

Development and co-ordination of a local capacity

1. A NECESSARY CO-ORDINATION

In any country where fighting against mines is considered a priority, all the parties mentioned above can be found in the field. Their techniques and their motivation are often different, their objectives vary depending on the contracts they are bound by...

Therefore, to reach maximum efficiency, it seems necessary to establish a strict organization on a nation-wide basis:

- **of the operational activities**, so as to make the most out of the demining capacity, to be able to assign the teams of deminers in the most rational way, and finally to respond to all new demands depending on the position and situation and activities of the teams.
- **of the consciousness-raising campaigns** which should be conducted on a nation-wide basis so as to allow the various teams to share their respective experiences and to plan their activities in such a way that the largest part of the population will be taken care of
- **of the financial aids** so as to amass them into a «common fund» and then distribute them in an equitable manner among the various regions, thus ensuring there will be no rejected populations
- **of the techniques and procedures** so as to establish, print and distribute guidelines and to standardise the activities
- **of the various tests and trials** as it is critical that the new methods be tested by an organization that will then be able to either promote them or reject them based on the results of the tests
- **of the bulk purchase of equipment** such as explosives, imported equipment... because besides saving time and money, this permits a better control, particularly for such fragile items as explosives.
- **of the information:** the whole of the information related to mines and mine clearance should also be gathered and centralized on a nation-wide basis to build up data banks, to establish detailed maps of the

mined zones, to set up survey departments and verify the data and the reliability of the information coming all the way up from the field. This information will also be used to prepare or update the consciousness-raising programs (conveying the information down to the communities), to inform the sponsors, the media, the operational groups in the field about the results (statistics, technical training on newly-discovered mines, stage of the research as new demining techniques are tested ...) and finally to gather the information in a central location for a better distribution for the benefit of all.

- **of the procedures and safety regulations.** Routine is the number one danger facing the operators. Mine clearance techniques are subject to a specific codification which leaves room for initiative and adaptation to specific situations but is clear on the basic elements of procedure. Such codification strictly limits actions not provided for in the standard procedures to personnel with specific level of professional qualification and experience. There must therefore be both a set of general standard procedures with which all field operational personnel are completely familiar, and - to avoid misuse - a further set of restricted procedures with a closely controlled and limited availability.



The standardization of mine clearing techniques: It enables all future mine clearance operators to receive the same training; They will then be able to move from one region to another and adapt to the work of a different organization according to the same rules and therefore with a minimum of time and funds invested in retraining or adaptation.

One advantage of this necessary co-ordination on a nation-wide basis is that it allows to establish at the same time the basic principles of a local capacity for mine action.

2. PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL CAPACITY

CONSIDERATION FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE COUNTRY

The basic principle is that the country concerned remains the only party responsible for the fight against mines conducted on its territory. The role of the UN, of the International Institutions or the various interveners is to not only participate in the demining operations but also to contribute to the establishment of a national mine action program. When the mine-clearance organization is appointed by the UNO, the program manager takes care of the co-ordination the whole of the operations, either directly or through the regional structures under his supervision. The doctrine of the UN today is well defined. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) is in charge of the co-ordination of all mine-clearing operations. This department works in co-operation with technical experts of the Department of peace keeping operations. From the very beginning of the mine-clearing operations, no matter who the project manager is, it should be kept in mind that the program will be transferred to a national organization as soon as possible, so as to take care of operational surveillance, alert, training and mine-clearing tasks, but also all the tasks related to logistic support, administration and medical security. Each member of the personnel should contribute to the training of the local agent who will replace him some day. This could be problematic in regions where there is no training in administration, management and accounting. This problem should be discussed upstream. Considering all hypothesis, the schedule of operations and deadlines should be established and the progressive departure of expatriates should be organized, taking into account the local personnel who will relieve them.

