

Mine Action Programme of Cambodia

Overview and Resource needs toward a Mine Free Cambodia, 2025!

Wednesday, 27 November 2019

Introduction and participants

On 27 November 2019, Cambodia and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with the support of the Implementation Support Unit, invited state and civil society representatives to engage in an open and frank discussion regarding Cambodia's needs and challenges in implementing its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention. In particular, Cambodia's efforts to complete its mine clearance commitments by 2025.

Participants received a package including an invitation, agenda and Cambodia's presentation, (delivered version attached) together with annex covering Cambodia's extension request and two concept notes. These documents will be made available on Cambodia's country page of the Convention website¹.

Participants

States: Australia, China, Croatia, Serbia, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, United States, Zimbabwe.

Organizations: ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC), European Union, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), United States (Department of State) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit.

Presentation

Following opening remarks by Senior Minister and First Vice-President of the Cambodian Mine Action Authority (CMAA), Mr. Ly Thuch, a presentation on the status and progress in implementation was shared by Secretary General of the CMAA, Mr. Prum Sophakmonko. Participants then engaged in an informal discussion about possible cooperation and assistance in support of Cambodia's mine clearance efforts.

Mr. Prum Sophakmonkol, presented on the history of Cambodia's Article 5 challenge, the impact of contamination on the population with a focus on Cambodia's achievements during the period of its previous extension request, (2009-2019). Mr. Sophakmonkol highlighted the significant contribution of the Royal Government of Cambodia to mine action, together with national institutions and organizations including that Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, the Cambodian Mine Action Centre and Cambodian Self-Help deminers. Furthermore, Mr. Sophakmonkol outlined the strong role of international actors; MAG, NPA, APOPO and HALO Trust supported by long term donors US, China, Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom in achieving progress.

Mr. Sophakmonkol mentioned that Cambodia's extension request includes a workplan for 2020-2025, with a detailed workplan in place for the period 2021-2022. This is supported by a National

¹ <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/states-parties-to-the-convention/cambodia/>

Strategy for the same period and a prioritisation process that takes place at national and sub-national levels to identify operational priorities that aim to deliver the best impact and cost efficiency on an annual basis.

Based on these factors, Mr. Sophakmonkol mentioned that Cambodia had identified a clear implementation plan towards meeting its 2025 commitment through, a) completing baseline survey by 2020, b) completing the first phase of its mine-free village policy by 2021, c) and increasing the role of the Royal Cambodian Army to recruit an additional 2,500 deminers. Mr. Sophakmonkol explained that the increase in demining capacity by 2,500 individuals would ensure 4 years of mine clearance work is saved in Cambodia and would result in a sustainable national capacity to address any long-term risks after achieving its mine clearance obligations.

Overall, Mr. Sophakmonkol explained the benefit of the exchange of information on the aims of the program to meet 2025, outlining 5 follow-up actions to facilitate engagement Continue individualized approach for resource mobilization, target traditional and new donors, encourage the royal Government of Cambodia to increase mine action funding gradually, mobilise funding from the private sector, and organize regular meetings of the technical working groups.

Discussion

Thailand asked Cambodia to provide further information on the post-clearance impact on agriculture and the potential of increasing cross-border trade. Thailand also remarked on the increase in child casualties in Cambodia.

Cambodia responded that 50-60% of all casualties are currently children and this is cause of great concern. Cambodia also mentioned that 50-60% of all land addressed is agricultural land located near border areas that could result in increase in agricultural yields and trade.

The United States of America provided an account of providing long term strong support for Cambodia to address its landmine and unexploded ordnance contamination. Cambodia remains one of the United States' top 5 countries for mine action, with direct support of organisations such as CMAC, HALO and MAG. The USA remarked that it was happy to discuss with another potential donors assistance to Cambodia.

China remarked that they had been part of two field visits to remote areas where the population was waiting for land to be cleared of landmines before they could return to undertake agriculture. China outlined its support in two ways, through the training of deminers, and through the provision of equipment. China mentioned that it will continue to provide effort and support in these two areas. China further identified the need for need for international assistance in order to support the return of populations to their homelands and to enable safe agriculture.

NPA mentioned the importance of dialogue and the national platform to increase cooperation of implementing partners and donors.

ARMAC congratulated Cambodia on its strong role in the region, its leading cooperation in MRE and strong national level process of prioritisation. ARMAC also gave its support of towards Cambodia's 2025 goals.

CMAA responded to these points by sharing its mandate to coordinate and prioritise across policy and strategic frameworks. This takes place at provincial level through Planning Units Chaired by Governor or Deputy Governor. These Units play a key role in prioritisation of operational tasks. CMAA also responded that a technical working group meeting is held twice a year to openly discuss

progress and challenges in implementation with line government ministries, development partners, with other technical working groups mandated to discuss technical issues.

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) asked for further clarification on the prioritisation process used to identify mine-free villages and the 10% Government contribution to any new funding allocated for mine action. CMAA referring to its previous comments on prioritisation process, responded that prioritisation also takes into consideration location and number of casualties, size of contamination, population of IDPs as well as national and sub-national development priorities. In regard to funding, 10% of Government contribution will be allocated in support of new international support for operators and/ or clearing of results project. CMAA also explained that, in addition to this, a 10% in kind contribution can be allocated by the Government for any new projects.

CMAA further outlined that Cambodia has graduated from least developed to middle developing country status that includes further competing national development priorities. As part of these priorities Cambodia has a 5-year national development plan, (2019-2024) that includes actions to meet its SDG targets.

Australia asked if landmine and Cluster Munitions clearance allows for shared methodologies. CMAA explained that unfortunately the clearance of areas contaminated by landmines requires a different methodology to cluster munitions and hence, cannot be combined. Thus, further challenging clearance operations.

MAG provided a comment that Cambodia has worked to support operators to improve technical efficiencies in land release in an environment of complex contamination, (UXO) in the country. MAG highlighted the peace and prosperity that can result of efforts on the common border of Cambodia and Thailand. Cambodia responded that both countries have agreed to make areas safe and secure for both countries people through a joint border committee that has met regularly on demarcation and demining. The CMAA has offered coordination and support for demining as part of this mechanism.

ICBL comments on four key areas of Cambodia's plan, highlighting the strong commitment of the Government to the 2025 goal, the positive role of Thailand and Cambodia in addressing border areas, the increased engagement of the Armed Forces in clearance that can result in a strong national capacity to address residual contamination after 2025.

Closing summary and follow up

In closing, Mr. Ly Thuch again thanked donors and operators for their clear commitment and that this will be met with strong national coordination from Cambodia. As a first step, Cambodia mentioned it will host a follow-up meeting in-country to engage all stakeholders, including the private sector.

Cambodia closed by sharing that the Convention needs success stories and that with the support of those here today Cambodia 2025 can be one of those success stories.

For further information on the Mine Action Program in Cambodia please direct all queries to:

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