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Strategic Planning in Yemen

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The first ever Landmine Impact Survey was completed in Yemen in July 2000 by the Mine Clearance Planning Agency. With the help of Cranfield Mine Action, Yemen has been developing a strategy to maximize the efficiency of its mine action program.

by Tim Lardner, *Deputy Director, Cranfield Mine Action* and Matt Craig, *Technical Director, Landair International*

Introduction

The Landmine Impact Survey (LIS), previously referred to as the Level One Impact Survey (LOIS), is a key process in the analysis of the impact that landmines have upon the population of a mine-contaminated country. The LIS is the principle component of the Global Landmine Survey Initiative coordinated by the Survey Action Centre (SAC) for the Survey Working Group (SWG).

The first ever LIS was carried out in the Republic of Yemen between July 1999 and July 2000. This survey was conducted by the Afghan-based Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) on behalf of the Yemen National Demining Committee (NDC) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). The Survey employed a staff of 102 Yemenis for the duration of the project, some of whom were further employed with the NDC following completion of the survey. MCPA fielded four Afghan staff throughout the duration, and UNMAS provided a Quality Assurance Monitor to ensure that the standards required by the UNMAS-chaired Survey Certification Committee were upheld.[1]

All data collected during the impact survey was entered into the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database. The volume of data collected during the survey was significant and accurately highlighted the exact impact of landmines throughout the country of Yemen. For example, the survey teams identified 592 mine-affected communities and approximately 1,200 mined areas. The unique characteristics of each community and each mined area were entered into the IMSMA system. Such data included environmental and spatial characteristics, levels of contamination and the precise impact that each mined area was having on each community.

During the process of the impact survey, it became clear that the volume of data collected and stored in IMSMA posed a significant challenge for the management of the mine action program. SAC and the NDC felt that local managers lacked sufficient capacity to use that wealth of data to aid in the development of the program and in informing the ongoing requirement for defensible prioritization of mine-affected communities for clearance.

Cranfield Mine Action (CMA) was asked to work with the Yemen impact survey project to develop and implement a strategic planning process for the mine action program. CMA worked closely with SAC in the development of the process, which was essentially divided into two phases, strategic mine action plan and strategic prioritization options.

Strategic Mine Action Plan

The development of a national mine action strategic plan results from a systematic planning process that represents the needs of the national government and the mine-affected communities. In Yemen, this process was achieved through detailed consultation with the key stakeholders, including the national institution responsible for demining, the NDC, as well as the UN agencies involved in the process, which resulted in the development of a five year strategic mine action plan for Yemen.

Strategic Prioritization Options

The second phase involved the development of a range of defensible, credible prioritisation scenarios highlighting the precise hierarchical order of mine-affected communities based upon the impact they suffered. In Yemen, these prioritisation scenarios were developed using a series of workshops involving the key stakeholders and ongoing assessment to ensure harmonization/ synchronization of the mine action strategic plan and the Yemen government national development plans. Six prioritization scenarios were initially assessed for the program. During discussion, the principle scenario was agreed as a geographical district-based cluster scenario with

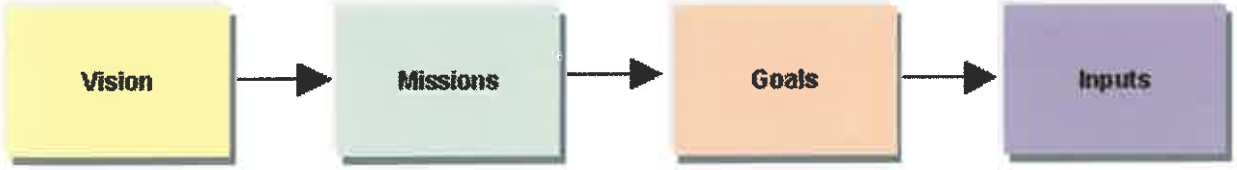

Figure 1 - Strategic planning stages

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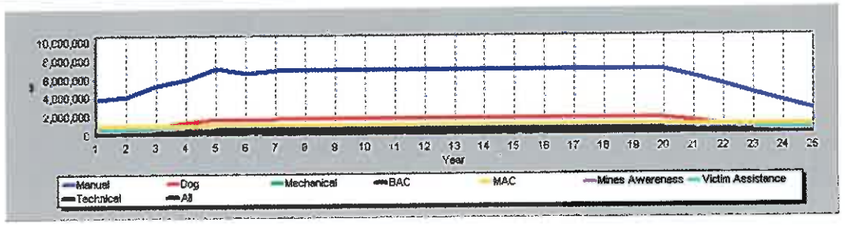

Figure 2- Example of *Pathway* financial analysis graph.

priority allocated to communities with blocked access to precious water resources.

To aid in the strategic planning process, CMA developed a purpose-built software application termed *Pathway* in conjunction with Landair International Ltd., to guide mine action managers through elements of the strategic planning process. The *Pathway* application was designed to provide structured access to the wealth of impact data stored within the IMSMA database, and in conjunction with the program management strategic planning assumptions, was designed to automatically provide the management team with clear, concise analysis and strategic planning recommendations.

