

Assistance in Mine Clearance supported \$126 million worth of mine action projects in 1998 alone. Other major donors are contributing to mine action bilaterally, such as the European Union and the United States. In addition, the Princess Diana Fund, the Turner Fund, the Slovenian Trust Fund and others offer an opportunity to increase contributions through matching funds. Even countries that are not traditional donors to mine action, such as Vietnam and China, are supporting mine action through in-kind contributions of personnel, equipment and facilities. Meanwhile, international financial institutions, as well as some regional organizations, are supporting mine action with increased resources, thus creating a solid network of donors worldwide.

When the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance was established in 1994, only a handful of countries were donors. To date 37 countries have made contributions.

The United Nations system has transformed its approach to mine action. Before the Convention was signed, mine action was the purview of a range of different UN agencies and even different departments within the Secretariat. Today the UN Mine Action Service performs a co-ordination role within the UN system which increases transparency and information sharing with donors, mine-affected communities and NGOs.

The UN was not the only organization to recognize the importance of co-ordination: donors have coalesced around the Mine Action Support Group in New York, NGOs have created organizations such as Landmine Monitor to monitor compliance with the Convention through a widely published annual report, and the Survey Contact Group to bring clarity and consistency to the management of level 1 surveys. Mine action centres are working in the field to co-ordinate civilian, commercial and military deminers, and national governments are working with the range of actors internationally and locally to implement national mine action strategies in as efficient a way as possible.

CHALLENGES

If the story of mine action in the first year of the Convention is positive, we must temper our satisfaction with an acceptance of the fact that we still face many difficult challenges. Most notably, mines are reportedly being laid in Angola and in Kosovo. One challenge to which donors should focus their energy in the coming year is improving the speed with which funds are transferred to the field. Implementing agencies cannot deliver adequate programs when their funding is delayed by the bureaucratic processes of donors. The international community is increasingly recognizing that to address the humanitarian emergency caused by mines we must give sufficient resources, preferably with multi-year commitments, to our implementing partners within reasonable time frames. We can also improve co-ordination between implementing agencies, donors and governments. A variety of mechanisms for dialogue may exist, but making good use of these facilities will be a great challenge. Finally, the collection of adequate statistical information, particularly concerning victims, remains a major challenge for all parties engaged in mine action. The better we understand the problem, the better we can direct our resources to where they are most needed.