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Evaluation

Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to mine action

Executive summary

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I. Introduction

1. The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has conducted an evaluation of the UNDP contribution to mine action, as specified in the IEO medium-term evaluation plan, 2014-2017 (DP/2014/5) approved by the Executive Board.
2. The objective of this evaluation was to determine, to the greatest extent possible, the UNDP contribution to mine action, taking into account its global programme and considering evidence at country and community levels. The evaluation included a global portfolio analysis covering all UNDP global, regional and country-based mine action programmes and projects since the beginning of UNDP involvement in mine action in the mid-1990s. The evaluation then considered a small sample of UNDP interventions at the country and community levels, from which a more detailed exploration of UNDP contribution to mine action was undertaken, including some consideration of impact.
3. Recognizing that most UNDP mine action support is focused on establishing the enabling environment and management capacities rather than the physical process of landmine removal, the evaluation sought to understand the extent to which the UNDP contribution to mine action has strengthened national institutional capacities to deliver mine action services that reduce vulnerability, enable equitable development, advance the rights of persons with disabilities and support compliance with relevant international treaties.
4. The evaluation team established a theory-based approach to gauge the UNDP contribution to mine action that built on data collected through the global portfolio analysis, desk studies and detailed country case studies. Community-based observations, interviews, focus groups and other rapid appraisal techniques were the principal modes of data collection for the country case studies. Overall, 24 mine-affected communities were visited to consider whether UNDP support has contributed to positive impacts at the local level. During visits, evaluators obtained information to determine: (a) how land release has affected local communities, including marginalized populations; and (b) whether the situation of landmine survivors and their families had changed and whether any such changes have extended to persons with disabilities more broadly.
5. The evaluation team collected and analysed four levels of data to provide a robust assessment of the contribution of UNDP support to mine action, including: (a) an international overview of national programmes and stakeholders; (b) review of the UNDP mine action portfolio; (c) a desk review of case studies of UNDP support to national authorities; and (d) three country case studies of the UNDP support in mine action, including the impact of mine action on communities and people.
6. The three countries selected for in-depth field study were the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Tajikistan. These countries were selected for their potential to reveal particular insights into the evaluation questions and to provide community-level evidence of impact. The selection was based on criteria that included: (a) the extent and duration of UNDP mine action support; (b) ongoing and/or recent cessation of UNDP mine action engagement; (c) availability of background documentation; (d) ability to conduct observations in the field recognizing safety considerations and government agreement; (e) regional variation; and (f) varied types of UNDP mine action engagement.

II. Context

7. Landmines are explosive devices deposited on or below the surface of the ground and designed to explode based on the pressure typically rendered by a person, livestock or vehicle. Landmines placed during war or conflict continue to have the potential to kill and injure victims for decades after the conflict has ended. Landmines include both antipersonnel mines and antivehicle mines. Antipersonnel mines are usually small, detonated with only a few kilograms of pressure and are meant to injure rather than kill.

Antivehicle mines are munitions designed to explode from the pressure of heavier items such as military tanks, cars, trucks, tractors and wagons.

8. Explosive remnants of war (ERW) are munitions left behind after a conflict has ended. They include unexploded artillery shells, grenades, mortars, rockets, airdropped bombs and cluster munitions. International law considers ERW to consist of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO), but not landmines. Explosive weapons that were used but failed to detonate as intended become UXO. AXO are explosive ordnance that were not used during armed conflict but were left behind and are not effectively controlled. Like landmines, ERW often have an indefinite lifespan and are usually activated by disturbance, force or movement.

9. Landmines and ERW continue to pose a threat to civilians in many countries. They continue to be found on roads, footpaths, fields, forests, deserts and surrounding infrastructure. This threat is manifested by restricted freedom of movement, reduced access to basic needs, hunting grounds and firewood, limited resettlement opportunities and obstructed delivery of humanitarian aid.

10. Mine action is a collective term used internationally to encompass the demining of landmines and ERW; the destruction of landmines and ERW stockpiles; landmine and ERW risk education; mine victim assistance; and advocacy against the use of landmines and cluster munitions. The objective of mine action is to reduce the risk from landmines and ERW to a level where people can live safely and where development can occur free from the constraints imposed by contamination.

11. Since the entry into force (in 1999) of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (also known as the Ottawa Convention), there has been substantial progress in the mine action arena. For example, reported casualties from landmines and other ERW are at an all-time low. In 2013, a global total of 3,308 casualties was reported; the reported incidence rate of mine casualties per day for 2013 is one third of that reported in 1999, when there were approximately 25 casualties every day.

