

## Mine Action Support Group, 18 February 2016

### Mine Action in conflict and urban settings

#### Introduction

- Operating in conflict settings has been one of the sessions of this year NDM.
- Informative presentations on mine action operations in Iraq and Syria which highlight the need, but also the complexity of operating in conflict
- Importance for the MA community to be on top of the implications of operating in such situations

I would like to share with you some thoughts we are currently entertaining on this matter, and would be looking forward to other views and thoughts.

#### **Operating in or close to situations of active conflict brings about distinct challenges**

- Traditional challenges common to all humanitarian actors:
  - o How to ensure access to contaminated areas
  - o How to guarantee safety and security of staff
  - o More in general, how to uphold the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence in these environments
- One would also have to expect different types of contamination and additional risks
  - o Traditional minefields in the countryside (if you allow the expression) are replaced by a contamination in urban/populated areas (heavy, often covered under rubble)
  - o Situation aggravated by further risks: we have heard in many presentations of the massive use of IEDs, but also of poorly managed ammunition depots (which often found themselves in urban areas as well) and of the proliferation of SALW
- Today's conflict are also characterized by the lack of clear-cut interlocutors
  - o Growing number, opacity and unpredictability of parties to conflict
  - o How to generate the necessary humanitarian space in these circumstances?
  - o How also to plan strategically, coordinate operations, to manage information efficiently?

## How to go about addressing these challenges?

What has been stressed today is the need to be flexible and innovative, to adapt and improvise. I was struck for example by the idea of getting information via social media – which is a possibility that we ourselves are exploring.

### 1. Stronger cooperation between MA actors and other humanitarian actors

- Similar challenges for all humanitarian actors
- Explore cooperative approaches, joint risk analyses (what Mr. Rasmus Jakobsen of DRC called “a common analytical lense”) and shared mitigation measures.
- Mine action needs to draw closer to the “humanitarian family”, and the World Humanitarian Summit represents a great chance to do so.

### 2. Different types of risks require different types of expertise

- For example: addressing IEDs requires a distinct set of skills, equipment and procedures.

### 3. Relying on local organisations

- I think it was the UN Deputy Emergency Response Coordinator who use the line “as local as possible, as international as necessary” and Mr Bryant, UNDP Yemen, was referring to local solutions for local problems.
- Partnering with local organisations will be instrumental in gaining acceptance and taking advantage of local knowledge.

### 4. Operating within an international political framework where possible

- International political frameworks can help enhance the feasibility and legitimacy of operations and makes them more sustainable.
- This is our experience for example in the Ukraine, where we are working with the OSCE.

## Conclusion

- Operating in conflicts is today’s reality in certain areas of the world. The humanitarian need for it is clear. The MA sector needs to respond to this need, which will require the ability to adapt and improvise to certain extents and to cooperate ever more closely with other humanitarian actors.

## Questions

- How can both donors and operators plan, coordinate and implement a *holistic* response to multiple risks stemming from explosives in conflict settings?
- How can we balance long-term support and emergency-type of interventions ?
- What are the limits and constraints of your government in terms of interlocutors when supporting emergency mine action during active conflict?