

The Road to Mine Action and Development: The Life-Cycle Perspective of Mine Action

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There are four main steps to completing the life cycle of mine action, and demining is just a small part. Without development, citizens continue to live in poverty and under oppression. The authors outline the four-step life cycle of mine action.

Like any development activity, a mine action programme evolves over its life cycle. It is important for mine action managers to understand this evolution, as priorities and partnerships—who we're helping and who we're working with—change as part of it.

As we in the mine action community know, most mine action begins in the chaotic period immediately following armed conflict. It is during this complex humanitarian emergency phase that former warring parties will ask the international community to provide assistance in the form of peacekeeping or broader peace-building missions. Where such efforts appear to be successful—or where major countries deem their national interests are at stake—the peacekeeping phase will lead to a major reconstruction effort, financed by donor countries and multilateral financial institutions.

Although in many cases "traditional" development work (**new** investments in infrastructure, social services, private sector development and the like) would never have stopped entirely, the government and major donors initially focus on peacekeeping/peace-building and subsequently concentrate on the reconstruction programme. However, as the restoration of key infrastructure (roads, railways, ports, electrical utilities, water systems, etc.) and basic public services (education, health, policing, etc.) progresses, increasing attention will shift to more traditional development programmes with—we all hope—the government increasingly taking ownership of the development effort.

Thus, we can place mine action within four main stages of a country's conflict and subsequent recovery:

1. Conflict
2. Immediate, post-conflict stabilisation (including peacekeeping/peace-building)
3. Reconstruction
4. Traditional development

This depiction of the transition from conflict to development is a stylised one. In many cases, development will continue in some areas while conflict engulfs others. Conflicts may also resume, halting a country's transition to the reconstruction and development phases. Other countries will not go through all the phases with the help of donors; for example, a major effort in post-conflict stabilisation may not be required where there has been a clear victor in the conflict (or where the conflict was with another state rather than internal). In others, the "wrong" side wins (at least from the perspective of the major powers) and the country does not receive significant

international assistance for its reconstruction. Some unfortunate countries will suffer from simmering conflict for prolonged periods, perhaps becoming a "forgotten emergency" and receiving little attention from the international community. Thus, the transition from conflict to development is uncertain and prone to reversals and may proceed at different rates in different parts of the country.

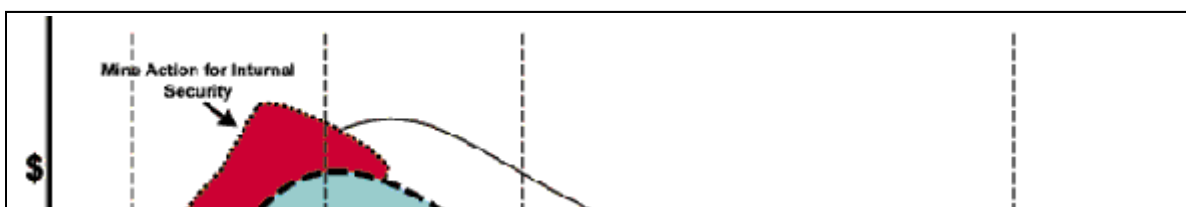
Regardless, conflicts eventually do end, and more-or-less normal development programmes eventually do begin; therefore, some sort of transition must occur. The important issue for us at this point is not so much the details of an individual country's transition, but rather the dynamics of such transitions in general and the implications of these dynamics for those planning and managing mine action programmes, particularly the following:

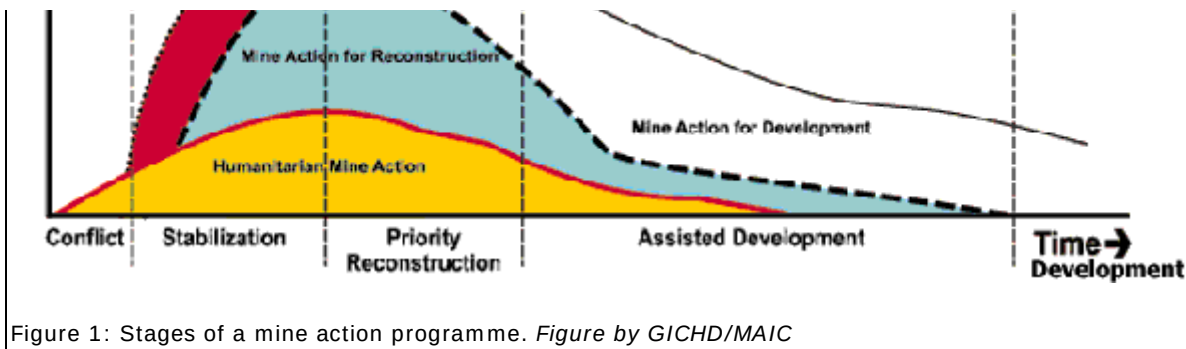
- The country's social, political and economic environment will evolve over time, in some aspects, quite rapidly.
- The size and relative importance of the different types of international assistance—humanitarian, peace-building/stabilisation, reconstruction and development—will evolve over time.
- Because of this evolution, the international actors present in the country, their primary objectives and their relative powers to influence local affairs will change over time.

