R E P O R T

2/2004

Preparing the Ground for Peace
Mine Action in Support of Peacebuilding

Though it is widely accepted that mine action can play a significant role in supporting peacebuilding, the interaction between mine action and peacebuilding is rarely examined in detail. Drawing on case studies from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Sudan, this report by the Assistance to Mine-Affected Communities (AMAC) project examines the potential of mine action in terms of both preparing the ground for peace and acting in support of peacebuilding. Rather than focusing on the often-acknowledged role that mine action plays in improving security and promoting socio-economic development, the research highlights less tangible impacts of mine action on peacebuilding in the political sphere. The report is aimed at all mine action practitioners and donor organizations. Drawing on the findings from the case studies, it outlines a set of key principles that have been developed to help guide mine action interventions in situations where there exist opportunities to support peacebuilding.

2/2004 Preparing the Ground for Peace: Mine Action in Support of Peacebuilding

Kristian Berg Harpviken and Rebecca Roberts (eds)

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AMAC KEY PRINCIPLES

Entry Point

Mine action provides the international community with an early entry point for positive interventions in conflict and post-conflict situations. It is generally accepted that interventions should begin as early as possible in order to facilitate moves away from conflict and towards peace.

Framework for Engagement

The Landmine Convention forms a basis upon which state and non-state parties can engage in mine action within an internationally recognized framework, using a range of established tools that support human rights, socio-economic development and peacebuilding.

Conflict Analysis

To be able to respond to the dynamics of a particular conflict in ways that maximize the positive impacts of mine action on peacebuilding, rigorous and continuous conflict analysis is vital.

Priority-Setting

To establish support for mine action activities on all sides of a conflict, it may be necessary to begin working in areas that are considered less sensitive by the conflict parties, rather than areas that might be prioritized under strictly humanitarian priorities.

Flexibility and Robustness

To commit external actors and conflict parties to a realistic and mutually acceptable plan of action, interventions need to be robust, but at the same time flexible enough to respond to the changing dynamics of conflict and post-conflict situations.

Political Awareness

When conflict parties engage in joint activities before peace or confidence between the sides has been established, the operating environment is complicated by the presence

of competing and unclear political agendas and politically affiliated organizations and individuals. To avoid unforeseen repercussions from ill-judged actions or contact with actors lacking legitimacy, implementing agencies need to develop political awareness.

Political Independence

In order to establish political independence and to develop productive working relation–ships with all parties, external actors should treat all conflict parties equally and be transparent and accountable to all stakeholders, from the grass-roots to the national level.

Brokering Role

In order to achieve consensus on mine action activities, mine action agencies perform a brokering role, liaising between conflict parties and helping to build productive cross-conflict communication and cooperation.

Two-Way Communication

In order to understand the mine threat and to be able to respond to national and local concerns, external actors should establish effective and appropriate ways of facilitating two-way communication. To maintain credibility and to avoid raising expectations and causing discontent, mine action agencies need to liaise with local communities and discuss working practices, priority-setting and the timescale required for demining.

Active Participation

To ensure the sustainability of mine action, as well as its long-term contribution to peacebuilding, external actors should adopt an inclusive approach and encourage active participation from the grass-roots to the national level. Without participation, interventions are less likely to respond effectively and appropriately to the needs of populations. National participation gives greater legitimacy to externally sponsored programmes.

Good Governance

Establishing local and national structures to plan, manage and implement mine action introduces the concept of good governance to areas where, as a result of conflict, it has often been marginalized.

Long-Term Commitment

Mine action that aims to support peacebuilding demands long-term commitment from all external actors and a recognition that work may progress slowly. Donors need to accept greater risk and fewer measurable impacts from investments in mine action in conflict and post-conflict situations. Implementers must brief field staff and equip them with the skills required to support peacebuilding through mine action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED that, in the aftermath of armed conflict, mine action lays the foundations for community security and makes it possible for people to return to their homes and recover their lives and livelihoods, the interface between mine action and peacebuilding is rarely examined in detail.

Drawing on case studies from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Sudan, this AMAC report examines the potential role of mine action in 'preparing the ground for peace'. Rather than focusing solely on the role played by mine action in improving security and promoting socio-economic development – which are often acknowledged as part of wider peacebuilding efforts – the research presented here draws attention to the less tangible impacts of mine action in the political sphere of peacebuilding.

The report takes a holistic view of mine action's potential as a means for building peace, moving beyond the technical, specialized and often isolated perceptions of mine action to a more central domain within the wider context of peacebuilding. The research should help to ensure that future interventions contribute more effectively to a shared goal of peace and development, and will, I hope, encourage other disciplines to seek to integrate their specialist interventions in a similar horizontal manner.

In addition, based on the findings of the case studies and aimed at all mine action practitioners and donor organizations, a set of 'Key Principles' has been developed to help guide mine action interventions in situations that offer opportunities to support peacebuilding. Among elements viewed as necessary for a successful intervention, the Key Principles highlight the importance of flexibility and robustness, effective communication, genuine participation and long-term commitment.

It takes courage to look beyond immediate objectives laid down in an operation's mandate. This study is a good example of how to move beyond formal boundaries of intervention, and it highlights the increased benefits of a more integrated and coherent approach to peacebuilding. It provides a point of reference for current mine action activities in situations of conflict, and should stimulate future discussion and research.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

KRISTIAN BERG HARPVIKEN & REBECCA ROBERTS

MINE ACTION IS NOW A STANDARD INGREDIENT of peacebuilding interventions. In addition, it is increasingly being implemented in active conflict situations, as longstanding efforts in Afghanistan's demonstrate. However, while it is recognized that mine action saves lives and limbs and contributes to socio-economic development, its potential peacebuilding role in the political arena is often overlooked. Mine action can, for example, build confidence between parties, serve as a focus of initial negotiations or promote reconciliation, as former adversaries work jointly to remove remnants of war.

Mine action can have a major impact on peacebuilding both during and after a conflict. Nevertheless, as with all interventions, mine action's peacebuilding impact should not to be taken for granted. Just as we have come to understand that any type of intervention can be at risk of causing harm, we need to understand how to ensure that interventions have the best possible impact on peacebuilding. Several components of mine action, such as surveying, demining or victim assistance, are characterized as technical support, yet they impinge directly upon political issues at the very heart of peacebuilding.

This report explores the interface between mine action and peacebuilding, and suggests a number of key principles that may guide future interventions. The discussion is rooted in case studies from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Sudan, but also draws upon interviews and literature reviews that are reported more fully elsewhere.[1] Our ambition is to stimulate debate about the peacebuilding potential of mine action, to highlight key areas for capacity-building, and to contribute to strengthening the role of mine action in the building of peace.

Peacebuilding

The ability of international assistance interventions to facilitate or sustain peace processes, particularly in today's pattern of protracted civil wars, is coming under intense scrutiny. It is no longer enough for humanitarian or development interventions

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[1] See, for example, Harpviken & Skåra (2003).

to concentrate on achieving a narrow range of concrete finite objectives. Today, the process aspect of interventions, and the benefits they can bring, are regarded as no less important than the final outcomes. Interventions are expected to provide 'added value', which might include capacity-building, encouraging grass-roots participation, promoting gender awareness or contributing to good governance. Moreover, there is greater stress on coordination between different interventions to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of individual initiatives through mutual support.

The concept of peacebuilding has expanded since 1992, when former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali introduced the term in *An Agenda for Peace.* Peacebuilding activities are no longer confined to an initial post-conflict phase. Instead, they are seen as long-term interventions that might take place in a period of heightened tension, to try to prevent conflict breaking out; during a conflict, in an attempt to bring the conflict to an end; or for extended periods of time following a conflict, to create a stable and sustainable peace. At the same time, the concept of peacebuilding has developed from being 'supply driven' (i.e. what is it that the international community can offer?) to being more 'needs driven' (i.e. what are the most appropriate interventions in this specific conflict context?).[2]

Numerous definitions of peacebuilding exist, but it is generally agreed that the concept includes three important elements: the provision of security, the establishment of socio-economic foundations and the political framework for long-term peace (Harpviken & Skåra, 2003). Peacebuilding can be driven 'from above' by external actors, or 'from below' by civil society actors. Peacebuilding from above usually takes place on a larger scale and emphasizes the development of governance structures, administration, judicial systems and national strategies for reconstruction and development. Peacebuilding from below focuses on grass-roots efforts to transform conflict at the local level, encouraging reconciliation, developing trust and confidence in the peace process, and ensuring that national strategies are grounded in local capacities and needs. Peacebuilding strategies from above and below are complementary, both being necessary to achieve a sustainable peace.

The 'Do No Harm' principle, advocated in the work of Mary B. Anderson (1999), has drawn attention to the complicated interplay between peacebuilding and external interventions. To do no harm is not a modest ambition, but rather a significant challenge to the design and implementation of all relief and development programmes. In a conflict-type situation, no intervention occurs in isolation from the local environment. At the very least, interventions need to be conflict-sensitive. Programmes should be designed to minimize negative impacts on the conflict and to prevent feeding into existing tensions. On a more ambitious level, however, programmes might be designed to engage with peacebuilding efforts in order to promote a sustainable peace.

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[2] For interesting discussions on the evolution of the peacebuilding concept, see Cousens (2001); Goodhand & Hulme (1999).

Mine Action

As a sector within international assistance, mine action has a short history. The initial steps were taken in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, and since then the sector has taken on a key role in the postwar assistance programmes of many countries. The current definition of mine action includes mine risk education, demining (including surveying, mapping and marking), victim assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction (UNMAS, 2001a). In the wake of the 1997 Landmine Convention, the mine action sector has taken major steps towards professionalization. It is tightly regulated and has its own set of international standards.[3]

Case Studies

To explore the relationship between mine action and peacebuilding – particularly the impact of mine action on peacebuilding in the political sphere – case studies for this report have been conducted in Sudan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Each of the case studies demonstrates that it is possible to undertake mine action with conflict parties even when a conflict is ongoing, and that both well-established mine action programmes and those that are still in their infancy can have an impact on peacebuilding. The case studies explore peacebuilding impacts from grass-roots to national and international levels, and examine peacebuilding strategies driven both from above and from below.

The Sudan case study in Chapter 2 traces the history of indigenous mine action initiatives by the two major parties to the conflict – the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army – from 1996 onwards. Mine action programmes that commenced in the Nuba Mountains following a ceasefire in early 2002 are discussed in detail, and the impact of those programmes on various aspects of peacebuilding, at different social and political levels, is examined.

The focus of the Sri Lanka case study in Chapter 3 is the demining and reopening of Highway A9, which runs through different areas controlled by the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The study explains the significance of the A9 and why its reopening formed part of the ceasefire agreement reached between the government and the LTTE in 2002. The peacebuilding impact of mine action is explored at national, intermediate and local levels.

The Afghanistan case study in Chapter 4 concentrates on a specific mine action project that was focused on the reintegration of former combatants through their incorporation into a community-based mine action initiative. The programme, Mine Action for Peace, was initiated in 2003 as one element in the country's demobilization initiative. The case study analyses the peacebuilding impact of the programme at the local level, discussing how former combatants view the programme and what effect it

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[3] For further discussion, see, for example, Harpviken et al. (2003).

has had on their relationships with former combatants from different militias, militia commanders and village communities.

Methodology

The case studies are based on a composite methodology that combines various techniques of data-gathering and aims to be both conflict- and culture-sensitive. Data-gathering included unstructured interviews with key respondents involved in various aspects of the mine action programmes, from the grass-roots to the national levels and from the local and international community; focus groups at the community level; workshops with participants in mine action and other relevant programmes; and both observation and informal conversations with members of local communities. Additional interviews were conducted outside the fieldwork periods with individuals with specialist knowledge, including mine action staff, diplomats, civil servants, journalists and academics.

A total of five fields trips (two each to Sudan and Sri Lanka, and one to Afghanistan) varying in length from two to eight weeks were conducted between December 2003 and July 2004. The field research was supported by extensive literature reviews drawing on grey, primary and secondary sources of literature, to assist conflict analysis and to aid in the development of a concept of applied peacebuilding that is rooted in current practice and experience within the mine action sector.

Structure of the Report

The Key Principles that appear at the front of this report have been developed out of the findings from the three case studies, as well as engagement with the larger literature and ongoing dialogue with mine action and peacebuilding practitioners. The principles highlight how mine action and peacebuilding can interact, and draw attention to the main issues that should be considered when planning and implementing mine action in support of peacebuilding. The case studies in the report are arranged in the following order: Sudan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The Sudan case study looks at the initial stages of establishing mine action programmes and provides a broad overview of the issues involved. Mine action in Sri Lanka is also discussed in broad terms, but because the intervention in that country is more established than that in Sudan, the analysis of the impact on peacebuilding in Sri Lanka can be framed within a longer-term perspective. In Afghanistan, which has the most established mine action programmes in the world, the case study focuses on the impact of one individual project that is still in its early stages. All three of the case studies were conducted in the middle of project cycles, and follow-up studies are needed to draw conclusions of a more definitive nature. The concluding chapter expands upon the Key Principles and draws comparisons between the experiences of mine action and peacebuilding identified in the three case studies.

Chapter 2

PREPARING FOR PEACE: MINE ACTION'S INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF SUDAN

REBECCA ROBERTS & MADS FRILANDER[1]

D ESPITE THE LONG-RUNNING CIVIL WAR in Sudan, various mine action initiatives have been ongoing in the country since 1996, inspired by national and international actors. And in spite of the numerous challenges faced, which were sometimes underestimated, mine action has both laid foundations for further peacebuilding in Sudan and demonstrated that it is possible for mine action to proceed during conflict. This chapter examines the impacts of some of the mine action activities carried out in Sudan during the last eight years, particularly in the Nuba Mountains. To provide essential context for the analysis that follows, a brief overview of the conflict is first provided, followed by a profile of the Nuba Mountains regions and a history of mine action in Sudan.

Conflict in Sudan

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, has an ethnically diverse population consisting of an estimated 36 million people, which can be roughly divided into 65% African and 35% Arab. Over 70% of Sudanese are Muslim, and a large number of these are of African descent. Between 5% and 10% are Christian, and the rest follow traditional

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theist religions (ICG, 2002).[2] Since gaining independence in 1956, Sudan has experienced ongoing civil war, with the exception of the 1972–83 period, during which a precarious peace held.

The current civil war broke out in 1983 and has caused large-scale death and displacement. Since the conflict began, it is estimated that 2 million people have been killed, half a million have left the country and 5 million have been internally displaced,[3] including up to 2 million originally from the south living in the north (ICG, 2002) and a further 2.2 million living in the transition zone. Sudan's transition zone 'lacks a precise definition or geographical area', but the term is used to refer to those areas of the country where 'Arab and African groups meet and overlap' (Duffield, 2002: 202).
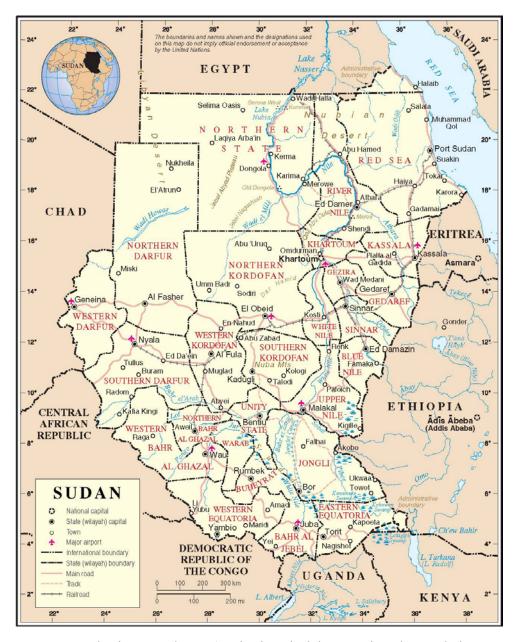
The conflict in Sudan is often described in terms of the Arab Muslim north against the African Christian south (ICG, 2002; Johnson, 2003). However, as is evident from the country's demographic structure, the reality is more complicated. In fact, the conflict involves numerous 'interlocking struggles' (Johnson, 2003: xii), many different warring actors, intergroup fighting and shifting alliances (ICG, 2003). The central parties in the conflict are the government of Sudan in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which is based in the south. However, southern politics is plagued by internal divisions and complicated by fighting between factions of the SPLM/A and variously aligned militias. In addition, the Sudanese government has used local militias as proxies in its war with the SPLM/A, and it cannot be assumed that independence in the south would put an end to the violence there (Martin, 2002). Also, there have been rebellions against the government in what has been considered the geographic north of the country – in the regions of Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and the southern Blue Nile. 'Insurgents from these areas have been fighting alongside the SPLM/A throughout most of the civil war' and have become 'integral parts [of the SPLM/A] while preserving their own regional agendas' (ICG, 2003: 2) The Sudan Liberation Army emerged in Darfur at the beginning of 2003, and there is civil unrest among the Beja people in eastern Sudan and increasing tension among the Nubians in the north.[4]

Like the conflict lines, the root causes are also unclear (Johnson, 2003). The most significant issues seem to be religion, control of resources, governance and self-determination (ICG, 2002: 91). The secularist ideology of the SPLM/A has seemed irreconcilable with attempts by the current National Islamic Front (NIF) government

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[2] Johnson (2003: xvii–xviii) argues that Sudanese who are neither Christian nor Muslim are often wrongly described as pagan or animist, when they in fact are theists.

