Mine Action Support Group Update

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**Recommended Citation**
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The Information Management System for Mine Action in Sudan (IMSMA) is a system that supports the planning, execution, and monitoring of mine action activities. It is designed to facilitate the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on the extent of mining, the progress of clearance efforts, and the impact of these activities on affected populations. IMSMA is an integral part of the Mine Action Support Group (MASG) network, and its data are used by various stakeholders, including humanitarian organizations, governments, and international bodies.

IMSMA is managed by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and operates in countries affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. It provides a platform for information sharing, coordination, and decision-making among various partners involved in mine action. The system includes a variety of tools and functionalities, such as the Information Management System (IMS), which is used for data collection and management; the Information Management System for Mine Action in Sudan (IMS), which is specifically tailored for operations in Sudan; and the Information Management System for Mine Action in Afghanistan (IMSMA), which is used for operations in Afghanistan.

IMSMA supports the implementation of the landmine ban and the Convention on Cluster Munitions by promoting good practices in mine action, ensuring the sharing of best practices among partners, and facilitating the coordination of efforts. The system helps in tracking the progress of mine clearance, monitoring the security situation, and identifying areas that require additional attention. IMSMA also plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of mine action operations, thereby contributing to the realization of the landmine-free world as envisioned by the Ottawa Treaty.

IMSMA is not only a tool for data collection and management but also a means of communicating the progress and challenges of mine action to stakeholders. It helps in raising awareness about the need for continued support and highlights the importance of the work being carried out by the Mine Action Community.
reported $15 million in confirmed and unconfirmed pledges through the Voluntary Trust Fund, which does not include funding for OEE or WMNC. While the UN Mine Action Team will continue to update donors on resource requirements, which are evolving as the full scope of the problem becomes clear.

Update from UNDP

Iraq: The Victim Surveillance and Victim Assistance Workshop was held August 27–31, jointly organized by the National Mine Action Authority of Iraq, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, UNHCR, and the Health Organization and presented to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. The event facilitated policy coordination among NMAs and key ministries with a view to increasing transparency and effectiveness of VSVAs. A major output of the event was a Plan of Action that responsible authorities agreed to implement.

The Iraq Landmine Impact Survey is complete, 15 of the 18 governorates. Landmines or unexploded ordnance contaminate 2,117 communities or about 17 percent of the tested area. The majority of the contaminated communities are blocked from the productive use of their land. The surveyors documented 577 recent victim incidents. More than 2.7 million people live in these contaminated and impacted communities.

Under the field operation team and Democratic Group, 10 national explosive ordnance-disposal teams improved the safety of more than 300 farming families and made more than 24,300,000 square meters (5,955 acres) available for agricultural use in the Basra region. This was accomplished through the disposal of more than 50,000 explosive items along with the clearance of 2,214,696 square meters (5,994 acres) from May 2005 until the end of July 2006.

Key objectives include:

• Mine- and unexploded ordnance capacity of NMA fully functional through its restructuring, policy advisory and technical support
• Field teams and mine action coordination and technical capacity of Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Center and General Directorate of Mine Action

By 2005 for Iraq it signs the Anti-personal Mine Ban Convention

Key challenges included the deteriorating security situation in central southern governorates. These achievements have been realized through financial support from the European Commission and the governments of the United Kingdom and Japan. For 2005, the governments of Greece and South Korea will provide additional support through the Iraq Trust Fund for the de- nunciation. spectacular progress in the management, coordination and technical capacity of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Center and General Directorate of Mine Action.

Victim assistance is a pillar of mine action that has been neglected in post-conflict situations. UNICEF has a task force of technical and financial experts, and is establishing new programs that will provide required information to stakeholders and service providers for assistance to victims and survivors. The workshop concluded with a plan of action for integrating victim assistance with mine clearance in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the NMAA. The participators of the workshop also agreed to poll the surveillance system in three governorates, two from the south and one from the north. This pilot is expected to start in early 2007.

With regard to victim assistance, the workshop discussed free main emergency treatments, medical care, physical rehabilitation, psychological support; social and economic reintegration; and laws and policies. A plan of action was developed for 2006–2009, which focuses on providing donors and other interested parties to a side meeting at the Seventh Meeting of State Parties’ where the government of Colombia presented the national plan for mine action and ongoing programming and gaps. UNICEF made a presentation on its role and support as well.

The Victim Surveillance and Victim Assistance Programme is currently supported by contributions from the governments of Canada, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands for mine action in Europe.

Iraq, following the recommendation of the MRE Coordination Meeting organized by UNICEF in February 2006, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO sponsored a five-day workshop August 27–31, 2006 on “Victim Surveillance and Assistance Strategy Development for Iraq” in collaboration with the National Mine Action Authority. Approximately 30 participants from the government (representing both north and south) and international and nongovernmental organizations, survivors, and UN agencies participated in the workshop. It was the first workshop of its kind to address the issues of establishing a victim surveillance system for U.N. and other donors to better identify victims/survivors in Iraq.

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The majority of the victims are between 14 and 49 years old, and most of them were holding when the accident occurred. Out of 582 contaminated communities, 41 percent have primary schools in the vicinity of contaminated areas, indicating that children are still at risk of landmines and UXO. The project was implemented by the General Directorate of Mine Action, which is the regional mine-action center for the Kurdistan government.

