Effects of Landmines on Sri Lanka

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Most of the losses and injuries of civilians arise due to negligence and carelessness. Civilians involved in non-military activities accounted for 103 of 143 cases with loss of an arm or hand, eye(s) or hearing and 43 of the 192 cases of lower limb amputations. In some cases, civilians were tampering with explosive devices and in other cases they were crossing into restricted areas. It can be concluded that in a number of cases civilian casualties resulted from treating explosive ordnance carelessly.

Recommendations

The main recommendations derived from the survey are as follows:

- Further coordination of mine-victim assistance activities: Activities of various governmental and nongovernmental entities should continue their joint efforts within the MVA working group, ensuring constant efforts toward sensitizing society to the problems of mine victims and persons with disabilities in general.

- Development of MVA projects and identification of implementing agencies: For projects developed using the needs-assessment-survey data, the emphasis should be on projects empowering the community, e.g., through establishment of associations for mine/UXO victims.

- Establishment of a charitable fund for MVA: Acting within the Azerbaijani legislative framework, a charity should be established to attract money from national and international organizations and individuals to fund various MVA projects.

- Monitoring of the level of mine/UXO victim assistance: For each victim, the level of medical care and physical rehabilitation measures, together with the degree of social reintegration and professional rehabilitation, should be evaluated over the course of a year using various methods. Articles about MVA should be published in international and national journals, newspapers and magazines whenever possible to continue educating the public on mine victims in Azerbaijan.

See Endnotes, page 111

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Effects of Landmines on Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, statistics show people between the ages of 20 and 45 are the most likely to be injured by landmines. When they are disabled, they become a burden to the country’s economy, requiring assistance instead of contributing to the country’s growth. This article discusses how landmines affect Sri Lanka and the efforts being undertaken to lessen their impact.

by K.T. Manjula Udayangana Hemapala | University of Genova

The Tamil people moved from the southern part of India to Sri Lanka around the 14th century and they struggled with the kingdom of Sri Lanka on and off throughout history. Since 1983, a Sri Lankan separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, has fought with the central government of Sri Lanka for a separate homeland for minority Sri Lankan Tamils. The decades of conflict have resulted in the destruction of large areas of fertile agricultural lands, commercial areas, residential areas, roads and water resources. Later, as people tried to resettle these areas, they encountered landmines and many became disabled.

Mine Ban Convention

The Sri Lankan government has not signed the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention. Both the government and Tamil Tigers formally committed to a ceasefire in 2002, but there has been a sharp increase in violence since President Mahinda Rajapakse came to power in November 2005. Government security forces are currently engaged in a limited operation in Trincomalee to reopen the Mavilare area that was closed by the Tamil Tigers. It provides water to over 15,000 families and approximately 30,000 acres of paddy lands in the Seruwela, Mutur and Elahamapura areas in the Trincomalee district. According to government sources, the Mavilare area was heavily mined by LTTE forces in an attempt to slow Army progress. According to the Landmine Monitor Report for Sri Lanka, there still are 700,000 anti-personnel mines in the ground.

1. Manual clearance—an effective but slow process
2. Manual clearance with support of mine-detecting dogs—a good method but very difficult in some areas, because the dogs can become confused if they smell explosives coming from several sources at once.
3. Mechanical clearance—the fastest method, but less effective. The speed of manual demining is approximately 25 square meters (30 square yards) per hour. Using explosives-detecting dogs is also a rather difficult process because the effectiveness of the dogs depends entirely on their level of training and the skill of their handlers. Also, all EODs are brought from foreign countries and are not used to the Sri Lankan climate, so they tire quickly. Mechanical mine clearance is the fastest method employed in Sri Lanka. The MV-4 Mini Flat System has an average speed around 2,000 square meters (2,400 square yards) per hour for light soil and 1,000 square meters (1,200 square yards) per hour for heavy soil. The Bobcat 64 cleaves around 2,500 square meters (3,000 square yards) per hour for light soil and 500 square meters (620 square yards) per hour in heavy soil.

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The other important factor concerning demining efforts in Sri Lanka is speed and efficiency. Cost.1 (Table 1) shows the factors that affect the costs of manual demining and mechanical mine clearance. However, the most problematic element to conditions of demining personnel operating in Kurdistan. All mine-action personnel working in the area have been working to reduce the impact of the threat, often at their own peril, and the parts are difficult to find. Conclusion When considering the challenges of demining in Sri Lanka, it is vital to understand the importance of developing new technologies or introducing existing current technology to improve the efficiency of the task—but only with proper training. Humanitarian-demining efforts in Sri Lanka are daunting, not only the threat in the ground but due to the tense situation between rebel groups and the Sri Lankan government as well. See Endnote, page 112.