



Report of Secretary-General on Assistance in Mine Action 2015

Summary

The biennial Report of the Secretary-General on Assistance in Mine Action (A/70/207) was published on 3 September 2015.

Introduction

The report serves as a reminder of the continued impact of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), noting that globally as many as 7.9 million people live in close proximity to areas contaminated by mines and/or ERW and an additional 4.7 million people are at risk as a result of seasonal migration through mine/ERW affected corridors.

The report notes progress towards reducing the number of people killed or injured by landmines, which has declined by two-thirds since a peak in 2005. However, it also warns of the huge increase in ERW resulting from ongoing conflicts. ERW casualties have not declined and the percentage of casualties who are children continues to rise. It is clear mine action remains critical to improving the safety of civilians affected by conflict, including refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), enables the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and contributes to socio-economic development.

The Report represents the findings of the Mid-Term Review of the 'Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018' and draws on the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Mechanism which was developed specifically to measure progress against the strategic objectives of the Strategy in all countries with a United Nations mine action presence.

International Legislation on Mine Action

The Report provides an update on the various instruments of international law relating to mine action, specifically; the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

As of the time of writing the Report, 162 countries (out of 193 Member States) had acceded or ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, with Oman joining in this reporting period. 47.1 million stockpiled landmines have been destroyed and 157 States Parties no longer hold any stockpiles of landmines. To date, 93 states are party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and five of these states completed clearance obligations during the reporting period; Albania, Grenada, Mauritania, Norway and Zambia. The Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons has been ratified or acceded to by 121 states, 6 of which joined in the reporting period; Algeria, Grenada, Iraq, Kuwait, the State of Palestine and Zambia. In addition, 156 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and 86 have ratified its protocols.



Mid-Term Review of Strategy of United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018

Strategic Objective 1: Risks to Individuals and the socio-economic impacts of mines and ERW, including cluster munitions, are reduced

Reducing the risk posed by explosive hazards requires a holistic approach including mine/ERW risk education, as well as survey and clearance of landmines and other ERW. Populations particularly at-risk include children, refugees, IDPs and nomadic communities.

The Report provides examples of progress made, such as an 85% reduction in annual casualty rates in Lao People's Democratic Republic over the last decade and information from Mozambique that by January 2015, 97% of districts had been declared free from known mine contamination. Across mine/ERW affected countries participating in the M&E Mechanism, 51 per cent of suspected and confirmed hazardous areas have been confirmed safe and released back to communities. Even in countries where conflict is ongoing, impressive outputs were achieved. In Afghanistan, the United Nations coordinated the clearance of 1,631 minefields and 98 battlefields, resulting in 359 communities being declared free from the threat of mines and ERW. Humanitarian mine action responses to the evolving threats posed explosive hazards, for example remnant IEDs in Iraq, are also highlighted. Furthermore, the Report also details United Nations mine action rapid responses following the floods in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the increase in hostilities in Gaza and Ukraine.

Mine/ ERW risk education was carried out in 18 countries or territories during the reporting period. As a result, over six million people were equipped with safety information that reduces their risk of being killed, maimed or injured by landmines and other ERW.

The efforts of the United Nations to reduce the risks posed by accidental explosions in Government-owned ammunition storage areas are also highlighted. For example in the Central African Republic, over 80 tons of unsecured ammunition were safely relocated and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1,500 tons of unsafe items were destroyed.

Strategic Objective Two: Comprehensive Support is provided by national and international actors to mine and ERW victims within broader responses to injury and disability

The United Nations provides support to affected States and communities across all six pillars of victim assistance; data collection, emergency and continuing medical care, physical and other rehabilitation, psychological and psycho-social support, social and economic inclusion, and establishment, enforcement and implementation of relevant laws and public policies. In 59 per cent of the countries and territories contributing to the M&E Mechanism, a disability policy or plan of action has been established that includes provision for survivors and victims of mines/ ERW. Furthermore, victim assistance is one of the most frequently identified capacity development needs in these field programmes.



The Report details the range of ways in which the United Nations supports affected states in their victim assistance efforts. One example is from Afghanistan, where 12,588 people were provided with physical rehabilitation, 5,638 people with vocational training and 2,326 people with psychosocial support such as peer-to-peer counselling. Furthermore, three United Nations advisors are embedded within the Ministries of Public Health, Education and Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled in that country.

