

SUDAN'S EXPENSIVE MINEFIELDS: **An Evaluation of Political and Economic** **Problems in Sudanese Mine Clearance**



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Human Security and Mine Action Discussion Paper
Centre for the Study of Global Governance
London School of Economics and Political Science
Funded by Fondation Pro Victimis and the Economic and Social Research Council

IS THE COST OF SUDANESE DEMINING WORTH IT?

“Of course, my brother! If you fight for over two decades... and you gain your independence, is this how you want to live? No! You want to be like any other country which is developed. And for you to achieve that you need to get rid of all the obstacles. ... All of these things are affected by the existence of landmines and remnants of war, so it is worth the expense.”
 – Spokesperson for South Sudanese Demining Commission¹

“In light of the extent of the mines problem, HALO does not believe the required costs to operate in South Sudan are acceptable in terms of expected output....”
 – HALO Trust²

“I believe it is worth it. There is a need to stabilize Sudan. If a big effort isn't made, it will descend very rapidly back to war. Yes, productivity is probably low by comparison to a number of other global programs. Yes, the impact might be lower by comparison, but in terms of bringing stability to the region, we are bringing so much more to South Sudan in addition to our technical skills. That's the rewarding aspect of it for me.”
 – Charles Frisby, Norwegian People's Aid³

¹ SSSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

² HALO Trust. (2007) “HALO Sudan Report.” Internal report. Obtained by author from HALO. p. 11.

³ Charles Frisby. (2 August 2007) Personal interview with author in Yei, Sudan.

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Acronyms

CPA – Comprehensive Peace Agreement	SIMAS – Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service
DDG – Danish Demining Group	SLR – Sudan Landmine Response
FSD – Swiss Foundation for Mine Action	SLIRI – Sudan Landmine Information and Response Initiative
HAC – Humanitarian Aid Commission	SPLA – Sudan People’s Liberation Army
HALO Trust – Hazardous Area Life-support Organization Trust	SSDC – South Sudan Demining Commission
JASMAR – Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines	UNDP – UN development Programme
JIDU – Joint Integrated Demining Unit	UNHCR – UN High Commissioner for Refugees
JMC – Joint Military Commission	UNMAO – UN Mine Action Office
MAG – Mines Advisory Group	UNMAS – UN Mine Action Service
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization	UNMIS – UN Mission in Sudan
NMAA – National Mine Action Authority	UNOPS – UN Office of Project Services
NPA – Norwegian People’s Aid	UXO – Unexploded Ordnance
OSIL – Operation Save Innocent Lives	WFP – UN World Food Program
SCBL – Sudan Campaign to Ban Landmines	

Abstract

Sudan is an extremely difficult place to run a demining program. Mine clearance agencies face astronomical prices of goods and services, monumental logistical challenges, bureaucratic impediments from government, fraught labor disputes and a deeply embedded political economy of conflict. This multitude of problems has made Sudan one of the most unproductive demining programs, in terms of ordnance or area cleared per US dollar, in the world. This begs the question whether the level of international investment in Sudanese mine action is truly worth it. This paper will argue that in terms of saving lives or increasing access to socio-economic development, much of the money pouring into Sudanese mine action might be better spent in other severely mine-impacted countries.

However, other considerations make such a cost-benefit calculation more complicated. There may be a genuine argument for pouring funding into Sudan for the political reasons of supporting the peace between the North and South. The political, economic and social dividends from demining (including increased freedom of movement, return of displaced people and a reduction in perceptions of insecurity) may justify some of the high financial and other costs. That said, donors should not deceive themselves about the limits to mine action's ability play the role of a midwife of peace.

a. Introduction

Sudan is an extremely difficult place to run a demining program. Mine clearance agencies face astronomical prices of goods and services, monumental logistical challenges, bureaucratic impediments from government, fraught labor disputes and a deeply embedded political economy of conflict. To some degree this is not surprising. Similar problems and socio-political distortions exist in most countries emerging from war. For instance, in Bosnia mine clearance was, for several years, ‘captured’ by ethno-nationalist interests that siphoned off funding, distorted priorities and cut corners in safety procedures.⁴ The Cambodian program also suffered endemic corruption for some time, linked to patronage and demining areas most beneficial for the illicit trade in hardwoods. These problems led one scholar of mine action to remark that “allegations of corruption” are the “Achilles’ heel” of many demining programs.⁵