Lau PDR, UNICEF has been working closely with Minas Advisory Group since June 2006 to conduct a UXO risk-assessment study. A stakeholder meeting was organized as the end of September to discuss the findings and recommendations.

In total, 1,312 adults completed a Knowledge Attitude Practice questionnaire, of which 54 percent were men and 46 percent were women. UNICEF and MAG selected a research group to have four-group discussions with 14 groups of men and 12 groups of women. A total of 720 children over eight years of age completed the KAP questionnaire (495 boys and 225 girls), and the research team held 38 focus-group discussions with children, using UNICEF ethical guidelines.

The study distinguished between intentional (i.e., voluntary) exposure to live ordnance, in which actors aware of the risk Publicly published full text in English: landmine.un.org, for live ordnance, and unintentional (involuntary) exposure. While some of the prevention activities can be the same, unintentional exposure is an important variable and particularly relevant in Laos, where UXO injury due to intentional exposure to live ordnance (for example, through the deliberate tampering of ordnance for the scrap-metal trade) is increasing. The assessment found a generally high level of UXO awareness and knowledge of risk-taking and risk-reduction behaviors; however, the assessment also found that many people, including women and children, continue to voluntarily interact with live, or potentially live, ordnance on an almost daily basis.

The findings from the study will be used in collaboration with the recently established UXO National Regulatory Authority to inform MRE strategy development as well as the development of new messages for at-risk populations—especially children—who are attracted to scrap-mal collection. The UXO Needs Assessment data provides a unique opportunity to assist the government in taking the next strategic steps to develop appropriate messages and responses that more effectively target areas and people.

Upcoming activities include a four-day UXO Risk Education Strategy Planning Workshop to be conducted by staff from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, UNICEF and the Laos Youth Union. In addition, finalization of the UXO Risk Assessment as well as translation of the IMAS Best Practice Guidelines will continue. UNICEF will also give support to the Community Awareness Technical Working Group of the NFA for the first technical working group meeting. The UNICEF office is seeking new funding to expand support in its collaboration with the UXO NRA and the development of new risk-reduction strategies.

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The recently released Portfolio of Mine Action Projects 2007 published startling figures concerning funding shortfalls for groups and organizations tackling the increasing threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance. More than 100 nongovernmental organizations, national authorities and United Nations agencies reported a total shortfall of U.S.$317.5 million for projects in 29 countries or territories.

The 2007 edition of the report reviews more than 300 proposals with a combined budget of $429 million. Only $223.7 million in funding for these proposals has been secured, leaving nearly 75 percent of these projects unfunded.


Ordoñez: Mine Action Support Group Update


Penning programs have evolved considerably since the first program for humanitarian demining, the Mine Action Programmes for Afghanistan, began in 1988. Likewise, the legal bases for dealing with the problem of landmines have developed substantially from the minimal 1980 Protocol II to the Convention on the Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, which entered into force in 1983, to 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 the Ottawa Convention), which was adopted September 18, 1997, and entered into force March 1, 1999.

The Ottawa Convention opted for a more radical approach to humanization law than previous agreements, bringing the disarmament element into the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines. While the objective of the Convention is clear, some of its core provisions can be subject to ambiguity. For example, Article 1 stipulates a State Party “undertakes never under any circumstances … to use anti-personnel mines.” The use of a weapon is typically a single action where no distinction can be made between the actor and the beneficiary of the action (e.g., pulling the trigger on a gun). However, with anti-personnel mines, the weapon is designed with a time-lag: one person may lay the mine, another may use it tactically. Hence, would a military unit that moves into an area where mines were laid and arrels itself of its placemen for its defensive permanence violate the prohibition on use if the unit in question was that of a State Party?

For no-insignificant questions such as this one, we are fortunate to have Stuart Madden’s contribution to the prestigious Oxford Commentaries on International Law series, edited by Professors Philip Alston of New York University and Vaughan Lowe of Oxford University. This work, the first volume of a projected line of commentaries on arms-control treaties, offers a comprehensive article-by-article interpretation of the Mine Ban Convention as well as a thorough overview of the Convention as a whole and the unusual fast-track negotiation—the “Ottawa Process”—that led to its adoption. Likewise, very useful is the inclusion of a long introduction describing the development and use of anti-personnel mines, assessing their military utility and reviewing the historical and legal antecedents to the Convention. While jurists will undoubtedly quibble at the margins with particulars about this paragraph or that parenthetical, Madden knows his material well—he is a member of the UNICEF delegation to the First Review Conference on the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (1995–1996), as well as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation to the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which adopted the AP Mine Ban Convention—and is clearly passionate about the subject (he is donating all royalties from the volume to a nongovernmental organization that provides financial and technical support to local organizations rehabilitating victims in mine-affected countries). Although it is neither an easy read (but not a difficult one either) nor an inexpensive book, this work deserves an honored place on the shelf of every scholar of international humanitarian law as well as that of mine-action centers worldwide.

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He has written nearly 200 essays and review articles for the editor or translator of over a dozen books. Among his notable publications are: Liberty: Portrait of a Failed State (Reed Press, 2004) and Child Soldiers, Aid Workers: The Global Dimensions of the Sierra Leonean Tragedy (Nova Publishers, 2003). He teaches the international law modules in the United Nations Development Programmes’ Senior Managers Course organized by the UN Institute for Training in International Law.