
MOZAMBIQUE: REBUILDING LIVES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

THE LANDMINE PROBLEM

Mozambique experienced 26 years of conflict, including a war for independence as well as a civil war, which left the country littered with non-self destructing or “persistent” landmines. The exact number of landmines is not known. However estimates range as high as one million. Several mine action non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with extensive experience argue that this estimate is high and should be lowered, but the lack of landmine location records makes it impossible to give a more precise figure.

While landmines are a problem in all of Mozambique’s 10 provinces, the most heavily mined regions are in the north. Virtually every part of Mozambique has experienced negative social and economic consequences from landmines. These “hidden killers” are a public health menace, hinder economic development, and have an adverse impact on farming. Persistent landmines also make it difficult for Mozambicans to install water supply systems. However, the humanitarian threat is becoming manageable, and the U.S. government plans to continue to support mine action efforts until it achieves a landmine-free environment, currently projected for 2009. Clearance of high and medium impact sites is projected to be complete by 2006.

U.S. PARTNERSHIPS

Working with NGOs and in partnership with other donor nations, the United States has supported mine action throughout Mozambique and has been the largest donor, contributing more than \$33 million in humanitarian demining assistance to the country since 1992, when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) supported mine clearance operations as part of the Demobilization/Reintegration Project. USAID

continues to focus on rural income generation programs in the agricultural provinces in northern-central Mozambique, which have 55percent of the country’s population. The agency has contributed \$4 million to support mine clearance along 2,400 kilometers of roads, facilitating post-war resettlement of agricultural land. In addition, the agency has disbursed \$1.2 million to fund, along with the Netherlands, HALO Trust’s clearance operations in Nampula Province. USAID’s Leahy War Victims Fund is underwriting Prosthetic and Orthotic Worldwide Education and Relief (POWER), an NGO, to assist the Mozambican government in producing and maintaining prosthetic devices. Thus far, more than 7,000 amputees (70 percent of the amputee population) have been fitted with prosthetics manufactured in the POWER workshop in Maputo.

Between 2000 and 2002, the Department of State alone contributed about 15 percent of annual donor financing for mine action in Mozambique, to include the donation of mine detecting dogs to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)/Accelerated Demining Program (ADP); equipment and training for the National Demining Institute (IND) Headquarters staff, and HALO Trust clearance operations in two provinces. At the request of the IND, the Department of State contracted RONCO to conduct high priority demining under IND direction, including clearance of the Sena Rail Line between Beira and the Malawi border. This restored rail line opens large areas of the Zambezi River Valley, key to development of the central provinces, for the export of agricultural products and minerals to the country’s second largest city and port of Beira. In addition, the Department of State in partnership with Japan contributed \$1 million to the Massingir Dam demining project, which is vital to the country’s overall development strategy. The dam is capable of supplying electricity to the area and irrigating nine million square meters of land.

Currently the United States is supporting HALO Trust in the clearance of the Cabo Delgado and Zambezia provinces. Demining in these provinces will facilitate cross-border trade with Tanzania and allow for agricultural development. Clearance of both these provinces will also improve income and food security of farm families. The United States also provides initial and refresher mine action training and equipment for Mozambique's military demining brigade, the only nation to do so.

PROGRAM CONCERNS

The Humanitarian Mine Action Program in Mozambique faced a serious problem in February 2000 when two typhoons caused severe floods and displaced landmines. At the request of the IND, the Department of State provided funding for the U.S. contractor RONCO to address the problem

On June 28, 2002, H.E. Leonardo Santos Simão, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and U.S. Ambassador Sharon P. Wilkinson signed an agreement formally establishing the world's first rapid response demining unit — the Quick Reaction Demining Force (QRDF) to be based in Mozambique. This force is available for immediate use in crisis situations worldwide. This unique force

has already deployed to wide acclaim in Sri Lanka as well as to the Sudan and Iraq. The QRDF currently consists of four squads of 10 deminers each and eight mine detection dogs. All demining personnel are Mozambicans who keep their professional skills well honed in demining their homeland between emergency deployments to other countries.

U.S. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2002, NGO mine-clearance operations funded by the United States, removed more than 17,000 landmines and cleared more than 14 million square meters of land. More than 4,500 kilometers of roads have been opened, including 2,400 kilometers in Sofal, Manica, and Zambezia Provinces, reconnecting nearly one million people to their land and communities. Casualty rates in Mozambique have been decreasing, proving that mine risk education programs do work. In 2002, 47 landmine victims were reported, a 58 percent decrease from the 80 reported in 2001. Fifty thousand people have gained access to previously inaccessible natural resources. U.S. support to clearing the northern provinces is improving safety conditions for local populations and, along with USAID projects, enabling residents to increase their incomes. ©