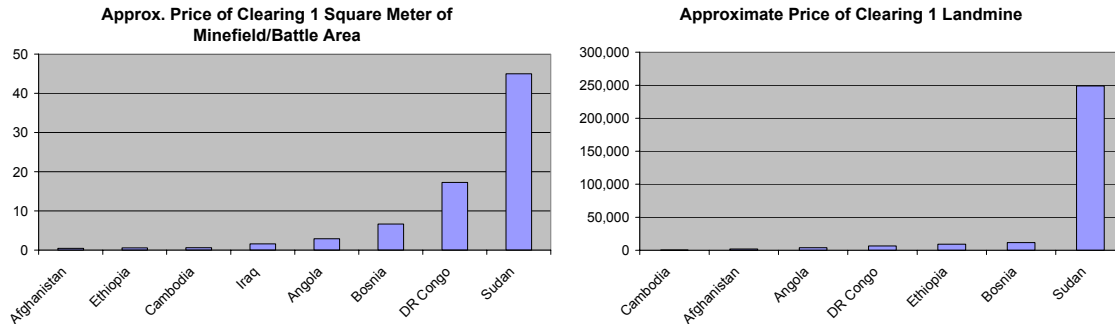
However, the current situation in Sudan appears to be particularly bad. Late last year, the HALO Trust, a British demining NGO, was expelled from Sudan following what it alleges amounted to massive dysfunctions in its partner’s management and administration. In addition, several NGOs and companies have had staff assaulted, threatened with death, arbitrarily put under house arrest, thrown out of the country and even taken hostage. This is compounded by less than ideal allocations of resources with a top-heavy reliance on expatriates, petty corruption and an inflated economy.

This multitude of problems has made Sudan one of the most unproductive demining programs, in terms of ordnance or area cleared per US dollar, in the world. It costs almost \$250,000 to clear one mine, or almost \$45 to clear one square meter of land. Indeed comparing the price of clearance in Sudan with Afghanistan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which would seem similarly logistically complicated, in the graphs below is especially shocking. Even if a significant portion of the expense is start up costs (since the massive Sudanese mine action program is relatively new), even in Bosnia, where salaries are much higher than in Africa, the average cost of demining in 1997 was not much higher than \$12 per square meter.

⁴ Bolton, M. & Griffiths, H. (Sept. 2006) *Bosnia’s Political Landmines: A Call for Socially Responsible and Conflict-Sensitive Mine Action*. London, Landmine Action.
<http://www.landmineaction.org/resources/Bosnias_Political_Landmines.pdf>.

⁵ Maslen, S. (2004) *Mine Action After Diana: Progress in the Struggle Against Landmines*. London, Landmine Action/Pluto Press. p. 124.

Figure 1: Comparing the Price of Demining and Battle Area Clearance in 2005 in Selected Mine-Affected Countries⁶



Ongoing survey efforts in Sudan are showing that mine and unexploded ordnance contamination is significantly lower than was originally estimated. In comparison with places like Afghanistan, Cambodia or Angola, the impact of mines on human settlements and socio-economic activities is relatively low. Yet Sudan remains one of the highest funded mine clearance programs in the world. *This begs the question whether the level of international investment in Sudanese mine action is truly worth it.*

Documenting in detail the immense political and economic challenges faced by Sudanese demining agencies, this paper will argue that in terms of saving lives or increasing access to socio-economic development, much of the money pouring into Sudanese mine action might be better spent in severely mine-impacted countries like Angola, Afghanistan, Iraq or Cambodia.

