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Eric Filippino
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

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Identifying Synergies Between Mine Action and Small Arms/Light Weapons

Over the last few years, there has been considerable discussion around linking small arms/light weapons with mine action, although, to date, there has been little concrete exchange between the sectors at an operational level. Accordingly, the U.S. Department of State commissioned the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining to look at areas of possible synergy, resulting in the study *Identifying Synergies Between Mine Action and Small Arms/Light Weapons*.

by Eric M. Filipino [Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining]

Based on available evidence, there are few examples of existing synergy between the small arms/light weapons and mine-action sectors. What does exist generally occurs as a result of the daily realities of mine and explosive-ordnance clearance and SA/LW mitigation in a post-conflict environment.

At the international level, many mine-action donors also contribute to SA/LW programs; however, the study could not find donors actively seeking to link mine action funding with SA/LW funding beyond a recognition that both issues are concerned with human security, and therefore may come from the same funding stream. The exception is the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, which has extended its original focus of providing financial support and technical assistance for the destruction of anti-personnel mines to include the destruction of SA/LW and stockpiled munitions.

Mine-risk and SA/LW Awareness

Three areas have significant potential synergy: mine-, explosive remnants of war- and SA/LW-risk awareness. Joint awareness projects can increase public understanding of legal statutes; improve confidence for weapons-collection initiatives; and raise awareness of the destabilizing effects of SA/LW on society. These projects can also build cooperation between the local population, civic authorities, security authorities and civil-society organizations on issues of SA/LW and security.

Several Ministries of Education—Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Vietnam, for example—that offer risk-education/risk-reduction programs as part of national curricula have already combined SA/LW awareness and mine-risk education. In addition, they readily include road-accident prevention and fire safety with programs under which MRE and SA/LW awareness have been delivered.



Journalists learn self-defense at a police shooting range, Manila, Philippines.
ALL PHOTOS © LUCIAN READ/SMALL ARMS SURVEY

Coordination and Management

Evidence from mine-action and SA/LW interventions around the world suggests there are real savings from coordinating program-management structures. SA/LW-mitigation practitioners have in some cases drawn explicitly from best practices in mine action over the past decade. In some cases, convergence has been opportunistic and *ad hoc*. In others, SA/LW practitioners have established coherent protocols following lessons learned in mine action.¹

Standards

Over the past 10 years or so, the mine-action community has developed a set of comprehensive standards governing virtually every aspect of its work. Known as the International



Newest product of the illicit weapons industry, Danao, Philippines.

Mine Action Standards, these documents form the normative framework of the industry. In a recent move, the United Nations has begun a process to develop international small-arms-control standards. The IMAS development process, as well as upwards of 25 percent of the individual standards themselves (for example, standards dealing with themes such as risk education, quality management, ammunition management and safety, etc.) are directly applicable to the emerging small-arms standards. It has even been suggested that the two processes merge into one over-arching mine and small-arms standard.

Technical Support

The area with the most potential for future synergy is the provision of technical expertise to manage the explosive threat through mine/ERW clearance, SA/LW-collection programs and ammunition-stockpile reduction, including destruction and demilitarization. Numerous mine-action actors—Mines Advisory Group, The HALO Trust and Danish Demining Group, to name a few—have already reconceived their mine-action role as part of a wider weapons-control process. This expansion has manifested itself in the form of weapons collection and destruction as well as community-security projects that explicitly address threats posed by both explosives contamination and SA/LW proliferation. To our knowledge, the mine-action projects have always been established first, allowing an expansion into SA/LW programming.

Victim Assistance

There is very little deliberate programming that addresses the needs of SA/LW survivors in joint efforts with the well-developed mine-unexploded ordnance disability-focused sector (although their needs are not ignored in general programming on disability). Despite this fact, one observer has claimed there is a potential relationship between mine-action and SA/LW victim assistance, both of which need to be integrated into the health-care system. Areas of synergy include medical personnel training, coordinated funding opportunities and reintegration of the victim to include employment and rehabilitation.²

Rule of Law

The rule of law is one area that is applicable to both mine action and SA/LW. International and national legislation controlling the production, transfer, possession and use of SA/LW, however, is a very different issue from that of landmines. Legislative control of anti-personnel landmines is relatively simple for many countries, as they are banned under the Ottawa Convention,³ and proscriptive domestic legislation on production, export and possession logically follows. This is not the case for SA/LW, which are legal in many countries and require a more complex and contextualized set of legislative controls.

Information Management

The process of comprehensive field-oriented data management that has been

the cornerstone of mine action is equally applicable to SA/LW. The Information Management System for Mine Action (particularly the new release) and other such database systems can easily be adapted to include SA/LW-related data.

Export-control Legislation

The export of AP mines is either banned or restricted by documents of international law. SA/LW are subject to several regional documents, including the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports,⁴ which also bans the exporting of landmines. It therefore follows that training of export-control officials and capacity building of national export-control institutions should include references to both landmines and SA/LW.

