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Aid Effectiveness in Insecure Areas

The issue of aid effectiveness in conflict-affected and insecure areas is receiving increased attention within the development community. The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*,¹ *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*² and the recent *Accra Agenda for Action*³ signal donor and recipient commitment to improve the effectiveness of aid. Conflict-affected countries often present aid-effectiveness challenges that require special attention—but what does this mean for countries affected by mines and explosive remnants of war? This article examines recent developments, highlighting some implications for mine action.

by Sharmala Naidoo [Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining]

In March 2005, over 100 donors and developing countries convened in Paris to reform the international aid system and make it more effective in addressing global poverty. The previous aid system, in place since at least the 1960s, had changed over time, mainly because of its problems and lack of effectiveness. The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*¹ was issued in an attempt to rectify the flaws and emphasize the need to “increase the impact of aid ... in reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity, and accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”¹

The Paris Declaration established five principles to shape aid delivery:

1. **Ownership:** Developing countries set their own development policies and strategies, while donors support capacity development and institution building.
2. **Alignment:** Donor assistance should be consistent with the national priorities outlined in developing countries’ development strategies.
3. **Harmonization:** Donors coordinate their aid activities.
4. **Managing for results:** Developing countries and donors focus more on the impact

of aid on people’s lives and create better ways to measure impact.

5. **Mutual accountability:** Developing countries and donors are more transparent in the use and impact of aid to their citizens and parliaments.

The *Paris Declaration* recognized that aid-effectiveness principles apply to conflict-affected and insecure areas but require adaptation, particularly where local ownership and capacity are weak. A recent report by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit⁴ reinforces this message. It concludes that the Afghan context poses unique challenges to aid-effectiveness principles, including continued insecurity, limited capacity, competing agendas, corruption, lack of coordination, and lack of clarity among military, humanitarian and development interventions.⁴

In 2007, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation Development Assistance Group released *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*² (hereinafter, the *Principles*). The *Principles* calls on donors to ensure conflict-sensitive aid, whole-of-government approaches⁵ and policy coherence⁶ in the political, security and development spheres. The *Principles* also encourages

donors to link aid to the wider agendas of peace-building, conflict prevention and state-building.

More recently, developing countries and donors met in Accra in 2008 to review progress on aid reform, and they issued the *Accra Agenda for Action*.⁷ The AAA emphasizes the following when engaging in conflict-affected areas:

- Conduct joint donor assessments (governance, capacity) and conflict analyses
- Promote flexible, rapid and long-term funding modalities on a pooled basis
- Link aid to broader peace- and state-building processes
- Strengthen the capacity of states to deliver core functions
- Work with local communities and civil-society organizations, particularly where government capacity is weak or non-existent as a result of conflict

Post-conflict Implications

In order to maximize contributions to relief, recovery and stabilization efforts, donor coordination and harmonization are vital in mine/ERW-affected countries like Afghanistan, Somaliland, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Where possible, support for mine action should be aligned with national government plans and procedures.

During and immediately after conflicts, mine action often plays an important role in facilitating peace-keeping and humanitarian access, as well as enabling the delivery of essential goods and services. It can also make important contributions to building peace, reducing armed violence and strengthening the capacity of state institutions. In such contexts, donors should ensure that support



A minefield in Bosnia prevents land use long after the conflict has ended.

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for mine action contributes to broader peace-building, armed-violence reduction and institution-building processes, where appropriate.

One example of how mine action played an important role in building confidence was between the government of Sudan and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army in 2002 when a locally-brokered ceasefire was negotiated, leading to a tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding among the government of Sudan, the SPLA and the United Nations. Following 30 years of conflict, this was the first time leaders from opposing sides in Sudan signed a nationwide agreement. The MoU allowed for emergency demining of key routes between North and South Sudan in the Nuba mountains. The United Nations Mine Action Service, in association with DanChurchAid and two Sudanese nongovernmental organizations—Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines and Operation Save Innocent Lives—jointly trained 15 people from both sides

as deminers. Community members from both sides were involved in assisting the deminers with clearing vegetation in exchange for food through a World Food Programme food-for-work scheme.

The value of humanitarian weapons abatement was apparent in 2008 when Mines Advisory Group started working with the Burundian police, *Police Nationale Burundaise*, in support of Burundi’s civilian disarmament campaign. A mixed MAG-PNB mobile team collected and destroyed small arms/light weapons previously handed over by the population or seized by the PNB. As part of Burundi’s implementation of the *Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa*,⁸ MAG conducted a survey of the PNB SA/LW sites in June 2009. This survey led to a comprehensive physical-security and stockpile management project in 2009 with MAG and the PNB which, parallel

to the marking of weapons, focuses on collecting and destroying surplus and obsolete SA/LW, as well as improving the physical security of police weapons stores. It also focuses on strengthening the capacity of the

construction and building trust between communities and the police.¹² In Somaliland, where state structures remain weak, strengthening the capacity of communities and civil-society organizations is critical.

aid effectiveness, donors can make valuable contributions toward peace-building, strengthening local government institutions, reducing violence, countering poverty and facilitating the coordination of humanitarian access in communities affected by mines/ERW.

Making aid effective in conflict-affected countries is clearly challenging. However, enhanced donor coordination, harmonization and support for broader peace-building, armed-violence reduction, and institution-building initiatives are all vital, and they can go a long way to improving safety and reducing poverty in communities affected by mines/ERW. ♦

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A MAG deminer working in Sudan.

PNB in weapons and ammunition accountability and safe storage.^{9,10,11} The project is ongoing with completion expected in April 2010.

A final example of the aid effectiveness is seen with Danish Demining Group's active involvement in efforts to reduce armed violence. In Somaliland, DDG is working with local communities and peace-building organizations to reduce the demand for SA/LW and enhance community safety. As previous attempts to forcibly disarm communities have failed, DDG is focusing on training local communities in conflict-management and conflict-resolution techniques, safe storage of SA/LW and ammunition, undertaking mine/ERW clearance and de-

Conclusion

Donors face increasing challenges in delivering aid effectively in countries affected by mines and ERW. Recently, several strategies including the *Paris Declaration*, the *Principles* and the AAA have encouraged donors to take a wider look at the unique issues encountered in delivering aid to conflict-affected and insecure areas. In order to maximize the benefits of relief, recovery and stabilization efforts, donors are encouraged to conduct joint assessments, promote flexible funding modalities, work in harmonization with local governments and communities, and look at the wider agendas of conflict prevention, state-building and peace-building in war-torn areas. In maximizing



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