[3] See US Committee for Refugees, 2004. 'World Refugee Survey 2004, Country Report: Sudan' (figures from end of 2003); available at http://www.refugees.org/world/countryindex/sudan.cfm (accessed 6 September 2004).

[4] The International Crisis Group (ICG) has criticized the Sudan peace talks for focusing on the conflict between the SPLM/A and the government of Sudan without taking full account of other conflict lines. Instead of relying on the north–south paradigm, the ICG argues that the conflict is better understood as 'the marginalization of peripheral regions and groups by successive governments in Khartoum' (ICG, 2003).

to create an Islamic state. The NIF's Islamist principles are rejected not only by non-Muslims but by many Muslims as well (ICG, 2002). In recent years, as the extent of the oil wealth in southern Sudan has become clearer, the SPLM/A's demands for self-determination in the south have taken on significant economic implications in addition to the political consequences.

Since peace talks began in Kenya in June 2002, six protocols have been agreed. This process led to the signing of a peace deal between the Sudanese government and the

SPLM/A at the end of May 2004. However, at the time of writing in November 2004, there is concern that the conflict in Darfur could jeopardize the peace deal before it is implemented, as the Sudanese government claims it is unable to control the Janjaweed militia it has armed to put down the uprising in Darfur. The international community has been refusing to support the implementation of the peace agreement with financial assistance and resources until the government of Sudan puts an end to the fighting in the Darfur region. Despite the ongoing peace talks, visible signs of conflict remain. The government of Sudan is based in Khartoum and in reality exercises authority only in the northern half of the country. Many senior SPLM/A figures operate from Nairobi. Access to southern Sudan for international actors and aid has to be routed through Kenya, as it is not possible to travel directly to southern Sudan from the north of the country. Freedom of movement is not possible within Sudan at the present time, and international organizations must liaise with both sides separately, which involves time-consuming travel and administrative hurdles.

The Nuba Mountains

'The ... conflict in the Nuba Mountains is almost exclusively a manifestation of the wider civil war in Sudan' (Sudan Peace Fund, 2002: 46). The inhabitants of the Nuba Mountains became involved in the conflict between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A in 1985, following clashes between the SPLM/A and local pastoralist tribes, armed by the government to form militias. The fighting escalated, and although the SPLM/A did not have a permanent presence in the Nuba Mountains, Nuba villages were repeatedly attacked by government troops and militias (Johnson, 2003). In 1986, the SPLM/A began recruiting people from the Nuba region, and in 1989 it established permanent bases in the Nuba Mountains. From 1988, the Sudanese government deliberately targeted the educated elite and traditional leadership of the region, which assisted the SPLM/A in its recruitment drive (Johnson, 2003). Although the SPLM/A did commit human rights abuses during its initial involvement in the Nuba Mountains, the SPLM/A command has since enforced a strict disciplinary code among its troops in order to reduce attacks on civilians. In contrast, it is claimed that the government has actively encouraged its troops to violate human rights (African Rights, 1995). Furthermore, it has been claimed that the SPLM/A has also been developing civil society institutions, while the government has been attempting to control the region by appointing its supporters to influential positions and undermining the traditional tribal governance structures (African Rights, 1995; Johnson, 2003).

   Located in the geographical centre of the country, the Nuba Mountains lie in Sudan's transition zone, between the Arab Muslim north and the Christian African south. Most of the inhabitants of the Nuba Mountains are Muslim, but there are also significant numbers of Christians and theists in the region. The Nuba Mountains is a fertile region, covering an area of 30,000 square miles (African Rights, 1995) and home to an

estimated 1.4 million people (NMPACT, 2002: 7).[5] The majority of the population are described as Nuba, which comprises around fifty diverse black African ethnic groups that rely on farming as their main means of survival. There are also Sudanese Arab pastoralist groups in the area, whose livelihood is based on herding cattle or camels (African Rights, 1995). Although there have been longstanding tensions between the Nuba and the pastoralists, predominantly over access to resources, some tribes had agreed methods of resources-sharing and other tribal groups had developed close relations with each other (African Rights, 1995: 11). The war, however, has exacerbated tensions between the two groups (Sudan Peace Fund, 2002), and many of the local mechanisms developed to limit tensions have now been abandoned.

The Nuba Mountains is a remote area. Consequently, the infrastructure in the region is undeveloped and access to services has been poor (Johnson, 2003). The majority of people live in mud huts in scattered villages and may walk up to seven hours a day to collect water. The basic schooling and medical services that were available before the war have been destroyed. Communication is slow, because there are no surfaced roads, only tracks, many of which have fallen into disuse and become overgrown. Most people travel on foot, and a few by cart or bicycle. Access to radio or television is poor throughout the region, and many rely on word of mouth for communication. Several of the towns under government control have telephone lines, but the network does not extend to the villages. In comparison with the larger SPLM/A-controlled settlements in the Nuba Mountains, the government settlements are more developed, the standard of living is higher, and the markets are larger and sell a wider range of goods.

Because of the ethnic and religious diversity of the Nuba Mountains and the region's location in the transition zone, questions related to Nuba identity and appropriate political rule for the region have been the subject of some debate (Johnson, 2003). The aggressive Arabization and Islamicization policies pursued by the Sudanese government have made identity and political status a major factor in the Nuba Mountains. It is argued that many Nuba aligned themselves with the SPLM/A as a means of achieving self-determination (Sudan Peace Fund, 2002). Support for the SPLM/A led to the government declaring a jihad against Muslims in the region (Johnson, 2003). Another factor in the conflict is ownership of and access to land. Successive Sudanese governments, ignoring traditional land law, have given large areas of land to their supporters for mechanized farming, which has increased the political power of the Khartoum government in the Nuba Mountains region, deprived the local population of land and disrupted any existing land-access agreements between the pastoralists and the Nuba.

In January 2002, the government and the SPLM/A reached a ceasefire agreement for the region for an initial six-month period. The Nuba Mountains is a geographical region rather than a politically defined area with administrative borders. Therefore, the

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[5] There are no accurate population records for the Nuba Mountains. Johnson (2003: 131) estimates the Nuba population to be between 1.3 million and 1.6 million; Africa Rights (1995: 12) estimated that the Nuba population was greater than 1.3 million in 1989.

ceasefire agreement defined the Nuba Mountains as the whole of the state of South Kordofan and the eastern province of Lagawa in the state of Western Kordofan.[6] A stalemate had been reached in the fighting, and the agreed ceasefire lines were primarily based on troop location. As a result, the areas under SPLM/A control are in the mountains, while the plains (by far the largest areas) are under government control. The ceasefire lines do not necessarily reflect the sympathies of the population, merely the troop locations at the time the agreement was reached. However, the ceasefire granted jurisdiction over their respective areas to the government and the SPLM/A, and permission has to be obtained from the relevant side in order to enter its territory. Although the Nuba ceasefire agreement was not part of the broader peace process that began later in 2002, the peace talks have helped to maintain the Nuba Mountains ceasefire: the agreement has been extended every six months and is still being maintained.

The Use of Mines in Sudan

Both the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A have used landmines in their offensive and defensive military operations, and rough estimates suggest that around one-third of Sudan is affected by landmines or explosive remnants of war.[7] However, the full extent of the mine threat and its socio-economic impact are unknown (ICBL, 2003). Even in the Nuba Mountains, where demining has been taking place for the last two years, few detailed surveys of mined areas have been completed. In general, the SPLM/A laid anti-tank mines and the Sudanese government laid anti-personnel mines. An assessment conducted in 2000 concluded that mines had been used for four main purposes: to defend towns and key military installations, to mine roads and tracks, to impede the pursuit of cattle raiders, and to stop military raiding parties and patrols (McGrath, 2000: 6).

  Despite claims to the contrary from both sides, there appear to be no accurate records of where mines have been laid. Often, relevant information was not recorded in writing, or individuals entrusted with the information have since been killed, have moved to an unknown destination or are unable to recall the details. Consequently, gathering accurate information about mined areas is difficult and time-consuming. The problem is compounded by uncertainty surrounding the location of villages and towns and the routes of roads. Over the years, inhabited areas have been deserted and reinhabited and houses have been destroyed and rebuilt to such an extent that many settlements no longer occupy their original locations. Similarly, roads (of which many were unsurfaced) have moved as vehicles have abandoned existing paths to avoid

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[6] See 'The Nuba Mountains Cease-Fire Agreement', available at http://www.gurtong.com/ downloads/Cease_Fire_Agreement.html (accessed 21 November 2004).

[7] See 'Sudan Reporting to the Second Session of the Standing Committees to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Geneva, 21–25 June 2004', p. 3; available at http://www.gichd.ch/pdf/ mbc/SC_june04/speeches_VA/Sudan_text_23June04.pdf (accessed 21 November 2004).

obstructions or original routes have become overgrown when roads have fallen into disuse. Mines themselves can also move because of flooding, which occurs annually in many parts of Sudan and can wash mines to different locations, making previously mine-free areas hazardous.

As a result of the mine threat, the majority of funding for humanitarian aid to southern Sudan has been consumed by the costs of providing aid by air. Demining would reduce the costs of delivering aid significantly. In addition, many of those who have been displaced by the war will want to return only when they believe it is safe to do so. Displaced groups are considered to be particularly vulnerable to mines, because they do not have local knowledge about the probable location of mines. Generally, the lack of information about the mine threat complicates all aspects of mine action and makes long-term planning difficult.

Mine Action in Sudan

When the international community began to examine options for more active involvement in supporting mine action in Sudan, it was thought that mine action could help to prepare for peace in five areas, all of which are seen as essential to achieving a sustainable peace. The five areas were supporting a peace process, encouraging good governance, strengthening civil society, promoting human rights and initiating official joint activities to benefit the population.[8] Mine action was identified by the international community as a possible entry point into Sudan to help to prepare for peace, because efforts to combat the threat of mines had already been commenced by both the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A. In fact, both sides had previously sought external help to begin addressing the mine problem. The international community, having recognized the benefits of undertaking mine action in Sudan sooner rather than later, initiated the process of gathering support from donors, developing working relations between the SPLM/A and the government of Sudan in relation to mine action, and undertaking preliminary research to assess the mine threat. This foresight and preparation meant that when a ceasefire was brokered for the Nuba Mountains, more extensive mine action activities could be started in that area.

Unfortunately, the original national efforts to address the mine threat have since been largely overshadowed by outside intervention. In this case study, however, the focus will be on events surrounding the development of indigenous mine action organizations. Mine action activities in the Nuba Mountains are analysed in greater detail and considered in terms of their success in preparing for peace.[9]

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[8] Interview with Xavier Marchal, EU Ambassador to Sudan (February 1999–October 2002), August 2004

[9] The Mines Advisory Group and Fondation Suisse de Deminage have both had programmes in Sudan. However, these are not discussed in this case study, as they were not operational at the time the field studies were conducted. The Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service (SIMAS) is not discussed in detail, because at the time of the field study it was not one of the prominent national initiatives operating in the Nuba Mountains.

Formal mine action activities in Sudan can be traced back to 1996, when the Sudanese Campaign to Ban Landmines (SCBL) was established in Khartoum and Operation Save Innocent Lives (OSIL) was formed in southern Sudan following the SPLM/A unilateral moratorium on the use of landmines in November that year.[10] Although the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A were concerned about the mine threat, both had difficulty securing outside help to tackle the problem. OSIL began operating in 1997, but since its inception, observers claim that it has struggled to secure enough external funding to function effectively and has lacked effective external expert support. In January 1997, the Sudanese government approached the UN for help. However, although a report assessing the mine problem was produced, it was not recommended that mine action should begin during conflict (UNDHA, 1997).

At the end of 1997, the government of Sudan signed the Mine Ban Treaty, which it ratified in April 2004. In 2001, the SPLM/A signed the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment, the equivalent of the Mine Ban Treaty for non-state actors.[11]

A further assessment of the mine problem in Sudan formed part of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Planning for Peace Initiative in 1999–2000. This initiative identified key areas that would need to be addressed in order for a sustainable peace to be achieved, such as food security, displaced persons, civil society building and land ownership. The report on mine action, published in 2000, concluded that little consideration had been given to 'the potential impact of landmines on other key sectors such as rural health programmes, refugees and internally displaced populations, agriculture, livestock movement and disease control, food security and aid logistics'. Therefore, it was argued that mine action 'must be an integral sector of the peace-planning process for Sudan' (McGrath, 2000: 26).

The IGAD report claimed that, despite international commitments, combatants from each side continued to use landmines. However, it argued that humanitarian priorities had to be put above political issues, and that mine action initiatives should be commenced immediately in advance of peace.[12] It was recommended that both sides start collecting data on mine incidents and meet to discuss technical mine-related issues; that two mine action centres be established; that further assessments of mined areas be conducted; and that first aid training and mine awareness programmes be established. In addition, the report suggested a 'Brave Option': 'a response to landmines [could] play an important part in building peace', and therefore mine-affected areas should be monitored to identify those that were uncontested and 'could be targeted for accelerated demining training followed by mine survey, marking and clearing operations' (McGrath, 2000: 29). It was intended that, if these recommendations were implemented, both sides would actively participate in mine

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[10] It should be noted that SCBL and OSIL are not strictly civil society organizations, as both have strong links to their respective regimes.

[11] For more on Geneva Call, including its work with non-state actors and the Deed of Commitment, see http://www.genevacall.org/home.htm (accessed 6 November 2004).

[12] According to the latest *Landmine Monitor,* the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A continue to accuse each other of using landmines (ICBL, 2003).

action, supported by resources and expertise from UN agencies and international NGOs.

In August 2001, SCBL, representing the government of Sudan, and OSIL and the Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service (SIMAS), on behalf of the SPLM/A, attended a meeting in London hosted by Landmine Action UK (LMA) and the Diana, Princess of Wales Fund to discuss how the Sudanese might begin to tackle their landmine problem. The two sides agreed to form the Sudanese Landmines Information and Response Initiative (SLIRI). This was conceived as an indigenous, grass-roots organization working with both sides of the conflict with a minimal number of international staff. Funding for SLIRI came from the European Commission and would be distributed through Oxfam GB, which would act as a fund-holder. LMA would provide practical support.

Through SLIRI, national capacity to undertake mine action would be developed, with the aim of ensuring that expertise and resources would be sustainable when the international community withdrew or reduced its support. Such a national organization would help to overcome the reduction in international funding that often occurs once an initial emergency phase is over. Another argument for creating SLIRI was that the undeveloped infrastructure and vast distances in Sudan meant that mine action staff had to be more self-contained and able to survive in field camps for longer periods of time than in many other countries. In such conditions, national staff would cope better than personnel from other countries.

In 2001, the Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines (JASMAR) was formed. This has become a significant actor in the Nuba Mountains. Like SCBL, JASMAR is said to be closely associated with the government of Sudan and to maintain political links through the appointment of key staff and board members.

In 2002, a number of factors coincided to make mine action simultaneously practical yet politically more difficult. The signing of the Nuba Mountains ceasefire agreement between the SPLM/A and the Sudanese government in January presented an opportunity for SLIRI to undertake a joint assessment using one team with members drawn from both sides of the conflict. However, the government of Sudan would not agree to such an arrangement, so a compromise was reached: two teams were formed, one from each side. Each team was restricted to gathering data from the areas under its own side's control. The assessment was completed in March 2002 (SLIRI, 2002).

Under the mandate of the Joint Military Commission (JMC), the international monitoring mission established to oversee the ceasefire agreement, it was stipulated that mine action was to be undertaken as part of the ceasefire.[13] The JMC entrusted the responsibility for coordination to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

SLIRI provided a briefing on the landmine situation for the JMC and UNMAS when the two organizations began operating in the Nuba Mountains. UNMAS initiated emergency demining, so that the JMC could establish its headquarters. Access to roads

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[13] 'The specific functions of the commission shall include ... supervising the mapping and clearance of mines.' See 'The Nuba Mountains Cease-Fire Agreement', available at http://www.gurtong.com/downloads/Cease_Fire_Agreement.html (accessed 21 November 2004).

was cleared by Ronco, which used demining dog teams from the United States, and DanChurchAid (DCA), using its Kosovar demining teams from Albania. To establish longer-term mine action solutions, UNMAS agreed with JASMAR/SCBL, OSIL and DCA at an Intersessional meeting in Geneva in September 2002 to begin what has become known as crosslines demining in the Nuba Mountains. The Sudanese government was represented by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), and the SPLM/A by the Sudan Rehabilitation and Relief Commission (SRRC); mine action is conducted in cooperation with both of those bodies.[14] The crosslines programme would involve training deminers from both sides together, in a training camp in a neutral area of the Nuba Mountains, in order to develop national capacity. DCA, JASMAR and OSIL would be equal partners in the project. It was also agreed that UNMAS would establish a National Mine Action Office in Khartoum, a secondary office in Rumbek in the south of Sudan, and a regional office in Kadugli in the Nuba Mountains.

Following an emergency mine assessment in March 2003, JASMAR/SCBL and OSIL withdrew from SLIRI, apparently because of disagreements over resources. A political dispute also developed between SLIRI and the Sudanese government. For several months, SLIRI found it difficult to operate. As a result of travel restrictions imposed by the government, it was unable to liaise effectively between the two sides. In addition, the grass-roots ideology underpinning SLIRI was at odds with the approach taken by UNMAS, which appeared to be advocating an internationally led mine action programme that could be initiated more quickly. It has been alleged by various organizations that UNMAS staff wanted to 'do a Kosovo' – that is, a resource-rich mine action programme to achieve rapid clearance. Many Sudanese civil society organizations claim that they were told by UNMAS that the Nuba Mountains would be cleared of mines within two years.