12. According to the Landmine Monitor (2014), 56 countries and four other areas continue to have a confirmed threat from antipersonnel mines. Six additional countries (Djibouti, Namibia, Oman, Palau, Philippines and Republic of Moldova) have suspected residual mine contamination. All but 15 countries (Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iraq, Israel, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Myanmar, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam) have been indicated by the Monitor to be fully capable of finalizing clearance by the end of 2019 if resources and efforts are sustained.

13. The extent of remaining antipersonnel mine contamination across countries and areas varies. Based on contamination classifications used by the Landmine Monitor, massive contamination is believed to remain in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Iraq and Turkey. Heavy contamination is believed to exist in Angola, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Thailand and Zimbabwe. Levels of contamination in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam are unknown but may also be heavy.

14. UNDP support is best considered within the wider context of the global development of mine action, including the body of international laws that buttress global and national efforts to limit the use of landmines and UXO. The initial context for mine action was shaped by post-conflict peacekeeping and humanitarian emergencies in which the United Nations assumed direct operational responsibility to respond to landmine issues. The key areas of attention in mine action were identified initially as demining, reduction of risk to civilians and support to mine victims. Subsequently, destruction of stockpiles of prohibited munitions in States party to relevant conventions and advocacy for a universal landmine ban were added.

15. UNDP, through its mine action programmes and projects, has established its role and legitimacy within a context where other actors (including United Nations peacekeeping operations) are operational. This environment includes multiple United Nations entities (particularly the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)); multiple international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) typically serving as mine action operators (particularly Danish Church Aid, Danish Demining Group, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, HALO Trust, Handicap International, Mines Advisory Group and Norwegian Peoples Aid); the Governments of countries affected by mines; and donors.

16. In 2013, the Secretary-General launched the new Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, 2013-2018 which engages 14 United Nations entities through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. The strategy reaffirms that affected States have primary responsibility for mine action within their own territories. In each context, United Nations assistance is expected to shift over time as well as in nature and intensity, according to requests for assistance and the comparative advantages of other actors. The strategy emphasizes that the identification of the impact of mine action work is essential to facilitating evidence-based policymaking and results-based management.

17. During the last decade, UNDP mine action work has focused heavily on 14 countries, each with a mine action budget in excess of \$10 million: Afghanistan; Azerbaijan; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cyprus; Ethiopia; Iraq; Jordan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Mozambique; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Tajikistan; Yemen; and State of Palestine. Additionally, Angola, Cambodia and Croatia received at least that level of UNDP support prior to 2004. Since 2004, Afghanistan (\$47.6 million), Lao People's Democratic Republic (\$65.7 million) and Mozambique (\$38.8 million) have received the most UNDP mine action funding.

18. As set out in the United Nations policy on mine action and effective coordination (2005) and Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, the UNDP role in mine action is expected to focus on assisting mine-affected countries to establish and strengthen their mine action programmes. A review of the UNDP portfolio suggests that UNDP support has evolved country by country and now includes virtually all aspects of mine action, including mine removal operations and victim assistance projects. Where UNDP support has included provision and/or facilitation of local services, it is usually to pilot new procedures and technologies for replication and scaling up by government and other mine action service providers.

III. Findings

Finding 1. There is a general consensus among stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation that UNDP has been a valuable participant in the global mine action effort, helping national Governments to establish and manage their mine action programmes.

19. The stature of UNDP in the mine action field can be seen in the breadth of its worldwide portfolio of programmes and projects and in its positioning in support of United Nations conventions, strategies and inter-agency coordination mechanisms focused on landmines and UXO. UNDP is considered to be a significant contributor within the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, in particular for its support to national mine action programmes and capacity development initiatives.

20. UNDP is perceived by stakeholders as being especially well positioned to advocate for government ownership and to work with central Governments and legislative bodies in the creation of legal and institutional frameworks for mine action, including strategies to implement legal obligations stemming from the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Some stakeholders, particularly donors, expressed a desire to see UNDP play a stronger role in advocating for changes in government policies that inhibit the achievement of landmine removal. Others would like

to see greater transparency, timelier and more complete reporting of results and a better framework to monitor the impact of its mine action support.

21. When considering country-level interventions, global partners note the value of UNDP serving as a channel for donor funding to national programmes. This is not necessarily seen as a global fundraising role, for which donors are more likely to turn to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, managed by UNMAS. Some donors that prefer to channel funding on a bilateral basis commented that UNDP support to Governments increases their willingness to provide support.

22. On the quality and results of UNDP support across countries, global partners indicated their perception that outcome achievement is largely dependent on the quality and competence of individual technical advisers. While this is not unique to UNDP, some have suggested that UNDP has heightened problems in this respect because of the lack of a global strategy and programmatic guidance to orient its mine action advisers. At the country level, the presence of the UNDP global network of mine action experts was cited as one of the organization's competitive advantage in the mine action field.