However, the author recognizes that other considerations make such a cost-benefit calculation more complicated. Firstly, the high level of international interest in Sudan has attracted the high level of funding. It is not clear that if the money was not sent to Sudanese mine action it would necessarily be used in mine action elsewhere – especially since a significant portion comes from the UN’s assessed peacekeeping budget. Secondly, there may be a genuine argument for pouring funding into Sudan for the political reasons of supporting the peace between the North and South. The UN especially does not want to see another failed peace agreement – and peacekeeping mission – in Africa. *One could argue then, that the political, economic and social dividends from demining (including increased freedom of movement, return of displaced people and a reduction in perceptions of insecurity) may justify some of the high financial and other costs.* That said, donors should not deceive themselves about the limits to mine action’s ability play the role of a midwife of peace. If this was the primary motive, then perhaps other activities, such as efforts to bring about a political solution to ongoing conflict, would be a better use of money.

This is not the first attempt to apply methods of cost-benefit analysis to demining. GICHD/UNDP,⁷ Litzelman,⁸ the Afghan Mine Clearance and Planning Agency,⁹

⁶ Prices were calculated roughly by dividing the total funding for mine action in the country by the total productivity. Data from: International Campaign to Ban Landmines. “Sudan.” *Landmine Monitor Report 2006: Toward a Mine Free World*. <<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2006/sudan.html>>.

⁷ GICHD/UNDP. (May 2002) *Socio-Economic Approaches to Mine Action: An Operational Handbook*. Geneva, GICHD/UNDP. <http://www.undp.org/cpr/documents/mine_action/training/Socio-Economic_Approaches_to_Mine_Action.pdf>. pp. 25-30.

Mitchell,¹⁰ Keeley,¹¹ and Harris¹² have all used economic tools to examine whether demining in specific countries is worth the expense. However, while drawing on economic theory, and occasionally providing basic statistical data, this paper will take a more qualitative, rather than a purely economic approach to evaluating costs and benefits.

Methodologically, in addition to an extensive review of both academic and ‘grey’ organizational literature, this paper is based on a month’s fieldwork in Sudan, where the author visited Juba, Yei and Khartoum. The author interviewed over 35 people, both local and expatriate, involved in Sudanese mine action and reviewed basic quantitative data available at the UN Mine Action Office. To protect the safety and security of sources in what is a contested political environment, the author has decided to paraphrase, rather than cite or quote directly most interviewees or organizational documents. However, because the HALO Trust has pulled out of Sudan, they have given the author permission to mention them explicitly in the text. This should not be read as a bias toward HALO, but rather an attempt to protect other agencies and individuals.

The rest of this paper will provide an overview of Sudanese mine action and the mine problem, outline some of the key challenges, evaluate whether the investment in Sudanese mine action has been worth the effort, show what some agencies have done to respond to the problems and finally make recommendations on how to improve cost-effectiveness and better allocation of resources.

b. Perceptions vs. Reality of Mine Risk

At war since 1983, Sudan has an as yet undefined landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination problem. Most of this problem is concentrated in the southern areas which have faced the most fighting. Most mine contamination occurs around former government garrison towns and along major roads. Mine and UXO present a public safety hazard, straining already poor health systems. They create economic blockages, as mined fields remain fallow and mined roads prevent the ordinary exchange of goods and services. They threaten the return of displaced persons to homes made uninhabitable by the remnants of war. Most significantly, they pose a direct threat of injury and death; there have been at least 3,700 mine and UXO victims in Sudan to date.¹³

Toward the end of the civil war between north and south Sudan, the UN and demining agencies began to raise awareness of the seriousness of mine contamination in

⁸ Michael Litzelman. (August 2002) “Benefit/Cost Analysis of U.S. Demining in Ethiopia and Eritrea.” *Journal of Mine Action*. 6.2.

<<http://www.maic.jmu.edu/journal/6.2/focus/michaellitzelman/michaellitzelman.htm>>.

⁹ Mine Clearance and Planning Agency (MCPA). (December 1999) *Socio-Economic Impact Study of Landmines and Mine Action Operations in Afghanistan*. Islamabad, Pakistan: UN Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan.

¹⁰ Shannon K. Mitchell. (2004) “Death, Disability, Displaced Persons and Development: The Case of Landmines in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” *World Development*. 32(12).

¹¹ Robert Keeley. (December 2003) “The Cost Capture Issue in Humanitarian Mine Action.” *Journal of Mine Action*. 7.3. <<http://www.maic.jmu.edu/Journal/7.3/notes/keeley/keeley.htm>>.

