



Urban Agenda Platform

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# Land use planning in landmine affected areas

Partner	Land use planning in landmine affected areas
Region	Asia and the Pacific
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

In 2004, Australian Volunteers International (AVI) initiated the Capacity Building for Mine Action Planning project to work with Cambodia's five Mine Action Planning Units (MAPUs). The project purpose was to build responsive, transparent and holistic mine action planning (MAP) capacity across mine-affected provinces; ensure the participation of all stakeholders and; facilitate land allocation and planning following clearance of explosive remnant of war (ERW - landmines and unexploded ordnance).

## Background and Objective

**SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN** In 1996, there were 4,320 explosive remnant of war (ERW - landmines and unexploded ordnance) casualties in Cambodia, mostly occurring in the northwest provinces of Banteay Meanchay, Battambang, Oddar Meanchay, Preah Vihear and the Pailin municipality. Furthermore, powerful people were acquiring cleared land in the absence of planning and poverty born from landlessness was worsening. In 1999, stakeholders called for processes prioritising land clearance according to greatest socio-economic and humanitarian need. **ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES** AVI prioritised building capacity of MAPUs. To achieve this MAPUs, with the support of the project, identified the need to enhance provincial ownership MAP through improved cooperation, collaboration and participation of women, Provincial Mine Action Committee, District Working Groups and key government and demining agencies. The International Women's Development Agency provided training support to MAPUs to improve field staff understanding of gender roles and affects on MAP processes. As part of the project, and with the assistance of the CMAA, the national mine action authority, the MAPUs prioritised development of a national information management system to manage key mine action data. This would support Government decentralisation efforts, and processes to secure tenure for allocated land. **FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES** Project approach was agreed in close consultation with both the CMAA and MAPUs and the mine action sector. The four project objectives were 1/ that key Government staff developed a capacity to manage the mine action planning process and critically analyse mine action data, 2/ that improved local level participation through village, commune and district groups (particularly of women) supported up to date and well informed mine action planning decisions, 3/ that a centralised system for data management from the field be established to manage all key mine action data in order to support planning processes, and 4/ that a clear understanding exists amongst the wider mine action community of the mine action planning process. **MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES** At the request of CMAA, Australian Volunteers International initiated the Capacity Building for Mine Action Planning Project. AVI identified and approached AusAID, as an appropriate financial partner as the agency had outlined its commitment to mine action planning in the Cambodia Australia Development Cooperation Strategy. To support project design and implementation, AVI undertook extensive stakeholder consultation at village, commune, district, and provincial levels for input into the project strategy. The also allowed AVI, the CMAA and MAPUs to raise awareness of project objectives, identify resourcing and encourage "users" of the MAP process to participate in and own the MAP process through the provision of technical input or other in-kind support – in addition to the substantial Government commitment. Throughout the process and within the project strategy and strong emphasis was placed on ongoing communication and awareness raising across all levels of government regarding their specific obligations in the MAP process, the process of decision making, particularly identifying beneficiaries for land allocation. Training of MAPU staff in community development and gender dimensions in mine action planning by International Women's Development Agency engaged women with the process. Each layer of government, LNGOs, INGOs, bilateral and multilateral funders therefore had some investment or involvement in the MAP process. On completion of project design, expatriate technical assistance was mobilised to each of the five MAPUs for the initial three years of the project. They provided broad based training to build capacity of the MAP process – notably participatory planning, GIS and data management. Based on lessons learned, AVI worked closely with CMAA to develop Operational Guidelines that consolidated the bottom up planning process outlined in Sub Decree on Socio-Economic Management of Mine Clearance Operations.

## Actions and Implementation

Historically, the mine action sector in Cambodia had been somewhat anarchic with mine clearance agencies using their own criteria to determine what constituted a priority. The introduction clear set of guidelines under the Sub Decree on Socio-Economic Management of Mine Clearance Operations empowered the government to assert authority, however this initially challenged for mine clearance agencies. Rather than the CMAA recentralising



