Clearing priority land

C learing mined land and returning it to safe and productive use is fundamental. The 10-year time frame written into the Convention is ambitious and sets a target which will require mass mobilization of resources, ingenuity and political will. One of the first challenges is the establishment of credible baseline data on existing mine contamination and setting priorities for clearance on the basis of greatest humanitarian need.

Mine clearance has undergone a revolution in both theory and practice over the past few years. There has been a shift from a numbers-based model of mine clearance to a more community-oriented, impact-based model. Success in older mine clearance programs was often measured by the number of mines detected and destroyed rather than by the amount of productive land cleared or related reductions in the social and economic impact of mines on communities.

Newer approaches use community consultation and impact surveys to locate both high risk and high priority areas, such as roads, fields and sources of water and wood that must be cleared first. In some instances "area reduction" techniques, such as using specially trained mine detection dogs, have dramatically increased the speed with which significant amounts of land can be returned to productive use.

Success in demining must be measured in terms of land returned to productive use.

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