Despite its problems, SLIRI has been able to continue to operate without renewing its working relationship with either OSIL or JASMAR. Relations with the government of Sudan have improved, and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with UNMAS in November 2003. In 2004, SLIRI and UNMAS developed a partnership in the Nuba Mountains under which SLIRI implemented the first landmine impact survey in Sudan, with mixed teams drawn from government- and SPLM-controlled areas.

The crosslines demining programme in the Nuba Mountains also experienced setbacks. International staff had difficulty in obtaining visas and travel permits, and the delivery of equipment was delayed in Sudanese customs in Khartoum. The SPLM/A claimed that the site chosen for the training camp in the Nuba Mountains, Um Serdiba, was not neutral, and initially the camp had to be moved a few kilometres away from the original site to an area that was less accessible. However, the training camp has now been permanently established in Um Serdiba, which has been accepted

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[14] The SRRC was previously known as the Sudanese Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA).

by both sides as a neutral area.[15] In the dry season, Um Serdiba is about an hour's drive from Kadugli, a government-controlled town and an important administrative centre, and three hours from the SPLM/A regional headquarters in the town of Kauda. Driving time can increase dramatically during the rainy season, however. Both JASMAR and OSIL have accused each other of appointing intelligence officers as trainee deminers. The accusations often seem to arise because individuals who have not been living in the Nuba Mountains have been selected for the programme. The original agreement had been that the trainees should be drawn from among the local population living in the Nuba Mountains. The development of local capacity would enable mine action to continue when external organizations shifted their focus to other parts of Sudan.

Challenges and Achievements

Working in any conflict situation is challenging, and it is inevitable that humanitarian and development interventions will encounter difficulties. Perseverance and commitment do not guarantee success. In Sudan, political and logistical problems encountered by individuals and organizations undertaking mine action initiatives have impeded progress. The Sudanese government has been reluctant to issue entry visas and internal travel permits to international staff, who are needed to provide expertise until national capacity has been developed. Organizations have also had difficulty negotiating the release of equipment from customs. The conflict between the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A means that staff and equipment for southern Sudan often have to be routed through Nairobi, as it is not possible to travel directly between the northern and southern parts of the country. The undeveloped infrastructure in the country, particularly in the Nuba Mountains, has impeded communication and the movement of people and equipment. In addition, the rainy season makes the roads in the Nuba Mountains almost impossible to use, so travelling time between locations increases dramatically. The progress of many activities becomes slower, and the heavy rains can stop demining activities altogether.

   The lack of previous long-term close-contact engagements in Sudan means that external actors do not have a good working knowledge of how to operate effectively in the country. Most external organizations, including those involved in mine action, are having to learn how to work in a new cultural, political and legal environment that has been shaped by a complicated protracted conflict. Often, even basic information related to normal daily activities is lacking. For example, there are no up-to-date maps, so locating a village or finding a road can be difficult. Even maps of Khartoum are not widely available. Building up an institutional understanding of a new working environment and determining how best to operate takes time.

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[15] The camp at UM Serdiba has become widely accepted as neutral territory and has been used by international organizations to hold meetings with people from both sides of the conflict.

As a result of the war, many Sudanese have not completed their education, have had little vocational training, and have limited or no experience of formal employment. Consequently, mine action organizations have to allow time to provide on-the-job training for many of their support staff. The trainee deminers are not used to classroom learning and the strict discipline required to ensure safety in an area suspected of containing mines. Therefore, the training courses have had to progress more slowly than they have done in other countries and, once trained, the teams still require close supervision. National and international staff need time to develop effective working relationships and to understand each others' working practices.

Despite the many challenges, though, progress has been made. Four teams of deminers known as JASMAR I and II and OSIL I and II have been trained through the DCA/JASMAR/OSIL crosslines programme. During their training, deminers from both sides lived together in the camp and were trained together. Currently, however, JASMAR teams can only work in government-controlled areas and OSIL teams in SPLM/A-controlled areas when they are deployed, though this may change after a peace agreement is implemented. Two teams of deminers from each side, trained by LMA, operate under SLIRI in the Nuba Mountains. SLIRI has also established seven offices in government-controlled areas and eight in SPLM/A-controlled areas, to collect information from local communities about mine incidents and suspected mined areas. Unfortunately, SLIRI states it can only share information if permitted to do so by the relevant authorities, so it has not been possible to use all the data collected to plan mine action programmes (SLIRI, 2004). SLIRI's reluctance to share information unless permitted has created some friction within the mine action community.

UNMAS admits that demining has progressed more slowly than would normally be expected. In the Nuba Mountains, 628,233 square metres of land had been cleared and 1,295 mines/UXO destroyed by July 2004.[16] Roads have been a main priority for clearance to improve access, but areas around some villages have also been demined. Unfortunately, though, there have been a number of mine incidents on roads where the mine threat had been considered low, including a road that has come to be known as the 'Humanitarian Highway'. This road passes through both government- and SPLM/A-controlled territory and is an important access route for supplies and assistance. Before the Humanitarian Highway was opened, information was gathered from the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A about where mines were likely to have been laid. It appears that demining activities were concentrated on those areas, and systematic demining of the whole road was not carried out. The mine incidents that have since occurred have led to both sides accusing each other of laying mines after demining, which has posed a serious threat to the Nuba Mountains ceasefire and the peace process. However, it is not widely understood that there have been no mine

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[16] See 'Demining' at http://www.jmc.nu/en/0306.htm (accessed 24 October 2004).

incidents in areas that were actually demined. Consequently, the confidence of the local population in the ability of mine action to make areas safe has been shaken.[17]

The prioritization of areas for demining is dictated by several factors. To fulfil its mandate, the JMC argues that it needs to be visible and to be able to travel within the Nuba Mountains. Although clearance of some roads may not have a direct impact on the humanitarian needs of a community, the JMC claims that demining that allows it to monitor the ceasefire has a longer-term impact for a larger population. The government of Sudan and the SPLM/A military in the Nuba Mountains are aware that the ceasefire might break down and seem reluctant to allow areas to be cleared that may be of strategic importance. In order to reduce the risk of losing the commitment of both sides and to maintain the momentum of mine action, demining sometimes takes place in particular areas simply because it can, rather than because of humanitarian need. In principle, it is desirable in mine action to target areas that pose the greatest threat to the community. However, when working in situations where peace does not exist, it may be necessary for external actors to make compromises and to focus efforts where it is possible to undertake physical activities in order to support the longer-term goals of peacebuilding.

A governance structure for the development of policy and management of mine action has been developed in Sudan. This is known as the National Mine Action Office (NMAO), and it involves actors from both sides of the conflict. A series of counterparts from the government, military and community levels have been established to liaise with each other and to represent the interests of all parties. SCBL, JASMAR, OSIL, SIMAS and SLIRI work through the NMAO, which coordinates mine action tasks in Sudan. To a certain extent, the NMAO is an artificial construct, heavily dependent on UNMAS for material resources and expertise, and reliant on third parties to liaise between counterparts who cannot or will not work directly with each other. Nevertheless, the existence of the NMAO could provide the basis for transparent and accountable mine action programmes. Support from Sudan's indigenous mine action organizations shows that the NMAO has some legitimacy and could facilitate coordination of joint activities. However, the NMAO does have operating problems. For example, in November 2004, it was claimed that there have been no coordination meetings at the national level for demining agencies in Sudan for over twelve months.

Poor communications and dispersed village populations present a challenge to mine risk education programmes, particularly when the extent of the mine threat is largely unknown. Similarly, community liaison to explain the processes involved in mine action is difficult. Mine risk education is in its infancy in the Nuba Mountains and so has not formed part of this study, but it is clear that developing methods of disseminating information that are culturally appropriate and efficient when large numbers of the population are nomadic or semi-nomadic presents a real challenge.

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[17] See 'Land Mine Accident Indicates Lurking Dangers in Sudan', UN WIRE, 15 October 2003; available at http://www.mineaction.org/refdocs.cfm?doc_ID+1605&country_ID+829 (accessed 11 November 2004).

Preliminary research suggests that using traditional governance structures to liaise with the local population may have to be supplemented with other methods, as tribal leaders and village chiefs may not always convey information to their communities. Effective methods of communication to inform and gather information from the population need to be developed, without the raising of unrealistic expectations or alarm among the people in the Nuba.

The Impact of Mine Action on Peacebuilding

As the initial motivations behind the international involvement in mine action in Sudan were to prepare for peace and to support peacebuilding, the fact that measurable outputs such as the size of areas cleared and number of deminers trained have been limited is less important if some of the original objectives have been met. The following section highlights the main impacts of mine action on peacebuilding in Sudan, with reference to the original objectives of the international involvement. These were to support a peace process, to encourage good governance, to strengthen civil society, to promote human rights and to initiate official joint activities to benefit the population.

Supporting a Peace Process

There seems to be broad agreement that progress made in mine action has been symbolically important and has highlighted the potential for peace in Sudan. Actors with access to the peace process argue that the international community has been more willing to facilitate negotiations between the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A because of their joint mine action efforts. In addition, because of what was being achieved in mine action, both sides in the conflict felt under pressure to engage in meaningful talks. In political terms, bringing the two sides together to agree a joint approach to the mine threat has been a success that needs to be transformed into tangible results to benefit the population.

   There is a fear that the concentration of mine action in the Nuba Mountains could create tensions in other parts of Sudan where, because of the greater challenges faced, comparatively little mine action is taking place. However, mine action in the Nuba Mountains has set a precedent for mine action programmes elsewhere in the country. The establishment of mine action in other areas could be facilitated by the Nuba Mountains experience, as working strategies between the conflict parties and the international community have already been developed, and physical, social and political challenges highlighted.

   The system of counterparts established to facilitate mine action has helped to build confidence between those directly involved, but does not seem to extend beyond the mine action community. Professional working relationships have been developed at the national, intermediate and local levels, and in some cases personal friendships

have followed. It is also apparent that friendships have been formed between the deminers trained as part of the crosslines process. Whether there was any resentment between the deminers as a result of the fighting is unclear, but without the programme simple geography or politically imposed travel restrictions would have prevented many of these individuals from meeting. Unfortunately, deminers are usually unable to introduce their new friends to their village communities because of difficulties in crossing ceasefire lines or covering large distances during limited free time. When a peace agreement is eventually reached and demining schedules become more predictable, the deminers' personal friendships may have a broader peacebuilding impact. Meanwhile, some individuals send messages to family members living in areas they are unable to visit personally via others they have met through the crosslines programme who do have access to those areas.

At the grass-roots level, there is a risk that mine action may feed into the conflict rather than support peacebuilding. It seems that the crosslines mine action programme has not responded fully to the contemporary situation in the Nuba Mountains. When the programme was designed, it was believed that the main conflict at the national level, that between the government and the SPLM/A, was also the primary line of division within the Nuba population. The assumption, however, oversimplified the situation. The people in the Nuba Mountains were drawn into the government–SPLM/A conflict, and most found themselves fighting for one side or the other for survival. The ceasefire lines have again imposed an external conflict on the Nuba Mountains, and the agreement can give the impression that those who live in a particular area support the side that controls it. This is not necessarily true: when the ceasefire was declared, most people simply found themselves living in a particular area, under the control of one authority or the other, not necessarily the one they supported.

Many Nuba people reject the suggestion that the crosslines programme reflects the conflict line in the Nuba Mountains. Although government policies did cause some genuine grievances, the Nuba argue that there is no internal conflict in the region and that any fighting that has taken place between them is the result of external forces beyond their control. Undoubtedly, relations among the Nuba have been damaged by the conflict, but some observers argue that, left alone, the Nuba would be able to rebuild their social networks.

A conflict that does threaten peace in the Nuba Mountains is that between the Nuba and the pastoralists. The civil war has exacerbated pre-existing tensions between these two groups, and traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms have been forgotten. However, the crosslines programme has either overlooked or chosen not to take this particular conflict line into account, as the pastoralists have no official representation within the programme. Again, some observers argue that the Nuba and the pastoralists can resolve their own conflicts if given the space to do so and the encouragement to rehabilitate their traditional resource-sharing agreements. Conversely, others argue that the situation has moved on, and that neither the conflicts the Nuba have among

themselves nor the conflicts between the Nuba and the pastoralists can be resolved without outside help.

Mine action has not overlooked the pastoralists altogether. Their migration routes are being examined to determine how they might be affected by mines, and mine risk education initiatives are being planned to specifically target pastoralists. During the fieldwork, it was claimed that some of those training to become deminers had been drawn from pastoralist communities.

Although mine action has brought the two main sides of the conflict in Sudan together, the peacebuilding impact has largely been limited to those directly involved in the programmes. A greater emphasis on community liaison would root projects more solidly within local populations and also contribute to developing confidence in the possibility of a sustainable peace. Some external actors have raised unrealistic expectations about how quickly areas can be cleared and have failed to explain that the capacity to clear all areas immediately does not exist. Disappointment and disillusionment among the population threatens the latter's confidence in the peace process, a dynamic that is strengthened as the expected peace dividend fails to materialize. A more solid form of local contact would help to convey the signal that both sides are working jointly in a way that benefits the local population, and that physical threats that are reminders of war are being removed. Working practices within mine action and the often time-consuming nature of the work could also be discussed. It may be that, in addition to mine risk education, a systematic form of liaison with the local population would need to be developed in an area such as the Nuba Mountains, where infrastructure is poor and traditional leaders cannot always be relied upon to relay detailed information to the community.

One particular issue that should be considered is whether mine action, from its national level to grass-roots structure, has given the Sudanese government legitimate access to civil society. The government is feared by many Nuba, including the pastoralists, whom the government has abandoned since the ceasefire agreement.

Mine incidents posed a serious threat to the ceasefire in the Nuba Mountains and jeopardized the mine action programmes. Both sides have accused the other of laying mines after the ceasefire came into force. At the community level, people's faith in the ability of mine action organizations to clear land has been damaged and, although it appears neither side did break the ceasefire, the commitment of both sides to the ceasefire and to reaching a peace agreement has been placed in doubt.

Encouraging Good Governance

Governance is provided by a set of recognized and accepted institutions that are accountable to civil society and authorized to exercise control within agreed spheres of public and private life. It is argued that sustainable development and stability cannot be achieved without good governance. Consequently, facilitating the creation of accountable governance structures contributes to peacebuilding (Kauffmann, Krayy &

Zoido-Lobatón, 2000; UNDP, 1998; World Bank, 1994). In Sudan, a NMAO has been established, vertical and horizontal information flows have been encouraged, planning and managerial skills have been developed, and policies and working practices have been discussed by the government, the SPLM/A and international mine action actors. To maintain momentum, the NMAO needs to encourage greater active participation, and to facilitate communication and coordination openly between the national and international actors A one-nation approach to mine action is being supported, and institutions on both sides of the conflict are involved in the process.

However, the NMAO has been established in Khartoum, which immediately credits the government of Sudan as the legitimate authority in the country, and the SPLM/A is marginalized because its staff cannot or will not work in Khartoum.[18] Consequently, the SPLM/A receives information belatedly and second-hand in Nairobi. A similar situation has developed in the Nuba Mountains. The training camp for deminers is based in Um Serdiba, a village located significantly closer to a government administrative centre than to an SPLM/A centre. It is thus more time-consuming and difficult to travel to see SPLM/A and OSIL staff, so meetings do not occur as frequently as with government and JASMAR staff. It could be that the failure of the international community to include both sides equally in the governance structure and process has contributed to the SPLM/A's plans to establish its own national mine action office in south Sudan, a proposal that was announced by the SPLM/A leader, John Garang, at the beginning of May 2004 as the government and the SPLM/A were on the verge of reaching a peace agreement (SPLM/SPLA, 2004).

Strengthening Civil Society

Civil society is the arena between the state and the market that society uses to discuss and manage public affairs. Civil society can include a wide range of institutions at a local, national or international level, ranging from highly organized religious groups, business affiliations and trade unions, though less formal NGOs, cultural organizations and sports clubs, to even looser forms of association, such as social movements and networks. In established civil societies, networks and interdependency become complex, and there is considerable overlap between civil society, the state and the market (Harpviken & Kjellman, 2004).

It is becoming increasingly accepted that one of the prerequisites for an effective and accountable state is the creation of an effective and accountable civil society capable of expressing its needs, approval and dissatisfaction to the state through recognized and legitimate mechanisms. Therefore, the creation of a strong civil society with nonviolent means of expressing itself, one that participates in furthering the interests

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[18] It would appear that mine action has been influenced by the international community's desire that the peace process result in a united and not a divided Sudan. The National Mine Action Office was established in Khartoum because there has always been an assumption that Khartoum will remain the capital of Sudan.

of the population and provides a counterbalance to state power, is essential to postwar recovery and peacebuilding.

It could be argued that SLIRI has helped to strengthen civil society in Sudan. It is a grass-roots organization that works closely with the local population to help reduce the threat of mines. Almost all of its staff are Sudanese nationals, and these are usually drawn from the community in which they work. SLIRI staff claim that the organization is trusted and has credibility, despite its slow progress, because it is well integrated at the community level. Although the status of JASMAR, OSIL and SCBL is more ambiguous and it is difficult to ascertain how they are perceived by ordinary Sudanese, those organizations, at the very least, highlight the rights and needs of civil society and provide an entry point for external actors to become involved in mine action. Through JASMAR, OSIL, SCBL and SIMAS, the attention of conflict parties, primarily focused on war, is diverted towards civil society.

