EVALUATION & ACHIEVING RESULTS IN ERW CLEARANCE PROGRAMS

Introduction
For many countries, the clearance, removal or destruction of ERW, as foreseen under Article 3 of CCW Protocol V, is a long-term, costly task. To achieve the best results with limited resources, proper program planning is critical. For this, project cycle management is a basic concept (see section below). This discussion paper will focus specifically on the role of evaluation in the project cycle. It will also introduce the results-based approach for program planning and highlight the particularities of ERW clearance programs in this context.

The OECD DAC defines ‘evaluation’ as the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy, or program. It is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, on-going, or completed intervention. Basic criteria used include relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of a program.

The Project Life Cycle
The life cycle of an ERW clearance project includes different phases: (i) a needs assessment of the extent and impact of the ERW contamination; (ii) project design and planning; (iii) project implementation and monitoring; (iv) delivery of benefits to the beneficiaries; and (v) evaluation to capture lessons learned for the next design and planning phase. We are most familiar with evaluations at the end of a project (called summative evaluations). The aim is to improve the project with every new cycle. Increasingly, however, the evaluation function starts in the design and planning phase (prospective evaluation), and continues through the implementation phase (formative evaluation – e.g. a mid-term review).

Note: This is not an official UN document and the symbol is used for reference purposes only!

Evaluation serves two main purposes: accountability and performance improvement (by capturing lessons learnt and applying these in the next cycle). For performance improvement, evaluation supports learning at two levels: (i) management performance in implementing the project as designed and (ii) information on benefits actually received by the beneficiaries, which indicates whether the program design was logical for that situation and time. It seeks to answer the questions:

- how can organizational and other implementation procedures be improved? and
- what difference has the program actually made in the lives of people?

**Program Planning for Results**

When planning a program, the core concept is to begin by determining ‘how to make a difference’ by addressing the people’s needs rather than ‘how we keep busy’. To achieve this, planning starts with the goal (overarching objective) and purpose (specific objective) of the program; for example, is our goal a developmental one, or is it treaty compliance. Once where we know where we want to go, we can turn to the question of how to get there: identifying outputs – the goods and services actually delivered by the project – then activities and, finally, inputs.

So we start the planning process by determining where we want to get to. But where should we want to get to? The answer depends on the country and the time – what are the country’s overall priorities at this particular time? For most poor countries, for example, poverty reduction is the priority and ERW program planners have to determine how ERW contributes to poverty and constrains poverty reduction efforts. If ERW is a rural problem in the country, an appropriate goal might be ‘reduce rural poverty in ERW-affected areas.’ One or more concrete objectives (often termed ‘purposes’) then indicate how the ERW program will contribute to this goal: for example, increase crop production. This makes it clear that the ERW project will give a priority to clearance of areas that will be used for agricultural crops.

This is the key to results-based planning approaches. The reduction of rural poverty is a worthwhile result, as is increased crop production. These are the things that will make an actual difference to people. The outputs of ERW programs – cleared areas, devices destroyed, risk education delivered – are also results (assuming our targets are achieved), but they only enable the beneficiaries to improve their lives by avoiding accidents, growing more food, and so on. The outputs produced by the ERW project are the means to an end – improvement in the wellbeing of people in ERW-affected areas.

The next step in the planning process is the analysis phase. A proper analysis of the actual problem is necessary to understand its various components. For example, if one of our purposes is to reduce ERW accidents, do we know what are the main causes of such accidents in this country at this time? Is it due to ignorance of the problem or because economic necessity makes people take risks, for example, by collecting ERW for scrap metal? Based on this analysis, the objectives of a program can be set to address the real needs in that country at that time; for example, the reduction of civilian casualties through clearance, information campaigns or through providing less risky economic alternatives.

Once we have determined what would be valuable to do, we still need to analyze whether it is doable: is it feasible in technical, financial and capacity terms? Who should implement the project: which organizations have mandate, interest, know-how and capacity?

Step three is the program planning phase, which includes the development of a logical framework with objectively verifiable indicators and means of verification, and the key assumptions or risks. Assumptions are an important part of the logic, because if a key assumption proves not to be true, the project is no longer logical. It is necessary to monitor each assumption and stop or re-design the project if a key assumption turns out not to be true.

Full implementation of a results-based approach for a program also requires the development of
performance targets for each objective that has been identified. Project planning for results is best done if a country has set up a results-based monitoring and evaluation system for the ERW program and, perhaps, more generally in the public sector. This can be done in various steps, including a readiness assessment, selecting key performance indicators to monitor outcomes, and using evaluation information for improvements.

Specific aspects when assessing an ERW clearance program

When assessing an ERW clearance program, it is important to understand its context. In countries emerging from conflict, the context can change rapidly in a number of critical dimensions: (i) the political dimension, (ii) the focus of international assistance, (iii) the growth in the country’s own capacities, and (iv) socio-economic development more generally. Evolution in the political dimension may entail a transition from conflict to an interim administration, agreement on a new constitution, the first democratic elections, and ongoing political development. The focus of international assistance typically starts with humanitarian assistance, often entails a peacekeeping mission to restore internal security, then moves to priority reconstruction and, finally, to assisted development, with recipient ownership growing along the way.