The Strategic Planning Process

There is increasing awareness of the importance of strategic planning to success in both the commercial world and the public sector, as well as in voluntary enterprises. This is equally applicable in the humanitarian aid sector, where complex management decisions are routinely taken that affect not just a bottom line, but also life and death issues. Too often in the past, failure in humanitarian aid programs has been considered to be "regrettable but acceptable" in an emergency assistance situation.

Mine action is a complicated science. It is relatively expensive and where done safely and systematically needs competent managers who can prioritize their programs against the competing needs of mine-affected communities, commercial enterprises, the national government's long term objectives for development, and principally, the donors who make the enterprise viable. Often in the past, management planning in mine action programs has been done to satisfy competing short-term demands. Rarely has long-term planning been a feature of mine action. Many of the problems experienced by mine action organizations worldwide can be blamed on this short-term focus.

Strategic planning in mine action requires program design analysis to produce the vision of a sustainable, balanced program to satisfy the needs of the key stakeholders in a particular country. It does not concern itself with short-term planning in the form of national annual works plans. Instead, the strategic plan deals with identifying the long-term aspirations of the national government and other stakeholders. It analyzes how mine action can help make those aspirations a reality within the constraint of likely resource mobilization, while at the same time maximizes the reduction of human suffering from the effects of landmines. It concentrates on project design to create a sustainable mine action capacity, which is then used to inform annual plans.

Strategic Analysis

The primary stage in the development of a national mine action strategic plan is a strategic analysis of the mine action situation at the national level. There are a number of traditional management analysis tools that can aid in this process. These tools include stakeholder, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity & Threats (SWOT) and Political/Legal, Economic, Socio-cultural and Technological (PEST) analysis.

This strategic analysis process needs to be led by the national program director. The aim of this analysis is to clarify what needs to be done by the mine action program to reduce the limiting impact of mine contamination on the national vision for reconstruction and development.

The detailed LIS provides a very clear picture of the impact of mines from the community level all the way up to the national level. The data gathered by the impact survey provides the means to design a mine action program to address the scope of the mine contamination problem in a finite time frame, removing the hindrance placed by mines and UXO on the long-term vision for national sustainable development.

Vision and Assumptions

The strategic analysis for mine action answers these three questions:

- *Where are we now?* What is the current situation with the national mine action program? Does it meet the needs of the stakeholders? What impact is mine contamination having on the national ability to achieve that national vision
- *Where do we want to be?* What end state needs to be achieved to mitigate the effect of mine contamination on the nation's ability to reach the national vision (mine free or impact free?)
- *How do we get there?* What must the shape and size of the national sustainable mine action capacity be in order to get where we want to be?

A strategic analysis cannot be undertaken without making assumptions about the future. These assumptions about the future are termed "Strategic Planning Assumptions." The value of consulting with stakeholders in the development of these planning assumptions cannot be overstated. Assumptions will change during the life of the program. The strategic plan will therefore need to be revised in line with the dynamic nature of assumptions. The strategic plan should be updated regularly—probably on an annual basis—using the most up-to-date data about planning assumptions gathered as the program progresses.

The strategic analysis in Yemen results in the mine action program "Vision." This may take the form of "A country free from the effects of mines by the year 2025."

Mission and Goals

The next stage in the strategic planning process is to decide what must be done in manageable periods of time in order to achieve the overall "Vision" of the mine action program. A manageable period is usually considered to be five years. Five years is the longest time that assumptions that have to be made regarding any part of the program could be considered valid. It is therefore usual to divide the program into a number of strategic periods of five years and to produce a mission for each of those five-year periods. A particular national mine action strategic plan therefore can be considered a five-year plan that works towards the ultimate achievement of the vision for the mine action program.

It is essential to define what is to be achieved within each five-year period of the national strategic mine action plan. This is often referred to as the "mission." The mission describes what is to be done during the period of the plan in order to achieve a certain end state or states. A mission may be:

"to develop a sustainable mine action programme capable of clearing up to 25km² per year of contaminated land by 2005…."

The description that forms the basis of the mission will depend on the individual prioritization scenario chosen and may be something like:

"to facilitate access to blocked water access and reduce casualties."

Once the mission has been developed, the next stage is to identify the goals that need to be accomplished in order to carry out the mission successfully. Usually there will be approximately 10 to 12 goals, each of which should be broken down into a number of inputs that need to happen in order to achieve the stated goal. An example of a goal could be:

- To carry out clearance of 100 km² by 2005, or
- To develop a fully functional mine action database by 2003.

Goals should be supported by a number of inputs. Each input should be clear and measurable. By monitoring the achievement of inputs, the program can be effectively managed.

Having defined the Vision and Mission, determined the Goals and Inputs and set measurement methods in place to monitor the progress of the program, the remainder of the strategic plan can be developed. This should consist of a number of separate annexes, each containing a focused plan dealing with issues such as:

- Resource mobilization plan
- Training plan
- Logistic support plan
- Public Relations plan
- Information Management plan
- Planning Tools

This strategic planning analysis provides the program requirements. Based on these program requirements, a series of possible "program design" options can be produced for consideration by the planning group in selecting a program design format that best fits the strategic plan.