Finding 2. Since 2008, the profile of mine action within the UNDP strategic framework has declined, and the temporary closing of the mine action global programme caused uncertainty among stakeholders as to the long-term strategic engagement of UNDP in this area.

23. The UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 makes no specific reference to mine action, and in late 2014 UNDP announced that it was ceasing its global mine action programming, but would continue to manage ongoing programmes at the country level. The UNDP decision to end the global mine action programme was received with concern by United Nations, donor and NGO partners. The cancellation constituted a break from expectations as set out in the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, and called into question the continuing work of UNDP on mine action. An analysis carried out by technical staff in 2013 indicated that 27 country offices, implementing 40 programmes worth \$45 million, would continue to require policy and technical support from headquarters and therefore at least a minimal expertise on mine action should be maintained by UNDP.

24. Following the 2014 closure announcement, UNDP commissioned an internal study to plan the close-out process. The results of the study, compounded by the recognition of the considerable ongoing work, led to a decision to reverse course and rebuild the global programme, including additional expert staff at UNDP headquarters and two of the regional service centres. The decision to continue the programme was announced at the Eighteenth International Meeting of Mine Action National Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers, held in Geneva in January-February 2015, although a formal announcement to external stakeholders has not been made.

Finding 3. UNDP is viewed as a neutral and reliable partner with considerable country-level knowledge, proven experience and comparative advantages in providing institutional support. In over two dozen countries, it has contributed substantially to mine action institutional capacity.

25. UNDP work in mine action is largely a capacity development effort, including information management, strategic planning and coordination, effective quality management of operations and resource mobilization. UNDP has sought to strengthen administrative and financial management capacities and to assist Governments as they set policies, strategies and legal frameworks for mine action. While institutional support and capacity-building are aspects of most mine action support from various actors, the development of capacities to manage the national mine action programme is a particular hallmark of the work of UNDP. Of countries reviewed in this evaluation, Albania, Cambodia, Lebanon and Sri Lanka are positive examples of countries that have developed a high level of national capacity in mine action to which UNDP contributed substantially.

26. Much of the specific technical support provided under the UNDP umbrella has been supplied through close working partners. In the early years of UNDP mine action support, UNOPS provided implementation services, developed the roster of experts and suppliers, etc. Operational support for demining was then provided by one or more NGOs or specialized firms. Operational policy development in many countries has been supported by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), and its advisers have continued to provide mine action expertise to Governments supported by UNDP. The ad hoc relationship with GICHD has been particularly valuable, with GICHD providing technical expertise while relying on UNDP for country-level access, support and coordinated follow-up.

Finding 4. UNDP support has generally been successful in stimulating Governments to institutionalize mine action, including through the formal establishment of national mine action management institutions.

27. UNDP has sought to ensure that mine action programmes are properly institutionalized. This has included: (a) the formal establishment of mine action management entities (national mine action agencies and mine action centres) as public sector organizations included in the state structure and budget; (b) a national contribution to the budget of the mine action programme; (c) demining activities set in law and regulation; and (d) legal recognition of the rights of mine survivors and usually by extension of other persons with disabilities.

28. In most countries with major landmine problems, the Governments have incorporated landmine issues into national development planning and legal structures, often as a condition for donor support. Including mine action in national strategies has generally been a slow process in countries in the midst of post-conflict redevelopment, and is often sublimated to other national development and investment priorities. While some Governments have passed specific demining laws, others have legal traditions that automatically include international treaties into the national legal framework, (e.g., Mozambique).

Finding 5. South-South cooperation for institutional capacity-building has been a regular feature of UNDP mine action support, especially in earlier phases when new country programmes were coming on line and there was a centralized mine action unit in the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. During the past decade, South-South cooperation on mine action has been ad hoc, initiated by UNDP country programmes and national government counterparts.

29. The most active period for UNDP headquarters in the promotion of South-South cooperation was 2000-2002, when the centrally managed Mine Action Exchange provided support for travel and exchange between mine action programmes. UNDP then utilized its own budget through 2008 to continue this exchange. This facility was widely used in Mozambique, for example, which established ongoing relationships with other national programmes (Cambodia in particular), facilitated in part with support from UNDP. Another positive example is the direct support provided by the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action to mine action in other countries including Georgia, Jordan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Viet Nam. UNDP has continued to facilitate exchanges worked out directly between programmes. All three field study countries have demonstrated participation in such formal and informal exchanges.

Finding 6. One of the most important roles that UNDP plays in mine action is to facilitate and channel international funding

30. Because mine action can stretch over decades, donor fatigue is a constant challenge, especially as landmine and UXO accidents decline and donor support migrates to new humanitarian and development priorities. Due to its country-level presence and close donor cooperation, UNDP has been in a position to help national Governments keep mine action funding on the agenda, and some donors stated that they are more

receptive to funding demining activities when UNDP and other international organizations are managing the funds.

