Strategic Planning in Mine Action Programmes

Tajikistan

Geneva, October 2013
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# GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>APMBC</td>
<td>Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention</td>
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<td>AP</td>
<td>Anti-personnel</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Cartagena Action Plan</td>
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<td>CHA</td>
<td>Confirmed Hazardous Areas</td>
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<td>CIIHL</td>
<td>Commission on the Implementation on International Humanitarian Law</td>
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<td>CoES</td>
<td>Committee of Emergency Situations</td>
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<td>CTA</td>
<td>Chief Technical Advisor</td>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>Central Region</td>
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<td>ERW</td>
<td>Explosive Remnants of War</td>
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<td>FSD</td>
<td>Federations Suisse Deminage</td>
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<td>GICHD</td>
<td>The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining</td>
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<td>GoT</td>
<td>Government of Tajikistan</td>
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<td>HI</td>
<td>Handicap International</td>
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<td>HDG</td>
<td>Humanitarian De-mining Group of the MoD of RT</td>
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<td>ICBL</td>
<td>International Campaign to Ban Landmines</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>IMAS</td>
<td>International Mine Action Standards</td>
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<td>IM</td>
<td>Information Management</td>
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<td>IMSMA</td>
<td>Information Management System for Mine Action</td>
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<td>MACCA</td>
<td>Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>MoD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
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<td>MoLSPP</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Population</td>
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<td>MRE</td>
<td>Mine Risk Education</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NMAA</td>
<td>National Mine Action Authority</td>
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<td>NMAC</td>
<td>National Mine Action Centre</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
<td>Norwegian People’s Aid</td>
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<td>NTS</td>
<td>Non-technical surveys</td>
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<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<td>Code</td>
<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>QM</td>
<td>Quality Management</td>
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<td>RCST</td>
<td>Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan</td>
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<td>SAC</td>
<td>Survey Action Centre</td>
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<td>SHA</td>
<td>Suspected Hazardous Area</td>
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<td>TAB</td>
<td>Tajik-Afghan Border</td>
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<td>TMAC</td>
<td>Tajikistan Mine Action Centre</td>
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<td>TMAP</td>
<td>Tajikistan Mine Action Programme</td>
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<td>TNMAS</td>
<td>Tajikistan National Mine Action Standards</td>
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<td>TUB</td>
<td>Tajik-Uzbek Border</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UST</td>
<td>United Sappers of Tajikistan</td>
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<td>VA</td>
<td>Victim Assistance</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tajikistan Mine Action Programme (TMAP) officially started in 2003 when UNDP, mandated by Government decree, established the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC). International operator Federation Suisse Deminage (FSD) has been a key international operator in Tajikistan since 2003, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been present since 2003.

The Commission on Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CIIHL) serves as the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) in Tajikistan and is made up of 15 Government ministries and entities. The subdivisions of the department of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) conducted the first demining activities in Tajikistan in 1997. The MoD’s role in the TMAP has been significant, as it has seconded hundreds of personnel to demining operators. The MoD established the Humanitarian Demining group, which by mid-2013 included one mechanical and two manual teams.

Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) started its operations in Tajikistan in 2010, bringing more technical expertise and assets to the TMAP. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Handicap International (HI) have also been key players in TMAP for many years, particularly in victim assistance and mine risk education.

Tajikistan’s first national mine action strategy – 5-Year Strategy for the Tajikistan National Mine Action Programme – covered the period 2006 – 2010 and was replaced by the Tajikistan National Mine Action Strategic Plan (NMASP) 2010 – 2015. The NMASP was developed in a consultative manner, providing all key stakeholders with the opportunity to provide input and feedback.

The TMAP, which celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2013, has steadily developed into a stronger programme, with improved coordination and information sharing. There has been a growing recognition that sound information management (IM) is a pre-requisite for strategic planning, essential for effective and efficient operations, and the realisation of the goals and objectives stipulated in the NMASP. Closely related to this is the mounting realisation that operational efficiency can be significantly improved by implementing a land release methodology, whereby appropriate methods are used to ensure that land is released as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Like most mine action programmes, the TMAP has had its ups and downs. Critics sometimes point out that survey and clearance resources were not utilised in the most efficient manner until fairly recently, and that the low productivity in the early years cannot be justified and that it damaged the programme’s reputation. Several respondents have underlined that the programme could have achieved considerably more over the past 10 years, given the small size of the programme, the relatively well-defined mine problem and the ongoing support from a number of international actors. There are also concerns that the lack of government commitment to mine action, the low level of national ownership and the ambiguous status of the TMAC have resulted in donor fatigue.
Nevertheless, despite some major challenges along the way, it is clear that strategic planning procedures and processes have improved, and that there is a gradual strengthening of the quality management (QM) system. What is also encouraging is that TMAC engages in fruitful collaborations with a number of external organisations, including the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), the Survey Action Centre (SAC), the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and the GICHD.

A number of good practices can be drawn from the strategic planning experiences in the TMAP, including:

- consultative development of the NMASP 2010 – 2015;
- resurvey activities;
- data clean-up project;
- midterm review of the NMASP; and
- collaboration with external partners.

The good practices that have emerged are positive outcomes of the challenges and lessons encountered during this process. Like most mine action programmes, the TMAP has experienced a number of challenges and problems over the years, including:

- too much focus on TMAC in national planning documents;
- transition to national ownership;
- development of a long-term action plan for demining;
- weaknesses related to the IM process; and
- survey activities and poor national clarity on the contamination problem.
INTRODUCTION

COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Republic of Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, bordering Afghanistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the west, Kyrgyzstan to the north, and China to the east. Tajikistan is predominantly mountainous (over 90 per cent), with only seven per cent of the surface suitable for agriculture. Still, 73 per cent of the 7.5 million population live in rural areas. The country gained independence in 1991, following the collapse of the United Soviet Socialist Republics. The civil war broke out shortly after independence in 1992 and lasted until 1997. Violence flared up again in the Rasht Valley (Central Region) in 2010. More recently, clashes erupted in Tajikistan’s autonomous Gorno-Badakshan province in July 2012.

Figure 1 Map: Tajikistan

Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia, ranking at number 127 out of a total of 187 countries in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2012 Human Development Index ranking. The country faces many development challenges, including lack of employment opportunities, poor infrastructure and low levels of food security. Extreme weather conditions often result in many areas being inaccessible during certain

periods of the year. In addition, natural disasters frequently affect the country, destroying the roads and livelihoods of affected communities.

ORIGIN, NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE MINE/ERW CONTAMINATION PROBLEM

Tajikistan’s mine/ERW contamination is concentrated in three areas: Tajik-Afghan Border (TAB), Tajik-Uzbek Border (TUB) and the Central Region (CR). Tajikistan’s historical contamination stems from three main periods:

- 1993 – 1997, when Russian border troops used mines along the TAB to protect the border area from armed groups entering Tajikistan from Afghanistan.
- 1999 - 2000, Uzbek forces used mines along the TUB to prevent armed groups and bandits entering Uzbekistan from Tajikistan. Subsequent surveys have established that these mines are located within Uzbekistan, but several suspect hazardous areas (SHAs) remain to be surveyed.

As of September 2013, the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC) estimated that 9.6 square kilometres of contaminated land remained to be cleared. It is important to note, however, that this figure is an estimate, and that the actual contamination figure may be very different. Key stakeholders have highlighted the following issues as impeding on gaining clarity on the actual level contamination:

- high altitude of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs);
- security concerns;
- logistical difficulties; and
- extreme weather conditions.

