007 through May 2008. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in sociology at James Madison University in May 2008, and is now on tour with his band.

Suzanne Tice was an Editorial Assistant for The Journal from January through August 2008. She is pursuing a Master of Arts in technical and scientific communication at James Madison University.

Today, Harte “dresses” a laptop for a living and has a healthy jealousy for his team working in the field. It is particularly proud of the young Cambodians and other graduates from the Cambodia Trust who have returned home to the country’s extensive disabled population.

The Cambodia Trust established the “Association for the equality of the disabled people of Cambodia” (ASEF), a local organization, that provides both physical rehabilitation and community engagement services.

In March, 1995, Bosnia established the ITF to help rebuild Bosnia and Herzegovina from the devastation of the Bosnian War. The ITF was originally focused on victim rehabilitation, socioeconomic re habilitation and demining. As the ITF began receiving more funds, the organization expanded its services to include mine-risk education and training. There was a need for mine action in the countries neighboring the Balkans and the ITF expanded its areas of service to all of Southeastern Europe region.

Today, the ITF continues to work in the variety of countries that the ITF has worked in over the last 15 years. The ITF’s work in the various countries led to the establishment of the South-Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council in November 2000. In the agreement, in which the directors of mine action centers from the Southeastern Europe region and the Cambodia Trust worked together to form the coordination and regional mine action efforts.

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Current Operations

- Mine action projects implemented through the ITF have been integrated into wider frameworks of development and human security by:

  • Coordinating action of mine clearance and mine-risk education.
  • Rehabilitating and integrating mine survivors, preventing social and economic alienation and consequently, impoverishment of mine-affected communities.
  • Enhancing regional cooperation and confidence building through joint and regional mine action activities.

Donors

- Donors have two options when contributing to the ITF: earmarked donations go to projects that the ITF has recognized as high priority, and the U.S. Department of State and ITF have an agreement that the United States will match all donations that other donors make to the ITF in the Southeastern Europe region up to the amount authorized by the U.S. Congress for this purpose.

Mine-Victims’ Assistance

- Rehabilitation of mine victims in an important component of the ITF’s program. Rehabilitation directly draws attention to the consequences of war. The ITF Mine Victims Assistance program is thus implemented on three different levels:
  1. Rehabilitation of mine victims from the Southeastern Europe region and other mine-affected countries at the Institute for Rehabilitation in the Republic of Slovenia.
  2. Other mine-victim assistance and mine-risk education programs implemented by various NGOs in Southeastern Europe and other mine-affected countries.
  3. Education and training of professionals from the Southeastern Europe region and other mine-affected countries specifically at the Cambodian Community Regional Training Center.

Demining

- An estimated two million mines and pieces of unexploded ordnance remain in Southeastern Europe from recent conflicts. Demining programs use trained deminers, mine detectors, dogs and machinery (blinds, rollers, vegetation cutters and excavation equipment) to remove the remaining hazards. The ITF supports demining programs in these affected areas: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

- With few exceptions, international mine action has been a great success and has demonstrated the benefits of mine-affected countries, international organizations, donors, implementing organizations and civil society working together with a common goal of reducing the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war in post-conflict countries.

Training

- The ITF provides funding for three areas of training: Courses are taught in explosive-ordnance disposal, monitoring and quality assurance/quality control. Between 1999 and 2004, 185 individuals received training in these areas. With funding from the ITF, the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation teaches courses and holds seminars in monitoring and quality assurance in the Southeastern Europe region; between 1998 and 2004, the institute trained 314 people. Through programs the ITF funded, the people trained with these skills later led others in the region affected by mines.
Table 1: Area cleared through ITF-funded programs as of June 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Area (square meters)</th>
<th>Area (square yards)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>2,054,655</td>
<td>2,457,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>46,801,728</td>
<td>55,974,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>26,861,603</td>
<td>32,126,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>4,455,707</td>
<td>5,326,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>721,125</td>
<td>862,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>12,619,704</td>
<td>15,095,040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ITF Future

The original vision of the ITF is being accomplished, and a new vision is evolving.

The ITF is expanding its activities outside Southeastern Europe, namely to the South Caucasus and Central Asia, while projects in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Latin America are in the planning stage. The ITF has initiated requests for cooperation from the following countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Thailand and Vietnam.

One of the ITF’s biggest accomplishments is making Macedonia and Montenegro officially mine free.

Table 1 shows the area cleared through ITF-funded programs.

Organizational Structure

The ITF’s Board of Advisors consists of the organization’s 52 donor nations. The Managing Board is comprised of nine representatives from three countries in Southeastern Europe: BiH, Croatia and Slovenia. The board is in charge of overseeing the activities of the ITF, which includes ensuring efficiency and transparency of all tasks.

Celebrating Its 10th Anniversary

The ITF marked its 10th anniversary with a number of different events, beginning with a photo exhibition, “An Abandoned Road,” the 19 photo panels in the exhibit illustrate the progress the ITF has made since its founding in 1998.

The ITF celebrated the establishment of its Board of Advisors in April 2008. For the first time, the world’s largest annual gathering of experts on landmines and explosive remnants of war was held in a mine-affected area, with opportunities to see firsthand lessons learned and operational activities in the field. The Eleventh Meeting for Mine Action National Directors and U.N. Advisors started in Lisbon, Slovenia, and continued in Sibiu, Croatia, in April 2008. The ITF prepared and presented in new strategy paper for 2009–13 to the Board of Advisors in November 2008, it was adopted by the Managing Board in December 2008.

Vinh and Trinh’s Adventure

by Allan Vosburgh

Co-written and illustrated by David Vosburgh


Printed in English and Vietnamese

reviewed by J. Holley Watts | Center for International Stabilization and Recovery |