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control of planning and instead creating a mine action planning process that was bottom up, and that supported macro decentralisation and deconcentration programs, there was little room to oppose the planning process being proposed. International organizations were now compelled to follow the priorities being set from the ground up. The MAP process is highly participatory, commencing with villages analysing their own mine problem. MAPUs then facilitate a process of prioritisation through each level of Government using transparent criteria, and resulting in an annual Provincial mine action plan. The inadequate participation of women in the MAP process was identified at the earliest stages of the AVI project. Regular and ongoing training has been provided to MAPU field staff by the International Womens Development Agency, and resulting in improved capacity of MAPU staff to manage gender difference. A problem that remains is the ability of mid levels of Government (Commune and District) to completely fulfil their stipulated role. This is due to Government staff at these levels being poorly remunerated. One point of culmination for the MAP process is issuing of land certificates to families receiving cleared land. The status of these land certificates is unclear, even though they have been issued by the Ministry for Land Management. This issue has been taken to the highest levels of Government for resolution, and as a result a national commission on land tenure in mine affected areas is currently being established to address this issue. The quality of participation at village level of the absolute poor in priority setting is unclear. In order to better assess impact, a post clearance monitoring system has been established to 'track MAPU performance'. On an ongoing basis following handover of land certificates, representatives of CMAA will visit villages in order to see if intended land use plans are still in place, and whether intended beneficiaries are still in possession of land. These assessments help measure MAPU performance, while monitoring the wellbeing of resettled families.

## Outcomes and Impacts

- Actual improvement achieved in people's living conditions including women and children;
- Better co-ordination and integration between various actors, organisations or institutions;
- Changes in local, national or regional social, economic and environmental policies and strategies;
- Improved institutional capacity at the national, sub-national or local levels;
- Changes to local or national decision-making, including the institutionalisation of partnerships;
- Recognising and addressing specific opportunities and constraints;
- Changes in the use and allocation of human, technical and financial resources at the local/national level;
- Changes in people's attitudes, behaviour and in the respective roles of women and men.

A strengthened MAP process has contributed to the following outcomes:

- \* Development of bottom up process through MAPUs that supports national mine action Operational Guidelines
- has given vulnerable people living in mine affected communities a voice in prioritising clearance of ERW and land use planning
- \* Development of national data management system has improved collation of village data has improved broader strategic planning at province and national level
- \* ERW problem 'owned' by the Provincial Mine Action Committee (membership including Department Heads of agriculture, rural development, planning, etc.)

This project has strengthened MAPU capacity to manage this important process in the following ways:

- \* Establishment of participatory planning process providing better representation of knowledge held by people living in mine affected communities
- \* Involvement of field staff in gender and mine action training increased awareness of gender issues, therefore heightening gendered perspectives to be carried through prioritization process
- \* Implementation of advocacy activities has ensured that different levels of Government understand the purpose of MAPUs, and their role in the MAP process
- \* Improved relationship between MAPU and PMAC (provincial leadership) allows for more effective and efficient problem resolution

Overall, the Project has played a vital role in linking local reality with policy setting. By constructively engaging and learning from provincial experience, and building strong lines of communication with the CMAA, they can provide effective leadership to the sector that has actual results in the field. Evidence of this is the dramatically falling casualty rates and allocation of land to the poor. The MAP process is a rare example of macro policies of decentralisation and deconcentration being effectively applied.

## Sustainability and Scalability

- Financial: The use and leveraging of resources, including cost recovery, indicating how loans, if any, are being paid back and their terms and conditions;
- Social and Economic: Gender equity, equality and social inclusion, economic and social mobility;
- Cultural: Respect for and consideration of attitudes, behaviour patterns and heritage;
- Environmental: Reducing dependence on non-renewable resources (air, water, land, energy, etc.), and changing production and consumption patterns and technology. E.g. Composting, recycling etc.
- Institutional: Legislation, regulatory frameworks, by-laws or standards formally addressing the issues and problems that have been dealt with by a practice;
- Social policies and/or sectoral strategies at the (sub) national level that have a potential for replication elsewhere;
- Institutional frameworks and decision-making processes that assign clear roles and responsibilities to various levels and groups of actors, such as central and local governmental organisations and community-based organisations;
- Efficient, transparent and accountable management systems that make more effective use of human, technical, financial and natural resources.

