



LAND RELEASE PROJECT: HOW TO MORE EFFECTIVELY UTILISE MINE ACTION ASSETS

In many mine action programmes throughout the world, deminers, machines, dogs and other expensive assets are deployed in areas that are subsequently found to be free from mines. While this process does give confidence to the end users that the land is safe and allows them access to it again, it does, in the long run, provide very poor use of the limited resources available within the demining community. The purpose of the GICHD land release project is to clearly define the process of land release in mine action and examine the applicability of risk management to that process. It is believed that if an effective process, that allows the right tool to be used in the right place at the right time, can be introduced into mine action, the limited resources available to the community can be used much more effectively. This will result in better value for money for the donors and, perhaps more importantly, a more rapid reduction in the removal of mines and UXO.

This work has a considerable amount of synergy with other work currently underway within the mine action community and the intention is to ultimately offer a model that can, with limited adaptation, be adopted globally.

It is now widely recognised by the broader mine action community that the most urgent requirement in mine action is to develop more efficient methods of releasing land by both non-technical and technical survey. This will free demining resources for clearance of genuinely mined areas. The GICHD has taken the lead in this process and over the past 18 months has encouraged discussions aimed at creating wider policy acceptance for challenging traditional methods when clearing suspect hazardous areas (SHA). It has



Suspect are in Cambodia – to be cleared or released?

been important to do so because risk management terminology and principles are potentially sensitive and could be rejected if misunderstood or put in the wrong context. While it was initially thought that donors would be reluctant to adapt a more proactive approach to releasing land, this has not proved to be the case. There is now broad agreement among donors that traditional clearance methods should be challenged in favour of more streamlined and effective land release methods. These views are shared among most international mine action organisations, although discussions have only marginally taken place in most of the victim states.

This process is ongoing in parallel with the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) in which States parties to the Convention commit (among other things) to clearing all known mined area in their territory within ten years of treaty ratification. Much of the

GICHD's work is to support these States parties, at the policy and operational level. At the operational level, the development of land release policies and concepts will help States parties focus more clearly on their political obligations and move more rapidly, not only toward those obligations, but also towards a point where casualties become relatively insignificant.

The GICHD undertakes these activities in a number of ways:

- Liaison
- Research and information dissemination
- Operational outreach
- Capacity development
- Networking

In the last 12 months, the Centre has undertaken a wide variety of activities. Some are outlined below:

- Support to the national Cambodian Mine Action Authority and the Cambodian Mine Action Centre in the development of a national land release concept and operational plan.
- Work with the national authority and NGOs in Lao PDR to develop a risk based model for land release and prioritisation in Lao PDR.
- Running several workshops for key stakeholders in Angola explaining land release concepts and assisting national staff with development of operational models.
- Policy advice to the governments of:
 - Mozambique
 - Uganda
 - Tajikistan
 - Sri Lanka
 - Colombia
- Development of a series of International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) to guide the community within the IMAS framework.

The centre has also recently published a study titled "A Guide to Land release: Non-Technical Methods" which draws experience and best practice from six mine-affected countries to suggest best methodologies for non-technical land release.

The last 12 months has shown significant impetus in the development of land release theories and practices. Over the next year, the Centre will be focussing on technical survey elements of land release and will publish a guide on this in the summer. Operational support will continue to be provided to countries, programmes and organisations who feel the need for support.

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