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National Ownership and Partnerships for Capacity Development

Through the lens of Jordan’s mine-action history, the importance of strong leadership, national ownership and partnerships are detailed here as necessary for capacity development.

by Mired R. Z. Al-Hussein [National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation] and Olaf Juergensen [United Nations Development Programme Jordan]

In 1993 His Majesty the late King Hussein bin Talal ordered the Jordanian Armed Forces to begin demining in Jordan. The King was deeply concerned by the disastrous humanitarian impact of landmines. He recognized that the recognition that without political will and leadership from the top, such initiatives will fail. Mine action is slightly different from other humanitarian services due to the great number of stakeholders involved. For instance, mine action in developing countries demands the involvement of a wide cross-section of society, including key government ministries; in the case of Jordan, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Defence, Planning, Social Development, Agriculture and Tourism have all played catalytic roles. The military, police, civil defense, local councils, notables, religious elders and mine-affected communities have also provided key contributions. In the view of the NCDR and the Jordanian government, success in mine action is sustained by powerful leadership that are able to share a common vision and objective. Without such direction, mine action will be subjected to bureaucratic obstacles and delays and will be thrown into a basket with numerous other national priorities. What is required early on is that the national mine action is the recognition that without political will and leadership from the top, such initiatives will fail. Mine action is slightly different from other humanitarian services due to the great number of stakeholders involved. For instance, mine action in developing countries demands the involvement of a wide cross-section of society, including key government ministries; in the case of Jordan, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Defence, Planning, Social Development, Agriculture and Tourism have all played catalytic roles. The military, police, civil defense, local councils, notables, religious elders and mine-affected communities have also provided key contributions. In the view of the NCDR and the Jordanian government, success in mine action is sustained by powerful leadership that are able to share a common vision and objective. Without such direction, mine action will be subjected to bureaucratic obstacles and delays and will be thrown into a basket with numerous other national priorities. What is required early on is that the national mine action is the recognition that without political will and leadership from the top, such initiatives will fail.

Two years ago, the NCDR formulated a national plan for mine action in Jordan, with input from all key local stakeholders and the international donor community. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme supported the NCDR with a capacity-development project, which saw the appointment of an international expert as a Chief Technical Advisor to the NCDR. The result of all these efforts is that Jordan can and will be—God willing—free of mines by its Ottawa Convention deadline, 1 May 2009.

Partnerships and Capacity Development in Jordan

One of the true hallmarks of mine action is the vibrant networks and partnerships that have developed over the past 10–15 years. Such collaborative efforts have focused on mobilizing political, financial and human resources, and today we can point to substantial progress in the sector—in the past, it was on the number of countries who have signed the Ottawa Convention or on the number of hectares returned to mine-affected communities. As noted above, capacity development in Jordan has involved all manner of local stakeholders in forging a common system (organizational framework) for mine action to operate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. NCDR tabled the integrated national mine action plan two years ago, and for the first time, the country approached mine action from a holistic development perspective. Prior to the drafting of the plan, the landmine problem was being approached from an engineering perspective in Jordan, and it was clear to the local leadership that operationally, the work was not occurring with as much speed, coordination or efficiency as was necessary. At this point the government sought the support of UNDP—there was an internal demand for international involvement to provide strategic and technical assistance in the strengthening of the NCDR.

Since the government of Jordan and UNDP joined forces in 2004, Jordan has accomplished much in the operational and managerial areas. The NCDR has attained an active, quality-assurance capacity; socioeconomic and victim information is being collected, analyzed and disseminated; and most importantly, Jordan’s Article 5 obligations are within reach. Clearly, mine action in Jordan can tap a relatively well-trained and educated population, its infrastructure is sound; and its overall mine problem is not large in comparison to other programmes. However, Jordan’s ability to reach out and utilize the existing political and technical knowledge networks has been exemplary. Also, this outreach has allowed Jordan to quickly build strong partnerships with the international community, which has seen Jordan’s mine action impact and organizational capacity development in the Ottawa Convention or on the number of hectares returned to mine-affected communities. As noted above, capacity development in Jordan has involved all manner of local stakeholders in forging a common system (organizational framework) for mine action to operate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. NCDR tabled the integrated national mine action plan two years ago, and for the first time, the country approached mine action from a holistic development perspective. Prior to the drafting of the plan, the landmine problem was being approached from an engineering perspective in Jordan, and it was clear to the local leadership that operationally, the work was not occurring with as much speed, coordination or efficiency as was necessary. At this point the government sought the support of UNDP—there was an internal demand for international involvement to provide strategic and technical assistance in the strengthening of the NCDR.

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The regular flow of information (quarterly donor reports) have helped this assistance develop. UNDP’s role in the case of Jordan’s mine action is to develop a common system (organizational framework) for mine action to operate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. NCDR tabled the integrated national mine action plan two years ago, and for the first time, the country approached mine action from a holistic development perspective. Prior to the drafting of the plan, the landmine problem was being approached from an engineering perspective in Jordan, and it was clear to the local leadership that operationally, the work was not occurring with as much speed, coordination or efficiency as was necessary. At this point the government sought the support of UNDP—there was an internal demand for international involvement to provide strategic and technical assistance in the strengthening of the NCDR.

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The regular flow of information (quarterly donor reports) have helped this assistance develop. UNDP’s role in the case of Jordan’s mine action has been to help introduce and draw upon the international resources that are available to mine-affected countries. First and foremost, strategic technical partnerships were built that allowed for customization of general guidelines to what best fits the needs of Jordan. Finding the best fit has included working closely on a host of operational matters with various technical actors, such as the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. James Madison University’s Mine Action Information Center, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the United Nations Mine Action Service and Norwegian People’s Aid. On issues related to the Ottawa Convention, words of encouragement and direction have come from civil society, as well as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, James Madison University’s Mine Action Information Center, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the United Nations Mine Action Service and Norwegian People’s Aid. On issues related to the Ottawa Convention, words of encouragement and direction have come from civil society, as well as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

In conclusion, it is clear that Jordan has not always been easy. The overall effort will no doubt be higher. However, Jordan’s ability to reach out and utilize the existing political and technical knowledge networks has been exemplary. Also, this outreach has allowed Jordan to quickly build strong partnerships with the international community, which has seen Jordan’s mine action impact and organizational capacity development in the Ottawa Convention. The regu...