



Remarks

by

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at the

UNDP Briefing on Development and Mine Action

New York, July 12, 2016

Check against Delivery

First, allow me to thank UNDP and UNDP's Assistant Administrator for convening this very important meeting.

I would like to thank UNDP's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), and welcome their report; I wish to also thank the Management for their Response to the Evaluation of UNDP's contribution to Mine Action

JULY WAR 2006

Ten years ago, on this very day, the 12th of July, 2006, Israel launched a 33-day war on Lebanon. During that war, Israeli forces rained an estimated 4 million submunitions on south Lebanon, the vast majority over the final three days when Israel knew a settlement was imminent.

According to Human Rights Watch Report: "Israel's strikes in 2006 were the most extensive use of cluster munitions anywhere in the world since the 1991 Gulf War. Based on its own field response and a review of public reports, the UN Mine Action Coordination Center of South Lebanon (MACC SL) estimated, that Israel fired cluster munitions containing as many as four million submunitions in 962 separate strikes. According to information provided to Human Rights Watch by Israeli soldiers who resupplied Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) units with cluster munitions, the number of submunitions used could be as high as 4.6 million. That is more than twice as many submunitions used by Coalition forces in Iraq in 2003."

Israeli forces cluster munition strikes were spread over an area of approximately 1,400 square kilometers north and south of the Litani river, that included urban centers, agricultural land, and woodland, which were directly contaminated by submunitions. Cluster munitions have contaminated some of the poorest areas of Lebanon, most of which depend on agricultural activities.

Experts have indicated that the failure rates for many of Israel's submunitions appeared to have averaged 25 percent, leaving behind vast numbers of hazardous unexploded submunitions.

SYRIA

Lebanon is facing a new challenge since 2011, with the start of the Syrian crisis, represented by the massive influx of Syrian refugees into its territories. Currently Lebanon has the highest percentage per capita of refugees, of whom over a million Syrian nationals. Syrian refugees have spread across Lebanon, including the country's south. The pressure on land use and these new residents' ignorance of the threat and location of landmines have led to more casualties. Refugees are compounding the problem because they really have no idea where the mines are.

Since 2011, the rate of injuries and deaths caused by unexploded ordnance has begun to climb in southern Lebanon, reversing a downward trend observed since 2007. From a low of six incidents in 2011, 24 took place in 2013. There were 19 incidents in 2014.

Extensive landmine education programmes in southern Lebanon are credited with saving countless lives.

LEBANON'S COMMITMENT

Lebanon remains committed to continually improve its program. The Lebanon Mine Action Program (LMAP) has made progress in demining work but the remaining tasks are, however, significant and continue to directly impact over 400 Lebanese villages covering more than 62 square kilometers. Indirectly, of course, the entire country is impacted, as these hazards block access to arable land in many cases and also impede the delivery of key development initiatives

The Government of Lebanon, through its coordinating body the Lebanon Mine Action Center (LMAC) collaborates with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the national and international mine action operators, to steadily progress towards recovery.

Despite insufficient funding, the hard work, and the efficient, well managed and coordinated efforts of all mine action organizations have resulted in the clearance of 70% of the cluster bomb contaminated areas, 66% of the dangerous areas, and 46% of the minefields. LMAC post-clearance survey data confirms that 97% of released land is put into use within 3 months.

The Lebanese Government has continued to contribute to the Mine Action Programme through the LMAC facilities and staff, in addition to the 19 Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Engineering Regiment (ER) teams that are supporting the mine action program (1 sampling team, 2 Multi-Task Teams, 2 Mine Clearance teams, 7 Mine Detection Dogs teams, 3 Non-Technical Survey teams and 4 Mechanical teams). In addition, the LAF provided 3 companies to cover rapid response over the entire Lebanese territories.

VICTIMS OF CLUSTER BOMBS REHABILITATION

LMAC Review Report: A sample survey conducted by LMAC showed that 88.7 % of the victims of cluster munitions are males mostly injured during work or farming in the towns fields (29%). 61.8 % of the male victims are married and 68.8% support between one to four family members. These indicators reflected that the victims are active male providers that economically support a family. These accidents caused drastic changes to their lives and required several measures to be undertaken to help the victim reintegrate as an active member of society. The survey also highlighted the economical endeavors the victims and their families are facing. In most cases the family income decreased after the accident occurred.

In 2014, 100 direct beneficiaries were trained on income generating projects allowing them a healthy mean of reintegration into society. The trainings were mainly funded mainly by the EU in addition to another fund by the Marshal Legacy Institute (MLI). The material offered a diversified choice of topics allowing each participant to choose the training according to their preferences and highlighting their skills. The topics tackled the following:

- 1- Raising poultry (egg and meat production)
- 2- Beekeeping
- 3- Agriculture (planting olives and apple trees, cultivation of plants, etc.)
- 4- Feasibility study for business plans

After completing the training and undergoing a competitive process, 15 individuals received grants to start their own income generating projects. This step is an opportunity allowing all the participants to use their acquired skills to improve their personal and family's quality of life.

LMAC-GICHD

The Ministry of National Defense, represented by LMAC, and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to manage and coordinate the Arabic Outreach Programme (AOP) for Mine Action. This memorandum will result in the full handover of the AOP planning, management and coordination to the LMAC by the end of 2017 so that the LMAC through the Regional School for Humanitarian Demining in Lebanon (RSHDL) will constitute a regional center for the AOP activities. It is worth mentioning that a five-year strategy for the RSHDL is currently being developed

THE ROAD AHEAD

The final goal put forward by the strategy (The National Mine Action Strategy 2011-2020), aiming at the total clearance and release of agricultural and residential lands, was impeded due to a funding shortfall, the unwillingness, by Israel, to surrender the complete mine maps, and the discovery of new contaminated areas.

In 2014, LMAC conducted a mid-term review for the first strategy tranche and accordingly adjusted milestones 2016 and targets 2020. The review clearly announced that within the currently available operational capacity, clearance of cluster munitions as planned by 2016 is not feasible. Thus, Lebanon re-adjusted its target to complete clearance by 2020, should funding be secured. This extension will still enable Lebanon to meet its ten-year framework stipulated under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

We would like to convey our sincere appreciation for the support of the donor community. We take the opportunity to thank in particular the European Union among other international donors for their continuous support as well as UNDP for ensuring the highest level of transparency and accountability for donor funds.

The combined efforts of the UNDP, international donors, and local stakeholders have enabled impressive results in a variety of fields. Funding limitations are impacting the future of demining efforts in the country and are impacting the country's ability to achieve the obligations laid down by the international treaties it has signed. In this regard, we call to increase the international support for clearance operations and for socio-economic development projects in order to enable Lebanon to meet its targets, as set by the National Mine Action Strategy, by 2020.