HISTORY OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESSES

BACKGROUND

Following the approval of the GoT, UNDP established TMAC in 2003. Its setting up took place in conjunction with the launching of UNDP Tajikistan’s first mine action-related project: *Support to the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme*. The UNDP project document (Prodoc) related to this project was officially adopted by the GoT. UNDP established TMAC as a national implementation modality (NIM), with the intention that it would become a

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3 FSD has surveyed four districts along the Tajik/Uzbek border, and jointly with TMAC and various Government entities concluded that no hazardous areas were inside Tajikistan. Following a June 2013 GICHD operational efficiency assessment, the GICHD recommended that a NTS should be conducted in the remaining six districts bordering Uzbekistan, to confirm if the remaining border minefields are, as suspected, in Uzbekistan. If this is the case these districts should be removed from the clearance plan.
nationally-owned programme in the near future, though a specific timeline and strategy for the transition to national ownership process was never drafted and implemented. The Commission on Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CIHIL) serves as the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) in Tajikistan and is made up of 15 Government ministries and entities. The CIHIL is chaired by the first Deputy Prime Minister and its members are at the deputy minister level.

The subdivisions of the Engineering Department of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) conducted the first demining activities in Tajikistan in 1997. The MoD is also the entity that was responsible for destroying Tajikistan’s stockpile of anti-personnel (AP) landmines in 2004, thereby complying with the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 4 obligation. The MoD’s role in the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme has been significant, as it has seconded hundreds of personnel to demining operators. The MoD signed a MoU with the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2009, with a focus on the development of indigenous and sustainable humanitarian demining capacities. The MoD subsequently established the Humanitarian Demining group (HDG), which by mid-2013 included one mechanical and two manual teams. The HDG may be regarded as the humanitarian part of the MoD. The MoD’s Strategic Plan on Humanitarian Demining 2013 – 2015 was adopted by the GoT on 17 July 2013. The strategic plan presents the MoD’s mission “to execute humanitarian demining operations and to generate suitable environment for development and work of the national humanitarian demining programme.”

In 2010, the Union of Sappers Tajikistan (UST) was established by former Tajik deminers and other citizens, with the purpose of further developing the national civilian demining capacities in Tajikistan. The signature of a MoU between the UST and the MoD in May 2010 resulted in the OSCE channelling its funding directly through the UST, which was responsible for project administration and financial management. In 2012, the UST organisational structure was strengthened and the organisation revealed its plans to develop its own civilian humanitarian demining teams, outside the cooperation arrangement with the MoD and the OSCE.

The Federation Suisse Deminage (FSD) is the longest-serving international operator in Tajikistan. The FSD programme was initially developed as a joint effort by the OSCE and the FSD. Based on a 2003 MoU with the GoT, FSD started its operations the same year. FSD conducted the first general survey in Tajikistan in 2004-2005, commonly referred to as the impact survey. Some 159 suspected hazardous areas (SHA) were identified, corresponding to an estimated 60 square kilometres. The purpose of the impact survey was to gain an understanding of the extent of the landmine contamination. FSD also implemented subsequent survey activities.

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4 Ministry of Defence of the republic of Tajikistan, Strategic Plan on Humanitarian Demining 2013 – 2016, 17 July 2013
5 This survey is frequently confused with the standard LIS. The LIS has never been implemented in Tajikistan.
FSD and UST signed a MoU in November 2012. The main areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU include increasing UST’s capacity to develop and promote innovation and better ways of reducing the risks from landmines and ERW. The two organisations will also cooperate and coordinate work on their respective performance indicator programmes.

In 2003, following an official request from the GoT, the OSCE became involved in humanitarian mine action in Tajikistan in 2003. The OSCE’s initial focus was on providing support to emergency humanitarian mine clearance operations. Due to a lack of humanitarian mine action expertise within the OSCE at that time, however, the OSCE provided its support through the international operator FSD. Among other things, the OSCE assisted with procuring equipment and creating a mine detection dog (MDD) training centre. Following an internal programme review in 2008, the OSCE shifted its strategic focus to supporting the development of national sustainable humanitarian mine clearance capacities. The OSCE further started facilitating a dialogue and cooperation for humanitarian mine action at a regional level. The OSCE involvement in mine action is guided by its specific mandate in Tajikistan to support activities with a focus on border security and control.

Given the fact that the Tajik-Afghan border is one of the most contaminated areas in Tajikistan, the OSCE became increasingly involved in mine action over the years, in particular in regard to national capacity development. While the OSCE has never implemented mine action directly, it has: supported the MoD and UST; has been involved in the development of long-term action plans; and has funded an exchange programme between TMAC and MACCA as part of the OSCE Confidence and Security Building measures.

The other international demining operator in Tajikistan is NPA, who started its operations in 2010 after signing a MoU with the Government of Tajikistan. It is widely believed that the arrival of NPA in the TMAP made a significant, positive impact on the programme’s clearance outputs. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been directly involved in victim assistance/disability work in Tajikistan, and has been involved in MRE through its national partner the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) since 2001. The RCST is one of the biggest MRE operators in Tajikistan, with a focus on training community MRE volunteers.

Handicap International (HI) started its activities in Tajikistan in early 2010, with a focus on disability/VA and MRE. Key activities include the 2010 implementation of the Knowledge, Attitude, Practice (KAP) MRE survey and the facilitation of long-term action plans for MRE and VA in 2011. HI and TMAC cooperate closely in the field of Disability Support.

While the coordination between TMAC and the various mine action organisations appears to be fairly good at the moment, it is clear that there have been major challenges in the recent past. Reportedly, the relationship between TMAC/UNDP and OSCE has been particularly bad in the past. It seems that the problems were mainly rooted in personality clashes, and it is evident that the relationship has improved considerably.
NATIONAL MINE ACTION STRATEGIES


The first national strategy was replaced by the Tajikistan National Mine Action Strategic Plan (NMASP) 2010 – 2015. In 2009, UNDP hired an external consultant to draft the UNDP project document (Prodoc) and the NMASP. The consultant organised four half-day workshops for each of the main themes; MRE, VA, land release and capacity development with relevant stakeholders. This participatory arrangement provided key stakeholders with the opportunity to contribute to the drafting process. The consultant developed a draft strategy document that was circulated to all relevant stakeholders for their comments. The document was then translated into Russian and Tajik before CIHL adopted it on behalf of the GoT in April 2011. It appears that the drafting process was consultative. The many stakeholders interviewed for this case study underlined that they were pleased with the process and the fact that they had the opportunity to contribute.

The NMASP sets out the following general vision: “The vision presented in this strategic plan corresponds to a Tajikistan free of the threat of landmines and Explosive Remnants of War, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment conducive to development and where mine victims are fully integrated in the society.”

The NMASP further stipulates that its strategic objective aims to ensure that:

I. the Government of Tajikistan is in a position to comply with its international obligations related to landmines and Explosive Remnants of War;
II. all priority areas will be cleared by the end of 2015; and
III. the national mine action programme efficiently supports the poverty reduction and socio-economic development strategies of the Government.

The NMASP further formulates one goal for each of the four main components of the TMAP:

- demining;
- VA;
- MRE; and
- TMAC/institutional framework.

Each goal is then followed by a background section before the corresponding specific objectives are presented. Below follows an outline of key strategic planning aspects that have been identified in a number of mine action areas.

DEMINING

The NMASP presents the following demining goal: “TMAC coordinates, regulations, plans and monitors all demining operators in the country to ensure that: all priority areas, corresponding to at least 7.5 square km of SHA are cleared and/or reduced, demining is conducted safely and expeditiously, according to IMAS and NMAS and according to annual...
work-plans, project documents and Article 5 Extension Plan.”