Linking SA/LW with Development

The mine and ERW threat has come to be understood as a development issue as well as a humanitarian one. Greater development will reduce the numbers of people who now put themselves at risk because of economic hardship. Donor insistence on “integrated mine action” projects and programs with equal parts of clearance and development can further push national efforts in this direction.

In countries and regions scarred by the legacies of war, and in which ordnance- and weapons-related violence is a daily experience, there would seem to be value from this development perspective in seeking to bring mine action and SA/LW together more systematically. In a similar manner, linking SA/LW and development is an approach that is increasingly seen as critical to progress on both.

Community-based Programming

The orientation of mine action and SA/LW toward community-based ownership provides a solid basis for future activity. Providing an important foundation and legitimization of this approach is the “Seila” approach,⁵ adopted by the Cambodian government as part of its development programming. The aim of this initiative is to establish a national program to promote local economic-development activities through decentralized planning and decision-making.

This basic “bottom-up” approach to national development planning is a fundamental part of mine-action programming and has shown how community-based approaches have also been part of the emerging SA/LW sector. This decentralized

approach to development planning and ownership would seem to provide a very strong foundation for future development of complementary and mutually supportive approaches.

Mine Action, SA/LW and DDR

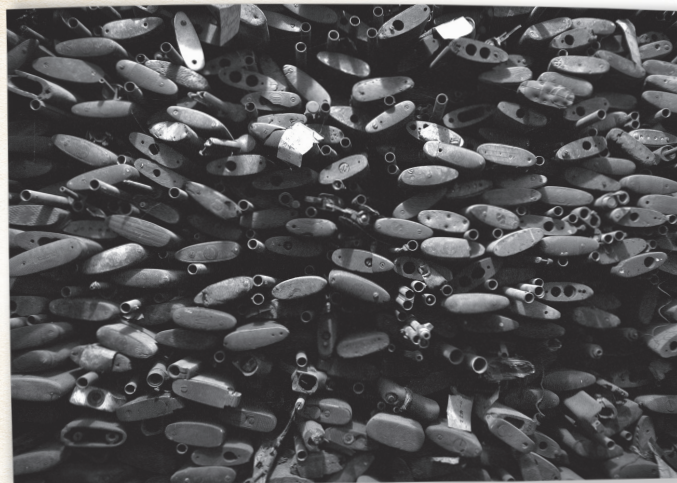
Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration refers to procedures designed to smooth the process of transitioning combatants back into productive civilian life. Analysis has shown that much of the informal demining taking place is conducted by ex-militia and ex-military. These former combatants represent both a problem and an asset for post-war countries. The combatants are trained and armed, and could be employed in projects including engineering, transportation and demining. They could also become restless and have a negative impact on the community. Unfortunately, the mine-action and SA/LW communities have yet to integrate this issue systematically to any real extent. This area is one in which the mine-action and SA/LW communities might be more successful if they jointly undertook analysis and strategic planning.

Conclusion

Though previous research has shown the management of SA/LW and mine-action programs require quite different skills, supporting analysis from other contexts and widespread expert opinion gathered from within the mine-action and SA/LW sectors show a number of areas at the project level that could offer opportunities for synergy. Accordingly, the integration of mine action and the management of SA/LW has been significant in some countries (Bosnia, Cambodia and Tajikistan, to name a few), and is accelerating on a global level. ♦

See Endnotes, Page 113

This article was extracted from the GICHD study *Identifying Synergies between Mine Action and Small Arms and Light Weapons* released in October 2006.



Confiscated weapons in a police warehouse, Manila, Philippines.



Eric M. Filippino has headed the Socio-Economic Unit at the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining since February 1999. He is responsible for thematic training, assessment, research and direct field support in the areas of socioeconomic, MRE and capacity development. Filippino has worked in mine action for the past 15 years and aid/refugee relief for five years prior to that. He has worked for both NGO and the United Nations in numerous field positions in Africa, Central Asia, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Eric Filippino
Head, Socio-Economic Unit
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
7bis, avenue de la Paix
Box 1300 CH-1211 Geneva 1 / Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 906 1660
Fax: +41 22 906 1690
E-mail: e.filippino@gichd.org
Web site: www.gichd.org

News Brief

Former U.K. Military Officer Announced as New UNMAS Director

The United Nations Mine Action Service has announced that Maxwell Kerley has assumed the role of Director of UNMAS. Kerley joined the United Nations in May 2003, transferring from his post at the United Kingdom Permanent Joint headquarters, where he was responsible for providing logistic and personnel support to U.K. military deployments around the world.

Born in 1952, Kerley enlisted in the British Army in 1970, and went on to join the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, where he commanded at the platoon, company and battalion levels. From 1995 to 1997, Kerley commanded a logistic brigade that took him through two tours in the Former Yugoslavia, and was part of the team responsible for forming the Defense Logistics Organization in the United Kingdom.

UNMAS was formed in 1997 to act as the United Nation's main resource for carrying out mine action. It is responsible for coordinating all aspects of mine action within the U.N. system, and it provides direct assistance during humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

SPECIAL REPORT