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Cambodian Mine Action Sector Briefing Paper Series

Post-Clearance Monitoring

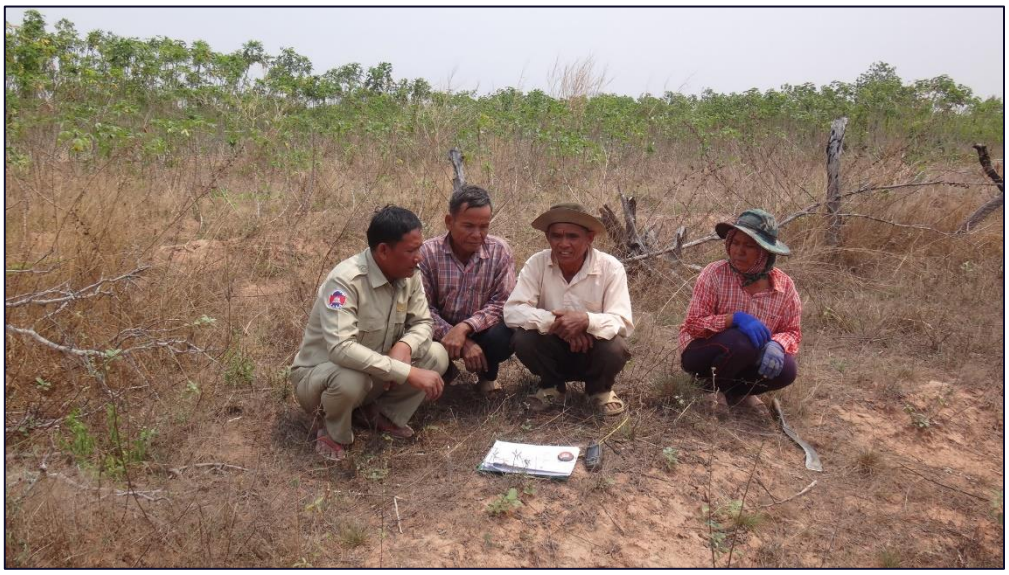

Photo courtesy of MAPU Banteay Meanchey

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Briefing Paper:
Post-Clearance Monitoring in Cambodia

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to present how 'post-clearance monitoring' (PCM) is conducted in the Cambodian mine action sector. The term 'PCM' refers to the physical observation and the collection of information from community members on the use of land that has been cleared of mines.

Photo courtesy of MAPU Banteay Meanchey

The purpose of the PCM is to understand what the cleared land is being used for and what the sub-national Mine Action Planning Units (MAPUs) need to improve on regarding planning and prioritization to ensure that the future cleared land is fully used as intended. It should be noted that the Socio-Economic Planning and Database Management Department of the CMAA (SEPD) is responsible for work related to the PCM, while the MAPU of each province is responsible for field data collection.

Introduction

Photo courtesy of MAPU Banteay Meanchey

Cambodia's landmine problem is the result of a protracted sequence of internal and regional conflicts that affected the country from the late 1960s until the end of 1998. The nature of landmine and unexploded ordnance contamination in Cambodia is highly complex. The north-west regions bordering Thailand are heavily affected, while other parts of the country are considered moderate to low. It was originally estimated that somewhere around four to six million landmines were laid during conflicts. The country is also heavily affected by explosive remnants of war (ERW) due to aerial bombing and ground battles. Mines and ERW have continued to threaten and injure affected populations, both military and civilian, with over 65,000 mine/ERW casualties recorded in the national database from 1979 to 2022.

Humanitarian mine clearance operations in Cambodia started in 1992 with the support of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to clear transportation routes to enable the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees living in camps in Thailand. When clearance of routes was completed, clearance operations shifted to clear land for housing and agriculture to support reintegration of returnees, reconstruction, recovery and future development.

In the early days, clearance operators selected minefields in consultation with affected communities and military officers. In the late 1990s, the planning and prioritization of mine clearance was defined, coordinated and facilitated by provincial Mine Action Planning Units (MAPU) to ensure that clearance addressed the needs and priorities of affected communities.