31. In 2002, the Lao People's Democratic Republic faced a serious decline in funding partly due to donor concerns regarding the lack of a credible estimate of the extent of UXO contamination and accountability. In response, UNDP and the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO Lao) commissioned an evaluation which recommended transferring the planning, coordination and regulatory functions from UXO Lao to another entity, and urged that the sector be opened to more private and commercial actors, thereby establishing a quasi-market. UNDP and other United Nations agencies promoted this division of labour, which led to the establishment in 2004 of the National Regulatory Authority, responsible for sector coordination and regulation, with UXO Lao acting as a service provider.

Finding 7. UNDP has actively supported Governments in transitioning to full responsibility for managing their mine action programmes. The results have been generally positive, albeit slow, and several transitions to national ownership have called into question the extent to which these capacities are sustainable without continued international support.

32. Transitions from UNDP support to full national ownership have been complicated by difficulties faced by Governments when trying to formally establish the status of national mine action entities. This was the case early on in Cambodia and Mozambique, and later in Angola, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Tajikistan, where the principal mine action entity was initially created as a temporary body, sometimes as a UNDP project that was funding a full complement of national staff (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Tajikistan). Each was later incorporated into public sector institutions and budgets. In a few cases this was a prolonged process. The Tajikistan Mine Action Centre was a UNDP project for 11 years, before the transition to national ownership began in 2014. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, the entities are still temporary and staffed by personnel on UNDP project contracts. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP withdrew its assistance in mine action when a new mine action strategy and strong national authority were in place. However, after UNDP withdrew, the results of mine action work began to decline, triggering a re-engagement by UNDP.

Finding 8. While mine action programmes often refer to their supportive role for development, UNDP has struggled to effectively mainstream its mine action programming within its other development work in many countries.

33. Since it began to work in mine action, UNDP has stressed that this work is a logical extension of its post-crisis development efforts, and that part of its value added is in mainstreaming mine action into broader development support. Donors and other stakeholders have indicated they view this to be a key part of the UNDP contribution to mine action.

34. Although national mine action programmes have engaged with other sectors and economic actors regarding potential threats to their activities posed by landmines, this has generally taken place through intragovernmental channels with minimal involvement of UNDP. Outside of a few training efforts for UNDP mine action staff, there is little evidence that UNDP has made linking mine action support to other development support a high priority, and it has not refocused governance and poverty alleviation programming to better address the needs of mine-affected communities and individuals. In all three countries visited, the respective national mine action strategy highlighted the importance of mine action to development, and national development and poverty reduction strategies generally referenced mine action. In communities visited, however, there was minimal evidence that land clearance and release had spurred non-mine action development assistance from UNDP. Where such linkages have occurred, achievements reflect the initiative of particular mine action technical advisers and country office management, rather than as a result of headquarters and regional bureau initiatives.

Finding 9. UNDP has promoted gender equality in its mine action work and stressed the need for gender-disaggregated data. Many partner countries have shown a general commitment to gender equality.

35. UNDP has generally promoted awareness of the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes and has requested and facilitated specialized input on gender aspects of mine action through the Gender and Mine Action Programme hosted by the GICHD. UNDP has also stressed, through its mine action centre support, the need for gender-disaggregated data and has emphasized that the different circumstances experienced by women, men, boys and girls need to be taken into account in victim surveys and mine-risk education. In some cases (e.g., Sri Lanka), more concerted efforts in developing country-specific gender strategies for mine action were initiated by UNDP, but did not have follow-through.

36. In the countries studied for this review, a general commitment can be perceived that mine action activities should benefit all members of the community – women and men, boys and girls. Many countries have their own laws and long-standing government policies promoting gender equity. In most countries, addressing the issue is understood to mean ensuring that community surveys include focus groups of women, having female deminers and collecting gender-disaggregated data for reports on communities and victim statistics. The evaluation evidence suggests that UNDP efforts have not substantially altered the commitment of partner countries to take gender aspects into account in their mine action programming.

Finding 10. UNDP has played a limited role in support of operational demining activities, the issuance of national mine action standards and the destruction of landmine and UXO stockpiles.

37. The comparative advantage of UNDP is not seen to carry over to the technical side of demining, where some international NGOs, UNMAS and UNOPS have particular skills and a stronger mandate. Likewise, organizations other than UNDP are perceived to offer stronger technical training on operational aspects of mine action. Clearance of landmines and UXO is the direct result of the work of demining operators, and UNDP is not a demining operator. UNDP has in some cases contracted operators to conduct demining and to train local deminers. It has also served as a funding channel from donors to operators.

38. In the countries where it has helped to establish mine action programmes, UNDP has supported the issuance of national mine action standards to guide the management and implementation of mine action projects. National mine action standards are issued by national mine action authorities to guide the implementation of mine action projects in a safe, coordinated and efficient manner.