Program Design

The strategic analysis identifies a number of options for program design. Program design identifies a suitable magnitude and form for the mine action programme in order to achieve the long-term vision and satisfy shorter-term missions.

Program design provides the program requirements in order to meet the overall program Vision. This includes such factors as the number of people to be directly employed in the program (clearance teams, survey teams), the potential for use of dogs and mechanical clearance devices, and whether outside agencies are to be employed to carry out mine action activities. It also considers the required degree of expansion or contraction required by the program in order to achieve its vision.

This analysis identifies a range of program design options. The goal of the process, however, is to result in a program that is both realistic and affordable and that addresses the impact factors relevant to the program. It is important that all factors that impact upon program design are considered, especially where such factors change over the life of the program. Therefore, where a factor that will impact upon the program is unknown or likely to change, an assumption must be made that will allow program design to continue. That is not to say that the assumptions are fixed—they are not. However, when an assumption is found to be

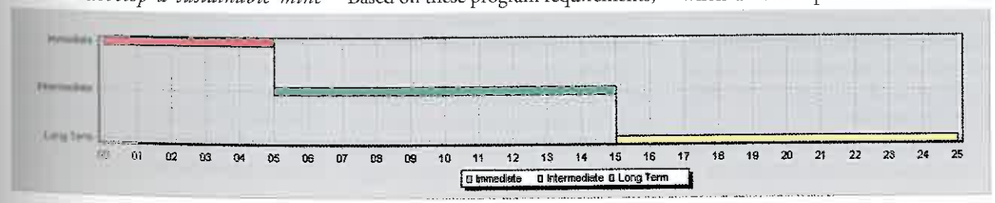

Figure 3 - Example of *Pathway*- prioritized clearance summary.

no longer valid, a revised assumption must be made and the program design reassessed in light of the change. Strategic planning is a dynamic process.

Assumptions are therefore vital to this program design process and should be agreed on by stakeholders in the planning process. Once decided upon, they must be carefully recorded and analyzed on a regular basis as part of the routine management process.

Prioritization

The strategic analysis also identifies a number of prioritization scenarios based on impact. The prioritization stage of the process involves analyzing these prioritization scenarios, identifying the precise hierarchical order of mine-affected communities based upon the impact they have suffered. In Yemen, these prioritisation scenarios were developed using a series of workshops involving the key stakeholders and ongoing assessment to ensure harmonization/ synchronization of the mine action strategic plan and the Yemen government national development plans.

Pathway

To aid in this strategic planning process, CMA developed a purpose built software application termed *Pathway* in conjunction with Landair International Ltd., to guide mine action managers through elements of the strategic planning process. The *Pathway* application was designed to provide structured access to the wealth of impact data stored within the IMSMA database and, in conjunction with the program management strategic planning assumptions, was designed to automatically provide the management team with clear, concise analysis and strategic planning recommendations.

The *Pathway* application provides a framework in which the process of strategic program design and prioritization can take place. The application allows those unfamiliar with strategic planning to move through the process, step by step, in order to have a standardized template for strategic planning in mine action at the national level.

The *Pathway* application is structured so as to address three main stages of the strategic planning process: Strategic Assumptions, Program Design and Work Prioritization.

Strategic Assumptions

Pathway guides mine action managers through the process of entering these fundamental strategic planning assumptions, which include the desired program "Vision," annual running costs, clearance rates and program duration.

Program Design

Based on the "Vision" of the mine action program, *Pathway* automatically calculates the required mine action program design, subject to the underlying Strategic Assumptions and the results of the LIS. The results of this analysis are presented in a number of clear ways using graphs, tables, and summary statistics, including the anticipated cost of the program, the required number of survey and clearance teams, and the anticipated areas requiring clearance.

Work Prioritization

Based upon the prioritization scenarios agreed upon by the stakeholders in the initial stage of the process, *Pathway* automatically ranks all communities visited during the LIS process based upon the degree of impact on that community. This provides the mine action managers with the means to rapidly assess where the maximum benefit can be gained from the prioritization of survey, clearance and mine awareness assets.

Based upon the program design and the prioritization scenario selected, *Pathway* automatically calculates and displays the anticipated time required to clear these "Immediate," "Intermediate," and "Long Term" priority areas—essentially High, Medium and Low priority areas.

Summary

As a result of the success of both the LIS and the Strategic Planning Process involving the *Pathway* application, the SWG has now agreed to form a link between the two, and all future LIS carried out using the standard protocols will now include a strategic analysis, the development of a strategic plan, and the provision of a program-specific *Pathway* application to enable the host nation to gain maximum benefit from the data collected during the LIS process. ■

Reference

[1] *Global Landmine Survey – Landmine Impact Survey – Republic of Yemen.* Survey Action Centre, October 2000.

**All graphics provided by the authors.*

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