Brief Description of Cambodian situation

Cambodia's landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) problems were the results of a protracted sequence of regional and internal conflicts that spanned over thirty years, which left the country heavily contaminated, inflicted thousands of casualties and many years to clean up. An early estimation projected that between 4 to 6 million landmines were used. Even after 19 years of demining intervention, the remaining problem is still substantial. The Cambodian National Mine Action Strategy estimated 648.8 square kilometres require clearance for the ten years starting from 2010 and 1,097.8 square kilometres need to be released through baseline survey and technical surveys. In addition to the mine problems the magnitude of the ERW problems resulting from the artillery shelling, rocket launching and air bombing is huge. Information received from the US Department of State reveals that just from 1965-1975, more than 2.75 million tons of bombs were dropped on Cambodia. As a result, by February 2012, 64,057 people felt victims, among those 50,802 were from landmines and 13,255 from ERW. There are four main humanitarian operators currently operating to address the problems.

Present some cases of MOTAPM use in Cambodia

Since mine action inception, 936,826 APM, 2,184,797 ERW 21,582 AT have been recovered and destroyed. However, casualties still remain high. In the last 5 years, there were 324 casualties resulted from Anti Personnel mines, 750 from ERW (including cluster munitions), and 283 from Anti Tank. The latter has been on the rise. There were 39 casualties in just 3 months period from December 2011 to February 2012.

Anti-tank mines were laid mostly by the Khmer Rouge for tactical and psychological motives. They were laid on roadways, rural and forest pathways without information and records. Many of these pathways were no longer used and after many years they were covered by grass and forest re-growth. In addition, the recent results of the on-going national baseline survey indicated 4,393 minefields have been found to be affected by AT and a combine TA/APM compare to 5,904 minefields affected with APM.

Anti-tank incidents often resulted in numerous casualties in each single case. The serious incident was on 03 February 2012. It occurred in one western province of Cambodia; it has taken 8 lives and one person seriously wounded. The incident took place while the victims were traveling in a homemade tractor on a newly reclaimed land located in suspected area. The victims despite of having previously received mine risk education messages decided to use the suspected land because of livelihood pressure. This case is similar to most of the Anti tank incidents that occurred in the last 2 years. The Government of Cambodia is very concerned with this issue and is taking all necessary measures to identify and address it in close collaboration with mine action operators and development partners.

The value of international cooperation and assistance for Cambodia

Since inception of its mine action program, Cambodia has been grateful of the opportunity to engage in international cooperation within its own border and beyond. Mine Action operators, both national and international collaborated and shared experience and expertise under that coordination umbrella of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority. A few examples of this type of cooperation can be seen when Cambodia developed its request for Article 5 Extension; during this process national and international operators convened together to contribute their expert knowledge to ascertain the
remaining contamination problems in the Country. Later, their jointed contribution has led to the development of a Baseline Survey protocol and the 2010-2019 National Mine Action Strategy. Cooperation with the GICHD and NPA has led to the development of a national land release standard, as currently being effectively implemented by national operators. These are just a handful example of cooperation.

Beyond its border, Cambodia has actively engaged in International mine action meetings and forums making effort to meet its APMB treaty obligation. Cambodian also extended its expert knowledge to assist other states parties in their effort to enhance their own program through exchange visits and third country training and knowledge sharing programs fulfilling its obligation to the APMBT Article 6. Moreover, in its effort to address the Cartagena Action Plan, particularly, Action #36: Promote technical cooperation, information exchange on good practices and other forms of mutual assistance with other affected State Parties to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise acquired in the course of fulfilling their obligations; Action #44: Develop and promote regional cooperation in sharing and effectively using national experiences and good practices, resources, technology and expertise in stockpile destruction and mine clearance, to implement the Convention and to engage the cooperation of regional organizations; Action #46: Develop and promote regional and bilateral cooperation in sharing and effectively using national experiences, good practices, resources, technology and expertise in addressing the rights and needs of mine victims and other persons with disabilities, to implement the Convention and to engage the cooperation of regional organizations. Evidence of this type of cooperation can be seen in the tripartite knowledge sharing arrangement with Colombia and Lao, PDR supported by Japan.

International valued financial and in kind assistance in form of human capital, equipment, research and development provided by the international community have enable Cambodia to address its landmine/ERW problem from emergency to development phase with reasonable success. They also helped building a human capacity and operating platform that enable Cambodia Mine Action program to meet the future challenges.

The challenges facing Cambodia, what it needs for capacity building

Funding remains the core problems for sustaining mine action operations to meet the remaining problems especially when most of mine action funding came from international donors and development partners. Actions would be needed to be able to help the National Authority and operators to mobilizing resources and sustain capable human capacity. However, an immediate challenge, the Cambodia faced is the ability to address increasing problems caused by Anti-Tank mines and making coordinated effort to made better used of resources.