PRIORITISATION AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING

A key issue with the general demining goal as presented in the NMASP is the vagueness of the term “priority areas.” The NMASP does not list any indicators that define what constitute priority areas, presumably resulting in subjective interpretations of what a priority area is. A key international stakeholder in the TMAP has pointed out that this issue was raised already in 2011. This issue was highlighted and discussed at the June 2013 MTR of the NMASP. As a result, the term “priority areas” will be removed in the updated version of the NMASP.

TMAC’s General Operational Guidelines for 2013⁶ aim to provide guidance for demining agencies and other governmental, non-governmental and international organisations involved in mine clearance operations in Tajikistan during 2013. The operational guidelines state that land release tasks are prioritised in coordination with local authorities and in accordance with a list of priority areas. The guidelines highlight that the following key issues influence the prioritisation process:

1. prioritisation system⁷;
2. hazardous areas accessibility for dogs and machines;
3. relief and weather;
4. security and political situation;
5. geographical locations of hazardous areas; and
6. official requests.

TMAC issues tasking folders and demining organisations develop implementation plans based on these, before submitting them to TMAC for approval. Operators start their activities in any given task area once implementation plans have been approved. The operational guidelines also include tasks sites for the three operators (the humanitarian demining unit of the MoD, FSD and NPA).

With regards to planning in relation to the APMBC A5 obligations, in collaboration with the EC and the ISU, TMAC organised an APMBC Article 5 completion workshop in Dushanbe in mid-September 2013. The aim was to clarify the remaining contamination problem, and to agree on a plan on how to deal with it in the timeframe leading up to Tajikistan’s APMBC Article 5 deadline in 2020. As a result of the workshop TMAC committed to hold a number of technical meetings to update the completion work plan (2014 – 2020) which will⁸:

- be developed in cooperation with all stakeholders taking into account the factors highlighted above; and

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⁶ Tajikistan Mine Action Programme General Operational Guidelines for 2013, received from Parviz Mavlonkulov, TMAC Chief of operations.
⁷ TMAC Operations Manager informed that TMAC is currently developing a prioritisation system, which will be part of the Article 5 Completion plan for 2014-2020, which is currently being developed and will be presented during the September 2013 APMBC A 5 completion workshop in Dushanbe.
⁸ ISU workshop report, September 2013.
be available by the end of November as a draft plan to stakeholders and subsequently be presented to the APMBC States Parties at the Convention’s Third Review Conference in Maputo, Mozambique in 2014.

TMAC is currently working on a completion work plan (2014-2020) which will be presented and discussed with all operators at the completion workshop.

With regards to socio-economic benefits stemming from mine action, the NMASP’s second demining specific objective focuses specifically on the development of a prioritisation and planning system and implementation of pre and post-clearance assessments with the purpose of documenting the benefits of mine action activities. Despite the inclusion of this specific objective, however, no activities investigating socio-economic benefits stemming from mine action are implemented in Tajikistan. The principal reason for this, as highlighted by TMAC and operators, is that because the Afghan-Tajik minefield is partly fenced, and is located in an area with no communities nearby, “there are no socio-economic impacts in this area, and therefore no need to implement any impact assessments.” It is clear that the general view is that survey and clearance activities in Tajikistan are essentially an APMBC Article 5 completion issue.

TMAC organises weekly land release coordination meetings where key issues are discussed with the FSD, MoD/UST and NPA.

LAND RELEASE PROCESS
While the NMASP’s demining section acknowledges a wide range of methods and assets, there is some confusion related to the land release terminology.

Clarifications related to this were discussed at length during the June 2013 midterm review of the NMASP, at which time the GICHD also provided an update on the reviewed IMAS 07.11 on land release. The TMAC Operations Manager and representatives from all operators agreed that the reviewed NMASP would comply with the terminology of the reviewed IMAS 07.11. This issue was also explicitly raised by MACCA, following its assessment mission to Tajikistan in November 2012.\footnote{MACCA, \textit{Mission report of the MACCA staff to Tajikistan Mine Action Programme}, November 2012, Report shared by the OSCE.}

It is widely acknowledged that the early so-called impact surveys resulted in poor quality data. The TMAC/FSD data clean-up project, which will be touched upon in more detail below, highlighted the following problems as impeding on the data quality\footnote{Notes from a the technical working group workshop on Historical Impact Survey & Non-Technical Survey Data, Dushanbe, 13 June 2013}:

- poor definition of the SHAs;
- information reliability issues;

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\footnote{MACCA, \textit{Mission report of the MACCA staff to Tajikistan Mine Action Programme}, November 2012, Report shared by the OSCE.}

\footnote{Notes from a the technical working group workshop on Historical Impact Survey & Non-Technical Survey Data, Dushanbe, 13 June 2013}
- lack of geographical description;
- high level of uncertainty; and
- unclear decision-making processes.

TMAC believes that the following issues contributed to the problems:

- lack of experience – early days of the TMAP;
- standard IMSMA templates were used which were not country specific;
- information collection needs, templates and standards were not well defined; and
- the different nature of the mine/ERW problems in Tajikistan, depending on the region.

Recognising the poor quality of the early surveys, FSD initiated resurvey activities in 2007, both in the Central Region and along the Tajik-Afghan border.

Several TMAP stakeholders pointed out that there is room for significant improvements with regards to implementing the land release methodology, and increased operational efficiency. This is also something that was highlighted in MACCA’s mission report following its November 2012 assessment mission, during which MACCA visited operational sites of all three operators (NPA, FSD and MoD).\(^{11}\)

Recognising this, the TMAC requested the GICHD to conduct an operational efficiency assessment following the midterm strategic review in June 2013. The main purpose of the GICHD’s visit was to assess the operational application of survey and clearance in Tajikistan, and to facilitate further completion planning in the second half of 2013.

The GICHD visited all three operators in the field (NPA, MOD/UST and FSD) along the Tajik/Afghan border, where the demining work is concentrated. Following the visit, TMAC/GICHD conducted a technical working meeting for operational staff to discuss the key challenges. A principal land release problem indicated by TMAC was the “clearance of additional square metres”, due to an underestimation of the actual mine contamination during initial surveys. This negatively affects the planning process and raises concerns regarding the efficiency of operations. The GICHD assessment underlined this as a principal concern, and highlighted that it needed to be resolved so that planning and reporting processes could be improved. The MACCA mission report acknowledged this issue, and underlined several additional issues, including the verification methods used in the TMAP, which according to MACCA result in inefficient use of assets. As well, the issue of operational efficiency was discussed at length during an operations briefing at TMAC in October 2012.\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) The MACCA mission report presents 14 recommendations related to strengthened QM and improved operational efficiency. Mission report shared by the OSCE.

\(^{12}\) The stated purpose of this meeting was to discuss operational progress and challenges and make conclusions, recommendations, decisions for further improvement of effectiveness, productivity and safety of operations and management in the team, organizations and programme levels.
The GICHD concluded that, in general, clearance is progressing well with all operators working on Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs), but that there is scope to improve the long-term operational planning and the effectiveness and efficiency of the land release process. The GICHD also highlighted that: “Both TMAC and the operators have the capacity and knowledge to continue the process to improve both survey and clearance activities. The training capacity exists within Tajikistan if all the available human resources are used. Further technical working meetings, with operations officers/team leaders, could be used as a forum for exchange of experiences and training.” TMAC has informed that, based on the GICHD recommendations, it has started to modify the land release methodologies and operations. In addition, TMAC will ensure the recommendations will be reflected in the relevant TNMAS that are currently under review and consequently request operating partners to modify relevant SOPs as needed.

In addition, as highlighted below, the Survey Action Centre (SAC) has provided support to TMAC with regards to the drafting of land release process maps.

**OPERATIONAL REPORTING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

Operators submit daily and weekly reports and monthly progress reports to the TMAC operations department. The TMAC operations department assures the quality of the data before submitting it to the IM department for quality assurance.