In 2004, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) issued the Sub-Decree No. 70 on Socio-Economic Management of Mine Clearance Operations. The Sub-Decree defines the role of CMAA, provincial authorities and development agencies to support socio-economic management of mine clearance operations. The Sub-Decree allows provincial governors in mine affected provinces to establish Provincial Mine Action Committees (PMAC) and MAPUs when needed. The role of the PMAC includes approval of annual clearance workplans formulated by the MAPU and resolves disputes on cleared land. The role of the MAPU is to coordinate, facilitate and formulate annual clearance workplans in consultation with affected communities and clearance operators to ensure that mine clearance supports the needs and priorities of people. At that time, the CMAA, represented by the SEPD, conducted post-clearance monitoring and collected field data to understand how the cleared land is used and by whom. Findings from the monitoring were shared with MAPUs so that they could improve their planning and prioritization process.

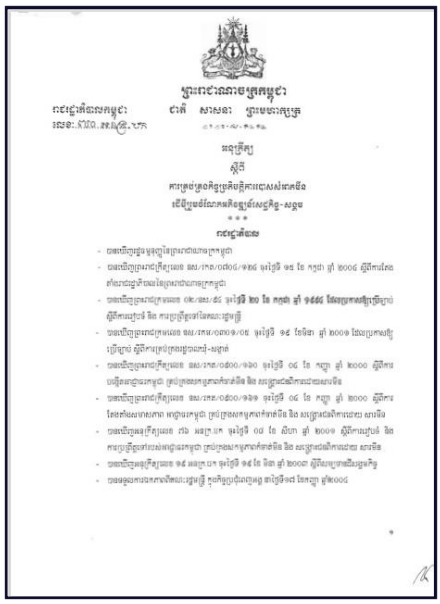

Photo courtesy of the CMAA

In 2009, the CMAA decided to decentralize the PCM's data collection function to MAPUs for the following reasons:

1. The MAPUs are closer to cleared minefields, thus it is more cost efficient for the MAPU to conduct the PCM.
2. MAPUs are able to conduct PCM for all cleared minefields in their provinces.
3. The findings from the PCM will help MAPUs to improve their own planning and prioritization.

As a result, the SEPD first trained on PCM selected MAPU officials from the western provinces; the training was later expanded to include other provinces.

Responsibility

The SEPD is responsible for training and coaching MAPU officials on data collection in the field, and reviewing, cleaning, and analyzing data to produce PCM reports. The MAPUs are responsible for identifying minefields to be monitored in their provinces, planning and conducting data collection, and sending collected data to the SEPD for further action. The data MAPU collects includes:

- surface area of the minefield cleared,
- surface area of the cleared minefield used by communities,
- land use of cleared minefield, e.g. for agriculture such as rice, cassava, corn, and sesame crops, etc., and irrigation, or for development purposes such as housing and infrastructure such as road, school, etc.,
- number of people benefiting from the cleared land (men and women over 18 years of age, boys and girls under 18 years of age, person with disabilities, and students for clearance of school land),
- disputes on cleared minefield land, if any, and
- reason if part or whole of the cleared minefield land is not in use, etc.

Photo courtesy of MAPU Banteay Meanchey

Post-clearance monitoring helps MAPUs improve planning and prioritization of mine clearance to support the needs and priorities of affected communities.

The Post-Clearance Monitoring (PCM)

In line with the MAPU office responsibility for data collection in the field, the following are the activities of the MAPU official who is responsible for data collection.

Before the PCM

a. Prepare the list of cleared minefields to be monitored. Minefields to be monitored are those that were cleared at least six months before the monitoring date to allow enough time for communities to put the cleared land into productive use.

Photo courtesy of MAPU Pailin

b. Prepare the data collection plan. The plan is to be implemented by the MAPU officials trained on data collection.

c. Compile required documents (clearance requests, clearance completion reports, and PCM data collection forms) and ensure that the necessary equipment (global positioning system (GPS), compass, binocular, tablet, transport) is ready to be used.

- Clearance requests are used to identify post-clearance use of the land.
- Clearance completion reports are used to understand the location and the size of the cleared minefield land, etc.
- The GPS is used to locate or find the starting point of the cleared minefield.
- The compass is used to orientate the sketching of cleared minefield and identify the shape of the cleared land.
- Binoculars are used to survey at a distance what the cleared minefield land is used for. Sometimes, the MAPU official is required to visit the cleared land to check land use if the binoculars do not provide adequate information due to the terrain or distance.
- Tablets are used to record collected data.
- PCM data collection forms. They are used as backup when the tablet is not functioning for any reason.

- Motorbike is used for travelling during the data collection.

