The Impact of COVID-19 on Mine Action

Drumlanrig Group
Agenda

- DRUMLANRIG GROUP
- UNOPS
- GICHD
- KEY MESSAGES
Impact of Covid-19 on Mine Action:

Why Mine Action Needs to Continue During the Pandemic?

❖ Impact of pandemic on mine-affected communities. More work required, but initial indications suggest contamination exacerbates risk:
   - Fear of spreading the virus accelerating IDP camp closures, forcing returns to contaminated areas.
   - Migrant labour forced to return home due to lockdowns, transiting through contaminated areas.
   - Loss of livelihoods due to economic impact of the pandemic leading people to cultivate contaminated land.

❖ Covid-19 impact on mine action differs depending on the national context and activities. Overall, the sector was able to adapt quickly and continue to deliver results.

❖ Mine action is essential to a triple nexus approach:

- Saves lives and protects civilians;
- Enables safe returns, rebuilding and access to essential services;
- Facilitates long term development through safe access to land;
- Facilitates safe humanitarian access;
- Contributes to peace processes;
- Contributes to capacity building towards national/local ownership (localization)

➢ Given its enabling role, supporting mine action is not just the right thing to do, but an essential prerequisite for sustainable peace and development in conflict-affected communities. The pandemic does not change that; it only adds urgency to implementation of mine action activities.
The Impact of Covid-19 on Mine Action:

Operational considerations

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Immediate consequences in 2020</th>
<th>Long-term impact and concerns</th>
<th>Recommendation to MASG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Many donors continued to support throughout the pandemic, but a number of them reallocated funds ➔ impact on operations.</td>
<td>Long term economic consequences of the pandemic (aid cuts, diversion of aid to deal with pandemic).</td>
<td>Continued commitment to mine action by donor governments in light of potential cuts to aid budgets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>Less travel, changes in spending patterns due to restrictions ➔ underspends</td>
<td>Reallocations and realignments permitted. Consider potential disruptions in future budgeting.</td>
<td>Continued donor flexibility regarding budget realignments, project adjustments and achievement of outputs.</td>
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<td>Operations delivery</td>
<td>Social distancing, hygiene requirements, limits on gatherings ➔ SOPs for Covid-safe operations.</td>
<td>Changes of operational areas/ deployment model and/or loss of operational days due to restrictions ➔ underachievement of outputs in some cases.</td>
<td>Anticipating that disruptions will continue, sustained donor support throughout lockdows will be essential to retain trained capacity and resume swiftly when restrictions are lifted.</td>
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<td>Ways of working</td>
<td>Remote working ➔ immediate impact on staff wellbeing.</td>
<td>Need to adapt ways of working, considering staff wellbeing while acknowledging benefits of agile work environments.</td>
<td>Further work will be required to define the best ways of working as a partial return to the office is expected.</td>
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- **Early engagement with sector partners** (Mar 2020) recognising the need for **flexibility** amongst key stakeholders, donors in particular;
- **Manage change and effects consistently**;
- **Maintain** mine action operations in an **efficient and cost-effective manner**;
- **Avoid outright terminations and loss of capacity** that would ultimately cost more to stand up later;
- **Amend/adjust** - de-scope, stand-down, suspend and where necessary - terminate.

UNOPS Peace and Security Cluster

- **Project management** - 18 UNMAS field programmes
- **100 contracts/grants**, representing **$200m** of mine-action activities
April 2021: Policy on options for contracts and grants in response to COVID-19

- Managing suspension, amendments to facilitate operational changes, stand down, termination or status quo;

May 2021: Policy on managing stand-down / suspension of contracts and grants

- Determine timeline, monitoring, and budgetary implications for stand down or suspension
- Requires a cost/benefit analysis to validate choice for approval by UNOPS delegated authority
22% of contracts/grants (22) - changes to scope of work
- Shifted risk education to radio/quizzes from face-to-face (Mali)
- Reduced EORE teams by 50% (Afghanistan)
- Extended contract duration to produce comic books (Iraq)

5% of contracts (5) - stand-down
- 3 contracts suspended until contract expiry to retain staff (South Sudan)

8% of contracts/grants (8) - temporary suspension
- 6-month suspension (Sudan)
- 1.5-month suspension (Afghanistan)
Opportunities and Challenges for Remote Delivery
Evolution of Remote Delivery Methods and Tools

Online delivery

Hybrid approaches

Onsite work
Key messages

- Mine action remains very much relevant. The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the need for mine action, but it has also highlighted that we will need to keep innovating and strengthening national capacities.

- The pandemic necessitated flexibility on all sides: donors, UN, implementing partners. Working together – more than ever – we ensured the continued viability of mine action operations.

- But the pandemic is far from over in the most mine-affected places. We need continued commitment and flexibility from all sides.

- We need to capitalize on the lessons learned and innovative approaches developed during the pandemic and ensure these become part of our working ways as we build back better in the ‘new normal’.
Discussion / Q&A

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