THE OBJECTIVES

Reinforcing or establishing a local and durable capacity influences the mode of intervention

- operational autonomy on the shorter or longer term (this duration should be decided upon when arranging the program);

- acquisition by the personnel of experience broad enough to help respond to all forthcoming situations;
- ability to adapt to all conditions of work;

- the quality of education guarantees maximum security. Without the guarantee that this discipline is understood and accepted by everyone, training will not be considered completed;

- the duration of training should be adapted to the level of competence of the personnel recruited: in Mozambique, training at the ADP centre (Accelerated Demining Program) goes on for 17 days during which theory is taught, alternating with practical experience, until a «real world» training period right in the field. In Cambodia, training at the CMAC (Cambodian Mine Action Centre) goes on for one month before the trainees get integrated within a team of deminers,

- understanding on the part of everybody of his position, role and duties within the mine clearance structure, no matter what his job is. For this purpose, each position should be clearly defined, and a «job description» should be established for each operator and well understood by all.

THE CONDITIONS FOR AUTONOMY

The time necessary to eradicate mines from most affected countries is a matter of years if not of decades, and it is unlikely the international community will be able to take on all the financial and operational responsibility for such a long period of time. The countries concerned might end up having to take on the mine action programs established as well as all the other aspects of restoration and social and economical development of the country

The national capacity should be set up so that the process of transfer of responsibility could be progressive and efficacious.

NATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR TRAINING AND CO-ORDINATION

This is an essential co-ordination cell used to avoid duplication of initiatives and to manage mine clearing operations throughout the country.

The standardization of the procedures depends on this structure, and so do the centralization of some tasks and the simplification of everybody's work. Particularly with regard to centralized purchases, administration of common stores and operating of a mine-clearance school This structure should also help guarantee that all deminers work according to the same standards and

gather information that will be used by the sponsors, the media and the population.

Finally, the structure should permit a rationalization of international financial aids, and keep some more remote regions from being left aside (all financial supports will be grouped within a «trust fund» and distributed fairly across the country).

This structure will only be efficient if it is economically viable, which is indisputably the toughest objective to achieve. For this purpose, the government should include these programs among the various tasks they are in charge of. To date, mine clearing operations have been initiated and conducted under mandate from the UN. These interventions were designed as temporary and the organizations taking them on also had temporary responsibility.

How to make sure that financing from the various sponsors, called upon by all, and local budgets, so restricted, if not in deficit, could be properly utilized to sustain such a capacity ? There is still no clear-cut answer to this question, although it is strongly suspected centralized organizations may tend to leave aside the most underprivileged populations living in remote regions.

ATTAINMENT OF AUTONOMY

The process usually consists of three phases.

● The first phase goes on for two years, and its objective is to

- set up the National plan for the fight against mines;
- assess the extent of the problem;
- build up a data bank;
- arrange a rehabilitation program including mine clearance;
- set the priorities for the first stage of mine action;
- establish the specialized mine clearance organism;
- undertake the deminers' training;
- start making the population aware of the danger of mines.

This first phase will then permit to set up the Mine Awareness Education, the **Nation-Wide Mine Survey** and to provide the country with a real **National Mine Action Capacity**.

● The second phase is the consolidation phase that may go on for between 5 and 8 years. Like the former one, this phase is financed on an international basis.

- prepare for the transfer of expertise so that the locals may be autonomous at the end of this phase;
- adapt the organization in place to the local context, especially with regards to the «santé-EVASAN» program, including air evacuation;
- prepare for the transfer of responsibilities of the action program to the national authorities, regarding both training of the personnel and administration of national deminers, of contract management, of logistic

support and communication strategies;

- update the minefield inventory so as to acquire a better knowledge and to prepare new rehabilitation programs,

- adapt and develop proximity mine clearance.

The second phase will correspond to the organization of the Angolan National Mine Action Institute which will be the last step of a whole process initiated in October 94 by the Angolan Department of Defense.

● The third phase is the autonomy phase for the country that will take over the mine clearance program. This is the application in the real world of everything that was done before. This phase is financed by the country itself, and its success depends upon the political goodwill of the country leaders and the restoration of the country.

It will only come to an end upon removal of the last mine...

A DECENTRALIZED INTEGRATION

Integrating the various components necessary for the organization of a local mine action capacity requires that the program is as cheap as possible, that its scope covers as much of the most affected territory as possible, and that it becomes operational soon.