Photos courtesy of MAPU Banteay Meanchey

d. Inform relevant village chiefs of the PCM plan and invite them to participate as required. For minefields cleared for housing and agriculture, families benefiting from the cleared minefield land are invited by the village chiefs to participate in the PCM and answer questions raised by the MAPU official.

During the PCM

a. MAPU officials physically visit the cleared minefields land with relevant parties. Sometimes, this visit requires the MAPU official, village chief and beneficiaries to walk through the cleared minefield land to observe the use of the cleared land.

b. Observation of the use of the cleared minefield land is undertaken, and some questions are asked to complete collected information and data using a tablet. The MAPU official also has paper forms as backup should the tablet fails for any reason.

c. At the end of data collection in a minefield, the MAPU official provides comments on the management and the use of cleared minefield land to the relevant village chief and beneficiaries to ensure the cleared minefield land is managed and used properly.

After the PCM

a. When the PCM plan is completed, the MAPU official conducting data collection prepares a PCM report for submission to the head of PMAC through the MAPU Chief. The report summarizes findings and results of the PCM and proposed corrective actions, if any.

b. If an issue on the management or the use of cleared minefield land is identified, the MAPU Chief prepares a letter guiding the Chief of District Mine Action Working Group and related parties to take corrective action.

c. If relevant, the MAPU official will prepare a follow up visit after completion of the PCM plan to monitor the progress on resolving the issues identified during data collection.

One step further

With support from the Clearing for Results project, the SEPD expanded the PCM form to collect extra socio-economic data and trained selected MAPU officials on data collection. With the additional socio-economic data, the SEPD was able to analyze and produce reports to present the socio-economic contribution of mine clearance. This report dives deeper as compared to the PCM report into the productive and/ or developmental use of the cleared minefield land before and after clearance, quantity of produce grown on the cleared land, income generated, produce kept for household consumption, economic benefits of the infrastructure built on the cleared land etc. The first report was produced in 2020, with each subsequent report enhancing evidence-based data collection on mine action contribution to the humanitarian-

Photo courtesy of MAPU Battambang

development-peace nexus by translating mine action into sustainable development dividends. A copy of this report is attached as annex 1.

Challenges and lessons learned

In the Cambodian climate, the wet season presents a challenge for MAPU officials to access some cleared minefields to collect socio-economic data. This can require the MAPU official to walk a long distance when a road is not accessible by motorbike. As such, the MAPUs intensify their PCM activities in the dry season.

The second challenge is access to beneficiaries, as some of them are not living in the village or due to seasonal migration are outside of the village during non-farming season i.e. dry season. This has required MAPU officials to travel to the village several times or interview them on the phone if MAPU is able to get their contact details. While time consuming and costly, undertaking this additional effort is important for population verification and understanding mine action efforts in building affected communities' prospects for a dignified and prosperous life.

Finally, in the field, access to electricity can be scarce, and tablet batteries can drain quickly, especially as the device ages. Ensuring that MAPU officials carry paper report templates which can be used in this situation is important.

Photo courtesy of MAPU Battambang

Conclusion

The purpose of the PCM is to understand what the cleared minefield land is being used for and what improvement is required for the MAPU to ensure that the planning and prioritization process supports the needs and priorities of the affected communities and that the cleared land is fully used productively.

Regarding the PCM, it is important to have a national structure which supports effective data collection, reporting and monitoring at each level to maintain data integrity and enhance sector learning from its analysis.

With support from the Clearing for Results project, the SEPD was able to prepare reports to present the socio-economic contribution of mine clearance in a way that increasingly demonstrates how returning safe land to communities for productive use, creates pathways for recovery which enable social, economic, and environmental benefits and illustrates to

development partners and stakeholders that mine clearance is an investment in people and societies.

Annex

Annex 1: Sample Report on the Socio-Economic Contribution of Mine Clearance in Malai and Thma Puok Districts of Banteay Meanchey.

References

- Decree No. 160 on the Establishment of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA).
- Sub-Decree No. 70 on the Socio-Economic Management of Mine Clearance Operations.
- Operational guidelines No. 12 on Post-Clearance Monitoring.

UNDP Cambodia, Australia, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand have been the proud partners of the Royal Government of Cambodia supporting the mine action sector. Currently in its fourth phase, the flagship project Clearing for Results (CfRIV): Mine Action for Human Development (2020-2025) aims to accelerate reaching the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goal No. 18 to "End the negative impact of mines/ERW and promote victim assistance" and to achieve the Kingdom's goal for a mine free Cambodia by 2025.