From day one, sustainability was integral to this project. Cambodian staff of MAPUs are seconded from four key Provincial Departments – either the Governor's Office, or Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development, or Planning. While these 'inherited' personnel posed some challenges in terms of not having the desired skill set required, it was regarded as a key step towards sustainability that Provincial leadership made this 'investment' in the MAP process. Therefore office space, staff and recurrent costs were provided by the Province. Downstream from province level, efforts have been made to embed the MAP process within the existing governance structures at District and Commune levels. Support has also been provided to village leaders to ensure their understanding of the purpose of the planning process, and the need to access the input of marginalised families. An ongoing issue for the MAP process is that there are too many villages for MAPU to be present at all village level consultations. There is sometimes a reliance on village leaders undertaking



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consultations with their communities to determine priorities. Effort has been put into raising awareness amongst village leaders of the purpose of the MAP process, and the need for it to reflect the input of those living in higher risk areas – women and men and impoverished. Increased awareness that post clearance monitoring will occur has contributed to better management of land allocation, with allocation increasingly effective in reaching the poorest. The Provincial Mine Action Committee mechanism helps ensure holistic thinking around land use. Recently, Heads of departments of forestry and environment have also engaged with the MAP process, when clearance has been mooted to occur in forest or environment protected areas. From a governance perspective, mine action is now a valuable model to other sectors, in that an appropriate system has been developed within the existing Government resource base, that is based on participatory bottom up planning, and has the commitment and active participation of all key stakeholders.

## Gender and Social Inclusivity

Australian Volunteers International approach to development is committed to building the capacity of a community encourage more active participation of the disadvantaged and vulnerable in decision-making and community development. This commitment has informed AVI's program globally, and was instrumental in positioning the organization to become involved in the MAPU project. The principles underpinning AVI and this project are of relevance to any development program. The project used a strong foundation of knowledge from village, commune, district and provincial levels, to assist with development of appropriate policy to better manage a complex issue. From this foundation, sustainability of the approach was enhanced by advocating across sector that all stakeholders were obliged to cooperate and support this good initiative. The project provided highly relevant technical assistance and focused capacity building efforts on supporting the Government system to manage this new process. Beneficiaries of the project were people already working within the Government system. Specialist planning skills such as gender awareness, the use of GIS and maps as planning tools, and facilitation have been developed as required. As capacity was developed, Government increased its confidence to continuously improve the operational guidelines, and is constantly honing its ability to extract better quality information from local communities. The approach of the project has also enhanced understanding of the purpose of participatory planning within villages, and the roles and opportunities that it entails for poorer people. The MAP process is regarded nationwide as a successful implementation of decentralisation policy. It has shown that a participatory planning process can be managed within Government, with only a modest investment. The Council of Ministers has recently engaged with the MAP the approach so that the MAPU system considers broader land management issues.

## Innovative Initiative

Using well crafted macro policies to leverage support and accountability at local level AVI's extensive engagement with mine action issues ahead of project commencement allowed AVI to play an important role in shaping the Sub Decree on Socio-Economic Management of Mine Clearance Operations that was passed in 2004, and outlines the detail of the MAP process. Through on-the-ground experience of mine action planning activities, AVI was able to work with CMAA to ensure the Sub Decree was a participatory bottom up process. Furthermore, AVI worked closely with CMAA to promote to the sector how the MAP process was an effective operationalisation of macro decentralisation policy, aimed at promoting greater grassroots participation. By linking the MAP process within the national development framework, both government and non-government stakeholders felt compelled to cooperate and support the fledgling process. Clarity of roles also helped ensure accountability, since each level was clear on its responsibility. This has also helped communities themselves in demanding accountability, since they are more clear on who is responsible for what. Sustainability of working within Government The Cambodian mine action sector had historically acted with a great deal of autonomy from Government, with a large role being played by international organisations. The MAP process helped assert Government ownership of the problem, and has led to a better coordinated sector, better policy based on their enhanced engagement, and longer term financial commitments to sustain mine action planning. Strong Government leadership and capacity has allowed the sector to enjoy greater continuity of approach. It has also allowed for mine action issues to be better mainstreamed through Government. Ability of 'good practice' to bring other stakeholders on board By acting as an advocate for following the 'good practice' being put in place by the Government, AVI was able to apply gentle pressure to other organizations to better integrate their programming with the MAP process, and support it through any teething problems.

## Conclusion

- Title of Article: Source (include author, publication title, volume/number, date, and page number(s): Scott Rankin, A Blessed Stone , AV Magazine Spring 2004 (Nov 2004) p20 – 21 - Scott Rankin, Removing the Red Tape, to be published AV Magazine Winter 2008 (May 2008) p10-11