ERW clearance with a humanitarian focus generally dominates just after the conflict, but may be required over the long-term in specific areas of a country. ERW clearance for internal security – for example, in support of international peacekeeping missions – starts and peaks shortly after the conflict. Then ERW clearance for reconstruction dominates, followed by ERW clearance for development, which is a long-term effort. Particularly in the development phase, a good concept for socio-economic priority setting is important. There is normally no clear cut line between the phases; there can be different ‘flavours’ of ERW clearance programs in a country at the same time. On balance, however, the clearance priorities evolve through the phases in line with the country’s overall progress.

Further complications for ERW clearance programs are different – and changing – donor priorities, ranging from the humanitarian imperative, to peace-building / peace-keeping, reconstruction, development, meeting treaty obligations, and promoting military cooperation. As well, the ERW clearance sector comprises individuals from very different backgrounds, with different outlooks and

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4 Further reading on this aspect: Jody Zall Kusek and Ray C. Rist: Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System, The World Bank, 2004
5 The aspect of Priority Setting is covered in Discussion Paper 6 of the 2009 Meeting of the Experts of the States Parties to CCW Protocol V: Priority Setting for ERW Clearance Programmes
ways of working, including: military engineers, humanitarian and development workers, health care professionals and information managers.

Thinking evaluation, we have to understand the implications of these massive and rapid changes in a program’s context; of different priorities imposed by donor countries; and of the different viewpoints and practices of ERW clearance practitioners from different professional backgrounds.

Evaluating ERW clearance programs in complex emergencies involves some additional challenges for evaluators due to the characteristics of the situation. These include:

- Difficulty distinguishing between combatants & civilians
- Violence directed at civilians
- Fluid, rapidly changing situation
- Breakdown of accountability structures
- Development of war economies
- Multiplicity of international actors, often with no one really in charge overall.

For evaluators, this means acting in a limited ‘humanitarian space’ and working in a situation where even very basic information is lacking. It is important to assess the ‘big picture’ (context), as individual projects are so affected by dramatic changes in the context, but often there is no organization with the authority to initiate a ‘big picture’ evaluation. The situation is often intensely political, which makes a neutral, fact-oriented approach difficult.

Possible additional criteria in this kind of situation include:

- Coverage – is the program reaching all major groups in urgent need?
- Coherence – is there consistency among security, military, developmental, trade, and political policies – as well as humanitarian policies – of donors?
- Coordination – does each actor play an appropriate and complementary role given what others are doing?
- Protection – of civilians and humanitarian workers.

Evaluating ERW clearance programs during priority reconstruction implies there are often fewer options to avoid contamination when reconstructing as infrastructure is often targeted in conflicts. As well, there may be different aid management structures established for the ‘big push’ reconstruction effort. Priority reconstruction programs have certain characteristics:

- Low recipient government capacity and/or commitment
- Big increases in aid flow, therefore…
- The government may lack the capacity to manage increased aid flows
- The World Bank and others step in to create a structure ‘waiting for a government’, which mirrors the organisation & program structure that government is expected to introduce.

Special evaluation issues in this phase include:

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6 Humanitarian emergencies are situations where war and/or political instability (rather than natural disaster) are the principal causes of crisis.

7 Source: OECD DAC

8 Reconstruction means investments to rebuild existing infrastructure, development means investments in new infrastructure (social programs etc).
Transparency: is humanitarian funding going to reconstruction? Is there no cross-subsidisation by ERW clearance organisations receiving grants but competing for commercial contracts?

Balance: among humanitarian, reconstruction and capacity development, and between service delivery and state building

Security.

When evaluating ERW clearance programs in a development phase, a common problem is often an inappropriate mix of projects due to different donor funding channels. Supplemental criteria that might be relevant in this case include:

- Compliance with international treaty obligations
- Coherence between treaty/disarmament policies, development policies & (often) defence policies.

Conclusions

1. Performance of an ERW clearance program should be measured by how we make a difference to people in ERW afflicted communities, more than how we keep busy.

2. Programs should be designed to deliver benefits to people and lessons learnt to managers.

3. The lessons learnt should improve performance in both program planning and program implementation.

4. When designing a program, the start is to consider what people need and how the program can meet those needs, not with what we happen to be able to deliver.

5. From there, the logic of the program is developed backward to outputs, activities and inputs.

6. It is important to document and monitor key assumptions underlying the logic program, and to develop performance targets (planned results) for outputs, intermediate outcomes, and final outcomes (impact).

Evaluation Resources for Mine Action

International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)\(^9\)

- 14.10 – Evaluation of Mine Action Interventions
- 14.20 – Evaluation of Mine Risk Education

Database of Mine Action Research and Evaluation Reports\(^10\)

- Over 300 reports from mine action evaluations, studies etc.
- Can be searched by country, subject, year, etc.

The GICHD and partners offer professional-level training courses in Evaluating Mine Action.

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\(^9\) [www.mineactionstandards.org](http://www.mineactionstandards.org)