



Land release and the role of risk management

In many mine action programmes throughout the world, deminers, machines, dogs and other expensive assets are deployed onto areas that are subsequently found to be free from mines. While this process *does* give confidence to the end users of the land that the land is safe and allows them access to their land again, it does, in the long run, provide a very poor use of the limited resources available to the demining community.

In order to address this problem, the GICHD is undertaking a project which aims 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 risk management process can be introduced into mine action, the limited resources available to the community can be used much more effectively resulting in better value for money for the donors and, perhaps more importantly, a more rapid reduction in the threat from mines and UXO rather than the all too common processing of uncontaminated land.

Several countries are being used as case studies to demonstrate current best practices and demonstrate methodologies that could be applicable to the wider Humanitarian Mine Action community.

Cambodia. Cambodia has recently introduced an “Area Reduction Policy” which aims to reduce the national problem – both in terms of perspective and of focussing the resources better. This model may well prove to be so significant in the Humanitarian Mine Action community that its impact and definitions warrant significant analysis.

Sudan. The urgency of opening roads in Sudan – particularly in the south where refugees are returning and aid convoys are often forced onto roads where there is little knowledge of the safety of that road – calls for the development of a risk management model to assess the risk. A model is being developed together with Norwegian People’s Aid and the United Nations in Sudan. It is believed that this model may be able to be developed into further models for other countries.

Lao PDR. The GICHD is in the process of developing a risk management/mitigation model for use in the Lao PDR – where the problem is essentially and primarily one of UXO. This model will contrast and complement the model from Sudan which will be designed specifically for a threat from mines.

Some of the specific objectives for the project are to:

- Analyse methodologies of countries where land release and technical survey processes have been formalised and refined to an effective process;
- Develop a risk matrix based system allowing the assessment of tolerable risk, based on the examination of national/international laws and standards, the intended use of the land, peoples' general exposure to risk and wider hazard consequences.
- Make recommendations for the implementation of a system that will allow national authorities, based on national needs and norms, to make significant inroads into reducing the national Suspect Hazardous Areas.
- Make recommendations for the implementation of a system that will allow operators to effectively yet methodically reduce areas with an audit trail that allows secure, justifiable decisions to be made.
- Develop a series of protocols that will form the basis for a rational methodology for land release protocols.

The *status quo* of the project at the moment should result in both models (mines in Sudan and UXO in Lao PDR) being completed by the end of the year, with the current developments in Cambodia and more globally being monitored closely.

GICHD, 26 June 2006

* * *

For more information on land release and risk management, please contact Mr. Havard Bach at [a.bach\(at\)gichd.ch](mailto:a.bach@gichd.ch) or Mr. Tim Lardner at [t.lardner\(at\)gichd.ch](mailto:t.lardner@gichd.ch).