TMAC has had significant IM capacity shortages and challenges in the past. From 2003 to 2008, TMAC only had one staff member who was knowledgeable about IMSMA. This individual was also responsible for information technology issues more generally, and for GIS. When this staff member went on leave for two years in 2008, TMAC’s IM capacity was virtually non-existent and the resulting gaps are being felt to this day. Several respondents highlighted that there is room for significant improvements related to the IM processes at TMAC. In particular, many referred to the lack of analysis of contamination data as a key problem that has resulted in poor use of resources. Some also argued that there is a fairly poor use of IMSMA as a tool to facilitate effective and efficient planning, prioritisation and tasking at TMAC.

TMAC currently uses two parallel databases, the IMSMA legacy and the IMSMA new generation (NG). All survey and clearance data is essentially divided into two parts: “historical” (2004-2010) and “current”. The historical data is stored in IMSMA Legacy, and all survey/clearance and MRE data since 2011 has been stored in IMSMA NG. The existence of these two databases has resulted in additional maintenance work and difficulties in reporting and analysing across the two periods.

The ways in which operators report on their activities and how they submit their reports vary significantly. For example, FSD still draws maps by hand while NPA uses GIS software. National operator MoD/UST also uses hand-drawn maps. TMAC has pointed out that the

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internal data quality management (QM) has been poor within some of the operators. As a result, TMAC has received data of poor quality, and has spent considerable time and resources trying to make sense of it, often having to send it back to operators for clarifications and modifications. TMAC recognises however that its own data QM procedures have also been poor in the past. The fact that there has not been a NMAS, nor a standard operating procedure (SOP) on IM in the TMAP has negatively affected the IM processes more broadly, with poor quality data as a result. Using the IM IMAS as a base, TMAC and MACCA started the process of drafting a TNMAS on IM in April 2013. Also based on the IM TNMAS, TMAC will further develop a SOP on IM, which it aims to finalise in the second half of 2013.

As part of the Afghanistan/ Tajikistan exchange programme, MACCA, TMAC, NPA, FSD and the OSCE conducted a joint field assessment mission to the Central Region in mid-April 2013. The joint mission delegation concluded that the TMAP should:

- refocus on the Central Region, to better establish the level of contamination; and
- conduct more intrusive resurvey activities to gain a more accurate picture of the level of contamination.

Recognising the importance of good quality data for operational planning and the challenges and additional work that poor quality data result in, TMAC and FSD initiated a one-year “data cleaning” project in October 2012. FSD recruited one IMSMA and one IT assistant to work on this project. The focus of the project was to systematically review the historical survey data conducted by FSD from 2004 to 2005 and from 2007 to 2009, and to identify areas where field visits were necessary for data verification.

The main quality issues concern the historical data set, still stored in IMSMA legacy. Non-technical surveys (NTS) are conducted on these sites to verify and validate the historical data at field level. This is a collaborative initiative between FSD and TMAC, with survey, QM and IM personnel involved in the teams. Following key findings from the April 2013 joint mission to the Central Region, resurvey activities started there in May 2013, and have now been completed. Once data had been “cleaned”, IM staff submitted it to the operations department, and once the operations department had reviewed and validated data, IM staff entered it into IMSMA NG. A principal objective was to improve the quality of all historical data before entering it into IMSMA NG. The final aim is to ensure that all data stored in IMSMA NG is of high quality and can be used as a basis for strategic planning. TMAC aims to have completed all the data clean-up and entrance of “old data” into IMSMA NG by the end of 2013. It is expected that the data clean-up exercise will result in high-quality data that

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14 The objectives of the field mission were to:
1. Review the quality and reliability of the NTS reports
2. Discuss possible land release methodologies and approaches in hazard areas with different conditions
3. Exchange of experiences and best practices between Tajikistan and Afghanistan mine action programmes

15 Good quality data is: Complete, legible, accurate, consistent and logical.
provides clarity on the remaining contamination problem, essential for strategic planning and resource mobilisation.

TMAC has pointed out that data QM is essential, and that it needs to take place at two different levels:

- internally at the TMAC level; and
- externally at operator level.

It is hoped that, with an increased appreciation of the importance of accurate data for all operational planning, combined with NMAS and SOP on IM, the quality of data will be significantly improved in the future.

Regarding data other than survey and clearance, MRE data has been stored in IMSMA NG since 2011, and VA-related data since 2013. All older VA data is stored in separate excel documents. TMAC estimates that 15 – 20 per cent of the old victim data is inaccurate, and points out that there have been significant discrepancies between various organisations’ data.

In terms of IM processes more broadly, it is believed that the 2013 modification of the TMAC organogram will help to highlight the fact that IM is a supporting asset to all mine action pillars, rather than a stand-alone department as it previously was. The title of the IM staff member has also been changed from IMSMA to IM office, underlining the fact that IMSMA is only a tool to facilitate broader IM. The GICHD has provided support to TMAC’s IM section for several years.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The Survey Action Centre (SAC) included Tajikistan as a case study for a pilot land release intervention between September 2010 and May 2011. Through this project, the SAC has been involved in strengthening TMAC’s QM system through a series of interventions. The project involved a total of four visits to Tajikistan. The purpose of the SAC intervention was to assist with improving the efficiency and effectiveness of land release activities. The final evaluation report from this initiative stressed a limited analysis of information, either before starting technical activities, during operations or on completion of site work.

The SAC assisted TMAC with developing a total of seven process maps:

1. land release overview;
2. SHA acceptance;
3. planning, review and decision-making;
4. site processing;
5. final acceptance;
6. analysis; and

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16 Latest TMAC organogram included in Annex I.
7. risk assessment.

The SAC underlines how the process of developing the process maps was valuable in its own right, as it provided an opportunity for TMAC and operators to sit down together and reflect on the land release activities. Importantly, the development of the process maps was supported by the FSD and NPA. TMAC staff members have started implementing them, recognise the value added by the process maps, and consider them useful as they enhance clarity of the work process.

The GICHD has also provided QM support to TMAC. In April 2012, the GICHD conducted an assessment of TMAC’s QM system and organised a QM workshop. The assessment concluded that significant QM gaps related to effectiveness and efficiency remain, particularly on the higher management and on the programme level.

QM was also a central aspect of the MACCA-TMAC exchange programme. MACCA highlights a number of QM-related issues and presents several related recommendations in its 2012 mission report.

In general, the process of implementing resurvey and data clean-up activities is a clear indication that there is an interest in continual learning and improvement, and in achieving higher quality in operational results. Continual improvement in this context relates to three main aspects:

1. efficiency and effectiveness;
2. understanding the problem; and
3. review processes.

Tajikistan National Mine Action Standards

TMAC developed a total of 21 Tajikistan National Mine Action Standards (TNMAS) chapters in 2005. These were all reviewed internally by TMAC in 2008.

In collaboration with UNDP, TMAC and the OSCE, the GICHD organised a regional workshop in Dushanbe in February 2013 as part of the Persian Language Outreach Programme. As well as key Tajik mine action stakeholders, representatives from the Afghanistan and the Iranian mine action programmes participated in the workshop that had four principal objectives:

1. to understand the mine action challenges specific to Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan;
2. to understand the role of National Mine Action Standards in the mine action programmes;

3. to discuss and recommend changes to the Tajikistan National Mine Action Standards; and
4. to discuss future regional coordination and cooperation among Persian-speaking countries.

Ten TNMAS chapters were discussed at length during the workshop, with participants from all three countries providing comments and suggestions. Specific recommendations were made for each TNMAS.