Promoting Human Rights

As in many conflict situations, during the last two decades of civil war in Sudan, human rights have been violated. The use of landmines threatens lives and livelihood activities. The signing of the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment and the 1997 Landmine Convention by the SPLM/A and the government of Sudan, respectively, is an acknowledgement of the potentially devastating impact of landmines on human rights. The framework of the Landmine Convention and the Geneva Call provides the international community with an entry point for humanitarian intervention and a set of activities that serve to promote human rights. The mine action activities that have been undertaken in Sudan have helped to draw attention to the issue of human rights, which is often forgotten during conflict. Mine action has contributed to the benefits the population has derived from the ceasefire.

However, there is evidence that upholding human rights is not necessarily the main priority of the two conflicting parties in Sudan. As the war is still ongoing and it is only a ceasefire that is in place in the Nuba Mountains, each side is seeking to maintain its position, which limits mine action and consequently its promotion of human rights.

Official Joint Activities

Mine action has brought the two conflicting sides together in activities that benefit the population in a range of ways. National mine action capacity has been developed, employment has been provided, and work has begun to reduce the mine threat. However, mine action may be a politically charged activity, and because of the potential repercussions and the continued conflict it has sometimes been used as a political tool. This has threatened the goodwill of external actors and damaged the fragile confidence that the conflicting parties have in each other. In a conflict and post-

conflict situation, the use of any intervention for political gain is inevitable, particularly when opposing parties are engaged in joint activities. However, the potential to manipulate mine action for political purposes has not always been taken sufficiently into account by external actors. In some instances, mine action activities have been jeopardized because a particular individual with good connections was not appointed or was dismissed from a particular post. In other cases, agreements central to the continuation of mine action have essentially been made with individuals rather than with organizations. Further problems can be created because, in order to achieve progress, it is necessary to liaise with influential individuals who may have ambiguous roles. The attention of external actors and the potential material benefits this offers can ameliorate the positions of such individuals without advancing mine action.

The government of Sudan and the SPLM/A each claim that the other side has used mine action to gather information about its opponent. Contrary to the terms of the crosslines agreement, it appears that individuals selected for the demining training have not always come from the Nuba Mountains. Both sides accuse the other of selecting intelligence officers for the programme to act as spies. It is also possible that individual Sudanese could become vulnerable if they were put under pressure to use the opportunity presented by mine action to gather sensitive information about the other side.

Although involving both sides in mine action has significant practical benefits, attempts to work with both conflict parties simultaneously have brought political agendas directly and immediately into humanitarian operations. Consequently, it has not been possible to depoliticize mine action, and efforts to promote transparency, accountability and confidence-building have been weakened.

External actors need to develop greater political awareness in order to assess the motivations of actors from both sides for becoming involved in mine action. After twenty years of fighting, it takes time for trust to be established, so even if conflict parties enter into agreements in good faith they will also take advantage of any opportunities to strengthen their position in case such agreements break down. With increased political awareness, external actors would able to make a greater contribution to peacebuilding.

Conclusion

It appears that the original objectives of mine action interventions in Sudan – namely, to prepare for peace and to support contemporary and future peacebuilding activities – were overlooked or not relayed to field-level staff. Consequently, efforts have tended to focus on mine action activities themselves, rather than on the processes needed to make such mine action activities possible, such as confidence-building and developing effective governance structures. As a result, the impact of mine action on peacebuilding has probably not been as significant as it might have been. However, concrete progress has been made: deminers have been trained, data-collection initiated, and mine risk education is under way; two conflict parties were successfully

brought together to develop strategies for reducing the mine threat in Sudan; professional, and in some cases personal, relationships have developed across the divide; and the importance of good governance, protecting human rights and strengthening civil society has been acknowledged, even if real progress has been limited.

It was a bold decision to begin mine action during conflict, and it has required commitment and a degree of risk-taking from the government of Sudan, the SPLM/A and international actors. Peacebuilding is a slow process that requires long-term commitment and patience from all involved parties. Mine action cannot build peace on its own, but it does have the potential to be an effective component of coordinated peacebuilding efforts. It is too early to fully assess mine action's contribution towards preparing the ground for peace, but the experience in Sudan shows that mine action with conflict parties is possible during conflict and can help sustain belief in a peace process and a future peace.

Chapter 3

IN SUPPORT OF PEACEMAKING: DEMINING SRI LANKA'S HIGHWAY A9

WENCHE I. HAUGE[1]

THE REOPENING OF HIGHWAY A9 was an important step towards normalization in the protracted war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The road runs from the government-controlled Jaffna peninsula in the north of the country, through the LTTE-controlled Vanni region in the northeast, down to government-controlled areas in southern Vavuniya, and then further south to the city of Kandy. Highway A9 was demined and reopened in 2002; further improvements and demining of roadside verges were carried out in 2003. Because of its location, Highway A9 is crucial for both sides of the conflict in Sri Lanka. Given this background, the demining of the A9 represents an interesting case for a study of the peacebuilding impacts of mine action.

The first section of this study provides a summary of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka and discusses various peacemaking initiatives. In the following section, the history and status of the A9 during the war and up to the carrying out of improvements to the road in 2003 are presented. Three subsequent sections analyze the effects of the demining and reopening of Highway A9 at different levels:

- at the *national* level, in relation to negotiations between the two sides, including the stance of the parties on the mine ban question;

- at the *intermediate* level, focusing in particular on how demining was organized; and

- at the *local* level, with a focus on the immediate effects for ordinary civilians.

Finally, a concluding section examines the interaction between these various levels and sums up the findings from the study.
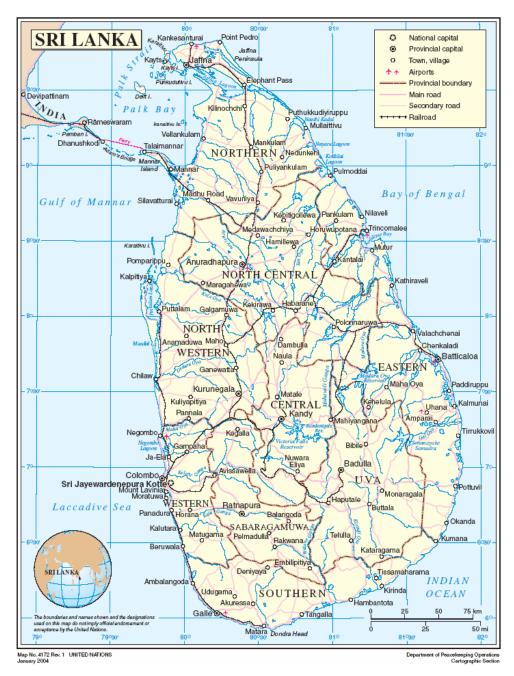
The Conflict

The civil war in Sri Lanka, which broke out in 1983, has been fought largely in the northeastern part of the country. Indeed, the population in the south has been relatively sheltered from the effects of the conflict, apart from suicide bombings carried out by the LTTE, mainly in the capital Colombo. A number of negotiation initiatives, some with outside involvement, have failed to foster peace. At the time of writing, though, the situation is that although a 2002 ceasefire agreement brokered by Norway is holding, negotiations are at a standstill. In the northern parts of the country, the LTTE controls the Vanni region, where it has built up its own administrative structure, while the government controls the Jaffna peninsula.

The armed conflict in Sri Lanka has a significant ethnic dimension. Sri Lanka's population of 19 million consists of an estimated 74% Sinhalese (mostly Buddhist); 12.6% Sri Lankan Tamils (mainly Hindu); 5.6% Plantation Tamils (Hindu); 7% Moors (Tamil-speaking, but of Muslim faith); Christians of both Tamil and Sinhalese origin; along with other groups, such as Burghers, Malays and Veddas (Goodhand, 2001: 23). Tamils account for the majority of the population in the northeast, which has been where most of the fighting has taken place.

The most obvious factor behind the conflict in Sri Lanka is the failure of successive governments to settle the grievances of the minority Tamil population in a way that is also acceptable to the majority Sinhalese population. Following the country's independence in 1948, successive governments established their political power-base among the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority and introduced discriminatory legislation against the Tamil minority, removing safeguards that had existed under the previous constitution. The most critical move was the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act of 1956, which overnight made Sinhala the country's only official language (Frilander, 2003; Lewer & William, 2002).

The LTTE has demanded recognition of the Tamil people's right to national self-determination, including the formation of its own governing institutions in the northeastern part of the country. The government, largely seen as representing Sri Lanka's Sinhalese-Buddhist majority, has responded by upholding the demand to constitute a nation and an independent state. Only recently, as a result of the peace talks, have the parties modified their positions somewhat, and the LTTE has now relinquished its demand for a separate state.

Throughout the Sri Lankan civil war, the intensity of the conflict has fluctuated and the battlegrounds have shifted. A short while after the onset of the war in 1983, India intervened to curb the activities of the LTTE. In 1987, government forces pushed the LTTE back into Jaffna city and struck a deal with India under which an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) would disarm the Tamil guerrillas and maintain security in the

northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka (Rotberg, 1999). However, the LTTE resisted these developments militarily, particularly in the north. In addition, a number of Sinhalese parties, as well as sections within the community of Buddhist monks, voiced their opposition to the Indian presence in Sri Lanka (Gooneratne, 2000). In 1990, the LTTE agreed to a ceasefire in order to speed up the withdrawal of the Indian forces.

Talks were held between the United National Party (UNP) and the LTTE towards the end of the IPKF presence. The Indian peacekeepers withdrew in March, and war broke out again in June. By the end of 1990, the LTTE controlled Jaffna and much of the north, while the east was largely back under government control. Highway A9 between Jaffna and Kandy was closed for all civilian traffic.

Promising an end to the civil war, the People's Alliance (PA), under the leadership of Chandrika Kumaratunga, won the parliamentary elections in August 1994. The PA engaged in direct talks with the LTTE, this time without any external mediator (Lewer & William, 2002). However, after a round of failed talks, the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) invaded the Jaffna peninsula in 1995. This resulted in a major exodus of people from the peninsula, and by December 1995 the army had taken control of Jaffna city. The LTTE then counter-attacked, and by 1998 frontlines between the army and the LTTE were cemented: the LTTE controlled the Vanni region, but not the Jaffna peninsula, while the army was unable to capture the stretch of Highway A9 running through the Vanni region down to Anuradhapura.

During the war, both Sri Lankan government forces and the LTTE have made extensive use of anti-personnel mines (ICBL, 2002; UNMAS, 2001b). Government forces have typically used anti-personnel mines to creative defensive barriers around army frontline positions, and according to UNMAS (2001b) these mines have been deployed in dense but fairly predictable patterns. The government minefields are usually marked and mapped, though the marking is often insufficient. For its part, the LTTE has used landmines mainly to defend smaller potential targets, such as defensive positions and strongholds. Marking and recording of LTTE minefields, however, is less systematic.

The civil war in Sri Lanka has had severe consequences, particularly for people in the northeast. It is estimated that more than 65,000 lives have been lost as a result of the conflict. In addition, more than 1 million people have been displaced at various times, and approximately 800,000 are still internally displaced. The remnants from two decades of armed conflict – landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices – continue to have a serious impact on Sri Lankan society. Consequences include deaths and injuries, restrictions on everyday life for civilians, and the impediment of relief and development projects envisaged by national and local authorities. The impacts have been particularly grave in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara (UNMAS, 2003). However, in the south, where people have been barely affected by landmines, there is relatively little concern about the problem.

It is estimated that 1,000,000–1,500,000 anti-personnel mines contaminate the districts of the north and east. The IMSMA database for Sri Lanka shows that since 1995 as many as 1,042 people have been killed or injured by mines and unexploded ordnance. The majority of casualties in the case of anti-personnel mines are men aged between 18 and 35, while children make up a large proportion of those injured by unexploded ordnance. In addition to civilian victims, the SLA has reported over 2,500 landmine casualties. War and its remnants have also had significant material and

economic costs. Anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices block access to cultivable land, water, roads, hospitals and other infrastructure, and have contributed to the isolation of the northeastern part of the country. In addition, buildings and infrastructure have been destroyed as a consequence of the war.

Fighting between the LTTE and the SLA came to a standstill with the Norwegian-brokered ceasefire agreement of February 2002, and the current peace process in Sri Lanka may be roughly divided into three main phases:

- prior to February 2002, culminating with the coming into effect of the ceasefire agreement between the LTTE and the government on 23 February 2002;

- between February 2002 and April 2003, including six rounds of direct negotiations between the UNP government and the LTTE; and

- since 21 April 2003, when the LTTE pulled out of the peace talks. This period includes elections held on 2 April 2004, in which the UNP government was replaced by the United People's Freedom Alliance, a coalition consisting of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party and the Janatha Vimukhti Party. The LTTE suffered from internal problems during spring and summer 2004, including the breakaway of Colonel Karuna and his supporters.

In such a situation as this, where the conflicting parties have reached a ceasefire agreement but no final peace agreement, the primary focus of peacebuilding efforts should be on creating a basis for peaceful conflict resolution through confidence-building and the fostering of popular support for the ongoing peace process. Indeed, some activities that normally take place in post-conflict situations – such as rehabilitation and reconstruction – have already been initiated in Sri Lanka. This has been possible because of the ceasefire, but is also intended to sustain momentum for peace.

The ceasefire agreement of 22 February 2002 stated that the Kandy–Jaffna road (Highway A9) would be opened to non-military traffic of goods and passengers, and that specific modalities would be worked out by the parties, with the assistance of the Norwegian government, within at the most 30 days after the entry into force of the ceasefire agreement.[2] In the context of peacebuilding, important questions related to the demining and reopening of Highway A9 are:

- how did this issue influence the negotiating process?

- what kind of cooperative structures were established between the parties for the purpose of organizing the demining work?

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[2] See 'Agreement on a Ceasefire Between the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam'; available at http://www. peaceinsrilanka.com/insidepages/agreement/agreement.asp (accessed 21 November 2004).

- to what extent have these structures contributed to confidence-building between the two sides?

Another important question is to what degree the effects of the demining and reopening of Highway A9 have influenced people's attitudes to the peace process.

Demining the A9

When fighting re-erupted in 1990, Highway A9 – the main land access to the Jaffna peninsula – was closed for all civilian traffic. In December 1995, the LTTE seized control of the road from government troops. On 13 May 1997, the SLA launched Operation *Jaya Sikuri* ('Victory Assured' in Sinhala) to recapture the road. However, the SLA drive was called off some 19 months later when, in November 1999, the LTTE recaptured a vast swathe of land in a single week, driving the SLA back to Omanthai, 17 kilometres north of Vavuniya town on the A9. At the time of writing, in November 2004, the northern frontline is at Muhammalai, north of the Elephant Pass.

In accordance with the ceasefire agreement, Highway A9 was demined and reopened in 2002. Two different stretches of the highway were reopened, at different times, between February and April of that year.

- The southern entry point into the LTTE-controlled Vanni area was reopened on 15 February 2002, with mine clearance carried out on both sides of the Omanthai frontline. The LTTE performed mine clearance north of Omanthai, and the SLA's Engineers Regiment carried out the demining south of Omanthai on the stretch of road leading down to Vavuniya town. Demining started on 6 February, in the presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which provided monitoring assistance to the SLA and the LTTE in the demining operation. An ICRC representative stated that the ICRC's role was simply to facilitate coordination and to ensure exchange of information between the SLA and the LTTE in the demining process. Responsibility for the demining operation belonged to the SLA and the LTTE themselves.

- The road was reopened on the northern frontline at Muhammalai, north of the Elephant Pass, on 8 April. This time, the LTTE was responsible for demining in the area under its control, south of Muhammalai down to Kilinochchi, and the SLA was responsible for the area north of Muhammalai, securing the road to Jaffna. Both the LTTE and the SLA began removing mines along their frontlines at Muhammalai on 1 April. Although there had been doubts as to whether the operation could be completed within a week, this goal was achieved.

Although the road was cleared of mines and reopened in February–April 2002, landmines still contaminated the wider roadside verges, posing an obstacle to the carrying out of further improvements. In December 2002, a decision was made to

make improvements to the road, and the Road Development Authorities raised this matter with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). On 23 December, the Road Development Authorities and eight private contractors signed agreements to reconstruct various sections of the highway. The estimated total cost for the reconstruction was 613 million rupees (USD 5.9 million), the bulk of which was covered by a grant from the ADB (Manatunga, 2003).

In order to be able to operate, the various road contractors would need to have the wider roadside verges cleared of mines. However, the road project did not include funding for mine clearance, which placed demining organizations in a difficult position. Despite this, various NGOs cleared different parts of the road: NPA/HDU[3] and the HALO Trust cleared stretches of road within the Vanni region, whereas the SLA and Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD) cleared parts of the road in the government-controlled areas. Given the lack of funding, demining of the road was carried out at the expense of other tasks, such as marking. Highway A9 thus sends a lesson to international donors that assessing the need for mine action should be an integral part of project planning.

The road construction work began on 23 February 2003 and was completed by 21 December 2003. During this period, 100 kilometres of the road were rehabilitated. The effect was immediate, with the driving time from Vavuniya to Kilinochchi reduced from 5 hours to 1 hour and 45 minutes. The full impact of the work, however, went far beyond reduced travel times and included contributing to confidence-building between the two sides in the conflict and fostering popular support for the peace process.

