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National Ownership and Partnerships for Capacity Development

Through the lens of Jordan's mine-action history, the importance of strong leadership, national ownership and partnerships are detailed here as necessary for capacity development.

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In 1993 His Majesty the late King Hussein bin Talal ordered the Jordanian Armed Forces to begin demining in Jordan. The King was deeply concerned by the disastrous humanitarian impact landmines were having upon innocent Jordanians and believed something had to be done about it. King Hussein made this decision prior to the signing of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty¹ and four years before Jordan joined the Ottawa Convention.² King Hussein and his wife Queen Noor set the trend for years to come by emphasizing this issue. Mine action became a national priority and was consequently viewed not only as a humanitarian imperative, but as a goal intrinsically tied to development.

Jordan's Lessons

To date, several lessons have been learned from the Jordanian experience in mine action. The most vital is the recognition that without political will and leadership from the top, such initiatives will fail. Mine action is slightly different from other humanitarian causes due to the great number of stakeholders involved. For instance, mine action in developing countries demands the involvement of a wide cross-section of society, including key government ministries; in the case of Jordan, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Defence, Planning, Social Development, Agriculture and Tourism have all played catalytic roles. The military, police, civil defense, local councils, notables, tribal elders and mine-affected communities have also provided key contributions. In the view of the NCDR and the Jordanian government, success in mine action is sustained by strong leadership that requires all players share a common vision and objective. Without such direction, mine action will be subjected to bureaucratic obstacles and delays and will be thrown into a basket with numerous other national priorities. What is required early on in mine-affected countries trying to establish demining programs is the nurturing of political awareness and stewardship from the top.

Mine-affected Countries Have Needs

Many mine-affected countries simply do not have the financial resources to earmark for mine action and instead rely on international donor funding. Mine-affected countries have to realize, however, that donors only like to fund projects in countries that show maturity in

their approach to mine action and are willing to own the problem rather than outsource it. The idea of national ownership is crucial because it places responsibility on the right shoulders. By having a viable national authority that gathers information, plans, strategises and implements projects, the chances of success and sustaining the overall effort will no doubt be higher.

Certainly mine action in Jordan has not always been easy. The difficulties have been attributed to bureaucratic and technical challenges more than anything else. Having said this, however, Jordan has recently redoubled its efforts and taken a different approach. Thanks to the direct support of His Majesty King Abdullah and the Jordanian government, the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation, which spearheads mine action in Jordan, has been able to develop into a responsible organization that knows what it wants and how to get it.

Two years ago, the NCDR formulated a national plan for mine action in Jordan, with input from all key local stakeholders and the international donor community. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme supported the NCDR with a capacity-development project, which saw the appointment of an international expert as a Chief Technical Advisor to the NCDR. The result of all these efforts is that Jordan can and will be—God willing—free of mines³ by its Ottawa Convention² deadline, 1 May 2009.

Partnerships and Capacity Development in Jordan

One of the true hallmarks of mine action is the vibrant networks and partnerships that have developed over the past 10–15 years. Such collaborative efforts have focussed on mobilizing political, financial and human resources, and today we can point to substantive progress in the sector—be it on the number of countries who have signed the Ottawa Convention or on the number of hectares returned to mine-affected communities. As noted above, capacity development in Jordan has involved all manner of local stakeholders in forging a common system (organizational framework) for mine action to operate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. NCDR tabled the integrated national mine-action plan two years ago, and for the first time, the country approached mine action from a holistic development perspective. Prior to the drafting of the plan, the landmine problem



A donor-government quarterly coordination meeting with HRH Prince Mired as chairman. He is flanked by a member of the Board of NCDR (right), UNDP (immediate left), and GICHD (far left).
PHOTO COURTESY OF NCDR

was being approached from an engineering perspective in Jordan, and it was clear to the local leadership that operationally, the work was not occurring with as much speed, coordination or efficiency as was necessary. At this point the government sought the support of UNDP—there was an internal demand for international involvement to provide strategic and technical assistance in the strengthening of the NCDR.

Since the government of Jordan and UNDP joined forces in 2004, Jordan has accomplished much in the operational and managerial arenas. The NCDR has attained an active quality-assurance capacity; socio-economic and victim information is being collected, analyzed and disseminated; and most importantly Jordan's Article 5 obligation⁴ is within reach. Clearly, mine action in Jordan can tap a relatively well-trained and educated population; its infrastructure is sound; and its overall mine problem is not large in comparison to other programmes. However, Jordan's ability to reach out and utilize the existing political and technical knowledge networks has been exemplary. Also, this outreach has allowed Jordan to quickly build strong partnerships with the international community, which has seen Jordan's vision, commitment and organization concerning the dual objectives of meeting its Ottawa Convention target and providing the space for human development to occur in some of the most fertile and agriculturally important areas of the country. Although Jordan's landmine problem is not large in size, the scope of its impact is great as the country has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, and less than 25 percent of its territory is suitable for agriculture.

UNDP Helps Find Resources

UNDP's role in the case of Jordan's capacity development has been to help introduce and draw upon the international resources that are available to mine-affected countries. First and foremost, strategic technical partnerships were built that allowed for customization of general guidelines to what best fit the needs of Jordan. Finding the best fit has included working closely on a host of operational matters with outside technical actors, such as the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, James Madison University's Mine Action Information Center, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the United Nations Mine Action Service and Norwegian People's Aid. On issues related to the Ottawa Convention, words of encouragement and direction have come from civil society, as both the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and ICRC have been valuable partners. In perhaps the most important area of cooperation—donor partnership—the NCDR has gone from almost negligible support in 2004 to today with more than 15 donors supporting mine action in Jordan. The regular flow of information (quarterly donor meetings, newsletters, etc.) and succinct reporting have helped this assistance develop. Nontraditional donors such as China, Monaco and South Korea are now mine-action partners to Jordan as well.

Looking at Jordan's approach to capacity development in mine action several lessons can be drawn. First, there needs to be strong leadership coupled with a long-term vision and commitment to what capacity needs to be built and why. Second, partnerships based on an open and balanced relationship—be

they government, donor or implementing partner—help promote sustainable and realistic local capacity development solutions. ♦

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