Recognising that the TNMAS needed to be updated, TMAC requested the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) and the Department for Mine Clearance (DMC) to conduct an external review of the TNMAS in November 2012. Following the assessment, it was agreed that MACCA and DMC would assist with updating the TNMAS. The purpose of the exchange programme, which was financially supported by the OSCE, was for the MACCA/DMC to share their experiences and best practices in the development and update of NMAS, QA & QC systems, task allocation and planning, mechanical application and verification after the use of mechanical assets. MACCA and DMC staff members, under the leadership of the Chief of QM, visited Tajikistan three times, between April and July 2013.

MACCA helped review 21 TNMAS chapters and corresponding annexes and it also assisted with developing the TOR for the TMAS review board. The review board is expected to have reviewed the updated TNMAS by November 2013; then operators will be expected to update their SOPs accordingly.

TMAC is very satisfied with the support from MACCA. The exchange programme responded to an evident need for clearer standards. The review of the TNMAS will contribute to a strengthened QM system, as standards contribute to improving safety, efficiency and quality and ensuring confidence in mine action.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE

TMAC organised the first ever National VA Workshop in Dushanbe in March 2006 with the aims of: reviewing the objectives presented at the Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC in Zagreb in 2005; and developing “smarter” objectives and a plan for action for the period 2006 – 2009. The Victim Assistance Plan of Action was approved a few months later in 2006 by the CIHL. The APMBC ISU pointed out that the first national VA workshop in 2006 was instrumental in raising awareness on to the rights and needs of mine victims and on Tajikistan’s international treaty obligations.

The APMBC Implementation Support Unit’s 2010 Review of the Victim Assistance Programme in Tajikistan pointed out that Tajikistan’s disability sector lacked the capacity to adequately address the rights and needs of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities. Since 2006, TMAC has taken the lead in reporting to the international community on Tajikistan’s efforts to address the rights and needs of mine victims and how it meets its APMBC obligations in this regard.
The NMASP explicitly states that it endorses the main conclusions and recommendations of the Cartagena Action Plan 2010 - 2014, and the 2009 Cartagena Declaration. The NMASP also states that it aims to “ensure the full and active participation and inclusion of mine victims in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities”... and that VA “efforts will meet the highest international standards in order to fulfil the rights and fundamental freedoms of survivors and other persons with disabilities.” The NMASP also declares that “the dignity and well-being of survivors, their families and communities will be at the core of our efforts.”

The NMASP presents the following VA Goal: “All mine victims, boys and girls, men and women, have equal and proper access to adequate medical and physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support as well as to socio-economic and legal assistance.”

The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Population (MoLSPP) holds the most responsibility in regard to disability issues in Tajikistan. The MoLSPP is the central organ of the executive authority which is responsible for the implementation of unified state policy and normative legal regulations in a number of areas, including the social protection and service of population, where disability issues (including VA) falls. The MoLSPP develops draft laws and normative legal acts in these fields as well as work plans and anticipated indicators of performance of the Ministry.

A key criticism of the NMASP is that it assigns too many responsibilities to the Government. A number of respondents highlighted that the Government does not have enough resources to implement the activities and reach all the objectives, as stipulated in the NMASP.

The Tajikistan Plan of Action to Assist Landmine/ERW Victims and Other persons with Disabilities 2012 – 2015 (the plan) is a result of a collaborative effort by a number of key stakeholders. HI hired a VA expert to draft the report and the CIIHL, OSCE and TMAC represented the steering committee. The overall objective of the plan was to make the VA section of the NMASP operational.

The drafting process was inclusive; operators, international organisations, civil society organisations, relevant Government ministries, persons with disabilities and landmine survivors had the opportunity to provide feedback through the organisation of six workshops. The lead agencies made a clear effort to ensure that all key stakeholders contributed to the final plan. It has been pointed out, however, that it was challenging for the HI consultant to encourage relevant stakeholders to participate in workshops and discussions. Another difficulty was related to the fact that organisations and governments did not send representatives that were empowered to make decisions to workshops/meetings. Participants were often not aware of internal strategies and future plans which impeded on the effectiveness of the workshop.

A VA expert from the ISU reviewed the draft plan, with the aim of ensuring that it accurately reflected key principles of the Cartagena Action Plan (CAP), such as non-discrimination. Thanks to the level of expertise involved in the drafting process, the final report:
• is inclusive of all persons with disabilities;
• reflects key principles of the APMBC and the CAP;
• takes gender fully into consideration; and
• considers VA in the broader disability context.

As to the monitoring of the plan, stakeholders attending the April 2013 technical working group meeting, organised by TMAC’s disability support unit, agreed that all partners will monitor their progress of implementing the plan in accordance with the specified indicators. As of early June 2013, the plan was still awaiting Government approval through the CIIHL.

MRE

The NMASP outlines the following goal for MRE: “The number of mine and ERW casualties is reduced in Tajikistan through the provision of mine risk education to all groups at risk in the mine-affected regions.”

Recognising the importance of making NMASP operational, the OSCE initiated the idea to develop a long-term action plan (LTAP) for MRE. While a HI consultant took the lead in the drafting process, the LTAP was developed through a consultative process in 2011, including workshops and interviews with main stakeholders.

The LTAP acknowledges the importance of recognising that women, girls, boys and men have different at-risk behaviours and are therefore differently exposed to mines/ERW. It further underlines the significance of carrying out a solid gender analysis to better understand the different behaviour and needs of women, girls, boys and men, and of tailoring MRE material and activities accordingly. The LTAP also highlights the importance of including and encouraging the participation of local actors and mine-affected communities in decision-making processes concerning the strategy and prioritisation processes.

The MRE technical working group meets on a quarterly basis. Key partners include the ICRC, the RCST, the Ministry of Education the Committee of Women and Family Affairs, and the CoES.

While the TMAC MRE department recognises the importance of the various pillars (MRE, demining and VA) coordinating and collaborating with each other, it was pointed out that there is room for great improvements in this regards. The MRE department is currently looking at ways to strengthen the coordination and collaboration between the different pillars.

HI took the lead in implementing a MRE KAP survey in 2010. The objective of the survey was to: create a baseline against which the impact and efficiency of future prevention activities could be measured; and to identify strengths and gaps of the past MRE activities to better plan and tailor for future ones. The KAP also incorporated an element of socio-economic analysis related to issues that influence land use and travel. The KAP added great value as it
provided MRE stakeholders with baseline information and strategic recommendations for future activities and evaluations.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{TRANSITION TO NATIONAL OWNERSHIP}

Transition to national ownership or “nationalisation” as it is commonly referred to in Tajikistan is the area that has progressed the least. The NMASP 2010 – 2015 sets out the following goal for the “TMAC and the national institutional framework of the programme” section: “\textit{National institution in charge of mine action (TMAC and CIIHL) do manage efficiently and professionally the national mine action programme to ensure that Tajikistan complies with its international obligations.” In addition, the NMASP also makes reference to the \textit{Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action}, and underlines the importance of national ownership.\textsuperscript{19}

The NMASP stipulates that “\textit{...it is expected that TMAC will be fully nationalised by the end of 2011 and its management and operational capacity will have to be developed and reinforced through additional training and technical assistance.” As of mid-2013, however, TMAC was still not established as a national entity, but remained a nationally-executed UNDP project. Some may say that TMAC is “nationalised” in the sense that all staff (apart from a CTA) are Tajik. From a national ownership perspective however, TMAC has a long way to go – Government commitment to, and ownership of, mine action in Tajikistan is weak.

The nationalisation part of the NMASP was discussed at length during the June 2013 midterm review of the NMASP. It is foreseen that the reviewed plan will see significant modifications.

