

Mr Tim Horner Mine Action Advisor UNDP New York 30/11/11
Bio

After learning explosives and countermining skills in the British Royal Navy as a Clearance Diver, Tim spent a few years working around Africa in the Oil industry before his entry into Humanitarian Mine Action in Somalia as a demining supervisor in 1992. He went on to work for NGOs in Angola then Bosnia as a project manager but took time out in 2000 to gain a Master's Degree in Disaster Management at Cranfield University. He then joined UNOCHA in Afghanistan, UNDP in Sri Lanka and then Laos before moving to UNMAS in New York and Sudan for two years. He joined UNDP headquarters in New York a month ago as the Mine Action Advisor.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today from a UN and a developmental perspective although I would like to start by saying a few words in line with the spirit of the 11 MSP to put a "face" on what I say with a personal perspective to illustrate the way Mine Action has evolved from an emergency response to a developmental issue.

I come from a demining background starting with military training on Explosive Ordnance Disposal and mine clearance. My first introduction to humanitarian demining after I left the military was about two decades ago in Somalia in 1992 where the demining project was initiated because aid workers had been killed by stepping on landmines in the course of their work.

The fear of landmines rapidly constrained where aid could be delivered and what could be accomplished. It inhibited population movement generally; and more specifically, the return of people displaced by the recently ended conflict. However, the subsequent demining project I was involved with had little direction except to find and destroy as many mines and UXO as possible. We, not unlike other demining projects in other countries at the time, measured success in numbers of mines destroyed regardless of their location or their impact on communities.

My colleagues and I carried out our work using a variety of techniques drawn from our different military backgrounds. We cleared a lot of bombs and mines. We also had more accidents during our work than we should have so we focused our efforts into improving efficiency in an attempt to clear more mines more quickly with greater safety for our deminers.

Back in 1992 (?), we didn't even begin to look at the broader impact of our efforts nor did we start to think about how we could link our clearance with other efforts to improve the livelihoods of the communities in which we worked.

Today, two decades later, Mine Action has evolved into a very different picture. A holistic approach is so obvious it makes me wonder why it wasn't recognised from the beginning. Today demining is not carried out in isolation. Today the most of the mines that would have replaced those we cleared are no longer produced. Through the Treaty 44 million mines have been destroyed in stockpiles long before they could have found their way into the ground. In fact 53 States no longer have stockpiles that could serve to

replenish those demined areas and 34 of the producing countries have voluntarily given up the capability to make mines.

Demining has become one part of a big picture approach along with Mine Risk Education, Victim Assistance, Stockpile Destruction and Advocacy. The UN Mine Action Team sees all of these pillars on which Mine Action is built, as contributing to rebuilding livelihoods and aiding economic recovery in post conflict countries.

UNDP along with its sister agencies in the UN Mine Action Team strives to support countries to not only reduce accidents but to mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement. We encourage the integration of Mine Action needs into national development and reconstruction plans; and assist in the development of national institutions to manage the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Two decades ago demining came first as a post-conflict response to the need to resettle refugees, to open access for humanitarian workers but it has evolved into a key priority during long term recovery as we have learned that the explosive legacy does not disappear when the humanitarian response turns into a developmental issue.

We can see this very clearly here in Cambodia where it has been integrated into the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals. We see it also in other States Parties, such as Afghanistan where minefields for so many years reinforced deprivation of communities, and where their clearance allows for improved livelihoods.

It sounds so obvious to say now that Mine Action is about people and not just about mines, but it's important sometimes to remember how recently this was not the case and that the evolution came about relatively quickly – in a matter of only a few years. This is a testament to the whole landmine ban movement among NGOs, activists, pro-active governments, and the mobilization of the survivors in affected countries. I also sincerely believe that the UN itself, through the involvement of development agencies such as UNDP and UNICEF, helped to move the agenda from mines to people.

Although the statistics are impressive this is however, no time for complacency. The traditional lines of mines that were laid in vast quantities and often in neat patterns have given way to sporadic mine use by non-state actors and improvised explosive devices have become the weapons of choice in many scenarios. Somalia in many ways is just as dangerous as when I worked there all those years ago but is much more complex.

I hope with the lessons learned, the advances in technology, methodology and the recognition that mines and explosive remnants of war are not only a humanitarian problem but a longer term developmental issue that it is a bigger challenge than one organisation, one agency or indeed one country can handle alone.

Even with the impressive progress being reported here this week there is much to do that requires us all to work on our piece of the picture to ensure that landmines are no longer a threat and as Helen Clark stated here on Sunday evening the UN team will continue support until such time that it is no longer required.

Thank you