

Tajikistan

Summary

Tajikistan's landmine problem has existed since the 1992-1997 civil war, when Russian and Uzbek forces laid mines along its borders. The number of accidents continues to fall every year. In 2008, as of August, there were 4 accidents with 2 injuries and 2 deaths. In 2007, there were nine accidents with 10 injuries and 9 deaths.

Efforts to eliminate mine threats have continued since Tajikistan signed the mine-ban treaty. Since 2003, the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC) has overseen all aspects of mine action, including mine risk education, survivor assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction. TMAC is a government structure supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which also plays a vital role in resource mobilization for all mine activities. The Swiss Foundation for Demining (FSD) clears mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) with TMAC supervision. Most FSD demining staff are seconded from the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The current mine and UXO contamination level is defined mainly by suspected hazardous areas. Efforts are underway to determine the actual magnitude, principally through land release.

Appreciable progress will be achieved in nationalizing mine and UXO clearance with sustainable support from the Government. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has committed to building the MoD's capacity for mine clearance, under the supervision of TMAC. The MoD will also be well equipped to work as a "residual agency" for future mine and UXO tasks. Per existing agreement with the Government, FSD has agreed to continue its presence until Tajikistan meets its mine-ban treaty commitments. FSD is likely to receive adequate funding for 2009, but additional donor support will be necessary, since the OSCE will now support only the MoD.

Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country with a structured national mine action programme. Sustained resource mobilization for all programme aspects remains critical. Without adequate and timely funding, Tajikistan will likely not be able to meet its mine-ban treaty obligations by April 2010.

The Tajikistan funding appeal under the 2009 Mine Action Portfolio totals US \$4,831,708.

Scope of the Problem

From 2003 to 2005, FSD undertook a general survey. TMAC recently conducted a comparative survey (visual verifications). As a result of these surveys and analysis, approximately 53 square kilometers of land have been identified as suspected hazardous areas throughout Tajikistan.

In late 2007, TMAC, in collaboration with FSD and with funding from OSCE, initiated a land release survey on 21 square kilometres of land, reducing it to only 4.8 square kilometres. As of July 2008, FSD had cleared approximately 1.5 square kilometres and released an additional 1 square kilometre. After reducing the quantity of suspected hazardous land through land release and clearance, the current total suspected hazardous area is 32 square kilometres. This does not include

(and will probably not include for some time) the quantity of contaminated land along the Tajik-Uzbek border.

TMAC intends to maintain this kind of remarkable decrease in the quantity of contaminated lands through land release surveys with funding from the OSCE and the ongoing assistance of FSD. Potential OSCE funding to undertake land release surveys is presently under negotiation. In 2009, OSCE, in collaboration with the MoD and TMAC, is also expected to undertake technical surveys, with particular emphasis on the Tajik-Afghan border.

Given the scope of the problem and limited resource mobilization, it is very likely that Tajikistan will not be able to meet its mine-ban treaty obligation of completing the clearance of all known minefields by 1 April 2010.

Coordination and Consultation

All aspects of the mine action programme in Tajikistan are undertaken in close collaboration with relevant stake-holders, in a responsive and welcoming host nation environment. Since TMAC was established in 2003 with support from UNDP, the Government has been continually involved at all levels. TMAC represents the executive arm of the Government on the Commission on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CIIHL). The Government provides the use of training facilities. The MoD, Committee of Emergency Situations and National Border Defence Committee provide human resources (principally, deminers). The national TV and radio agencies broadcast mine action messages, interviews and film spots without charge. Imported mine action equipment and supplies enjoy tax and duty-free status. In general, the political climate continues to remain amiable.

TMAC's national landmines database is used by various agencies. A shift is underway from the old version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) to the latest version. The IMSMA has to address many information collection and management-related issues, however. Experts from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) have visited TMAC and made improvements.

TMAC is responsible for coordinating all mine action activities, including clearance operations by FSD. Clearance capacity is expected to be nationalized, with the MoD taking over some portion under the supervision of TMAC.

Mine risk education and survivor assistance projects are undertaken in close collaboration with local government authorities – both at the local and central levels - along with civil society and affected communities.

The process leading to the submission of project proposals for the 2009 Mine Action Portfolio has involved extensive consultations through workshops, discussion sessions and meetings where TMAC presented and clarified the scope of the portfolio and sought project proposals. This resulted in the submission of 12 projects oriented around a coherent strategy to eliminate mine and UXO risks.

Strategy

Although much progress has been made, Tajikistan continues to be a nation in post-conflict recovery. Humanitarian mine action helps re-establish a safe environment, ensuring a return to normal life and economic development. The objective of mine action is to reduce risks from landmines to a level where people can live safely; economic, social and health development can occur free from the constraints imposed by landmine contamination; and the needs of survivors can be addressed. The overarching objective of the national mine action programme is to develop national capacities so that strategic commitments are reached, and a year-on-year increase in inputs from the national Government eventually reduces reliance on the international donor community. It is imperative that the programme plans and coordinates all mine action activities with national and international stakeholders so that the following four goals can be achieved, in accordance with the 2006-2010 national strategy:

- A reduction to virtually zero in the number of casualties from mines and explosive remnants of war;
- Rapid clearance of areas with considerable economic or agricultural potential;
- Improved access to treatment for accident survivors;
- Gender balance; and
- Full compliance with the anti-personnel mine-ban treaty.

UNDP's capacity development project aims to assist the Government to create a stable, sustainable, indigenous national institution able to plan, coordinate and implement a comprehensive mine action programme. The requirement for an international advisor to be part of TMAC will continue as long as the Government and UNDP consider it necessary. The advisor's principal role should be capacity building of the national staff person at TMAC.

The mine action programme strategy emphasizes working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and all other stakeholders to plan and implement a dynamic mine risk education programme. FSD, as well as other relevant actors such as the MoD, will continue to be involved in planning and coordinating survey, marking and clearance operations. With OSCE support, the MoD will establish a full-fledged mine action unit. Other initiatives involve the Government and other actors in ensuring that the plight of landmine victims is adequately addressed.

TMAC and UNDP coordinate all aspects of the mine action programme to ensure that it is being undertaken in complete compliance with national and international standards, and that it is in line with the Government's overall development strategy.

UNDP plays a critical role in engaging stakeholders in discussions about mainstreaming mine action within national development strategies, mobilizing resources and ensuring gender equity in all aspects of the mine action programme. In encouraging a coordinated, comprehensive approach to mine action, it helps create an environment in which mine action activities are conducted with the greatest impact, productivity, cost efficiency and gender equity.
