

Improving mine action information

One of the greatest challenges to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of mine action programs is the lack of reliable information on the nature of the landmine problem. Over the past two years significant improvements in the quality and quantity of this information have prompted a shift away from focussing on the number of mines in an area to addressing the social and economic impact of the mines. This conceptual shift - and the new information it is generating - are enabling a growing number of national and international mine action institutions to plan and program in a more coordinated, purposeful and systematic way.



At the global level, the United Nations system has transformed its approach to mine action over the past 18 months. Today the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) acts as the focal point within the UN system for all mine-related activities and works closely with organizations such as, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Program, the World Health Organization and the Department of Disarmament Affairs to support specific mine action initiatives and programs. UNMAS also coordinates the collection, analysis and dissemination of mine action information and has taken the lead in working with members of the New York-based Mine Action Support Group to improve donor coordination.

Another significant global development has been the emergence of the Survey Contact Group - an NGO coalition working with UNMAS and key donors to facilitate the implementation of national level one surveys aimed at producing high quality, standardized data on the socio-economic impact of AP mines. Since 1997, level one surveys and/or in-depth assess-

ments have commenced or been completed in Bosnia, Cambodia, Chad, Jordan, Lebanon, Mozambique, Thailand and Yemen.

To enhance the coordination of global mine action, DFAIT granted a one-time contribution of \$500,000 to UNMAS in 1998-99. This funding will help to ensure global resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Canada also developed the Multilateral Institutions Program to support mine action initiatives undertaken by multilateral agencies such as the UN and ICRC. This program will fund a total of \$10.5 million of initiatives over five years and this year disbursed just over \$2.8 million through these international bodies, including \$1.5 million for the national level one survey in Yemen described above; a further \$205,000 directed to the UNDP Trust Fund for Laos; \$500,000 to the UNDP Trust Fund for Cambodia; \$300,000 to the OAS Trust Fund for demining along the Peru-Ecuador border; and a \$300,000 contribution to mine awareness training in Afghanistan.

As well, much of Canada's work in Mozambique consists of a multi-year program to improve the information on that country's mine situation by supporting a national level

Improved information on the mine problem is critical to the efficient and effective use of limited mine action resources.