National-Level Impacts

The prospect of reopening Highway A9 served as an incentive to both sides during the separate talks between the facilitator and each of the conflicting parties that took place in the period up to February 2002. From the government's perspective, a reopening of the highway meant that transport of goods and civilians to the government-controlled Jaffna peninsula would no longer have to go by sea or air, which was either time-consuming or costly. For the LTTE, it meant that foodstuff, relief and reconstruction equipment could be brought more easily to Vanni and the surrounding areas, and that civilians would have increased mobility. However, both sides knew that if Highway A9 was to be reopened, it would first have to be cleared of landmines.

On the government side, the practicalities regarding the demining of the road were solved by the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees ('Triple R'). At first, the Ministry of Defence argued that the SLA should be in charge of the demining process, but it soon had to accept that the army would not be given access to the LTTE areas, and that international NGOs would therefore be needed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was concerned that demining work on Highway A9 would

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[3] Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) works with the Humanitarian Demining Unit (HDU), the mine action capacity of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO).

lead to increased pressure on the government to sign the Landmine Convention, and emphasized that there should also 'be a look to the other side', with pressure to be exerted on the LTTE, as a non-state actor, to declare its adherence to a total ban on anti-personal landmines and to commit itself to cooperation in mine action.

Although neither side has signed the Landmine Convention (or its equivalent for non-state actors, the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment), a number of positive steps have been made. Sri Lanka has conveyed to the UN General Assembly its support for the humanitarian objectives of the Landmine Convention, and in November 2002 it voted in favour of UN General Assembly Resolution 57/74, calling for universalization of the Convention. The government of Sri Lanka also participated as an observer at both the Fourth and Fifth Meetings of State Parties in September 2002 and September 2003, respectively, and Sri Lankan representatives have attended the meetings of the Inter-Sessional Standing Committee. At the May 2003 meeting, Sri Lanka stated that 'the position of Sri Lanka is under review and current developments in the peace process will be taken into account'. In 2004, Sri Lanka has gone a step further, declaring that it is not a matter of *whether* it will sign the Landmine Convention, but of *when*.[4]

In parallel, while the LTTE has not signed the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment, it has indicated positive interest in a process that may lead to the endorsement of that document. During the peace talks in Oslo, a people's petition to stop the use of anti-personnel mines containing over one million signatures was handed over to representatives of the government and the LTTE. In response, Karikalan, the leader of the eastern province at the time, declared that full support would be given to the people's letter (ICBL, 2002). The LTTE has also met several times with Geneva Call representatives travelling to Vanni, and Geneva Call has met with Tamil organizations in Europe. It would be a boost to mine action in Sri Lanka if the parties were to endorse a ban on landmines, since many donors have taken a principled stance against funding landmine clearance in cases where the relevant authorities have not acceded to the Landmine Convention. An expansion of mine action programmes is also likely to have positive effects on the peace process.

While the prospect of a reopened Highway A9 was important for the negotiation process itself, the demining and reopening of the road had consequences for the peace process that went beyond increased mobility for people and goods and increased focus on endorsing a ban on landmines. Reopening the A9 broke the physical isolation of the northeast. Furthermore, according to representatives of the LTTE's political leadership, it improved access to the international community: 'People can come here and understand reality.' As one representative of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) put it: 'A9 goes beyond Colombo – it links with the international community.' The work of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), for example, was

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[4] 'Humanitarian Organizations Call on the Government and LTTE To Sign Treaties Banning Anti-Personnel Landmines', Media Release, Colombo, 14 July 2004. This media release was distributed at a press conference organized by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies.

substantially eased by the reopening of the A9.[5] With district offices in Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara, and an office for liaison with the LTTE in Kilinochchi, mobility is important in the everyday activities of the SLMM.

At the national level – in the context of the relationship between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE – the prospect of a demined and reopened road had a confidence-building effect, as it accelerated the positive dynamics of the negotiating process. The fact that the reopening of the A9 would bring about fairly immediate benefits for each side in the conflict made it serve as a 'carrot' in the early negotiating process. Furthermore, discussions related to the demining operation increased the focus on the question of an international ban and served as a basis for ongoing dialogue between the two sides.

Impacts at the Intermediate Level

The ceasefire agreement and the demining of Highway A9 in early 2002 opened up new possibilities for mine action. UNDP had already begun working in Sri Lanka, and several international mine action NGOs also initiated work in the country during this period. This created the need for a coordination mechanism, and in August 2002 the government of Sri Lanka established a National Steering Committee for Mine Action (NSCMA). The NSCMA leads the National Mine Action Programme, and its tasks consist in accrediting, licensing, coordinating and monitoring activities related to mine action (Triple R, 2003). The NSCMA meets every six weeks and includes representatives from various government ministries and their equivalents on the LTTE side, as well as major donors, UN organizations and NGOs engaged in mine action or other types of assistance. The NSCMA has established a subcommittee on demining, under the chair of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees (Triple R), to coordinate resettlement with mine clearance operations. The UNDP Chief Technical Adviser provides technical support both to resettlement activities and to mine clearance operations.

Since its creation, the NSCMA has branched out and established District Mine Action Steering Committees and District Mine Action Offices (DMAOs) in both Vavuniya (covering Mannar, Batticaloa and Trincomalee) and Jaffna. The local mine action offices are headed and hosted by government agents. In Vavuniya and Jaffna, the DMAO is supported by a UNDP Technical Adviser, and its main task is to set priorities in consultation with all relevant authorities and in response to local needs. In the LTTE-controlled areas, the TRO currently coordinates humanitarian mine action activities, with technical advice available from the Jaffna DMAO. There are plans to set up a new DMAO in Kilinochchi, and a Memorandum of Understanding between UNDP and the TRO is in the pipeline. UNDP is also working on setting up a small-scale liaison office for mine action with the government agent in Trincomalee, in order

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[5] The SLMM is a small monitoring mission, with personnel drawn from all of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden).

to improve coordination of mine action in the east, and is planning to set up a focal point office in Batticaloa.

When Highway A9 was demined in preparation for road reconstruction work in 2003, it was the NSCMA that coordinated the process, ensuring an efficient division of labour between the various international NGOs and their national partner organizations. As a matter of routine, international NGOs inform the NSCMA and the District Mine Action Steering Committees about their work, as do the HDU and the SLA. Such information-sharing is important both to secure efficiency at all levels and to support the atmosphere of trust and confidence that exists in the District Mine Action Steering Committees.

According to UNDP staff, as well as representatives from the SLA and the TRO, the District Mine Action Steering Committees have had an important positive function. Committee meetings have brought together the various members to enable them to work on important tasks for the benefit of local populations, and the atmosphere and dynamics between the TRO and the SLA in these meetings have generally been good. The committee meetings have therefore contributed to strengthening confidence between the two sides in the conflict.

UNDP has played an important role in assisting the establishment of the NSCMA, and in other work related to coordination between the SLA and the LTTE. One important task has been to gather maps and information about mined areas from the SLA, and these have been fed into an IMSMA database that can be accessed by the Sri Lankan government, the TRO and international NGOs. The SLA has been extremely cooperative and has willingly handed over information to UNDP. Furthermore, UNDP has transferred explosives for use in demining from the SLA to the HDU and to the international NGOs working in the area.

During the initial demining of Highway A9 in March–April 2002, the ICRC served as a communication link between the deminers from the SLA and those from the LTTE. With a continuous presence along the A9 in the buffer zone that divides LTTE-controlled areas from government-controlled areas both at the Omanthai checkpoint and at the Muhammalai checkpoint, the ICRC continues to play an important role. ICRC representatives liaise between the two sides and facilitate travel between the two areas, which functions as a confidence-building measure between the two sides.

The division of labour among the various mine action organizations in Sri Lanka reflects the pattern of the armed conflict. Most of the organizations have chosen to work primarily either in LTTE-controlled areas or in government-controlled areas. Thus, NPA/HDU works exclusively in LTTE-controlled areas, and Mines Advisory Group works mainly in LTTE-controlled areas. The HALO Trust works primarily in government-controlled areas, while the Sri Lankan Army – which has been trained by the US company Ronco Consulting – works exclusively in government-controlled areas. Two organizations – the Danish Demining Group (DDG) and the FSD – have made a principle of working on both sides, and both have experienced specific problems related to this. The LTTE, for example, permitted only HDU deminers to work in areas under its control, which created an extra bureaucratic layer between the

foreign NGO and the deminers. There have also been difficulties in crossing the lines with sensitive equipment (FSD, 2003). In spite of such difficulties, however, both the DDG and the FSD continue working with both sides in the conflict.

The structures that evolved as a consequence of the demining and reopening of Highway A9 have had an important confidence-building function at the intermediate level, with the ICRC present at the checkpoints in Omanthai and Muhammalai, conducting a form of liaison service between the two sides, and District Mine Action Steering Committees – in which the SLA and the TRO work together constructively on the practicalities of mine clearance – active in several areas. The District Mine Action Steering Committees, with their constructive atmosphere, serve as an example of how structures evolving from mine action can have wider peacebuilding impacts. It may be worth considering whether the committees – and the structure associated with them – could be either expanded or emulated in other assistance sectors.

The Local Level

For the local population, the most important consequences of the reopening of Highway A9 are that people and vehicles can now move freely along the road: through the checkpoint at Omanthai north of Vavuniya town, within the Vanni region, and through the checkpoint at Muhammalai in the north, accessing the Jaffna peninsula. With effect from 15 February 2002, civilians can cross the checkpoints seven days a week, between seven in the morning and half past five in the evening. There is no restriction on the number of persons, and all Sri Lankan citizens and foreign passport-holders are allowed to travel to the LTTE-controlled area (Kachcherie Vavuniya, 2004).

Agricultural products from the Vanni district and Jaffna can also be transported to the government-controlled area in the south without restriction. Likewise, foodstuff can be transported into the Vanni region without restrictions, and lorry convoys can move freely through the LTTE-controlled area to Jaffna. However, certain limitations have been imposed: some items are banned and others are restricted. The banned items include unlicensed arms/ammunition, unlicensed explosives, remote control devices, and binoculars and telescopes; restricted items include petrol, diesel, cement and iron rods.

The tremendous increase from 2002 to 2003 in the number of persons and vehicles passing through the Omanthai checkpoint illustrates the impact of the reopening of the highway. The total number of civilians passing the checkpoint increased almost threefold, from 1,100,394 in 2002 to 3,181,581 the following year. The total number of trucks passing the checkpoint increased from 40,039 in 2002 to 95,312 the following year (Kachcherie Vavuniya, 2004: 10).[6] Parallel figures for the first five months of 2004 indicate a continued increase in the number of crossings, albeit not on the same scale as that of the previous year.

Excerpts from an interview with seven passengers at the train station in Vavuniya further illustrate the difference that a reopened A9 has made in the daily life of many

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[6] Figures for 2002 are for 11 months only (from February onwards).

people. This group, all Tamils, was waiting to take the night train from Vavuniya to Colombo, and most of them had taken the A9 either from Jaffna or from the Vanni region. Six of them were heading for Colombo, and one for Ratnapura, near Kandy. For three of the travellers, the purpose of the journey was to go to hospital in Colombo. The remaining four had quite diverse reasons for their journeys, including visiting family members, conducting business or obtaining a visa for travel to France.

All of those interviewed said that the reopening of Highway A9 had great significance for them personally, as travelling had become much easier. One of them explained that a journey from Jaffna to Colombo would previously have cost around 5,000 rupees (USD 48), whereas it was now possible to make the same journey for only 200 rupees (USD 1.90), and that to travel from Kilinochchi to Vavuniya before the road was reopened involved having to change bus six times.

When asked why they thought the reopening had taken place in 2002, the reason they gave was either because it was necessary or because it would make life easier for people. One person replied that he did not know why the road had been reopened. However, after giving their answers to this question, one after another they each suddenly said that they were worried about the current situation and hoped the peace process would not break down. This sequence indicated that they all thought the reopening of the road was due to the peace process, for which they were openly supportive.

The reopening of the A9 also meant that a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) would want to return to areas they had originally inhabited. In August 2002, a group of IDPs staying in welfare centres in Vavuniya were asked where they wanted to go. The answer they gave was Omanthai, an area contaminated with mines. Authorization for the return of the IDPs was sought from the SLA, before the Swiss organization FSD surveyed the area and the Indian demining organization Saravatra cleared the mines. Following this, 120 internally displaced Tamil families moved back to Omanthai and began planting paddy fields in the areas that had been mined.

In one case, demining facilitated participation in democratic processes. During the elections in April 2004, a polling station was set up in a previously mined area at Omanthai. People travelled from the Vanni region through the checkpoint at Omanthai to participate in the elections – and more than 60,000 people came to give their votes here, walking through an area that previously had been mined. This was an important test of the quality of the work carried out, both for the demining organizations and for UNDP and the ICRC, who all followed the voters' movements closely. However, all went well, and no accidents occurred. The people from Vanni were able to participate in the elections in an area in which they felt safe and comfortable, and which at the same time was acceptable to the government. This was quite a triumph for the deminers – and for the peace process itself.

However, the reopening of the A9 has also involved a number of negative effects. With the ceasefire agreement and the reopening of the highway in 2002, refugees began to return to the northeast. Many of them went to Jaffna, an area badly contaminated with landmines. Most were informed about the danger of mines by UNICEF and others, but still wanted to return. Some of the returning refugees hired

private contractors to carry out demining, which resulted in a sharp increase in mine-related accidents in 2002. Since then, the SLA, HALO Trust and the DDG have carried out mine clearance work in Jaffna, and the number of accidents dropped significantly in 2003.

Despite demining in their home areas, many IDPs are prevented from returning to their homes by a lack of housing, income and healthcare facilities. A post-clearance assessment report by NPA draws attention to this problem:

> It is not expected that all IDPs will return, but when 96.3% of homes cannot immediately be inhabited, it is understandable that clearance alone has often not been enough for all potential IDPs to return. The implications of these additional factors mean that the socio-economic impacts of clearance may not be fully realized until all other factors are addressed. (NPA, 2003: 5)

The integration of mine action with measures in other sectors – increasingly referred to as the challenge of mainstreaming mine action in development – would solidify the impact of mine action in Sri Lanka and represents a major coordination challenge.[7]

A related problem – one that can only be addressed through a maturing peace process – is that many of the refugees that want to return to their homes in government-controlled areas are prevented from doing so because their homes are located within one of the government's High Security Zones (HSZ). This is an issue that has been placed on the negotiation agenda, but still awaits a solution. The problem illustrates that there is a fine balance between the positive effects of the humanitarian mine action work undertaken and further progress in the negotiations between the government and the LTTE.

At the local level, the positive effects of the demining and reopening of Highway A9 can best be seen in the form of increased mobility and less expensive and time-consuming travel for the people of Jaffna and Vanni. Large groups of IDPs in the northeast could return home after the highway was reopened, but were exposed to a mine risk with which they were previously unfamiliar. Overall, however, the reopening of the A9 seems to have generated significant support for the peace process, first and foremost among population groups in the north and east, who were directly affected by the development.

Conclusions

During the early negotiations in 2002, the political decision by the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government to make the reopening of Highway A9 part of the ceasefire agreement served as a catalyst for a range of events and processes that reflected positively on the peace process in general, and acted in support of efforts to broker peace in particular. The reopening of the road depended on demining, which led to the formation of national, regional and district structures for mine action cooperation. In

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[7] See, for example, Harpviken & Isaksen (2004).

addition, with the opening of the road, the ICRC assumed an important role in the buffer zone. The government also understood that large numbers of people would begin to travel to and from the northeast with the reopening of the road, so it abandoned its requirement for a special permit from the Defence Ministry for such travel. Similarly, restrictions on a large range of items for transport to the Vanni region were lifted, and foodstuffs, relief and reconstruction material now pass mostly unchecked. Ambulances pass the buffer zone unhindered night and day.

The effects of the demining and reopening of Highway A9 have been sustained even through the period during which the peace talks have been stalled. Observations and conversations with people in Jaffna, Vanni and Vavuniya have indicated that the great majority recognize the benefits of the peace process and are worried that war will break out again. In the words of one interviewee: 'When refugees can return to their home after it has been demined, they realize its value, and none would want to go back to war again!'

There is a close relationship between progress in the negotiations, on the one hand, and scaling up the peacebuilding effects of mine action work, on the other. The peace talks opened up possibilities for intensive demining, which in turn served to bolster the peace process. Now, however, mine action depends on further progress in the negotiations if it is to realize its full potential. This is highlighted by the fact that many refugees are still waiting to return to their homes in the High Security Zones, an issue that still awaits a negotiated agreement by the parties. Some of the positive effects of the road opening were also reduced because the LTTE taxes goods that pass through the Vanni region. With a final peace agreement, and possibly some kind of agreement on an interim governing authority in the northeast, other sources of financing may become available to the LTTE. Thus, progress on a number of issues of relevance to mine action still depends on progress in the negotiations.

The effects of the ceasefire agreement have moved from the national level down to the intermediate level, where confidence-building between the two sides has taken place, down to the local level, where people have experienced the concrete effects of the reopening of the road, and then back to the national level, through local participation in the 2004 parliamentary elections in an area cleared of mines. A possible future scenario would be that the structures of cooperation that emerged through demining could contribute to easing negotiations on an interim self-governing authority in the northeast, particularly with regard to the administration of Jaffna. Established structures of cooperation could function as – or perhaps be transformed into – a mechanism that could assume a role in the administration of particular (controversial) sectors or areas in the northeast.

