



TOWARDS FASTER RELEASE OF LAND IN CAMBODIA

Land Release – pilot projects in Cambodia

The GICHD has provided considerable mine action support to Cambodia over the past ten years. Decades of war left major parts of North West Cambodia littered with landmines and UXO and there has been a comprehensive national and international effort to minimise and eventually eliminate this problem. The GICHD has been leading the development of land release methodology and, over the past two years, has supported CMAC with the development and implementation of an operational land release concept in Cambodia. While CMAC has been the prime partner, it has been equally important to support the Cambodian Mine Action Authority (CMAA) with the development of national policies and standards to facilitate the implementation of land release activities in the field.

The Centre undertook three workshops with CMAA and CMAC in 2008/9. The aim was to broaden perspectives on potentially useful land release methodology, identify weaknesses and strengths in current survey and clearance approaches, identify appropriate responses and develop a concept to increase the efficiency of CMAC's operational survey and clearance capacities. A fairly detailed framework for operational land release was developed collaboratively in early 2009, including plans to conduct pilots on new non-technical and technical survey methods.



The assessment team – CMAC, NPA and the GICHD

In light of concurrent plans to implement a wider baseline survey, CMAC decided to integrate its non-technical survey method with the baseline survey as an evidence-based assessment component.

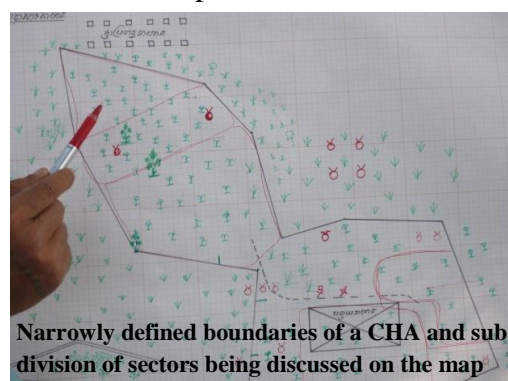
Mike Creighton (GICHD consultant) has provided full-time support to the land release process in Cambodia since March 2009. A major part of his work has been to assist CMAC in designing and implementing the planned survey pilots while also assisting CMAA in developing national policies and standards on land release. The GICHD works in close partnership with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in providing support to CMAC and CMAA.

In December 2009, the GICHD, NPA, CMAC and Stockholm University undertook an assessment of the newly implemented pilot project on non-technical survey. The the

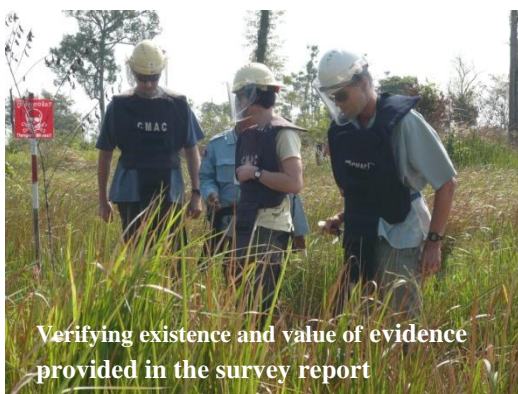
purpose of this collaborative effort was to explore strengths, weaknesses and relevance of the newly implemented concept and to propose improved training solutions and concept changes, if required. Several survey and clearance sites were visited, some where CMAC conducts non-technical survey with the new concept and some where the new release methodology has not yet been implemented. It was thus possible to observe and compare the difference between old survey/clearance approach and new survey methodology.

Key observations

An inability to draw realistic polygons has been critical in the past. A lack of criteria, methodology and training has caused considerable inflation of the mine problem. It has, therefore, been an essential part of the preparation for the non-technical survey to make sure that the polygons prepared by the non-technical survey realistically represent the mine problem. The December assessment showed that the survey teams are well trained and are able to use the new concept and draw appropriate polygons that represent fairly accurate boundaries of the mined areas.



The ability to sub-divide polygons into appropriate sectors based on the amount and type of evidence available for each sector within a polygon is another difficult challenge for the survey teams. The reason for sub-dividing polygons into sectors is that that it provides an opportunity for a more tailored and efficient follow-on technical survey. Sectoring of polygons is not straightforward and can be undertaken in many different ways. CMAC’s survey teams have been trained to sub-divide polygons into sectors and the assessment showed that they are able to apply this technique fairly well in the field. The assessment gave room for frequent discussions with the members of CMAC’s survey teams about how to divide polygons into sectors to ensure the highest efficiency of the follow-on technical survey.



The non-technical survey model (evidence based assessment component) grew out from a collaborative effort between the GICHD, NPA and CMAC, with additional support from Stockholm University. A representative from Stockholm University took part of the assessment and was able to see how the model is now applied in the field. The survey teams provided inputs into potential improvements

and a few potential areas of improvement were identified during the assessment.

CMAC employs more than 2,100 people in different capacities. The organisation is funded by a range of different donors that have different perspectives on the requirements for mine action support in the field. CMAC is partly contracted by the development sector to clear areas that have been defined by development actors rather than through proper non-technical survey. For land release to become successful, it is evident that not only CMAC and CMAA, but also the broader development sector, need to fully understand land release. With the new national standard on land release in place, there may be agreement within the mine action sector about how survey and clearance should be applied to resolve a mine problem. There may, however, still be obstructing contractual obligations and conflicts between mine action and development actors because of a lack of understanding about appropriate contracting modalities in the context of land release.

When comparing old methodology with new, it is evident that CMAC's land release concept is more than just a redefinition of what it is already doing. The assessment analysed one area that had just been cleared and where a more appropriate non-technical and technical survey would have justified the release of approximately 10 hectares with no need for clearance. The cost of clearing 10 hectares (100,000 m²) of land is considerable, entailing two months of work using 100 manual deminers. This was just one task, but the task in question was one that CMAC had been contracted to clear in full, further underlining that improved efficiency cannot be addressed by CMAC or any other demining operator in isolation but needs to be tackled collaboratively between CMAC, its partners and donors.

The future

An essential component of CMAC's land release concept is technical survey. Streamlining the non-technical survey and



Discussing challenges and potential improvements

tailoring it towards providing useful information to define minimum requirements for technical survey seems to have been successfully achieved. That said, not much has happened in terms of designing and implementing the appropriate technical survey response, and this remains a high priority. The agreed first step is to finalise the technical survey concept and then train CMAC's field managers to apply it in the field. The second step is

to conduct a pilot in some areas where a non-technical survey has already been conducted. The third step will be to evaluate the results from the pilot and, finally, implement the combined survey approach into the wider part of CMAC's capacity.

The GICHD will continue to support CMAC and CMAA with the development and implementation of land release methodology in Cambodia throughout 2010. We hope that other mine action organisations will consider a close collaboration with CMAC to ensure that land release methodology becomes a cross-cutting priority area throughout mine action and the broader development sector. The potential cost and resource saving is considerable and a wide collaboration around appropriate land release methodology could resolve the landmine problem more rapidly in the future.

Some parts of Cambodia are virtually mine free but are littered with sub-munitions and other UXO. Land release in this context requires a different approach and new methodologies are urgently required. The GICHD has been asked to assist CMAC with the development of land release methodology tailored towards battle field areas and cluster munitions strikes. Preliminary discussions on how to put this process into effect were initiated in December 2009 and a more detailed plan will be developed in early 2010.

For more information, please contact Håvard Bach, Head Operation Methods at h.bach@gichd.org.