Most of the extensively mined countries are characterised by great migrations of populations and high demographic increase rates. While the first demining operations are usually conducted in the areas with the highest demographic density, those with the most resources and the most fertile soils, the most underprivileged populations will eventually have to rely on the exploitation of poor and remote regions for their survival.

Besides, mine clearance cannot be viewed as a mere emergency and military support program, as it will condition the whole development of the country in the future, especially because it is subject to very costly commercial contracts.

On the other hand, it is critical to establish local capacities in response to these situations of uncertainty, which do not raise much interest among the political and national decision makers, so as to eradicate the dangers that put the heaviest burden on the rural populations. These capacities should be established for the long run, in co-operation with local authorities and taking into account the existing initiatives and the motivations of the decentralized administrations and powers.

In short, the experience acquired in the past thirty or forty years spent assisting with development and mine action, the demonstrated advantages of decentralization and community approach all underline the importance of local mine action, which is just as essential as the action resulting from national co-ordination.

3. MINE CLEARANCE SCHOOLS

A PRIORITY

It seems that for various political, technical and economic reasons, it is necessary to train local mine-clearance operators. The creation of local schools is one priority in the process of peace restoration. It represents a very important normalization symbol for the populations, as school represents the first tangible evidence of the end of the hostilities and of the cooperation among former adversaries.

Within this structure, the dangerous collective national restoration mission they will undertake is likely to arouse team spirit, friendship and solidarity. However it is not always considered a priority in countries where so much needs to be done for peace restoration. This training should then be integrated within a global mine action program set up and financed by international aid.

Future deminers should be chosen among demobilised soldiers from all the various factions so as to give a strict image of neutrality to the population. Not too much should be expected from their demining abilities, though, which are usually nil.

This is the reason why training and instruction should be the responsibility of **foreign civilian or military experts**.

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING

Both the quality and the quantity of local deminers guarantee the efficacy and quickness of a mine action program. All attention should then be drawn to the early organization of the training facilities. The cost for training a deminer depends on the program. It is estimated at \$ 6,000. The experience drawn from Afghanistan shows that the cost for training represents between 4 and 10 % of the total annual budget of the mine action program. Such an investment should be made early enough so as to make it possible from the beginning of the program to cover expenses related to purchase of equipment and installation of the school. Thus the necessity to have a **sufficient and immediately available budget**.

The objective of the deminer training school in Luanda is to train as many as 3,000 mine clearance agents. Through the creation of humanitarian schools, some personnel could be trained in identification of mined areas and public information. The centre of Risalpur, where Afghan deminers are being trained in Pakistan, accommodated up to 77 foreign instructors who taught 20 classes in basic mine clearance simultaneously. In Mozambique, 200 indigenous deminers were trained within 6 weeks, with a student-to-instructor ratio of 6, which appears as the optimal ratio.

The scope of the training should be restricted to the actual needs of the country and adapted based on their



ability to learn. Detection, identification and destruction of some types of mines should be the main objective. **The trainees should not be expected to become experts in neutralization or to engage in destruction of specifically treacherous ammunitions presenting chemical or biological hazards.**

THE SCHOOL

The creation of a mine clearance school is a priority requiring the co-operation and assistance of the country concerned. The school should be located in a vast area not polluted by metal objects, and if possible in the vicinity of a big city.

The site should have running water available, be supplied with electricity, be accessible via a decent road and if possible have housing facilities for the trainees. Health security, including means of evacuation, should be provided just like it is provided in regular worksites.

The school should be able to give a basic training but also to provide specialized tuition to the people who will be in charge of management and administration.

The trainees should be chosen among young motivated people very willing to acquire the bases of a serious and useful training. However, they should not be selected based on school achievements, as they generally have no qualification. The average compensation offered to a local deminer is between US\$ 120 and 150 per month. This is a decent compensation that gives candidates an incentive and allows the individuals performing the selection to be particularly strict.