It is vital to emphasise that starting and ending points of the different phases will not be clear-cut; rather, phases overlap. For example, we will not see an abrupt end to the reconstruction programme followed by an abrupt start-up of more traditional development activities. Instead, the reconstruction programme will build to a peak of activity, then decline over a few years. During these years of decline, donors will shift proportions of their funding to standard development approaches. Perhaps they will build on smaller, localised development efforts that international non-governmental agencies have supported, even during the conflict. Thus, there will be shifts in the relative importance of these two types of programming, and these shifts will continue over some years. For example, large "priority reconstruction programmes"¹ often are planned to last five years, although delays in disbursements and implementation might add years before the programme ends.

The principal outputs of mine action (safe land and facilities; public awareness of dangers posed by landmines and UXO; amputees fitted with prostheses; etc.) are not ends in themselves; each mine action output is a means to an end. Therefore, mine action is (or should be) at the service of the mine-afflicted country and its citizens. At any point in time, it should be focusing the lion's share of its resources in support of the most strategically important efforts under way in the country. More precisely, mine action should be focusing on those most important efforts constrained by landmine and UXO hazards.

Thus, mine action priorities—and the programme's allocation of resources—should also change as the emphasis shifts from humanitarian assistance through stabilisation to reconstruction and finally to development. Again, these typically will be relative shifts over time rather than abrupt changes, so there may be periods when the mine action programme is working in support of three types of programmes: humanitarian, reconstruction and development.





When segmented in this manner, the pattern of mine action expenditures over time might appear as depicted in Figure 1.²

Two additional types of changes will be occurring that also are vital to the performance of a country's mine action programme. First, the programme's capacities will be growing with new assets, training, better organisational management systems and experience. As well, capacities can be enhanced if countries adopt special legislation covering mine action, if public support for mine action grows, etc. Some of the likely developments over time for a mine action programme are listed at the bottom of the programme stages in Figure 1.

Second, mine action planners and managers will acquire additional data over time, allowing them (in theory, at least³) to make more informed decisions and better projections concerning likely developments in the future that will affect their programme. Some of the important categories of data to a mine action programme are those concerning the following:

- Hazards—locations, numbers and types of devices, what community assets the hazards are blocking, etc.
- Livelihoods—how individuals, households and communities survive and prosper (this requires socio-economic data)
- National governance—how governments are formed and replaced, and how the machinery of government functions
- International aid—the key actors and their principal objectives at national, regional and community levels

Getting Quickly to Development

The life-cycle perspective emphasises that the links between mine action and development do not simply happen; rather, they emerge over time. The problem for mine action is that, over much of a programme's life cycle, the attention is not on development but on other related, yet different, goals. These goals include humanitarian assistance, peace-building or reconstruction of essential infrastructure. As a result, the mine action programme may not be linked early and strongly with developmental actors, particularly within the national government, who eventually will assume control of the country's development agenda. If this happens, the profile of the mine action programme will almost certainly suffer, along with its funding. Mine action planners and managers can, however, forge earlier and stronger links to a country's development efforts if they understand the direction and nature of the evolution from conflict to development.

Biographies

Eric Filippino has headed the socio-economic section of GICHD since February 1999. He deals with research and analysis aspects and provides consultation and



direct field support in the areas of civil/military cooperation, mine risk education, victim assistance, monitoring and evaluation, and impact survey. Filippino has worked in mine action for the past 10 years and worked in aid/refugee relief five years prior to that.



Ted Paterson joined GICHD in July 2004 to assume responsibility for the evaluation function. He has a background in international development, working with NGOs, research and education institutes, consulting firms, and as an independent consultant. Paterson has been active in mine action since 1999, working mainly on socio-economic and performance management issues. He has degrees in business, economics and development economics.



Endnotes

1. This phrase is from The World Bank, which has been in the forefront of planning, managing and financing post-conflict reconstruction since the wars arising from the break-up of Yugoslavia. The central role played by the World Bank is one of the defining features of post-war reconstruction efforts, and during such periods the Bank may be an important source of financing for demining.
2. Regular readers will notice a strong similarity to Figure 1 in the article from Issue 9.1 (Chip Bowness, "The Missing Link in Strategic Planning: ALARA and the End-state Strategy Concept for National Mine Action Planning"), which was developed independently in 1998 by Chip Bowness to illustrate the "End-state Strategy" approach to developing a national mine action strategy for Cambodia. GICHD personnel developed the life-cycle perspective to illustrate not only that the size of a programme would eventually diminish, but also that the principal purposes of and partnerships for a mine action programme will evolve in a manner that can be understood and planned for.
3. Raw data does not help decision-makers unless it is "analysed" into information. Information is the right data presented in the right format at the right time to the right people.

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