¹² Geoff Harris. (March 2002) “The Economics of Landmine Clearance in Afghanistan.” *Disasters*. 26(1). G. Elliot & G. Harris (December 2001) “A cost-benefit analysis of landmine clearance in Mozambique.” *Development Southern Africa*. 18(5).

¹³ UNMAO. (July 2007) “IMSMA Monthly Report.” Obtained by author from UNMAO. p. 8.

Sudan, including the potential public safety problems and the potential risk to humanitarian agencies. However, lacking any comprehensive survey of the country, and facing some reluctance to handover data from the armed factions, both local and international agencies made dubious overestimates of as many as 3 million mines, 70,000 mine victims and three million livestock killed by mines in Sudan.¹⁴ Pressured by the need to fundraise, and highlight the need in Sudan, there has been a financial disincentive to low ball estimates of the impact of mines.

When the UN mission ramped up its presence in Sudan following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), ending war between the north and south, and began to deploy peacekeepers throughout the south, they looked to UNMAO for guidance in avoiding mines, especially on roads. Making an understandably risk-averse decision to err on the side of caution, UNMAO came up with a Road Threat Map system, which color-coded roads based on the risk of them being mined.¹⁵ Roads where there were reports of mine contamination were rendered red, cleared roads green and roads that, following survey, appeared mine-free, were coded yellow. Officially, UN regulations proscribe travel on red roads.¹⁶

While eminently sensible, the problem with this system is that the maps are easily misunderstood. A ‘red road’ is not necessarily impacted by mines, it has just not been confirmed as mine-free. Moreover, mine contamination in a very small section of a road could lead to a road’s entire length being labeled red. To a layperson, the Road Threat Map – especially in its early editions – suggested that huge swathes of Sudan’s roads were mined. Moreover, the roads that remain red are not necessarily the ones most likely to be mined, rather they are the ones located in marginal and ‘inaccessible’ locations. Unfortunately, due to the tendency of Sudan’s political economy to favor metropolises over marginal areas – a tendency some say is a root cause of Sudan’s many conflicts – these are the areas that often need significant humanitarian and development assistance. However, many of these communities were marginalized by risk-averse humanitarian agencies unwilling to travel red roads. Some agencies, including certain UN organizations, are subverting this system by traveling on well-used red roads, or subcontracting transport to local companies willing to travel down them. As one independent evaluation of Sudanese mine action said:

Perceptions of risk from explosive contamination in a country – sometimes inflated by the mine action community in order to attract donor attention – create special problems for development in mine-affected areas. ... Many such agencies simply adopt a policy of avoiding communities in which there are suspicions of contamination, with the result that these communities are ‘doubly

¹⁴ “The UN assessment team [concluded]... that the most credible estimate of the number of landmines in Sudan is ‘in the range of 500,000 to 2 million landmines....’ The Sudanese government states that two to three million landmines and UXO cover some 800,000 square kilometers or 32 percent of the country.” International Campaign to Ban Landmines. “Sudan.” *Landmine Monitor Report 1999: Toward a Mine Free World*. <<http://www.icbl.org/lm/1999/sudan.html>>.

Figures for mine victims and livestock from: Abu Osama Abd Allah M. (n.d.) “Mine Clearance in Sudan with Specific Concentration to Nuba Mountains.” Unpublished document printed by JASMAR, obtained by author.

¹⁵ UNMAO (30 June 2007) “Road Threat Map.” <<http://www.sudanmap.org/Images/GISmaps/Road%20Map.jpg>>.

¹⁶ For more information on road risk classification see: Greg Crowther & Richard Moyes. (November 2006) *Anti-Vehicle Mines: Understanding the Impact and Managing the Risk*. London, Landmine Action. pp. 54-55.

damned' (i.e. not only do they suffer from contamination but they are also denied development assistance.¹⁷

The wild overestimations of the level of mine contamination and Road Threat Map have both contributed to a perception that mine risk is much greater than it really is. This is being confirmed by the ongoing Landmine Impact Survey (LIS), which is assessing the impact of landmines on human settlements in the regions considered most mine-affected. While the LIS is still in progress, preliminary results from suggest that the level of contamination is much lower than previously expected and few communities are severely mine-affected. The LIS estimates that only 1.5% of all communities in Gadaref, Kassala, Red Sea and Sennar states¹⁸ and 6% of communities in Blue Nile State are impacted by mines.¹⁹ This suggest that human impact from mines contamination in the north is low.

