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Mine Action and Development

Earl Turcotte
Foreign Affairs Canada

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Landmines are victim-triggered weapons that injure or kill on contact. They are indiscriminate in nature, making no distinction among enemy combatants, farmers at work, or children at play. Nor do they cease to be a threat when a conflict has ended. The vast majority of mine incidents involve civilians who are killed or injured post-conflict, often many decades after the conflict. The majority of mines that were laid during conflicts are victim-activated, meaning they are triggered by movement and are therefore prone to indiscriminate effects and cause high collateral damage. By any standard, the Ottawa Convention is a remarkable achievement in the annals of international disarmament efforts. It constitutes concrete action and makes manifest several of the core principles governing the conduct of war post-conflict. However, as significantly as the Ottawa Convention, the challenge is to implement the Ottawa provisions that call for countries to “ban, stockpile, produce, or transfer landmines.”

The integration of mine action in the broader developmental agenda reflects further evolution in our understanding of “development” and what it takes for it to be achieved. Among the many lessons that almost half a century of international development cooperation has taught us is that “development” is an increasingly inclusive notion—much more than a healthy gross domestic product and “human-centered development” requires a multi-dimensional approach. It is not enough that people have nutritious food, potable water and shelter from the elements. We also need a clean environment, adequate healthcare, education and the means to provide for ourselves and our loved ones over the long term. We need to live in societies where rule of law prevails, where civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are respected, where we are free to move about in safety, and so on. To fully develop, therefore, we must create the conditions under which a very wide range of physical, psychological and other needs can be met on an ongoing basis.

In fact, one embraces this broad concept of development, immediately obvious is the relative artificiality of any categorical divide between traditional “peace and security” and “development” concerns. At minimum, we are compelled to acknowledge the reciprocal relationship between the two, as one is almost invariably a necessary condition for the other. Perhaps more importantly, we should regard them as largely one and the same and structure our interventions accordingly. To this end, several countries have begun to take what is now commonly called the “3-D” approach on many international files by forging strategic alliances and, in some cases, full partnerships at the national and international levels in the arenas of diplomacy, defence and development. This is an ambitious undertaking but one that promises to generate real synergy and hard results over time.

The foregoing also underlines the salience of the distinction between the so-called “developed” and “developing” worlds. We are all “developing,” albeit in different ways and to different degrees.

**Positive Changes**

It is a tragic fact that in the heat of battle and the fog of war even the most responsible and disciplined combatants, farmers at work, or children at play. Nor do they cease to be a threat when a conflict has ended. The vast majority of mine incidents involve civilians who are killed or injured post-conflict, often many decades after the conflict. The majority of mines that were laid during conflicts are victim-activated, meaning they are triggered by movement and are therefore prone to indiscriminate effects and cause high collateral damage. By any standard, the Ottawa Convention is a remarkable achievement in the annals of international disarmament efforts. It constitutes concrete action and makes manifest several of the core principles governing the conduct of war post-conflict. However, as significantly as the Ottawa Convention, the challenge is to implement the Ottawa provisions that call for countries to “ban, stockpile, produce, or transfer landmines.”

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Mine Action and Development

The author explains why he thinks the international mine action and broader development communities are moving in the right direction by mainstreaming mine action into development programs where the degree of landmine contamination warrants.

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In addition to threatening life and limb, landmines inhibit rehabilitation and reconstruction, agriculture, water supply, education, and industrial and commercial development. They prevent the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and impose significant and unnecessary costs on health systems already stretched to or beyond capacity. They also create instability and insecurity and terrorize entire populations. For these and a host of other reasons, mine action is very much a development issue, and there is no doubt that in many affected countries, effective mine action can contribute to a great deal to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

With increased awareness of the links between mine action and the achievement of the MDGs, mine-affected developing states have begun to establish mine action as a development imperative—not a great deal in different ways and to different degrees.

Positive Changes

It is a tragic fact that in the heat of battle and the fog of war even the most responsible and disciplined areas of diplomacy, defence and development. It is an ambitious undertaking but one that promises to generate real synergy and hard results over time. The functioning also underlines the futility of the distinction between the so-called “developed” and “developing” worlds. We are all “developing,” albeit in different ways and to different degrees.

“A child who dies of diarrhoeal disease because the only clean water source in an area is mined or of malnutrition because farmers’ fields are mine-contaminated is no less a mine victim than the child struck down directly by a landmine.”