39. Stockpile destruction has been a relatively minor aspect of UNDP mine action support, with projects in Angola, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP work has included support for stockpile destruction within a wider effort to help the Government to develop its small arms control strategy and programme. UNDP is currently the only international organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina working on stockpile destruction, and has achieved notable results in this area.

Finding 11. The capacity of national partners in the area of information management for mine action remains a challenge.

40. A primary concern of UNDP in nearly all mine-affected countries it has supported has been the establishment or strengthening of a database unit to manage information regarding suspected and demined areas, together with a survey of the national problem. After 1999, the database system most widely used was the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), developed by GICHD for UNMAS, although some existing programmes were reluctant to replace their own database systems with IMSMA. The development and management of information systems within government structures

has been an especially difficult capacity development challenge in many countries due to the difficulty of retaining qualified staff.

Finding 12. Over time, the prioritization of mine clearance has evolved and become more systematized, and UNDP has been a strong proponent of strategic planning and evidenced-based clearance methodologies. More recent national mine action strategies have benefited from greater national ownership, better information and more reasonable expectations.

41. Since the start of the current millennium, the global mine action community has come to recognize the value of strategic planning as an essential element of effective national mine action programmes. While countries previously had annual operational plans, they began to develop strategies that assessed the known extent of the problem, considered the level of operational activities necessary to resolve it and projected the financial resources required to complete the task on time. The degree of realism of such plans varied widely. The first plans were often produced with considerable input by international advisers and in many cases were funded through UNDP. Over time, with more experience and better information, more recent strategic plans have included more national and community participation, have been based on better information and are more realistic, although often still benchmarked against unrealistic timeframe obligations of the Ottawa Convention, e.g., clearance completed in 10 years.

42. A vital component of strategic planning is the prioritization of land clearance. Quite often, the immediate post-crisis selection of demining activities in countries has been ad hoc and reactive. The initial purpose being the quick removal of mines in heavily populated and travelled areas to ensure safe access and reduce casualties. During initial periods of peacekeeping and humanitarian emergency programmes, high-priority tasks were easy to discern, and less emphasis was placed on assessing the relative importance of second-tier sites for clearance. Once emergency tasks were resolved, efforts were made to prioritize a large number of competing priorities.

43. Early on, UNDP recognized the need for good national surveys of landmine problems and promoted local community involvement in prioritization. UNDP, with UNMAS and UNOPS, was an early promoter of landmine impact surveys (LIS) as a means to obtain more complete information about suspected mined areas and their impacts on affected communities. LIS were carried out in most of the more mine-affected countries between 1999 and 2006. LIS and other impact-assessment tools were introduced to ensure that assets employed would have the greatest positive result on mine-affected communities. In particular, LIS should help to determine and delay the use of clearance assets in areas where there is insufficient evidence of contamination.

Finding 13. UNDP has sought to frame its support for mine action in terms of the contribution to poverty reduction. In most villages visited, there is some evidence of improvements in standards of living over the course of the mine action programme, although the extent to which this is a direct result of the demining effort is difficult to quantify.

44. In the immediate post-conflict recovery period, the demining of urban areas and major infrastructure such as highways significantly contributes to economic development. Once these higher-impact tasks have been resolved, the majority of remaining areas are typically in remote agricultural communities. Expanding livelihoods in such communities requires access to complementary resources that are not readily available.

45. In nearly every community visited for the country case studies, the lives and livelihoods of impacted communities and citizens were improved as a result of demining and land release. People benefited economically because they were able to farm larger plots of land or farm existing plots more efficiently, access water and other resources more easily, use their time more efficiently and benefit from increased access to markets and trade.

Finding 14. The UNDP pro-poor orientation was not evident in day-to-day support to mine action. Nonetheless, continuing UNDP support to mine action has an inherent pro-poor bias, as remaining landmine problems in mature programmes typically concentrate on poor rural areas.

46. In general, UNDP promotes a pro-poor agenda and indicates that it is strategically focused on marginalized populations. With respect to mine action, this orientation should be revealed in the processes used to determine priorities for mine clearance sequencing, but this is not evident in most cases. UNDP has supported the LIS and has emphasized that socioeconomic factors should be taken into account in setting clearance strategies, yet has also recognized that high priority should be given to opening up public infrastructure and reducing the risk of casualties in densely populated areas.

47. While women and the poor are often lumped together and considered marginalized, the term also takes into account minority communities that in many nations suffer oppression and ostracism. Minority groups are often forced to settle in low-value, uncontested lands, including areas with landmines. The evidence from this evaluation shows little in the way of UNDP achievement in championing the rights of minority communities to demined land.