A number of UNDP evaluations have underlined the importance of clarifying TMAC’s status. For example, a 2012 evaluation states: \textit{“Eight years after it was created, TMAC has an ambiguous status as it is neither a directly implemented UNDP project nor a nationally implemented project.”} \textsuperscript{20} The evaluation acknowledges that TMAC operates “reasonably well” despite its ambiguous status, but lists a number of reasons why TMAC’s status needs to be addressed, including:

\begin{itemize}
  \item the UNDP mandate stipulates that projects should be nationalised as soon as possible in countries where there is a functioning government (which is the case in Tajikistan);
  \item TMAC does not have legitimate authority;
  \item some donors willing to support NMAAs cannot fund TMAC or its operations because it is not a national agency; and
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{18} Handicap International, \textit{Mine/ERW Risk Education in Tajikistan. Baseline Information from Three Districts in Sughd Region. 2010 KAP Survey Results}, 2010
\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action}, \url{http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/34428351.pdf}
• TMAC cannot have a bank account since it is not a national project, and mine action funding cannot be channelled through TMAC, something that has created misunderstandings between donors and TMAC.

Several representatives from operators in Tajikistan highlighted that the ambiguous status of TMAC result in numerous challenges:

• accreditation of operators; and
• signing of handover certificates.

Despite the early intentions to nationalise TMAC “as soon as possible”, it appears that no transition plans or strategies that stipulated how to reach that goal were in place until recently. A previous UNDP CTA has however pointed out that the nationalisation process started in 2006, with the aim of handing over TMAC to the Government, with support from UNDP.

TMAC organised a working group meeting on defining the status of TMAC in Dushanbe in May 2012. A total of 16 participants, representing all key Government ministries, the CIIHL, TMAC and the OSCE attended the meeting. Representatives agreed during this meeting that TMAC should be established directly under the GoT.

Following on from the May meeting, TMAC organised a “nationalisation workshop” in Dushanbe in June 2012, with representatives from the operators, UNDP, TMAC, the OSCE and a number of Government ministries and committees. One of the principal issues related to the nationalisation process in Tajikistan relates to where TMAC should be “housed.”

In relation to this, the CIIHL Secretary presented two options during the nationalisation workshop21:

1. the establishment of TMAC under the Government of Tajikistan; and
2. the establishment of TMAC under the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The workshop report states that the TMAC Director, the OSCE and the UNDP CTA will be closely involved in advising the Government on the legislation necessary for a NMAA to be established, including its composition, roles and responsibilities. The report further states that “UNDP assistance will continue to aim primarily at supporting a national mine action programme owned by the Government.”

The nationalisation workshop ended with the CIIHL secretary urging all Government representatives to submit their final suggestions related to the institutional arrangements within a week of the closure of the workshop, pointing out that the GoT would consider all

21 Tajikistan Mine Action Workshop on Nationalisation, 5 June 2012 Dushanbe, Tajikistan (document shared by UNDP CTA)
suggestions put forward.

In response, 15 different ministries confirmed their support to nationalisation. Based on the feedback to the CIIHL, four different options related to the institutional arrangement of the NMAA/TMAC were identified:

1. directly under the President;
2. under the Government of Tajikistan;
3. under the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoESCD); and
4. under the Ministry of Defence.

Following recommendations from a 2011 UNDP evaluation\textsuperscript{22}, TMAC developed the \textit{Tajikistan Mine Action Programme Transition and Exit Strategy 2013 – 2015 and Beyond} at the end of 2012. The three-page document aims to provide guidance to TMAC and its mine action partners on implementing the next phase of the programme (from 2013 – 2015 and beyond). Key issues outlined in the transition and exit strategy are summarised in Annex III.

While the transition/exit strategy adds some value in providing an overview of the key issues and objectives of the TMAP until 2015 and beyond, its vagueness means that it is not clear how key issues will be dealt with, what activities need to be implemented in order to achieve the objectives, and who will be responsible for ensuring that the objectives are achieved. The transition/exit strategy would benefit from an accompanying plan that clearly stipulates:

- who is responsible for what, by when;
- the necessary activities that need to be implemented to reach the objectives; and
- the budget.

Recognising the slow progress in the nationalisation process, the UNDP CTA started the “dialogue process” project. UNDP contracted a national NGO to be responsible for implementing the project which aimed to strengthen the dialogue related to nationalisation with the GoT, thereby accelerating the nationalisation process. As of September 2013, two main meetings had been held with representatives from key ministries and TMAC/UNDP. The national NGO has been asked to collect and present information related to best practices from other mine/ERW affected countries. While no concrete decisions were made at these meetings, TMAC/UNDP has highlighted that the initiative has strengthened the trust between the various Government ministries and TMAC/UNDP, which may result in something more tangible in the future.

As of August 2013, a decision related to the institutional arrangement of the national mine action programme had still not been made. While there is undoubtedly a lack of political will and commitment on behalf of the Government to resume any ownership of mine action in Tajikistan, several respondents have also pointed out that UNDP could have done considerably more to push nationalisation and transition at an earlier stage. Some

\textsuperscript{22} Roberts, R, \textit{ibid}
respondents pointed out that the status quo of TMAC remaining a UNDP project, with no government ownership “suited both the GoT and UNDP”. The rationale behind this was that the GoT did not have to worry about channelling funds from an already stretched state budget to mine action, while UNDP staff remained secure in their positions, receiving UN salaries that are considerably higher than Government civil servant salaries.

As mentioned above, it is clear that there is little commitment on behalf of the GoT to resume ownership of the mine action programme. As long as UNDP does not exert more pressure on the Government, there is a real risk that there will not be any real progress in the nationalisation process in the near future. The UN Resident Coordinator reportedly communicated with the President of Tajikistan in February 2013 and was assured that the GoT would nationalise TMAC.

ALIGNMENT WITH BROADER NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Tajikistan’s poverty reduction and development plans include the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is one part of the National Development Strategy 2007 – 2015 (NDS). The PRSP was reviewed in 2012 and was renamed the Living Standards Improvement Strategy of Tajikistan for 2013 – 2015 (the LSIS). Following advocacy work by TMAC, the LSIS includes two references to mine action:

The section on “Main strategic development goals and priorities in ensuring environmental stability and sustainable development”, states: “Improve arable land and fields suitable for farming activity through clearing antipersonnel mines and explosive remnants of war, and guarantee safe access to them”

The section on “Recommendations for addressing the challenges in Ensuring environmental stability and sustainable development for 2013-2015”, states: “Ensure capacity development and implementation of mine action programme aimed at reducing the risks of mines and explosive remnants of war.”

While these two references are quite vague, the TMAC is pleased that its advocacy efforts resulted in the inclusion of mine action in a national development document for the first time ever. In 2013, TMAC organised a meeting with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, which is responsible for developing District and Jamoat development plans. At this meeting it was agreed that TMAC would train ministry staff on making mine action considerations a priority at local level planning.

INTERNATIONAL TREATY OBLIGATIONS

Tajikistan acceded to the APMBC in October 1999 and became a State Party on 1 April 2000, resulting in an Article 5 obligation deadline to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas on 1 April 2010. Tajikistan reported its responsibility for a significant number of landmine survivors at the first Review Conference of the APMBC in 2004. Tajikistan has, since that time, been a focus of attention in the work of the APMBC’s Standing Committee on VA and Socio-Economic Reintegration.\(^\text{24}\)

Tajikistan’s APMBC obligations are very much the focus of the NMASP, reflected in its first strategic objective: “The Government of Tajikistan is in a position to comply with its international obligations related to Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.” The NMASP also states in the legal background section that “the ultimate goal of TMAC is to ensure Tajikistan’s compliance with the obligations of the MBT.”