Development: Much More Than a Healthy GDP

The integration of mine action in the broader developmental agenda reflects further evolution in our understanding of “development” and what it takes for it to be achieved. Among the many lessons that almost half a century of international development cooperation has taught is that “development” is an increasingly inclusive notion—much more than a healthy gross domestic product—and “human-centered development” requires a multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach. It is not enough that people have nutritious food, portable water and shelter from the elements. We also need a clean environment, adequate health care, education and the means to provide for ourselves and our loved ones over the long term. We need to live in societies where rule of law prevails, where civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are respected, where we are free to move about in safety, and so on. To fully develop, therefore, we must create the conditions under which a very wide range of physical, psychological and other needs can be met on an ongoing basis.

If one embraces this broad concept of development, immediately obvious is the relative artificiality of any categorical divide between traditional “peace and security” and “development” concerns. At minimum, we are compelled to acknowledge the reciprocal relationship between the two, as one is almost invariably a necessary condition for the other. Perhaps more appropriately, we should regard them as largely one and the same and structure our interventions accordingly.

In fact, several countries have begun to take what is now commonly called the “3-D” approach on many international files by forging strategic alliances and, in some cases, full partnerships at the national and international levels in the

But by no means is this the only area of progress. Some of the same states and others, through the Campaign on Certain Conventional Weapons, have established protocols that ban landmines and incendiary weapons, among others. At the current time, these states are actively engaged in the search for instruments and measures to address adequately the often-horrific impact on civilian populations of anti-vehicle mines, cluster munitions and the like.

Yet other fora are presenting with special challenges presented by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (at roughly 639 million and counting) conventional weapons and, most terrifying of all, weapons of mass destruction.

Conclusion

The face of war is changing. More often than not, combatants are indistinguishable from and intermingled with civilian populations. Even when they are not, today’s battlefields is tomorrow’s village, roadway or farmer’s field. Fighting such wars in a manner that respects this reality requires weapons that:

1. Render appropriate force
2. Are reliable
3. Can be carefully targeted to minimize the risk to civilians

It also requires the unswerving determination of those who have these weapons to use them responsibly.

Portions of this article have been abstracted from earlier work by the writer for the United Nations Development Programmes. See “References and Endnotes,” page 105.

Earl Turcotte, recently appointed director of the Mine Action and Small Arms Team in the International Security Branch of Foreign Affairs Canada. From May 2004 to June 2005 he was senior development advisor to the UNDP Mine Action Team, based in New York. From 1982 to 2004, he was with the Canadian International Development Agency in various capacities, and he was an occasional television broadcaster focused on international issues.

Earl Turcotte
Director
Mine Action and Small Arms Team
International Security Branch
Foreign Affairs Canada
Lester B. Pearson Building
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0G2 / Canada
Tel: 613 995-3585
E-mail: earl.turcotte@international.gc.ca

Mine Action

by Earl Turcotte [Foreign Affairs Canada]
Assisting Landmine Accident Survivors in the Thai-Burma Border Region, Mattthe [from page 11]

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A Regional Approach: Mine and UXO Risk Reduction in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, Wells-Dang [from page 14]

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Destroying the Mother of All Arsenals, Zahaczewski [from page 18]

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2. For online text of this report see http://www.mag.org.uk/magtest/cambodia/Tampering.pdf.
4. The War Goes On, Vosburgh
6. For more information, see http://www.prio.no/page/preview/preview/9429/40814.html.

Hidden Killers in Afghanistan, Sharp [from page 20]

Endnotes
2. 3 Square kilometers is approximately 0.8 square miles.
3. 1 Square kilometer is equal to about 0.386 square miles.
5. 1 hectare equals approximately 2.5 acres.

Developing Alternatives: The Locally Demining Community in Cambodia, Leighton [from page 35]

Endnotes
1. Richard Moyes in his report, Tempering: Deliberate Handling and Use of Live Ordnance in Cambodia (MAC, Handicap International-Belgium, Norwegian People’s Aid), 2004, recognizes that deliberate handling occurs amongst the most vulnerable families with the least traditional economic opportunities such as generation of income through livestock or land ownership. For online text of this report see http://www.magi.org.uk/nagc/cambodia/tempering.pdf.
2. Review of the locally demining model was undertaken by Pi Walgou for MAG.
3. As observed by MAC Cambodia’s technical operations manager, Gary Fenton.

Afghanistan LIS, Fruecht [from page 38]

Endnotes
1. A Landmine Impact Survey, or LIS, is a community-based national survey that measures the extent of the impact of the landmine problem in a country, based on the number of accidents, socioeconomic burdens and types.
2. USAID’s Perspective: The Importance of Social and Economic Developing Strategies for Humanitarian Mine Action, Feinberg

Endnotes

References
1. 104
2. [references and endnotes] journal of mine action [2006] [February] 9.2