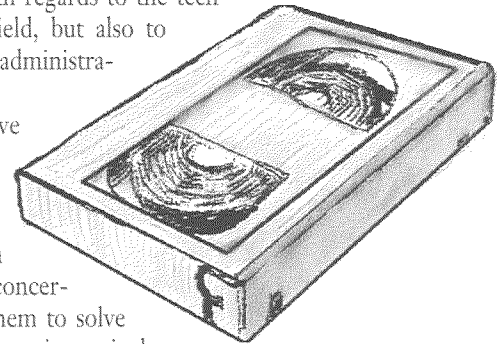
For psychological reasons, candidates who have been the victims of mines in the past should not be systematically discarded, provided their disability does not make them unfit and their psychological state is satisfactory. The issue of illiteracy of the trainees is not a major obstacle as training is based on the observation of sketches or equipment rather than reading, and on the practice of behaviors adapted to various situations.

The trainees should understand that unlike military practice, the success of mine clearance is determined by quality and not by swiftness. They have to learn meticulousness and acquire a good working method. Although no longer in the military, the trainees should be trained to a strict discipline. Their activity is dangerous for themselves and for the others. The discipline of the team is linked to individual meticulousness. It is necessary to wear a uniform, not only for the sake of identification, but also to reinforce the cohesion within the group and its identification by the population as peace keepers.

All mine clearance agents working in the same country must have received the same training.

As instructors might come from various origins, it is critical to make sure that they use the same methods. For this purpose, they should have the same training manuals, not only with regards to the techniques used in the field, but also to safety measures and administration.

Some NGO's have already started in this direction by taking advantage of their good integration within the countries concerned, which enables them to solve communication problems in particular.



As an example, these are two typical training programs for local mine clearance operators. The first one is from the DHA; it is implemented in the main Afghan mine clearance school, in Alalabad (Pakistan). The second one is offered by NPA (Norwegian People Aid).

THE EXAMPLE OF D.H.A.

- basic mine clearance (individual training): 15 days
- surveying minefields: 15 days
- preliminary deployment (group and team training) : 10 days
- training of the instructors: 7 days
- training of the team leaders: 15 days
- training of radio operators: 7 days
- maintenance of mine detectors: 42 days
- driving lessons: 7 days
- refresher training: 5 days
- para-medical techniques: 30 days
- training of dog-handlers: 60 days
- training of chief technician: 7 days.

THE EXAMPLE OF N.P.A.:

The training program offered by this great para-public Norwegian association is implemented in Mozambique and consists in three steps.

- 6 weeks of training in mine clearance followed by 8 to 12 weeks actual work in a minefield;
- 2 weeks of training for the team manager, followed by 10 months actual work as a team manager;
- 2 weeks of training for the chief technician, followed by 8 months actual experience as a chief technician in the worksite.

The instructors are very present at the beginning of these training programs but they are barely seen at the end. This principle is consistent with attainment of autonomy via training and transfer of expertise.

RECURRENT REFRESHER TRAINING

This is critical in such an activity, where the slightest weakening in competences may be fatal. The school should then provide the capacity to accommodate trainees for periodical and compulsory review sessions. The frequency of these sessions should be yearly, plus they should be completed by sessions in the field twice a year. The whole training is completed internally. It calls upon formerly trained local instructors, plus a small number of foreign experts.

The question as to **what type of equipment** the deminers should be trained on is an important one as it will determine the purchase policies. For safety reasons as well as for the sake of educational and operational consistency, it is recommended to use only one type of detector, and the same holds true for protective equip-

ment and clothing. Obviously this causes co-ordination problems between the persons in charge of training and the supervising authorities.

Training indigenous mine clearance operators is an absolute priority. The school may be unique, or, as is the case in huge territories like Angola, be divided up into several sites. In this case, the general organization of the training must be very strict and set by the main Centre for Training.

The creation of mine clearance schools must be an inherent part of national mine action programs.

As we will discuss in the following, because of the high cost of training, these schools should provide the trainees with a much broader intervention capacity concerning all aspects of the rehabilitation, and also with a very comprehensive knowledge of developmental techniques