Finding 15. The evaluation did not find evidence that the release of previously mined land was a significant source of conflict.

48. Short of a land reform process, mine clearance does not create a new asset to be distributed at the will of the Government (or any international actor). Accordingly, it is not surprising that across the three case study countries, while there were communities where demined land was the subject of land tenure dispute, the causes of dispute were not because of demined lands being released.

49. In Tajikistan, most respondents stated that there had been no conflicts over released land because the Land Committee is responsible for allocation and everybody is entitled to some land. Use of and access to land had not changed significantly between the time when the land was contaminated with landmines and the land was released, and all members of communities previously affected by mines had benefited equally from released land. The use of shared land for grazing is regulated by community leaders and access is based on long-agreed prioritization of households; order of access can be negotiated and respondents claimed that the system works well and that there are no conflicts.

Finding 16. UNDP has contributed to an increased sense of safety in demined areas, which is reported by community members as the major impact of mine action at the community level.

50. Based on evidence from the 24 communities in the three countries visited, it is abundantly clear that from the perspective of community members and local officials, the main perceived problems caused by landmine and ERW contamination are: (a) heightened levels of fear; (b) reduced freedom of movement; and (c) restricted access, particularly to natural resources.

51. In all but one of the communities visited for this evaluation, male and female inhabitants of contaminated areas reported significant safety improvements and limited socioeconomic improvements following clearance. Almost all of the communities reported reduced fear and improved access to agriculture and food and to income and livelihood options. Improved freedom and access to water and natural resources were reported in around two thirds of communities. Changes related to safety – reduced fear, improved freedom of movement and improved safety of livestock – were the most reported, followed by changes related to livelihood access and growth.

52. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, UXO action had a very limited impact on casualty rates. In the communities visited, however, respondents were very happy that UXO had been cleared in their villages and held UXO Lao with respect.

Overwhelmingly, the most important benefit for both women and men was a sense of safety and peace of mind, and the ability to live and work without the constant underlying concern about safety for themselves and their children due to UXO injury.

53. These findings are also evident in the desk studies examined. For example, in Sri Lanka, through limited post-clearance impact assessments carried out under the Sri Lanka Mine Action Programme, there is evidence of a high level of confidence by community members in the safety of cleared land. While the impact assessments indicated that standards of living have increased and more basic needs of agricultural households are being met as a result of increased cultivation of land cleared through mine action, reports point to difficulties in attributing impact to mine action, but do suggest its contribution to enabling a host of development interventions.

Finding 17. UNDP has had limited engagement in support to mine victims and survivors. In the instances where it has provided support in this area, it has mostly focused on institutional aspects and its work has been well received by national partners.

54. The United Nations Policy on Mine Action indicates that the World Health Organization has primary responsibility for the development of standards, provision of technical assistance and promotion of institutional capacity-building in the area of victim assistance. Nevertheless, some countries have turned to UNDP for assistance as they strengthen services for mine victims. Most frequently, UNDP has supported national efforts to identify and survey mine victims/survivors in order to understand more clearly the extent of the problem, the nature of their needs and the availability of and access to support services, and then to advocate for other sector actors (ministries of health, social welfare, and labour) to better respond to the problems of mine victims. In a few countries, UNDP financed Handicapped International and Red Cross/Red Crescent projects to construct, supply and operate orthopaedic centres. UNDP has also funded several employment centres for mine survivors. In cases where UNDP or mine action authorities have supported victim assistance centres, the evaluation did not see efforts by government or other entities to scale up pilots into wider programming.

55. In Lebanon, UNDP helped to mobilize resources for monitoring the needs of mine victims (tracking 690 victims), for software to keep track of surveyed victims and for the production of a booklet to raise the awareness of victims about their rights and advise them how to maintain their prostheses and handle their disability. In Angola, UNDP provided technical assistance to support the Government in the development of a victim assistance strategy.

56. In Tajikistan, from 2005 to 2009, the victims assistance programme of the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre, supported by UNDP, provided direct support to more than 60 per cent of the 854 registered landmine/ERW survivors/victims and their families which included access to income-generating opportunities, vocational training, psychosocial support, rehabilitation and physiotherapy. In 2012, the programme expanded in scope to include support to all persons with disabilities and in 2013, the title and role of the Disability Support Unit (DSU) was clarified. Since 2014, the DSU has been mainstreamed into the UNDP disability programme and victim assistance activities have been mainstreamed through different institutions. Including victim assistance programming in wider support to persons with disabilities is a notable example of how some countries have revised their planning for victim assistance in light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and should be encouraged globally by UNDP.

Finding 18. In the few cases where UNDP has provided substantial, long-term support to countries for victim assistance, some improvement in services can be discerned, including more generally for persons with disabilities.