Tajikistan submitted its APMBC Article 5 Extension Request to the President of the 9\(^\text{th}\) Meeting of the States Parties to the APMBC in March 2009. The extension request presented the following issues as having impeded Tajikistan’s ability to complete the A5 obligations within the initial 10-year time-frame:\(^\text{25}\)

1. **Delay in starting**: Demining began four years after the entry into force of the APMBC, leaving only six years for Tajikistan to fulfil its obligations.
2. **Only manual demining employed**: mine clearance with a small number of demining teams were deployed in the first years.
3. **Difficult areas**: Tajikistan is a highly mountainous country, with many of the SHAs located in hard to access areas.
4. **Weather**: Extreme weather conditions have presented a challenge to clearance operations.
5. **Financing**: Insufficient funding and a delay in funding have impeded operations.
6. **Demining machines**: The availability of demining machines would have increased the speed of demining activities as some areas are more suitable for mechanical clearance.
7. **Minefield records**: Russian military minefield records have proven to be inaccurate.
8. **Border dispute with Uzbekistan**: Lack of cooperation from Uzbekistan has resulted in a delay in clarifying the contamination situation along the Uzbek border.

TMAC’s operations officer developed the request with extensive support from the ISU. TMAC has highlighted the following issues as impeding on the accuracy and relevance of the request and the accompanying work plan:

\(^{24}\) [http://www.apminebanconvention.org/background-status-of-the-convention/assisting-the-victims/]

the unreliability of non-technical survey (NTS) information;
minefield records for the Tajik-Afghan border were not fully available;
the lack of information on contamination along the Tajik-Uzbek border;
the request was based on the capacity available at the time, when only one international operator was present – FSD.

In its critique of Tajikistan’s extension request, the International Campaign to Ban landmines (ICBL) argues that the 10-year request was far too long and based on an “unambitious plan.” The ICBL further points out that the low annual funding requirements and the low productivity projections presented in the extension request are not in line with Article 5 obligations that stipulate that mine clearance should be completed “as soon as possible”, and that extensions should be only for the minimum time strictly needed. The ICBL critique highlights concerns that the extension request was influenced too much by a UNDP evaluation that “was much more conservative than TMAC or other actors on the ground had been”. The UNDP evaluation recommended a completion time-line twice as long as TMAC’s initial estimation of completing all clearance by early 2015. The ICBL critique also recommended that Tajikistan be granted a five-year extension, urging Tajikistan to draft a new, more ambitious five-year plan.

The States Parties agreed to grant the request until 1 April 2020 at the Second Review Conference of the APMBC in Cartagena in December 2009. As highlighted above, TMAC and partners will develop a draft completion work plan 2014 – 2020 by the end of November 2013.

Tajikistan is neither a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, nor the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS
The NMASP makes reference to gender on a number of occasions throughout the document. For example, the “methodology and purpose section” of the NMASP states: “Attention to equal access of both sex groups to the benefits of mine action activities, as well as planning and monitoring of mine action will be reinforced.” The lack of post-clearance impact monitoring activities, however, means that it is challenging to monitor how women, girls, boys and men benefit from mine action activities, especially land release activities.

More generally, it is clear that gender considerations have been included in strategic planning processes in the MRE and VA/disability pillars. TMAC’s MRE department has

26 The ICBL, ICBL Critique of Tajikistan’s Article 5 Deadline Extension Request, November 2009, http://www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Work/MBT/Mine-Clearance/Extension-Requests/critique-tajikistan2,
proactively included gender in its activities and has utilised resources from the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP)’s portal, as well as the UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes. As mentioned above, the LTAP for MRE specifically underlines the importance of gender. Likewise, TMAC’s VA/disability department demonstrates a solid understanding of the importance of including gender in its planning and implementation activities.

The extent to which gender considerations are given importance in survey and clearance activities, however, appears to be limited. There are presently no female deminers or surveyors in Tajikistan, though the UST has informed it is keen to try to establish female clearance teams.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The NMASP does not include a specific monitoring and evaluation framework. It makes a brief reference to monitoring under the methodology and purpose section however, where it underlines the importance of developing action plans, emphasising that these plans need to have “concise M&E approaches.”

The midterm review of the NMASP

TMAC organised a midterm review (MTR) of the NMASP in June 2013. A total of 38 representatives from the Government of Tajikistan (GoT), national civil society organisations, national and international operators (NPA and FSD) participated in the workshop, as well as the ICRC, the OSCE, the GICHD and ISU. Following a request from TMAC, the GICHD assisted with co-facilitating the two and a half day MTR workshop.

The main objectives of the MTRW workshop were to:

1. review the mine action strategy against the reality of TMAP 2013;
2. inform on findings and recommendations made in evaluations, action plans, etc; and
3. jointly revise mine action strategy, conclude a draft and agree on the next steps.

The MTR workshop further aimed to promote greater inclusion of Government representatives in strategic planning, and to strengthen the network among mine action stakeholders.

Reflecting the participants’ areas of expertise, the facilitators divided them into four different working groups, tasked to review the relevant sections of the NMASP:

1. demining;

2. MRE;
3. VA; and
4. national ownership.

In collaboration with partners, TMAC is currently finalising the review process, based on changes presented by the various working groups during the MTR.

**KEY FINDINGS: GOOD PRACTICES, MAIN CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT**

The TMAP, which celebrates its 10-year anniversary in 2013, has steadily developed into a stronger programme, with improved coordination and information sharing. Furthermore, there has been a growing recognition that sound IM is a prerequisite for strategic planning, essential for effective and efficient operations, and the realisation of the goals and objectives stipulated in the NMASP.

Closely related to this is the mounting realisation that operational efficiency can be significantly improved by implementing a land release methodology, whereby appropriate methods are used to ensure that land is released as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Like most mine action programmes, the TMAP has had its ups and downs. Critics sometimes point out that survey and clearance resources were not efficiently utilised until fairly recently, and that the low productivity in the early years cannot be justified and that it damaged the programme’s reputation. Several respondents have underlined that the programme could have achieved considerably more over the past 10 years, given the small size of the programme, the relatively well-defined mine problem and the ongoing support from a number of international actors. It is important to underline, however, that Russian minefield records were not available until 2009. There is also the concern that the lack of Government commitment to mine action and the low level of national ownership, combined with the ambiguous status of TMAC, may result in donor fatigue.

Nevertheless, despite some major challenges along the way, it is clear that strategic planning procedures and processes have improved, and that there is a gradual strengthening of the QM system. What is also encouraging is that TMAC engages in fruitful collaborations with a number of external organisations, including the MACCA/DMC, the SAC, the ISU and the GICHD.
GOOD PRACTICES
A number of good practices can be drawn from the strategic planning experiences in the TMAP, including:

CONSULTATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NMASP 2009 – 2015
The NMASP was developed in an inclusive and consultative manner. All informants pointed out that they were satisfied with the drafting process and they felt they had the opportunity to provide input and share recommendations in a meaningful way. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted, including operators, civil society, government ministries, etc. This corresponds to global best practice which clearly shows that consultative planning processes are preconditions for a successful implementation of the plans.

RESURVEY ACTIVITIES
The recognition that the quality of the initial general survey data was poor, and the subsequent initiation of resurvey activities demonstrate an acknowledgement of the importance of good quality surveys for strategic planning and subsequent operational efficiency, and an eagerness to improve. This relates to a key QM principle – continual learning and improvement.

DATA CLEAN-UP PROJECT
Related to the above point is the 2012 TMAC/FSD-initiated data clean-up project, which resulted out of a growing recognition that accurate and reliable data is imperative for any strategic planning processes. The problem related to poor-quality data is not unique to the TMAP, but is a principal problem in most mine action programmes. It is, however, encouraging that TMAP stakeholders recognised the flaws of the data and proactively initiated a project together, developing a strategy on how to deal with the problem and securing funding to implement the project.

MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE NMASP
While the NMASP does not contain a monitoring and evaluation framework as such, the initiative to carry out a midterm review of the NMASP in June 2012 provided a good opportunity to bring representatives from the Government, civil society, operators, the ISU and the GICHD together, to review the plan and discuss and clarify several issues. The midterm review further demonstrated that there is a good partnership between the various TMAP stakeholders.
COLLABORATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS
It is evident that the TMAP has benefited considerably from fruitful collaborations with a number of external partners, including the MACCA, the ISU, the SAC and the GICHID. Procedures and processes have clearly benefited from a strengthened QM approach to operations through the development of process maps, the review of TNMAS and SOPs, and from recommendations related to operational efficiency.

MAIN CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT
The good practices that have emerged are positive outcomes of the challenges and lessons encountered during this process. Like most mine action programmes, the TMAP has faced several challenges over the years, including:

TOO MUCH FOCUS ON TMAC IN NATIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS
A key shortcoming of the NMASP is that it focuses too much on TMAC. It equates TMAC with the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme on numerous occasions. This is problematic for many reasons, particularly in regard to transition to national ownership. This issue was discussed during the midterm review of the NMASP, and all stakeholders agreed that the reviewed version will address this.

TRANSITION TO NATIONAL OWNERSHIP
The TMAP has struggled considerably in the area of transition to national ownership. As underlined above, there is an apparent lack of commitment on behalf of the Government to make the transition to national ownership in Tajikistan. In addition, it is obvious that UNDP could have asserted more pressure on the GoT to take on more national ownership early on. It is clear that the lack of national ownership and the ambiguous status of TMAC have negatively impacted on the TMAP, especially in regard to accreditation processes and the handover of safe land. The real question is if it is realistic to hope that the Government will take on more national ownership. Mine action is clearly not a priority in Tajikistan, which in some ways is understandable, given the relatively low level of humanitarian impact from mines/ERW.

Nevertheless, the low level of Government commitment goes against the notion of national ownership, a key principle of the APMBC, to which Tajikistan is a State Party. There is also a risk that it sends out negative signals to the donor community which could potentially affect funding and Tajikistan’s progress in completing APMBC A5 obligations as soon as possible.

DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-TERM ACTION PLANS
The process of developing the long-term action plans for demining and nationalisation has been described as a “complete failure” by one key stakeholder. The principal reason for this failure has been pointed out to be rooted in a lack of commitment and ownership of the process on behalf of the GoT and TMAC/UNDP. Whereas the processes of developing the MRE and VA plans were driven by external technical experts, the demining and
nationalisation were not. Given the low level of national commitment, this reportedly resulted in a stagnant process. The absence of long-term action plans for demining and nationalisation has been argued to negatively impact on the implementation of the NMAS.

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

It is evident that there have been weaknesses related to the IM process. Staff shortages in TMAC’s IM department for a few years impacted negatively on IM processes within the TMAP. It also appears that more effort could have been spent on data analysis. Many respondents highlighted the lack of thorough operational analysis and the negative implications this had on strategic planning and operational efficiency. As mentioned earlier, the quality of the data has also been a key challenge in the programme, and it appears that the interactions between the IM and operations departments could have been more solid earlier on. The extent to which IM is recognised as a cross-cutting issue can also be strengthened. There is further room for improvements in regard to information sharing between the various mine action pillars, to ensure a holistic approach to mine action.

**SURVEY ACTIVITIES AND NATIONAL CLARITY ON THE CONTAMINATION PROBLEM**

A number of lessons learnt can be drawn from the implementation of land release in the TMAP. A key challenge relates to the initial survey activities, which, for reasons presented above, resulted in poor quality data and in an inaccurate picture of the level of contamination. This impeded on strategic planning processes and ultimately operational efficiency. More solid survey activities could have contributed to greater clarity on the contamination problem at an earlier stage, which would have facilitated long-term strategic planning.
ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED


The GICHD, Gray, H, Operational Efficiency and Land Release Analysis, June 2013

Handicap International, Mine/ERW Risk Education in Tajikistan. Baseline Information from Three Districts in Sughd Region. 2010 KAP Survey Results, 2010


Ministry of Defence of the republic of Tajikistan, Strategic Plan on Humanitarian Demining 2013 – 2016, 17 July 2013


TMAC, National Mine Action Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015

TMAC, Tajikistan Mine Action Workshop on Nationalisation, 5 June 2012 Dushanbe, Tajikistan

TMAC, Tajikistan Mine Action Programme General Operational Guidelines for 2013

ANNEX III: EXIT AND TRANSITION STRATEGY


- National ownership and responsibility should be recognised through the official establishment of TMAC as a national MAC under a dedicated entity
- Land release operations will benefit from strengthening land release techniques and methods with systematic quality management
- The aim is for Tajikistan to be mine impact free at the end of 2015
- A sustainable national capacity to deal with residual contamination should be developed after 2015
- VA is mainstreamed into other UNDP programmes/national structures
- MRE is mainstreamed in MoE school curriculum and programmes
- Advocacy for continued mine action will be strengthened to raise the profile of mine action in Tajikistan
- Strong information management, sound planning and coordination will support the TMAP and prepare for national capacity after 2015

Exit Phase: Post-2015

- The scope and the negative impact of the contamination from landmines/ERW will have been reduced to a minimum
- Tajikistan is a mine-impact free country
- Programme activities are integrated and mainstreamed within projects of national institutions, ministries and agencies
- The need to maintain a specific mine action agency is largely reduced
- VA and MRE pillars are completely mainstreamed within GoT-programmes and activities
## ANNEX IV: INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Jonas Zachrisson</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
<td>NPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Resda Junuzagic</td>
<td>Operations Manager</td>
<td>NPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Sheree Bailey</td>
<td>Disability/VA Advisor</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Valiev Davron Abdurakhamnovich</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>MoLSP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Asadullo Zikrihudoev</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Society of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Muhabbatova Soima</td>
<td>Head, dept. of social service on</td>
<td>MoLSPP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>protection of families and children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Varka Okhoniyozov</td>
<td>Programme Analyst</td>
<td>TMAC/UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Muhabbat Ibrohimov</td>
<td>Head</td>
<td>TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Nargiza Babakhanova</td>
<td>Project Coordinator</td>
<td>Union of the Sappers of Tajikistan (UST)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Khodjibekov Amonkhodja Aripovich</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>UST</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Hlima Razakaoui</td>
<td>Regional Programme Director</td>
<td>HI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Richard Schmidt</td>
<td>Country Programme Director</td>
<td>FSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Christoph Waldmeier</td>
<td>UNV, Project Assistant</td>
<td>TMAC/UNDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Severine Chappaz</td>
<td>Head of Mission</td>
<td>ICRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Parviz Mavlonkulov</td>
<td>Operations Manager</td>
<td>TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Pascal Simon</td>
<td>Previous CTA</td>
<td>TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Sebastian Kosack</td>
<td>CTA</td>
<td>UNDP/TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Varka Okhoniyozov</td>
<td>Programme Analyst</td>
<td>UNDP/TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Ulmas Davlatov</td>
<td>MRE Coordinator</td>
<td>RCST</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Abdulmain Karimov</td>
<td>IM officer</td>
<td>TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Sharinusso Davlyatova</td>
<td>MRE Officer</td>
<td>TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Reykhan Muminova</td>
<td>VA Officer</td>
<td>TMAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Luka Buhin</td>
<td>Mine Action Officer</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr William Lawrence</td>
<td>Former CTA</td>
<td>UNDP/TMAC</td>
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