Chapter 4

TRANSFORMING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS: REINTEGRATION OF COMBATANTS THROUGH MINE ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN

ARNE STRAND[1]

T HE MINE ACTION FOR PEACE (MAFP) project is part of a larger initiative dealing with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The project, rooted in the experiences of earlier Afghan community-based mine action initiatives, focuses on local reintegration of soldiers. Coordinated with the existing mine action structure, MAFP is part of efforts to scale up Afghanistan's capacity to deal with landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). However, equally important are the project's direct peacebuilding objectives, which involve demobilization as a way of transforming relationships between former combatants and their commanders, and employment in mine action as a means of facilitating local reintegration.

 The following chapter is based on a short field study, conducted in the midst of the pilot phase of the project, which included field visits to four of the project sites. The ambition is not to assess the eventual success of the project, but rather to explore its conceptual foundations and sum up some early experiences. Since the MAFP project is interesting both from a mine action and from a DDR perspective, a fuller assessment of the process and its impact will be merited at a later stage.

 In the first section, we take a brief look at Afghanistan's recent conflict history. The MAFP project, including its relationship to mine action and the larger DDR initiative, is then introduced in more detail, before we turn to the contextual challenges the
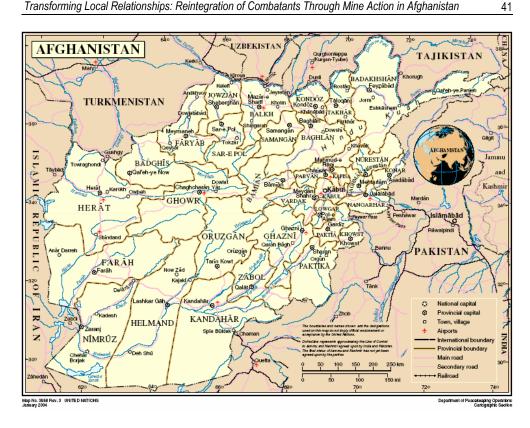
project faces. A subsequent section deals with recruitment patterns to MAFP, in large part based on case-study interviews. In a further section, we examine the MAFP objective of transforming the relationships of former combatants with their commanders, communities of origin and other combatants, and report preliminary findings. We then go on to discuss how MAFP could be further strengthened and round off by offering some general conclusions on what the case reveals about the relationship between mine action and the DDR component of peacebuilding.

From War Towards Peace

The war in Afghanistan began with a coup d'état by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in April 1978. After December 1979, when the Soviet Union sent in armed forces in support of the new power-holders, the conflict escalated dramatically. Over time, the resistance – commonly referred to as the *mujahedin,* and to a large degree operating out of Pakistan and Iran – intensified. Throughout the early 1980s, the mujahedin built up its military capacities, with considerable international support. A sizeable part of Afghanistan's problem with landmines and UXO stems from the period between 1979 and the collapse of the so-called communist regime in 1992 (Soviet forces had been withdrawn three years earlier).

   In 1992, a coalition of resistance groups took power in Afghanistan, only to engage in new rounds of fighting. This renewed period of fighting hit Kabul particularly hard and involved major rights violations, group killings and a massive exodus of people. In late 1994, the Taliban emerged, initially garnering support through popular disillusionment with the mujahedin regime. Within two years, the movement had gained control over the greater part of the country, including Kabul. Soon, however, the Taliban's relationships with the international community soured, and its leadership became increasingly dependent on the Al-Qaeda network, which was then using Afghanistan as its base area. Terrorist attacks on Washington and New York on 11 September 2001, however, were followed by a major US-led intervention in Afghanistan, which quickly removed the Taliban from power.

   The war against the Taliban was to a large degree fought by Afghan groups, though with critical ground and air support provided by a US-led international force. The Bonn Agreement of December 2001, which was to lay the foundation for a post-Taliban transitional arrangement, was an unusual peace agreement, and the ensuing peace process has been described as 'conflictual' (Suhrke, Harpviken & Strand, 2004). Most importantly, the agreement was entered into only by the victors, was signed against the background of a continuing internationally led war in the country, and was largely mute on a range of controversial issues. Critically, the Bonn Agreement did not address major security concerns, including how to disarm and scale down existing armed groups, with the consequence that progress in the larger security domain soon lagged seriously behind developments in the political and socio-economic arenas (Suhrke, Harpviken & Strand, 2004; Thier, 2003).

As a result, efforts to move ahead with DDR have been slow to gain momentum. In part, this has been a consequence of the continued US-led war – Operation Enduring Freedom – which has been associated with support for and shielding of a range of armed Afghan groups. Furthermore, the new Afghan administration struggles with a capacity deficit and has suffered from internal differences. The administration has blamed international donors for being slow and for not committing sufficient resources. However, the international community's efforts to pursue DDR have been hampered by the fact the DDR programme is controversial for both the Ministry of Defence and the coalition government, which includes a number of military leaders for whom demobilization equals loss of power. With armed conflict involving both international troops and various Afghan groups ongoing, security remains a problem in large parts of the country.

Mine Action as DDR

The Afghan mine action programme dates back to 1988. The oldest humanitarian mine action programme in the world, it is also often considered to be the best (Harpviken, 2002). The programme is implemented by a large group of NGOs, with national agencies playing a key role. The UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA), currently under the UN Mine Action Services (UNMAS), coordinates

the programme. As a whole, the Afghan mine action programme has built up an extensive administrative structure, with Area Mine Action Centres throughout the country and a nationwide mine action implementation capacity. Despite the continuous war in Afghanistan, the mine action programme has had a significant impact over the last decade and a half, reducing risk and facilitating socio-economic development (Byrd & Gildestad, 2001).

While part of the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP),[2] which is a classic DDR initiative, the MAFP project is also a component of major efforts to scale up the capacity of the Afghan mine action programme. Soon after the fall of the Taliban, UNMACA launched plans to double the estimated 5,000-strong mine action workforce. The individual organizations implementing MAFP relate to UNMACA for surveys, selection of tasks and quality assurance. Implementation of the programmes is carried out by existing mine action NGOs. Given the long history of mine action in the country, Afghans are familiar with the time-consuming character of mine action, but they have also seen its impact and hold mine action and its staff in high regard.

The initial MAFP project document outlines the project's dual purpose. This states that the MAFP project is to help fulfil the overall aim of mine action activities in Afghanistan, which is to reduce the threat posed by mines and UXO and 'thereby support the process of peaceful rehabilitation and development' (UNMACA, 2004: 1). In addition, beyond an increase in overall outputs through the building of capacity for manual clearance and mine risk education, the project should implement a community-based approach in order to provide a viable reintegration opportunity for demobilized combatants. As a foundation for its DDR aim, MAFP draws inspiration from experiences with community-based demining in Afghanistan.

The concept of community-based demining was tested out in Afghanistan from 1997 onwards by the Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan (AREA).[3] For AREA, which had taken over a small project previously run by a small Austrian NGO, the basic idea was to incorporate demining as part of its rehabilitation and development activities, so that it would be able to respond to demining needs just as it would respond to any other needs that a given community felt were pressing. AREA emphasized close interaction with the village development *shura* (council) through the organization's community mobilizers, who served as the main liaison both generally and for mine action specifically. Demining teams were to be locally recruited. AREA, which was working within the UNMACA structure, was a great strength in terms of technical competence, although accommodating AREA's highly different working practices at the local level raised a number of potential problems.

The ANBP, and therefore MAFP too, had a problematic starting point, being implemented in a setting where the security domain has been lagging behind in the peace process. In a recent critique of standard DDR approaches, Stedman (2001: 746) points out that large-scale disarmament may not be a necessary condition for a

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[2] For further details, see UNDP/UNAMA, 2004.
[3] For further details, see Harpviken (1999).

sustained peace, whereas 'demobilization of soldiers and their reintegration into civilian life are the most important sub goals of peace implementation'. The establishment of the Afghan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (ADRC) may have helped to turn the focus of the DDR debate away from disarmament and towards reintegration, emphasizing the importance of providing viable livelihoods for former combatants to enable them to disengage and the relevance of a longer-term effort to ensure their reintegration into society.

A pilot phase for the MAFP project was introduced in early spring 2004 in the cities of Kunduz, Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul. One mine action NGO would be responsible for implementation at each site, where approximately 138 former combatants, demobilized through the DDR process, were to be trained. Based on the declared interest of each demobilized soldier, the idea was to identify all those from within a larger cluster of mine-affected villages so that the capacity could be deployed within a limited area over its entire lifetime. Out of each batch of demobilized combatants, three mine clearance teams, three permanent marking teams and a mine risk education team would be trained. The plan was to later expand the project to the cities of Kandahar, Jalalabad and Herat, where a total of 8,334 demobilized former combatants would be trained over a period of three years.

For each former combatant, enrolment within the MAFP project implied a package that consisted both mine action training (including mine risk education) and vocational and literacy training. During the training period, the trainees would benefit from medical coverage and insurance, and would be guaranteed employment within mine action for 13 months. Each demobilized combatant would also receive a reintegration grant when leaving mine action to further facilitate establishment in his local area. However, given the rather scattered village structure of most parts of Afghanistan, it proved difficult to establish suitable clusters of villages to match numbers of soldiers with the mine action needs of given areas. The practical solution to this was to expand the definition of a 'cluster', so that the demobilized combatants engaged in the MAFP project could come from a wider area than initially envisaged.

As in the original AREA project, the function of community mobilization was expected to be critical for MAFP, both for ensuring local support for the project and for facilitating reintegration for individual soldiers. UNMACA is of the opinion that mine action, which is generally regarded as an honourable job, would ensure community acceptance and thereby a dignified reintegration. In the words of the original project documents, MAFP engagement was expected to contribute 'to the rejuvenation of the community and ... enhance peace and stability' (UNMACA, 2004: 1).

More specifically, it was anticipated that community consultation would take place with community councils (often termed *shura* or *jirga*), so that community mobilizers, applying participatory methods, would be able assist such councils to identify community needs and to 'work out strategies to create economic opportunities for [the] demobilised soldier that help meet those needs' (UNMACA, 2004: 4). This follow-up over the duration of the mine action engagement represents an important

factor, as it makes it possible to tailor solutions to particular individuals and to respond to problems that become apparent during the entire process.

Challenges to Implementation

The implementation of MAFP took place within a difficult political and military context, with armed conflict continuing in many parts of the country and considerable uncertainty surrounding the viability of the peace process. For MAFP, as for any other project, a primary challenge is to build up a sensible understanding of the context in which the project is operating. This needs to be realistic, however, as the ability to affect conditions, particularly at the international and national levels, is likely to be limited.

   The MAFP leadership seemed well aware of the contextual constraints under which the project operated. At a workshop in Kabul in late April, for example, the MAFP project manager presented a list of what he saw as the major challenges facing the project: continuing factional disputes, weak central government with limited military and economic power, high expectations from external sponsors, reintegration opportunities blocked by social and economic factors, competition from opium production, and failure to recognize psychosocial problems.[4] This list represents MAFP's underlying conflict analysis. However, while summing up the central contextual constraints under which the project operates, it does not focus on factors that MAFP can address directly (with the possible exception of recognizing psychosocial factors).

   For MAFP, it was a conscious choice to focus on geographical areas least prone to conflict during the pilot phase of the project, while moving on to more troublesome areas in the planned expansion phase. While this may have seemed an odd priority if the aim was to maximize immediate peacebuilding impacts, it was probably wise to proceed step by step, rather than expose the project to undue risk at the pilot stage.

   As indicated above, the DDR mandate of the ANBP was itself rather controversial. A second set of contextual challenges stemmed from the fact that MAFP was part of the larger ANBP, which meant that MAFP management had little control over decisions that had major implications for the project. Examples include lack of influence over the selection of recruits and an ANBP decision to withhold financial compensation for demobilized combatants.

   The lack of influence in the selection process posed a particular problem for MAFP, which needed to identify sufficient numbers of people originating from relatively limited areas affected by mines. In Kunduz, the majority of the combatants came from the local region, while in both Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif many participants turned out to be from other parts of Afghanistan but had registered in these locations as their military unit or mujahedin group had been decommissioned there. As a result, a central ambition of the MAFP project, to facilitate local reintegration through

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[4] For further details, see Strand (2004).

engaging former combatants in mine action in their areas of origin, could only be partially fulfilled.

Central administrative tasks also fell under the responsibility of the ANBP. This became problematic when the ANBP decided to withhold the second instalment of the sum offered to combatants for handing in their weapons (at least US$100, depending on the individual's military grade). The explanation given by the ANBP was that it was worried former combatants might be put at risk by this, because some commanders – who in many instances could claim to own the guns – had demanded part of the payments. However, the decision to withhold the money was taken without prior discussion with either MAFP or former combatants, and even after the decision had been taken minimal information was provided. For people enrolled in the project, this seriously undermined confidence in the international community, which was supposed to be trying to sway their loyalties away from former commanders, and it posed a serious threat to both MAFP and the larger DDR process.

The ANBP also lacked relevant competence. As with many new organizations in post-Taliban Afghanistan, national staff members were generally young and inexperienced, with often only a basic command of English as their primary qualification. For their part, the international staff had limited knowledge of the Afghan context, and several of those interviewed in the field expressed little interest in building such knowledge. When facing problems, internationals leaders at regional ANBP offices suggested that coercive force was the only option, a reflection of their own military backgrounds. This begs the question of whether international military personnel are best suited for heading DDR processes in politically sensitive settings. Within ANBP, the concern is not unfamiliar, and it was discussed in a concept paper from July 2003: 'it seems that DDR in Afghanistan is being driven by military thinking (occupational army) rather than rational "situational" thinking' (ADRC, 2003b: 1).

A final set of potential challenges stems from within the mine action sector itself. While the sector has a strong organizational structure and solid technical competence, its organizational culture may not be conducive to tackling the social and psychological sensitivities associated with DDR. The community mobilization function, for example, is not a common feature within mine action. The only organization within the Afghan programme that had any experience of community-based mine action was AREA, and the other implementing partners had to develop this capacity within a limited span of time.

Summing up the contextual challenges discussed in this section, it is safe to say that in many ways MAFP had a difficult start. On the other hand, the project could build upon the existence of an established organizational structure and a project management that was capable of continuously monitoring the larger context within which it operated. In addition, the project could benefit from the fact that mine action already enjoyed a considerable degree of legitimacy within the wider Afghan population.

Recruitment

Few of the recruits for the larger ANBP initiative had a formal army background dating back to the PDPA regime. The mujahedin commanders who dominated the Ministry of Defence were reluctant to allow recruitment of former army officials, both to ensure that their own comrades were prioritized in the DDR process and to prevent former 'communist' fighters from being recruited to the new Afghan army. The effect was that anyone with formal military experience was effectively excluded, both from DDR assistance and from a future within his profession.

The 17 combatants interviewed for this case study ranged from 22 to 48 years of age (with an average age of 31). The majority had been part of the Afghan resistance (mujahedin), fighting for a variety of different parties and commanders. Only three had been enlisted in the old (pre-1992) Afghan army. Of the 17, 11 said that they had been engaged in fighting from the 1980s onwards, though not necessarily for the whole period. One had been forcibly recruited as a child, and at least one appeared to have had no previous military engagement but had joined the project simply to get a job. The majority of those who joined MAFP, however, were seasoned fighters, though many had combined their military role with other occupations and sources of income.

The responses of the interviewees about why they joined the ANBP can be divided into two main categories. On the one side were those who had been ordered to do so by their commanders (or by the Ministry of Defence), otherwise they would lose their position and income; on the other side were those who had volunteered because they regarded DDR and the MAFP project as an opportunity for education and employment – 'so I can be able to run my life in the future', as one interviewee put it. The majority added that they had had enough of war. For example, one stated: 'I was too tired of fighting. We fought for the wish of others, it is now time for us to live our own life'. For those joining MAFP, it seemed that there was a hope that mine action would lead to a secure job, perhaps lasting beyond the initial 13-month period. Despite the controversial nature of the peace process – and the DDR process – it is clear that the ANBP, and MAFP in particular, is seen by many as an attractive offer.

Transforming Relationships?

The ultimate objectives of the MAFP project can be summed up as transformation of relationships: weakening existing ties between combatants and their commanders, and rebuilding (or strengthening) the ties of former combatants to their communities of origin. An additional effect has been the emergence of ties between combatants who have fought on opposite sides but have now worked or trained side by side (this was not among the original objectives). Based on interviews with MAFP recruits and others, the following discussion is a first attempt to understand the potential pitfalls and opportunities related to this innovative attempt to base DDR on community-based mine action, with a focus on the transformation of relationships.

The Commander–Combatant Relation

For the ANBP to succeed, there was a need to disrupt, or transform, existing relationships between combatants and their commanders. The war against the Taliban and continued support under Operation Enduring Freedom for various militia forces not under the control of the Afghan army had aggravated the problem. Many of the commanders that had fought as part of the US-led operation received an official rank and had their forces enrolled in the records of the Afghan Military Force (AMF). Few of the commanders in question, or their men, had any formal military training (ADRC, 2004: 3). The lure of international support ensured the maintenance of many of those military units that joined the US-led coalition forces in defeating the Taliban, and contributed to an understanding among many commanders that they stood above domestic law and DDR plans.