57. While the research did not gather enough evidence to determine the success of victim assistance, respondents who had received income-generating support said that they had benefited significantly from the assistance. However, most community members

interviewed in the three case study countries reported that besides immediate medical attention, no support was provided for mine survivors and their families. Community members went on to state that in the absence of victim support, the socioeconomic conditions of mine survivors were consistently worse than they had been prior to the landmine or UXO accident.

IV. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. UNDP support to mine action has contributed substantially to increased human safety, through the reduction of risk. To a lesser degree, it has also led to improvements in socioeconomic conditions at the community level.

58. Over the past 25 years, international support to national mine action programmes has had a major impact on the landmine problem. International trade in antipersonnel landmines has essentially ended, as has the use of landmines by nearly all States that once used them. The number of new victims per year globally has fallen by two thirds and in many countries the annual total has fallen even more. National mine action activities supported by UNDP have contributed to this overall reduction in casualties. Indeed, the greatest contribution of UNDP support to mine action at the community level has been the reduction of fear and anxiety. The benefits of this sense of increased safety are shared by all community members, even as the economic benefits may be uneven and difficult to quantify.

59. As the number of new casualties has fallen globally, greater attention has been given to economic development, support to existing landmine victims, integration of gender in mine action, land rights and other issues. UNDP has partly justified its mine action work as contributing to socioeconomic development and poverty eradication. While small-scale livelihood improvements are evident after landmine clearance in the communities observed for this evaluation, these improvements were mostly due to local initiatives enabled by the reduced risk, rather than specific economic development or job-creation programmes sponsored by UNDP and national partners.

60. In its strategic plans and mission statements, UNDP indicates that it emphasizes support to poor and marginalized populations. The majority of mine-affected communities are indeed poorer and more marginalized than the rest of the country, yet this evaluation finds no evidence that UNDP support to mine action has placed added emphasis on aiding marginalized populations, or that it has prioritized mine-affected communities for development support.

Conclusion 2. The phasing down of the UNDP global mine action programme over the past decade has lessened its strategic coherence and limited the capacity of headquarters to fully support staff at the country level.

61. Most UNDP headquarters mine action staff were phased out of the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery between 2008 and 2013. Prior to this, these staff had produced several strategy documents for use by country offices and contributed to the development of the United Nations Guidelines on Gender in Mine Action (2005), the United Nations victim assistance policy and overall United Nations mine action strategies. A common perception of the stakeholders interviewed is that UNDP over the past decade has lacked clear policies and guidance for its mine action work, and pursued only limited interaction and information-sharing between country programme personnel. Some country-level personnel noted that they received little practical guidance from UNDP headquarters and relied on other organizations for technical support. Strategies and techniques for advocacy programming on mine action should logically exist as part of the UNDP lexicon, but staff have had to look to other organizations for practical guidance on this important aspect of mine action.

Conclusion 3. The main value-added contribution of UNDP is the establishment of national institutional capacities to manage mine action. Nevertheless, the transition to national ownership of mine action in some countries aided by UNDP has been slow and inconsistent, and the sustainability of some nationally managed programmes remains in question.

62. Most UNDP support has been for capacity development of national mine action institutions, and there is substantial evidence of UNDP achievement in helping over two dozen governments to establish policies, strategies and legal frameworks, set up mine

action centres and strengthen core institutional capacities for strategic administrative and financial management.

63. National ownership is an indication of political support and engagement and is evident through: (a) formal establishment of a national mine action authority as a public entity; (b) significant contribution of government funds for mine action; and (c) reference to mine action in national planning documents. While these thresholds have been reached by many countries supported by UNDP, not all have done so. In two of the three countries studied for this evaluation (Tajikistan and Lao People's Democratic Republic), the national mine action entity remained a UNDP project until very recently.

64. Several nationally managed mine action programmes have struggled to maintain momentum and to retain skilled employees. Information management is an area of particular concern in this regard, since the specialized skills involved make it difficult to attract and retain capable staff.

Conclusion 4. As mine action programmes mature, they tend to become increasingly more focused on poor rural communities with a wide array of development challenges. UNDP has recognized that there are important development linkages for mine action, yet there is scant evidence that this recognition has led to linking with or targeting of other development programming in poor communities that have been demined.

65. The evaluation considered each of the countries where UNDP has done mine action work and assessed whether UNDP had been successful in getting Governments to establish and utilize pro-poor, gender-inclusive prioritization criteria. Results suggest that UNDP has had little success in this regard. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, no livelihood analysis was carried out. In Mozambique, the country office is hoping to focus more attention on development only after all demining efforts have been completed. In Lebanon, a 2011 review noted that a shortcoming of the UNDP programme was the lack of mainstreaming of mine action into other priority development sectors.