Strategic Objective Three: The transfer of mine action functions to national actors is accelerated, with national capacity to fulfil mine action responsibilities increased

The Report identified two crucial elements to assess progress towards the transfer to national actors; the development of a national mine action strategy and the provision for mine action in the national budget. Among countries participating in the M&E Mechanism, all of whom receive United Nations mine action support, 59 per cent have developed a national mine action strategy and a national budget for mine action. Furthermore, 61 per cent of these countries initiated plans for the transition to national ownership.

The report highlights specific examples of progress including Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the national authority now manages all mine action planning and operations and the United Nations only provides strategic advice and emergency support when requested. In addition, in Somalia the United Nations supported the Somali Police Force to establish the country's first Improvised Explosive Device Defeat capacity and 11 Somali Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams to act as first responders to explosive hazards in the major cities.

The Report also emphasizes the importance of South-South cooperation in accelerating the effective transfer to national actors and provides positive examples of cooperation between Tajikistan and Jordan, as well as Mali and Benin.

Strategic Objective Four: Mine action is promoted and integrated in multilateral instruments and frameworks as well as national plans and legislation

The Report elaborates on the inclusion of mine action in national plans in countries such as Colombia, where in August 2014, a report issued to Colombia's Congress on the implementation of the Victims and Land Restitution Law highlighted the importance of mine action. In addition, at the regional level, the African Union launched the Mine Action and ERW Strategic Framework, a significant initiative developed in close partnership with the United Nations.

In terms of integration into multilateral instruments and frameworks, 68 per cent of affected countries are States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and 77 per cent of those with a United Nations mine action presence are States Parties. While 48 per cent of affected countries are States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, this figure rises to 69 per cent among countries with a United Nations mine action presence.

Internal Commitments to Strengthening the United Nations Capacity in Mine Action



This report also provides information on a number of initiatives the United Nations committed to as part of the Strategy to strengthen its assistance in mine action. One initiative was to sustain the implementation and monitoring of the UN Gender Guidelines; the M&E Mechanism shows that 76 per cent of programmes often or almost always consider gender in its programme design; 75 per cent of programmes almost always or often disaggregate survey data by sex and age; and over 90 per cent assemble survey teams of men and women as appropriate taking into account community demographics and customs.

Another initiative was to update the United Nations Policy on Victim Assistance; consultations are advanced and will result in a policy that focuses on how the United Nations can best support victims from mines, explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards.

Finally, in support of strengthening resource management, on behalf of the IACG-MA, UNMAS coordinated and oversaw the process of creating and publishing the Portfolio of Mine Action Projects for 2015, which presents the resource needs of more than 20 mine and ERW affected countries.

Observations and Recommendations

The Secretary-General concludes the Report with a number of observations and recommendations, which are summarised below:

1. Mine action is at the core of post-conflict humanitarian response; the contamination of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) remains a major security issue affecting civilian populations, United Nations operations and the sustainment of global peace and security.
2. Mine action enables the safe flight, return and other durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees and ensures access for humanitarian actors and peacekeepers.
3. The rise in the number of intra-state conflicts and the expansion in the range of explosive hazards have presented new challenges and resulted in increasing requests for United Nations emergency humanitarian mine action assistance.
4. Member States are requested to support to the efforts of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to collect examples of good practice and develop guidance on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Parties to conflict are urged to stop the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas.
5. The increasing use of IEDs in today's conflicts is also noted and parties to the conflict called to desist from the use of such weapons and methodology.
6. Unplanned explosions resulting from unsafe and unsecure ammunition stockpiles located in populated areas continue to wreak havoc in many countries; states are called on to align their ammunition stockpile management with international standards.
7. Member States are requested to support the United Nations rapid and flexible mine action response through predictable, un-earmarked funding.



8. The Secretary-General calls on States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty to stay committed to the task of ridding the world of anti-personnel landmines and realizing the rights of survivors and victims through political will and financial support.
9. The Secretary-General calls for the universalization of the instruments of international legislation relating to mine action and for compliance in all aspects.
10. South-South cooperation is an important tool in the transfer of responsibility to national authorities.

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