What it means to be a commander varies a great deal, as summed up here by the ADRC (2004: 3):

> For a start, the term 'commander' – or *qomandan* – is generic and does not necessarily relate to a military rank. It is a term that can best be applied to any man who has used war and fighting to further his leadership ambitions and who through patronage, position and strength of personality, commands the loyalty of as few as four men armed with ubiquitous kalashnikov, to those who command the loyalty of entire military formations including tanks and heavy weapons.

Interestingly, this definition emphasizes the relationship between a commander and his subordinates, which is often based on longstanding loyalty rather than on a contractual relationship that can be revoked overnight. The ADRC paper goes on to state that

> while some of these *qomandan* exercised power in the worst possible way, many were clever opportunists who set out to benefit their supporters and to confound their enemies. There were of course those who simply aimed to serve the interests of the people under their power as best they could.

One approach to demobilization is to address each commander directly, seeking to disengage him from his military engagement by offering an alternative position in an embassy abroad or elsewhere in the government administration, or to support him in setting up a private business. While this involves considerable costs, not the least in terms of the composition of the country's administration, it is a model that has been used extensively.

It is interesting to note that the commanders interviewed were in general supportive of the MAFP project, which they had come to regard as a useful change of occupation for their former combatants. However, their positive attitude towards MAFP was largely overshadowed by their scepticism towards the entire disarmament and demobilization process as handled by the ANBP. During an interview in Kunduz at which ANBP officials and local council members were present, one commander, who

held the rank of general, denounced the ANBP project as biased. There was evidence that one factor contributing to this dissatisfaction was his own experience with ANBP officials, who often lacked the sensitivity required for intervening in delicate local politics.

An alternative approach to the commander problem is to target the relationship of the individual soldier to his former patron. The ANBP soon realized that demobilized combatants might need assistance to become fully disengaged from the influence of their previous military commanders, some of whom operated within and others still outside the newly established Afghan Military Force. The importance of transforming commander–combatant relationships is discussed in an early ADRC paper, which suggests that DDR

> will also (theoretically) improve security in the country not so much by removing weapons (taking 100,000 kalashnikov's out of the system won't make much of a difference – in fact it is more or less symbolic) but by breaking up armed power structures especially at the micro (valley) level. (ADRC, 2003b: 1)

Some of the demobilized combatants were still to a certain extent under the influence of their former commanders. Some respondents claimed they felt compelled to pay part of the US$100 they received monthly to their commanders, as they had received their guns from them. (In one case, it emerged that a combatant had been recruited and armed by a commander so that he could become a candidate for demobilization.) According to the ANBP, however, this problem was limited. In the first round of demobilization, the programme believed that only 44 out of 1,000 soldiers in Kunduz had been forced to pay money to a commander, although it was suspected that figures could be higher in Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul.

As a result of the DDR process – and the gradually strengthening but still vulnerable peace process – relationships between combatants and commanders were changing. When demobilized combatants associated with MAFP were asked whom they would consult if they had to make an important decision about their future, all except one (a former army officer who explained that his training enabled him to decide by himself) referred to their close family and friends. The demobilized combatants all said that they would not consult with their commanders, and one explained that 'I don't need his permit any more'.

One of the demobilized combatants had just returned from his home in northern Afghanistan, where a military conflict between two major commanders had flared up. A subcommander from his native village had approached him and other soldiers who were on weekend leave from MAFP, and had tried to pressure them into rejoining his force. When they refused, the former fighters were beaten up and the commander confiscated both their cash and their DDR identity cards. They then escaped under cover of night. When asked what he expected would happen on his next home visit, the former combatant replied, 'next time when I go home I will have a demining uniform and then the commander will not have power over me any more'.

All of the demobilized fighters interviewed were asked if they would consider rejoining the fighting. The vast majority answered in the negative, and the following statement was fairly representative: 'There is now nothing worth fighting for.' However, several would make an exception if they were forced to fight or if Afghanistan were invaded again, though one combatant also stated 'If I don't get a good job, of course I will go back to fight.' While not expressing it quite so explicitly as this last source, several of the more seasoned fighters indicated that they had secured quite substantial financial means during the fighting.

The Community–Combatant Relation

The reintegration of combatants into their communities was perceived as a major challenge during the MAFP design phase and served as the principal rationale for the community emphasis. The assumption was that former combatants might have committed major violations in their home communities, which would prevent acceptance and reintegration. ANBP documents from an early planning phase, however, reveal a less pessimistic view on reintegration. A concept paper from August 2003, for example, argues that 'most members of the AMF, police, or even members of factional militias will be relatively easy candidates for reintegration. They will be "ordinary" men caught up in larger events, many of whom have already returned to their homes or who rotate between their "home" and the garrison when required.' Furthermore, these former combatants were expected to 'enter the reintegration process without fear that they will become targets (or with as little fear as any member of the community)' (ADRC, 2003a: 1).

The same paper argues that a smaller number of former combatants might be vulnerable during the reintegration process, listing people who have been involved in robbery, extortion, abduction, forced marriages, murder, etc., whose protective surroundings may be removed when they give up their arms. The paper goes on to state that 'these men will only enter the DDR process if they are fools'. Here, the ANBP paper is in line with the initial thinking that informed the MAFP strategy, and it suggests that the remedy for such problem cases would be to 'mobilize traditional community/district/regional structures to implement the reconciliation process'.

The interviews conducted for this case study provide support for the assumption that, in general, reintegration is not a problem. None of those interviewed had really fought in their home areas. If they had, it was during the Soviet era, when they enjoyed strong communal support for their armed struggle and were seen as taking part in a jihad (holy war) against an invader, a just struggle with strong religious justifications. Later on in the war, combatants had primarily fought along shifting battle lines, but only rarely in what could be regarded as their own neighbourhoods.

However, although the danger of community rejection may have been overestimated, the community still plays an important role for viable reintegration. The implementing NGOs play a central role in preparing the ground for re-establishing community relations. Implementing agencies for MAFP lacked previous experience from

community-based work, with the exception of AREA, which came to serve as a resource pool on this aspect of the programme. The model adapted for community mobilization, however, was a blueprint of that used in Afghanistan for broad development schemes and included the formation of a *shura*, a community development council. The application of this model raises at least two major concerns:

- First, most villages are likely to already have a *shura*, often established at the initiative of external agencies. While fairly common practice, it is generally unwise to establish a parallel local council for the purpose of a specific project. The new National Solidarity Program (NSP), a government initiative with nationwide coverage, is based on democratically elected *shuras*.

- Second, if a *shura* is set up for the programme, this may give rise to an expectation that other forms of aid will follow, a promise on which MAFP is unable to deliver. This may then have a boomerang effect: when villagers have wider expectations but see that the gains are limited to mine action, they may lose interest in the initial initiative. It might be the case that MAFP would have benefited from using a different system for community information, combining larger community meetings with direct provision of information to the families of demobilized combatants. Such an approach could be combined with liaising with representatives of a *shura*, where one exists.

The MAFP programme could benefit greatly from a look beyond the narrow circle of mine action, learning from other agencies with more extensive experience of linking peacebuilding to community mobilization. Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), for example, is an Afghan NGO that has been engaged in this field since 1997. CPAU focuses on local-level peacebuilding, and it identifies as one of its main challenges the fairly common attitude that peace is about national and international forces, a view that tends to see local engagement as irrelevant. CPAU works with *shuras,* normally large ones consisting of some 25 to 30 members, including elders, local authorities, militia commanders and others. CPAU mobilizers start with a foundation workshop that takes place over several days and culminates in a local plan of action, and follow up with regular visits over a number of years. Individual *shuras* are linked in clusters within a larger area. Exchange visits, as well as meetings with representatives of the administration in Kabul, are other key components of the NGO's work. CPAU's experience is that it can be difficult to bring commanders on board but the gains are great when it can be achieved, and that creating community awareness is important for fostering strong relationships between communities and combatants (or commanders) (Strand, 2004: 7–8).

Interviews conducted with families of MAFP trainees, community members and councils indicated strong local support for the project. The ability to make regular visits home, either on a daily basis or at weekends, while part of the project was particularly welcome, since this allowed former combatants to contribute to family

production and to cultivate networks. This seemed to generate strong local support for the project, and for disarmament in general. Former combatants talked with other villagers when gathering at the mosque on Friday, reporting on the progress of the project and sharing their personal experiences, all of which appeared to generate a vision of a different, more secure future.

In several locations, the MAFP initiative triggered an expressed wish for more comprehensive local disarmament, a challenge to which the project (or the ANBP) was unable to respond. In Kunduz, people witnessed the start of an economic boom, which they feared could be jeopardized by renewed warfare. The ANBP stated that it was not set up to accommodate a general disarmament process, although its mandate might be expanded in such a direction at a later stage. Not to use such a momentum for disarmament may appear to represent a missed opportunity, but on the other hand the ANBP has limited capacities and a more general disarmament of civilians could make locals more vulnerable to commander exploitation or crime.

The Combatant–Combatant Relation

The most striking and perhaps also the most interesting aspect of the project for a discussion on peacebuilding was the unintended reconciliation effect among former combatants. This reconciliation process appeared to have been initiated by the demobilized combatants themselves as they realized that they needed to have full trust in each other if they were to work together as a demining team: if they were unable to settle old scores and come to terms with the past, their lives would be at risk. The initial ANBP and MAFP plans had not considered the potential reconciliation impact that can occur when people who have fought on opposite sides are engaged in joint training or working together. Yet, in the case of demining, former enemies would not only have to work and train side by side, but also to trust other each in risky situations.

In Kunduz, where the group had worked together for some time, it became obvious they its members had undergone a major transformation. Several of the combatants interviewed pointed out that they had gone through a process of reconciliation. Coming from very different backgrounds and having fought on opposite sides, they were now forced to work and study together, and thus to find a way to solve their differences as a group. As one of them stated, 'in the beginning we had a lot of problems on this course, now we sit and work together as friends and brothers'. A contributing factor to the success appeared to be the careful coaching of the NGO facilitator, who ensured that there was time and opportunities for the trainees to discuss related matters, while remaining able to respond quickly and consistently when tensions broke out in the open.

Enhancing reconciliation through focusing on jointly solving concrete problems has been tried before, also in Afghanistan. In Kabul, for example, following several rounds of fighting along ethnic lines in the early to mid-1990s, local communities that had been on opposite sides were brought together to agree on common rehabilitation projects that only got off the ground if the parties were capable of producing a joint

plan (Hakim, 1998). The clearance of landmines and other remnants of war is not just an extremely concrete and practical undertaking, it also carries a strong symbolic message that a conflict has come to an end and that it is now time to invest joint energies differently.

The Way Forward

Representing a unique experiment in linking DDR to community-based mine action, the MAFP project should be monitored closely in order to document both mistakes and lessons learned. Many of the threats to the project stem from the conflictual context in which it has been implemented, while others have to do with the institutional setup of which the project forms a part (that is, it is integrated into the UNMACA structure, but is part of the ANBP initiative).

For the ANBP, competence has been a major challenge. While the programme has included a group of advisers who have provided constructive and critical input throughout the process (as demonstrated in a number of concept papers), the organization has proved to be largely incapable of converting such input into practice. Part of the problem may be that most senior personnel within the ANBP have an international military background, which many critics see as one reason for the relative inflexibility of the organization and for the emphasis on the technical, as opposed to the larger social and political, aspects of the programme. An additional challenge is general resistance to change, both within the Ministry of Defence and by individual ministers.

A critical factor for MAFP is the ability to offer training that fits the skills and expectations of former combatants, as well as the requirements of the local labour market, both as a means to cut dependence on former commanders and as a way of strengthening reintegration in the local community. In the early phase of the project, the main offer for vocational training was tailoring and carpentry. Many former combatants – most of whom cited hopes that the training would lead to a secure job as a chief motivation for joining the programme – were not satisfied by such a narrow set of opportunities. A majority of the MAFP recruits interviewed felt that the training provided should be based on their existing skills and experiences, while some (perhaps less realistically) wanted an opportunity for training at more advanced levels – for example, to become an administrator, teacher, journalist or doctor. Many expressed concern that carpentry and tailoring were professions typified by tough competition and rapidly fluctuating incomes.

For MAFP, it is a major threat that the DDR process is primarily (as confirmed by the ANBP) about 'DD' – disarmament and demobilization – with less emphasis on 'R', the reintegration aspect. While evidence suggests that reconciliation between former combatants and their communities of origin is not generally a problem in Afghanistan, providing a basis for sustainable jobs is critical for reducing dependence on commanders and fostering community reintegration.

In its earlier stages, the DDR process also suffered from poor communication strategies at multiple levels. In terms of local communication, MAFP had a good starting point in its community-mobilization model, though this appears to be one area where competence needs to be strengthened. A particular challenge is to ensure that relevant information reaches both men and women. One recent report draws attention to the limited amount of information provided directly to Afghan women, who are then dependent on male family members for information, as they are often not permitted to interact with women outside their own families (FIFC, 2004). As an complement to direct communication with former combatants, commanders and community representatives, it is important to build general awareness of DDR initiatives through radio and TV broadcasts, again keeping in mind the need to reach both women and men.

Following on from the ANBP focus on disarmament and demobilization (as opposed to reintegration) is the question of how success is to be judged. The larger programme has insisted that project achievements be measured primarily in terms of costs incurred per demobilized combatant, which basically excludes issues that are critical to the sustainability of the MAFP project – such as its reintegration focus, MAFP's primary strength. When the ANBP suggested ending MAFP in April 2004, a key argument was that the project's costs were far higher than those of alternative projects offering agricultural packages and less expensive vocational training.

Conclusion

The MAFP concept – facilitating the reintegration of former combatants through their recruitment into community-based mine action programmes – is a solid basis for testing out a new concept in practice. As revealed in its earlier stages, the MAFP project also seems promising in terms of implementation, with its considerable success both in disrupting commander–combatant relationships and in supporting community reintegration. An additional effect, not originally contemplated, has been the reconciliation impact of new ties between former combatants who fought on opposite sides, which may offer a potential for emulation at higher levels, fostering group-to-group reconciliation. This also opens up the possibility of establishing a network of former combatants as 'agents of change' within village clusters, using their own experiences to promote reconciliation and peacebuilding. It is its ability to transform relationships and to foster reintegration and reconciliation that stands out as MAFP's primary quality.

The ability to graft the MAFP project onto the mine action programme, perhaps the country's most mature sector of assistance, has been an asset. Initially, there was some concern that the relatively technical focus of the mine action sector would become a major obstacle to implementing a DDR programme, which would require considerable social sensitivity and communication skills. In practice, though, this seem to have been a negligible problem: the combination of an established organizational structure with experienced personnel and the competences of senior staff brought in from the

outside appears to have been a good recipe. Additionally, existing experience of community mobilization by one of the implementing partners within UNMACA proved important, though arguably more could have been done to draw on competence outside the programme and to ensure MAFP mobilization is coordinated with both existing community structures and overlapping initiatives.

   Ultimately, of course, MAFP will also become part of the continued effort to rid Afghanistan of landmines and UXO. The longstanding history of Afghanistan's mine action programme, with its demonstrated results, provides firm ground on which MAFP can build. In combination with the widely held perception that landmines constitute an illegitimate weapon of war, this legacy is directly converted into wide-spread support for mine action in Afghanistan. Seemingly, popular support for demobilization and reintegration is equally strong, and their combination with mine action should provide MAFP or parallel initiatives with the best possible starting point.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

KRISTIAN BERG HARPVIKEN & REBECCA ROBERTS

T HE SUDAN, SRI LANKA, AND AFGHANISTAN case studies presented in this report have illustrated some of the ways in which mine action can help to prepare the ground for peace or support peacebuilding processes by promoting confidence-building, establishing governance structures, developing national capacity and laying the foundations for postwar reconstruction and development. This concluding section expands on the Key Principles presented at the front of this report, using findings from the three case studies and drawing on relevant literature and earlier AMAC field research. It examines the structures that enable mine action to support peacebuilding and highlights issues that need to be considered before initiating mine action in conflict-type situations. Each conflict situation is different and demands an individual approach, so each intervention must be tailored to the specific environment in which it will take place (Havermans, 2002). The issues discussed below are not a blueprint for mine action interventions, but are rather intended to provide a starting point for planning and managing mine action to support peacebuilding.

Interventions during and after conflict can both fuel tensions and alleviate them. Therefore, even if a mine action intervention is not explicitly intended to support peacebuilding, it must be designed and implemented to 'do no harm', to avoid exacerbating the existing situation (Anderson, 1999). Conversely, mine action programmes can be designed to 'do good' and to contribute actively to peacebuilding. This type of approach requires greater analytical capacity and political awareness (Lange & Quinn, 2003). Whether actors choose the more modest approach and emphasize conflict-sensitivity or adopt a proactive stance and seek to maximize peacebuilding impacts, mine action programmes should be coordinated with other interventions and subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation in order to enhance and maintain their effectiveness.

Although there are challenges, the scope and adaptability of mine action interventions offer unique possibilities for supporting peacebuilding. Mine action is required in most conflict and post-conflict settings. Therefore, it provides peacebuilding opportunities through concrete activities at an early stage of involvement. Through the range of activities it comprises, mine action gives access to

different sectors – for example, it gives access to health and education through victim assistance and mine risk education. Furthermore, mine action can bring conflict parties together at different stages of a conflict and encourage cross-conflict interaction from the grass-roots to the national level within civil, military and political arenas. Interventions that aim to tackle landmines and UXO are intuitively seen as useful by people living with conflict, as demonstrated in multiple AMAC studies (Harpviken & Skåra, 2003). The removal of these instruments of war signals a transition towards peace, based on a commitment by warring parties to start giving up their arms.

