A Profile of Afghanistan

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I come to you and my heart finds rest.
Away from you, grief clings to me like a snake.
I forget the throne of Delhi
When I remember the mountain tops of my Afghan land.
If I must choose between the world and you,
I shall not hesitate to claim your barren deserts as my own.

-Ahmad Shah Durrani (Pashto Poet)
clearance activities in reconstruction projects. According to Takuro Kudo, Surveyors must take measures to address the needs of the development. Prioritization of mine action activities has made a perceivable shift to the eradication of the problem, due to post-conflict security issues in 2002 and 2003. The Mine Clearance Planning Agency (ATC) is working on both the central and western regions of the country, along with the Survey Action Center (SAC), start- ed a new 14-month survey in June 2003. The following are some tentative survey and destroyed devices figures for 2003.

Clearance

According to the Landmine Monitor, about 263 sq km of mined land has been cleared in addition to 422 sq km of battlefield areas from 1998-2002. In that time, over 268,000 AP mines, nearly 13,000 AT mines and 1,468,000 mines were destroyed and destroyed. Below are tentative figures for the year.

Through February 2003, ATC had cleared 82.4 sq km of high-priority mined areas and 93.2 sq km of former battlefields. It is currently working to clear battle and minefield areas in and around the Kabul International Airport, the Kandahar Highway and nearby secondary roads that could serve as alternate routes to the highway. ATC is also working on an clearance side projects on provincial roads (funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development) and at the Sickch Dam in Ghazni province. The organization currently has 25 manual minefield and battle area clearance teams of 40 men each. They have 70 mine detectors, a U.S. ATC vehicle, and 10 mechanical clearance units using excavators, backhoe loaders in rotary cutters. At a higher level, it is important to implement a Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) Program in the northern Kunduz province, ATC has succeeded in facilitating the absorption of 110 ex-combatants into a clearance, mine risk education (MRE) and permanent marking program. Last February, ATC started a new DDR program in Sado Ban, central province (north of Kabul) with 49 enrollees.

The main agencies working on clearance, in addition to ATC, are the Agency for Rehabilitation & Energy Conservation (ARCEC), the Danish Demining Group (DING), the Demining Agency for Afghan (DAFA), the HALO Trust, the Mine Detection and Dog Center (MDC), OMA, MCPA, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Training Agency (META) and RONCO Consulting Corporations. The latter has become one of the richest archeological artefacts in the world (most of which are now either located or destroyed). Afghanistan's most important traditional agriculture, however, remains intact despite the devastation that has destroyed most of its cultural artefacts and relics. The beauty and depth of Afghan and their land persist despite the ravages of war, famine and economic instability. Their ability to endure is a truth that seems to have passed on to the mine action workers from around the world who have been vigilantly working for over a decade to clear the land of mines. As the poet Durrani elicits, it is not their ability to adapt that seems to have passed on to the mine action workers from around the world who have been vigilantly working for over a decade to clear the land of mines.

The Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (MACA)

Tel: +070 762 918 170 E-mail: atc@apollo.net.pk

Takuro Kudo

External Relations Associate

UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (MACA)

Tel: +820 762 918 170 E-mail: takutok@unopsmail.org

Kimberly Kim

MAC

E-mail: kimk@jmu.edu

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Standardization (CEN) Workshop activities on standardization are deemed useful and necessary, cur- rently for manufacturers, but the timeliness of the activities is questioned in the presence of a shrinking market.8 Standards should gain acceptance also by the end-users and manufacturers before gaining maximal utility. In order for users to be taken into account, e.g., the appropriate footprint size at a specified depth (Verdon Joffre 2005). The present lack of a global strategy for the use of the information and knowledge is a major problem. This is one of the elements in procurement decisions of existing tools.

References


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2004.

The thought behind the following three observed revolutions converges towards a similar way to move forwards to the investigation of a paradigm shift in research, development, deployment and donor attitudes from humanitarians towards towards reconstruction communities and evidence- based risk management.

1. At the organizational level in EC- FM, R&D on humanitarian demining is part of “Improvement of Risk Management.” The text of the “Call for Proposals” is technically oriented towards (open) system development, and should be interpreted as a transcrip­ tion of the global objective to achieve high-level soci­ety benefits.

2. At the level of field actions, in practice, mine action centres (MACs) are adapting their priorities to those of the locality. Avoiding famine by food supply, medical assistance and agricultural activities or restoration of water sources might come first before the removal of mines. S. Gräning presented a case study in Lebanon in which urban respon­ sibilities were prioritized over the infrastructural work of the contracted demining organisation had the opportunity of fully removing the mine threat.25 In certain situations, the risk of famine or socio-economic failure might either subjectively be perceived or objectively be higher than the mine threat, and this can result in the prioritization of action. Ranking of risks is implicitly made.

3. At the level of designing models and R&D. J. Trelivian presented a possible model of agricultural exploitation in the absence of mine risk. The model is an initial proposal and includes mine-risk agricul­ tural machinery and new agricultural practice. The idea is certainly not mature yet but deserves to be taken up further.

The fundamental question was raised of whether or not this viewpoint is the correct one. In our opinion, it is, "the mining of felds that have little impact on the socio-economic life rather than their removal" and "prioritizing a solution to the threat of famine by culti­ vation rather than roads than to clear it", can be seen as interim solutions to solve urgent local problems causing immediate and high risk, taken up before the actual mine clearance.

The emerging paradigm also triggered a lot of organisational questions. New views are required on the quality of results and liability defined in terms of achieving acceptable risks, which should be adopted by the donors in their contracts. Probably due to the presence of representatives from several demining companies, the difficulty of the statement of work in the contracts was raised at several occasions, e.g., the specification of the equipment to be used in the field. The UN requirement for humanitarian mine clearance efficiency of 99.6 percent is in contradiction to the term "acceptable risk," which primarily depends on the end use of the cleared land.9

Conclusions and Discussion

The EDELMIC-I2003 conference has brought together stakeholders of all players in the field of humanitarian demining. The presentations and discussions were characterised by an increasing maturity, transparency and honesty. Afghanistan can be regarded fairly between different parts of the community, including analy­ ses of what went wrong and what did work.

The authors wish to thank all the EDELMIC-I2003 conference participants, and mainly the ones that have contributed to extracting the general trends, conclusions and open questions described in this paper. Some were obvious to pick up, others were slightly hidden and needed collaborative digging to be extracted. Special thanks go to Karin De Buys, Claudia Bouschini, Russell Gasser, Stewart Gräning, Vernon Joffre, Paddy Biggs, Carsten Seif, Chris Wittick, Noel Milliman, Helmut Krammle, Russell Hammon and Francois Lianaous.
clearance activities in renovation projects. According to Takako Kubo, Surveyors must now face an ongoing shift towards the right along with the needs of development. Prioritization of mine action activities has made a perceivable shift from clearing to mine action due to post-conflict security issues in 2002 and 2003. The Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MACA) and western and regions of the community are working with the Survey Action Center (SAC), estab-

lishing the shift to wards reconstruction and development projects. According to Takuto Kubo, Surveyors must undertake a new 14-month survey in June 2003. The Agency for Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration of Widows (ADWAR), and 192.7 sq km of former battlefield cleared in facilitating the absorption of cleared 82.4 sq km of high-priority mined areas. The Agency for Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration of Widows (ADWAR), and 192.7 sq km of former battlefield cleared in facilitating the absorption of cleared 82.4 sq km of high-priority mined areas.

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