Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

STANDING COMMITTEE ON MINE CLEARANCE, MINE AWARENESS AND MINE ACTION TECHNOLOGIES

Meeting Report
January 29-30, 2002

Co-Chairs: Germany and Yemen
Co-Rapporteurs: Belgium and Kenya

I. General

Because UN organisations, donors and NGOs lack sufficient data and information, including information on available funding, it is very difficult to develop an effective assessment of the global situation, to undertake rational targeted mine action activities and to build a strategic plan to which donors could stick to in order to prioritise funding. It was suggested that UNMAS and the ICBL could collaborate in order to gather reliable information concerning clearance and funding. Germany offered to fund efforts to improve information and data collection.

II. Presentations by the UN family

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reported on:
- the United Nations mine action strategy for 2001 to 2005, which was presented to the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly:
- highlights of its programme;
- its support for an emergency response capability;
- the necessity of impact surveys and that in each of the years 2002 and 2003 seven new surveys will be undertaken;
- quality management;
- resource mobilisation; and,
- the 28 February launch of its new portfolio.

UNMAS expressed the wish that although there is a recognition of the necessity for additional financial support in Afghanistan, donor countries should not forget to support other mine infested countries.

UNDP focused on the importance of capacity building (e.g. management training) and socio-economic aspects of mine action, including the fact that the following socio-economic studies haven been undertaken:
- "Socio-economic approach to landmines" by GICHD;
- Field oriented socio-economic handbook; and,
- Socio-economic rehabilitation of landmines victims (with WRF).

The UNDP work plan for 2002 includes:
- the continuation of the support to relevant countries;
- the provision of inputs for UN policy;
- the support of impact surveys;
- the stockpile destruction assistance in a limited way; and,
- fulfilling the objectives of the UN strategic plan.

UNICEF reported that its main objectives relate to ensuring that the UN strategy objectives are achieved, implemented with UNMAS and UNDP, and integrated in Mine Action Centers. The UNICEF work plan for 2002 includes:
- the integration of a mine risk education section into IMAS;

- the development and the integration of mine risk considerations into IMSMA;
- the monitoring and the control of mine risk education in order to assess its impact;
- the development of manuals;
- the development of training packages for mine awareness managers; and,
- the promotion of the change of the term "mine awareness" to "mine risk reduction education".

III. Country presentation: Afghanistan

Mine Action Programme Afghanistan (MAPA) stated that if funds materialize as expected in 2002, priority regions will be cleared within seven years. MAPA insisted on:
- the necessity to improve data collection and database;
- the importance of surveys, especially emergency surveys;
- direct and indirect mine awareness training; and,
- the necessity to complete the IMSMA database and to support it with equipment.

MDC is ready to share its experience (dog breeding, training and operations) with other affected countries.

OMAR pointed out the lack of security and funds and insisted on the ongoing promotion of the Convention. Handicap International Belgium introduced existing mine awareness programmes and gave feedback on lessons learned. The ICRC presented its particular approach in Afghanistan. HALO explained its innovative activities and showed the necessity of using mechanical devices. It insisted on the fact that technology must be kept simple.

UNMAS wrapped up by presenting 5 strengths and 5 weaknesses of the demining programme in Afghanistan:

1. Strengths
- The structure of the programme
- Its common identity, integrity and strict neutrality
- The successful use of dogs
- Continuous ability to innovate
- Continuous evaluation (with impact on the programme)

2. Weaknesses
- Mines are still laid
- Lack of resources mobilisation, particularly the fact that regular resources are missing and that the replacement of obsolete equipment is not sufficient
- No management by national authorities
- Insufficient focus on security
- Lack of participation of the local community (linked to resources availability)

IV. Technologies for Mine Action

It was noted in a market study that there is no coherent strategy, resulting in duplications and in developments that are the result of needs assumed by developers rather than real needs. The market is small, inefficient, and shrinking. Factors that encourage adoption of new technologies by users must be found in order to eliminate the barriers to practical application. Finally, an international co-ordinated approach is needed.

Currently, the research and development activities are poorly co-ordinated and lack communication with the users. This produces duplication of efforts, decreases efficiency, slows down the transfer of new technologies to the users and results in the developed tools being inadequate to meet the real needs of the users.

To overcome these major problems, the GICHD has identified the following key-issues:
- First, it is necessary that the users define their requirements better, find ways of communicating better when providing requirements to the R&D community in technical terms, create a peer review system to identify user-relevant R&D, as well as promote and use networking.

- Second, it is necessary that donors support new technology, maintain a technical forum in the work of the Convention, support a peer review system, review and support national mine action R&D activities, as well as examine what might be the mine action situation in 2010.
- Third, it is necessary that the R&D community communicates with users, involves users from the concept stage, works in a concerted way, avoids duplication, sets sensible aims for unit cost and date into service and sticks to them, and talks to other communities in understandable language.

Mandatory conditions, as defined by CCMAT, to insert new technologies into the field include the correct identification of the real users needs, the continuation of the research and development activities, the test and the evaluation of material and equipment in a controlled environment as well as user trials and technical demonstration.

V. Mine risk education (MRE)

For mine action to be truly effective, it is essential that MRE is an integrated part of the prioritisation, clearance and post clearance certification process. Apart from the well known (and probably over-emphasised) element of public education, MRE provides an interface with communities which, if implemented correctly, ensures that beneficiaries have a say in which areas are cleared, that they understand precisely what has been cleared and that they have confidence in the quality of clearance, enabling them to use that land. In their presentations to the Standing Committee, organisations involved in MRE (UNICEF, HI France, Mine Awareness Trust, ICRC, and Rädda Barnen) emphasized this approach and stressed their respective experiences and capabilities.