66. UNDP has shown little evidence of responding to mine-affected communities or individuals through its other programming, although its mine action support typically has referred to the importance of mine action for development. In Tajikistan, the 2006 mine action strategy was designed to restore access to land and infrastructure to ensure that economic activity and development projects were unimpeded by landmines. UNDP in Sri Lanka likewise made efforts to link mine action with other development priorities, especially focusing on increased equity in socioeconomic opportunities and services for conflict-affected communities and internally displaced persons.

67. UNDP efforts to mainstream gender in its mine action programming have not significantly altered national mine action programmes. UNDP has supported the integration of gender perspectives in mine action primarily by calling attention to the United Nations Guidelines on Gender in Mine Action. The most direct implications were already widely accepted (e.g., the value of surveying women as well as men for information regarding suspected areas, the relevance of gender-disaggregated data on mine victims).

68. UNDP has undertaken very little systematic engagement on victim assistance within its mine action work. Where UNDP has been engaged, victim surveys and advocating for national mine victim policies are the most common activities, preferentially within the context of broader support to persons with disabilities.

V. Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should reaffirm its strategic commitment to mine action support globally and ensure that the dozen countries with ongoing mine action programmes are fully supported at the headquarters and regional levels.

69. UNDP should support mine action over the long term as a result of obligations created by the Ottawa Convention and as a result of its long-standing post-conflict redevelopment support to national Governments. The legal obligation to eliminate all known and suspected mined areas, including low-density and low-risk areas, implies that some mine-affected countries will continue to seek international assistance over the long term. For the immediate future, roughly 12 national Governments can be expected to continue requesting UNDP support for mine action. This does not mean that a new, large-scale global programme for mine action is needed at UNDP. Rather, UNDP can effectively carry out its mine action responsibilities through:

- (a) ensuring that mine action technical advisers have the requisite management and capacity-building skills;
- (b) providing practical guidance to countries on transitioning to national implementation, and enhancing development support in demined areas;
- (c) maintaining high-level headquarter engagement with the United Nations Inter-agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, Mine Action Support Group and the annual meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers.

70. During the upcoming midterm review of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, 2013-2018, UNDP should pay special attention to strategic objective 3 (development of national capacity) and consider changes to clarify that the emphasis should be on developing sustainable national management capacities. UNDP should seek to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation framework distinguishes clearly between developing the capacities of its own project staff and those of national institutions. Finally, UNDP should seek greater clarity in the United Nations strategy on the roles and responsibilities for technical support to victim assistance.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should further enhance its institutional capacity support services to Governments on mine action, building on lessons from successful transitions to sustainable national ownership and utilizing South-South cooperation opportunities and closer engagement with United Nations and other international partners.

71. In keeping with the UNDP Strategic Plan and in consideration of the results of UNDP mine action support highlighted in this evaluation, UNDP should continue and enhance its support to national Governments in the areas of: (a) institutional capacity assessment for mine action, including the use of relevant indicators; (b) development and management of comprehensive databases of suspect and released mine areas; (c) land release prioritization; (d) strategies for transition to national ownership of mine action programmes; (e) mainstreaming mine action into broader development imperatives, with special emphasis on marginalized communities; (f) taking gender aspects into account in mine action programming; (g) linking victim assistance support, where it exists within mine action programmes, into broader support for persons with disabilities; (h) efficiently channelling donor funding; and (i) utilizing partnerships with other United Nations agencies and international organizations. UNDP should update its mine action programme guidance to clarify priorities, elaborate practical methods and utilize its roster of capable consultants for technical support and policy research in the above areas.

72. Transition strategies to full national ownership need further attention, taking into account not only government capacities but also practical needs, when completing and closing down land mine programmes, to maintain a residual capacity for response and to support future development projects on previously mine-affected land.

73. In order to properly plan for future land use and development projects, it is important to develop comprehensive databases of all sites that were ever suspect or demined. The importance of such mapping is sometimes underestimated by mine action authorities and operators, so it is incumbent on UNDP and other strategic advisers to emphasize the need to capture and transfer this data to the appropriate government entities.

Recommendation 3. In the near term, most of the requests for UNDP support on mine action will focus on mature national programmes in non-conflict circumstances where the residual mine problems are located in poor rural areas. This suggests an important development need that UNDP is well suited to support by providing strategies and techniques for job creation and market development, and by channelling targeted donor support towards improving the socioeconomic conditions in mine-affected communities.

74. The capacities of rural communities, especially poor ones, to improve standards of living is dependent on many factors such as access to labour, credit and markets. Nevertheless, in nearly every community visited for the three country case studies, the lives and livelihoods of impacted communities and citizens were improved as a result of demining and land release. At the same time, in every case far more could have been achieved if additional resources had been made available simultaneously to stimulate the local economy. Landmine clearance should not be seen as an end result but rather as an initial step in a much longer development effort.