Entry Point

It is generally accepted that to facilitate conflict transformation, humanitarian interventions should begin as early as possible. Mine action provides a legitimate early entry point for positive interventions in conflict and post-conflict situations. The recognition of landmines and UXO as a humanitarian problem, both internationally and at national and local levels, provides a shared focus for conflict parties to engage with the international community and each other.

On some occasions, initiatives to address the landmine and UXO threat form integral parts of peace agreements, as in the cases of Angola (1994), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995), Cambodia (1991), El Salvador (1991), Ethiopia/Eritrea (2000), Kosovo (1999) and Mozambique (1992).[1] Landmine concerns can also be integrated in ceasefire agreements, as in Sri Lanka or in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. For both mine-affected states and non-state actors, mine action can be an attractive access point for the international community. For the conflict parties in Sri Lanka and Sudan, engaging in the fight against the mine threat provided a new arena in which conflict parties could meet and confidence could be built. Furthermore, in both countries, the conflict parties gained recognition from the international community for their adoption of humanitarian mine action initiatives.

Framework for Engagement

The 1997 Landmine Convention provides a framework for mine action and acknowledges that landmines and UXO are a central challenge for human rights, development and peacebuilding.[2] The Convention places a clear responsibility on affected states to carry out mine action within their territories and obliges states 'in a position to do so' to provide assistance. Initiatives such as the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment, which developed out of the Landmine Convention, enable non-state actors to endorse the landmine ban and to engage in mine action with state actors and

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[1] For further details, see United Nations (2003).

[2] An early and influential initiative that emphasized the peacebuilding potentials of mine action was that of the so-called Bad Honnef Guidelines (German Initiative to Ban Landmines, 1997; 1999).

the international community.[3] To move from being an active user of landmines towards a commitment to the Convention's objectives should be a process that involves most spheres of society, so it offers fertile ground for debate and reflection from within.

The institutions and tools that have been developed to support the Landmine Convention are widely recognized and have international legitimacy. Furthermore, the existence of an international framework for action facilitates the startup of new mine action engagements, and established practices provide a point of reference and facilitate the mobilization of necessary resources. Though solid frameworks can also on occasion mean a temptation to apply blueprint solutions with little concern for the specific environments of new contexts, they are first and foremost a resource. Ultimately, as the case studies in this report have demonstrated, mine action is able to engage in conflict-type situations in a variety of ways, on different levels and with numerous actors.

Conflict Analysis

To ensure that interventions are conflict-sensitive, conflict analysis is a fundamental requirement (Lange & Quinn, 2003). A conflict analysis identifies the root causes and fault lines of a conflict, the main actors and their interests, and any obstacles to and opportunities for peace. Such an analysis provides a basis for designing and implementing programmes that can contribute constructively to a peace process. Ideally, the analysis should be undertaken by multiple actors from different levels, ranging from donors to host-country representatives, rather than by actors from a single specialized sector such as mine action. In the startup of a new intervention, the ability to conduct an informed conflict analysis is dependent on capacities for building on local resources and identifying resource persons or partners who are already familiar with the context.

As conflict situations are dynamic – characterized by shifting balances of power, economic flux and large population movements (Smith, 2003) – conflict analysis needs to be a continuous process, not just an isolated effort at the startup phase of an intervention. Continuous impact assessment focusing on landmines and UXO should be conducted in parallel with conflict analysis, so that the significance of the landmine threat, both for the conflict and for potential peacebuilding, is correctly understood at all times. The need for solid and continuous analysis requires competence, but there are an increasing number of resources available to inform interventions in conflict situations.[4] Given that the failure of misinformed interventions can lead to serious repercussions, it is essential that time and resources be invested in conflict analysis.

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[3] Further information on the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment is available at
http://www.genevacall.org/about/testi-mission/doc04oct01.htm (assessed 18 November 2004).

[4] See, for example, Gaigals (2001); Lange (2004).

Priority-Setting

Priorities informed by a peacebuilding agenda may be different from priorities aimed at saving lives or promoting reconstruction and development, which generally drive mine action. Politically sensitive situations may require mine action to adopt a more flexible approach to priority-setting. The Afghan initiative to link demobilization of soldiers to mine action was initially established in less problematic areas of the country. In Sri Lanka, minefields linked to so-called High Security Zones have a serious impact, particularly on returnees, yet have not been addressed by mine action during its earliest stages. In Sudan, although the Nuba Mountains region was perhaps not the most heavily mine-affected part of the country, a local ceasefire made access possible and offered an opportunity to jointly engage the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A. In all of these instances, priority areas were determined by access and by the existence of an opportunity to contribute to a peace process that might enable a more regular mode of priority-setting in the future.

   However, priorities informed by narrowly conceived peacebuilding objectives may raise other issues. In Sri Lanka, for example, the demining and reopening of Highway A9 enabled internally displaced persons to return home. Unfortunately, their original settlements had not been demined, which led to casualties among the returnees.[5] Existing mine action tools, such as the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) and the International Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) cannot offer guidance on how to maximize peacebuilding impacts (Harpviken et al., 2003). Consequently, the trade-off between peacebuilding and other impacts is dictated by individual judgments and bargaining between actors. Ultimately, the credibility of mine action is vested in its lifesaving and developmental impacts, which are fundamental to achieving a stable and sustainable peace. Therefore, priorities determined by peacebuilding objectives should be the result of informed decisionmaking and under constant review.

Flexibility and Robustness

As conflict situations are dynamic, mine action interventions need to be flexible enough to respond to the changing environment but robust enough to survive the changes and continue to pursue their objectives. This requires continuous monitoring of the situation, a good understanding of the conflict, the courage to seize opportunities, the ability to adapt quickly, and the capacity and authority among field staff to make judgements about when to reach a compromise or take a stand. For example, in Sudan, mine action interventions became involved in political disputes. They had to be flexible enough to work through those disputes and adapt their plans accordingly, but robust enough to maintain independence and pursue their original overall goals. Staff at headquarters of international organizations are not always in a

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[5] For a Colombian parallel, see Aqa et al. (2004).

position to make informed decisions quickly, and in conflict situations it may be necessary to devolve more decisionmaking powers to the field level.

   Coordination of mine action with peacebuilding objectives adds to the challenges usually faced by mine action interventions in conflict and post-conflict situations.[6] Peacebuilding packages include a variety of actors with diverse mandates and working styles, which can both enhance and weaken the impact of mine action. Mine action is a thoroughly regulated sector, with a comparatively clear division of labour, a quality that may limit adaptability to rapidly shifting circumstances. Adopting working practices such as those highlighted in the Key Principles helps to maintain interventions that are both flexible and robust in order to maximize the impact of mine action on peacebuilding.

Two-Way Communication

The legitimacy of mine action and its potential to contribute to peacebuilding depends on its ability to communicate with host populations. Mine action interventions, particularly demining operations, are demanding in terms of time and resources, and may progress more slowly than most people would expect (Millard, Harpviken & Kjellman, 2002). Misunderstandings can feed into existing tensions or create new ones. Community liaison helps to demystify mine action activities, keeps communities informed, draws attention to the differences between areas that are marked, fenced or cleared, and at the same time is the most effective approach to relevant data-collection, which informs programme design. Interventions are more effective when the host population is engaged in dialogue aimed at enhancing appropriate responses and fostering ownership of the outcome (Lange & Quinn, 2003).

   Ideally, two-way communication is complemented by other forms of information dissemination. In Afghanistan, for example, direct mine risk education was complemented by awareness messages integrated in a radio soap opera series (Andersson et al., 2003). However, in some contexts – in Sudan, for example, where the infrastructure is poor and access to media is limited – direct communication assumes great importance at all stages of the programme as the only effective means of keeping communities informed.

Political Awareness

Conflict-type situations present external actors with a confusing working environment. To progress with mine action, agencies have to engage with such a situation and develop relationships with individuals and organizations without fully understanding the political affiliations or personal and professional motivations of these actors. External actors are vulnerable because, to survive in a new environment, they are often

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[6] See, for example, Kjellman et al. (2003).

reliant on a small number of key individuals from the host community, who may have agendas that are not conducive to peace (Anderson, 1999). In addition, the resources mine action interventions require can attract the attention of individuals wanting to gain personal wealth or fund their own organizations. Although those involved in mine action in Sudan knew that they were operating in a challenging environment, many initially underestimated the level of politicization, and this created protracted tensions that were difficult to resolve. External actors cannot avoid these types of problems altogether, but they can limit their vulnerability by developing political awareness. This means considering the potential repercussions of every decision, avoiding close alliances with organizations or individuals that have potentially destructive agendas or lack popular support, and taking care not to enter into any agreements or contracts that may weaken an organization's ability to act in a politically independent manner.

Political Independence

Conflict and post-conflict situations are politically charged, particularly for mine action interventions, which invariably address a political issue, namely, tackling what have been or are still perceived as instruments of war. Consequently, it is essential that mine action agencies establish their independence and are able to interact with the political environment without being manipulated by it. Mine action agencies can assert their political independence by operating in a transparent and accountable manner with all sectors and at all levels of society.[7] Conflict parties must be treated equally, otherwise external agencies may appear to be making a political statement by crediting one particular side with more time, resources or recognition. In Sri Lanka, external agents have found it difficult to deal with the government and the LTTE on an equal basis, and most of the international mine action NGOs have chosen to work with only one of the parties. In Sudan, some external actors appear to have worked on the assumption that the Sudanese government has more legitimacy than the SPLM/A and have often failed to recognize the popular support for the latter.

   One of the challenges in this type of environment is the asymmetric relationship that characterizes many intrastate conflicts between governments and opposition groups. In order to work with both sides as equal partners, it may be necessary to create parity and to enable all actors to engage at the same level by providing additional support to opposition groups in the shape of expertise and resources. This may, for example, involve offering basic skills training, so that similar numbers of people from both conflict parties can be employed, or it may involve providing independent legal advice, so that both sides understand the implications of mine action agreements.

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[7] See Lange & Quinn (2003).

Brokering Role

Mine action is conducted using information gathered from political, military and community groups associated with the different conflict parties. Mine action initiatives in Sri Lanka and Sudan deliberately promoted cross-lines communication and confidence-building. In Sri Lanka, the ICRC acted as an intermediary during the first round of the demining of Highway A9. During the early stages of the ceasefire, there was little confidence between the parties, and face-to-face interaction took place only at the elite level. On the ground, the operation was implemented by each party separately. Similarly, deminers from each side were trained together in Sudan, but were later deployed in separate units in areas controlled by their respective sides. However, although it has not yet proved possible for demining teams to work side by side in Sudan, external brokers were instrumental in securing a parallel commitment to mine action.

Though it is not always immediately apparent, most mine action initiatives perform a brokering role between two or more conflict parties. Initially, conflict parties may not have confidence in each other, but they must have confidence in the broker. To facilitate confidence-building, the broker must be seen as neutral, legitimate and transparent, and must ensure that conflict parties believe that they are being treated equally and given equal opportunities to participate in the initiative. The brokering role of external mine action agents should also be noted by actors outside mine action. It is desirable that potential brokers be trained in such a role, though experience in Sri Lanka and Sudan demonstrates that many brokering roles evolved in response to situations encountered rather than being planned in advance. Some of the brokers were highly visible, such as the ICRC in Sri Lanka, though in Sudan many of the external actors working at the grass-roots level generally performed unseen brokering roles between individuals.

Active Participation

Active participation from broad segments of the population is a prerequisite for a meaningful peace process. To engage broadly, there is often a need for different types of interaction – for example, to reach both women and men, a particularly acute issue in, say, gender-segregated Afghanistan. The potential for mine action to be a constructive peacebuilding element can be maximized through large-scale participation. Initial interventions tend to concentrate on military and political leaders, without whose commitment it is difficult to break the conflict cycle. However, there is a danger that an early bias towards elites limits the possibility of popular participation later. The presence of potentially destructive actors, who tend to be overrepresented at leadership levels in conflict societies, presents a second danger that can be reduced by adopting a broader participatory approach.

Conflict contexts create 'participation dilemmas', because the engagement of individuals or groups that have played major roles in the war may be critical to

initiating a peace process and sustaining peace, yet may also be seen as rewarding earlier perpetrators and thus place interventions in disrepute (Smith, 2003; Harpviken, 2004). The Mine Action for Peace programme in Afghanistan, with its invitation to former combatants, illustrates that the participation dilemma should not serve as an excuse for failing to foster broad engagement, and that genuine local engagement is possible. In general, programmes that harness national capacity at all levels are more likely to be sustainable. In addition, active participation from the grass roots to the national level gives greater legitimacy to externally sponsored interventions and facilitates the development of culturally appropriate and conflict-sensitive programmes.

Good Governance

It is widely accepted that good governance structures and practices are necessary if a sustainable peace is to be achieved.[8] Conflict tends to destroy governance systems, and in a protracted conflict the culture and skills of governance can be lost altogether. Consequently, the establishment of sound governance practices at all levels and within all sectors of government is a major challenge. The mine action sector has its own framework for engagement, and structures developed to manage and implement mine action programmes can provide an example of an accountable, transparent and workable system. As mine action is usually among the first internationally supported structures to be established, new governance structures can be formed in parallel with the growth of the programme. The process of creating such structures helps to develop national capacity, strengthens feelings of ownership and gives the programme greater legitimacy. In Afghanistan, mine action practices related to transparency and the development of local capacity provide an example to other sectors, and staff trained through mine action have been in high demand from other sectors. When mine action succeeds in establishing good governance both within the mine action sector itself and through its interaction with local populations and national institutions, it is able to provide a valuable model and influence governance practices more broadly.

Long-Term Commitment

Any humanitarian or relief intervention demands long-term commitment (Havermans, 2002), as well as an element of risk-taking. The degree of commitment needed and the exposure to risk involved are multiplied when interventions take place in a conflict-type situation and are aimed at supporting peacebuilding processes. The risks associated with starting and maintaining a mine action programme in a conflict zone differ from those associated with a post-conflict environment: in the former, there is considerable danger that efforts will not yield any results, and even investments in

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[8] See, for example, Kaufmann, Krayy & Zoido-Lobatón (2000); UNDP (1998).

capacity-building can be lost; in post-conflict situations, external actors perceive the risks as smaller and are more willing to accept them to support a peace process. The case studies presented in this report demonstrate that mine action is a versatile and robust intervention in conflict-type situations. Experience in Afghanistan proves that mine action can work effectively during conflict, and the Sri Lankan and Sudanese cases indicate that mine action can play a role in preparing the ground for peace.

Expressions of support alone are not enough to sustain mine action and peacebuilding. Mine action programmes in conflict and post-conflict environments must be supported by long-term commitment that remains strong during periods of uncertainty and slow progress. Adequate funding must be made available to allow mine action to be undertaken effectively and to demonstrate the commitment of external actors to mine action programmes and their peacebuilding potential. If the international community wishes to support peace processes, a willingness to accept a degree of risk will undoubtedly be necessary.

Conclusion

Mine action can play an important role in peacebuilding. Emerging mine action initiatives may help foster confidence between conflictual parties, as it has in recent years in Sri Lanka and Sudan. Organizational structures that are set up for mine action, such as Sri Lanka's district committees, may eventually take on a larger role of sustaining interaction between former adversaries. Engagement in mine action may also support reconciliation at various levels, as illustrated by the relationships between former fighters in Afghanistan's Mine Action for Peace programme. Ultimately, mine action breeds general support for the peace process through its direct impact on people's daily lives – eliminating risks, reopening transport routes or freeing up scarce resources, such as land and water sources. Carefully designed, implemented and coordinated mine action interventions provide a flexible and robust tool for peacebuilding.

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADRC	Afghan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission
AMF	Afghan Military Force
ANBP	Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme
AREA	Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan
ATA	Afghan Transitional Authority
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
DCA	DanChurchAid
DDG	Danish Demining Group
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DMAO	District Mine Action Office
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
FIFC	Feinstein International Famine Centre (Tufts University)
FSD	Fondation Suisse de Déminage
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
HALO Trust	Hazardous Area Life-Support Organisation Trust
HDU	Humanitarian Demining Unit
HMA	humanitarian mine action
HSZ	High Security Zone
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IMSMA	Information System for Mine Action
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Forces
JASMAR	Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines
JCCP	Japanese Centre for Conflict Prevention
JMC	Joint Military Commission
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (Sinhalese Marxist party)
LMA	Landmine Action UK
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MAFP	Mine Action for Peace
MAG	Mines Advisory Group
MRE	mine risk education

NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NSCMA	National Steering Committee for Mine Action
OSIL	Operation Save Innocent Lives
PA	People's Alliance
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
QRDF	(US State Department) Quick Reaction Demining Force
RDA	Road Development Authorities
SCBL	Sudan Campaign to Ban Landmines
SIMAS	Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service
SLA	Sri Lankan Army
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLIRI	Sudan Landmine Information and Response Initiative
SLMM	Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SRRC	Sudan Rehabilitation and Relief Commission
TRO	Tamil Rehabilitation Organization
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMACA	UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNP	United National Party
UPFA	United People's Freedom Alliance
UXO	unexploded ordnance

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