In Eastern Equatoria (in Southern Sudan), the LIS found that around 11% of communities, home to 83,000 people, were impacted by landmines and around 16% of these were considered high-impact.²⁰ This is at a higher level than the overall level of impact in Afghanistan (one of the most heavily impacted countries), where 8% of communities are impacted, with 12% of these considered high-impact.²¹ However, it is misleading to compare a province to a whole country. A better comparison would be to compare Eastern Equatoria, one of Sudan's most heavily mined states, to Kabul province, Afghanistan's most heavily mined region, where 32% of communities, home to 486,000 people, are impacted and 56% of these are high-impact.²² Thus, compared to some areas of Afghanistan, the level of mine risk in Southern Sudan is also relatively low.

The distortion in the perception of risk to the population from mines is evident when comparing the number of casualties from traffic accidents to mine/UXO accidents. In a search of the UN funding database for Sudan, there were no projects listed for reducing road traffic accidents. And there is no similar UN 'Road Threat Map' for traffic accidents, despite these actually posing a much higher threat than mines and UXO to people's safety.

¹⁷ X, Y & Z. (2007) Independent evaluation of one donor's projects in Sudan. p. 25. Obtained by author.

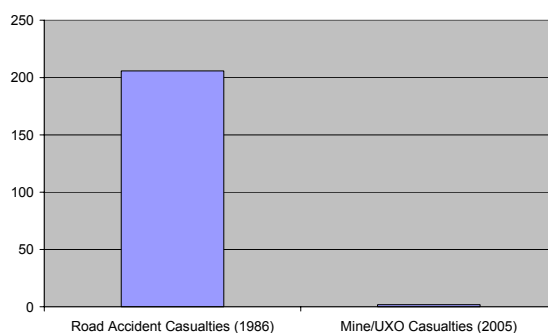
¹⁸ Survey Action Center (SAC), Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines (JASMAR). (September 2007) "Landmine Impact Survey Sudan: Kassala, Red Sea, Gadaref and Sennar States." <http://www.sac-na.org/pdf_text/sudan/ES_Report_Sep07.pdf>. p. 4.

¹⁹ Survey Action Center (SAC), Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Sudanese Association for Combating Landmines (JASMAR). (March 2007) "Landmine Impact Survey Sudan: Blue Nile State." <http://www.sac-na.org/pdf_text/sudan/BN_Report_Mar07.pdf>. p. 6.

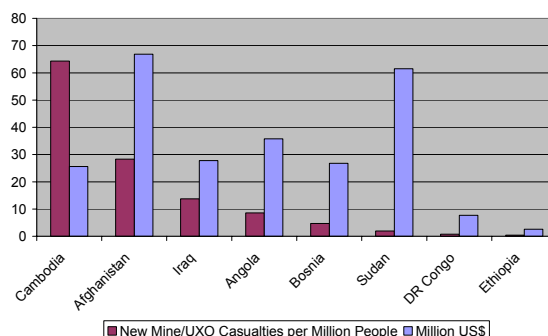
²⁰ Survey Action Center (SAC) & Mines Advisory Group (MAG). (March 2006) "Landmine Impact Survey Sudan: Eastern Equatoria." <http://www.sac-na.org/pdf_text/sudan/EE_Report_Sep06.pdf>. p. 3.

²¹ Mine Clearance and Planning Agency (MCPA) & Survey Action Center (SAC). *Landmine Impact Survey: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. Takoma Park, Maryland: SAC. <http://www.sac-na.org/pdf_text/afghanistan/AFG_FinalReport_Engl.pdf>. p. 7.

²² Mine Clearance and Planning Agency (MCPA) & Survey Action Center (SAC). *Landmine Impact Survey: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. Takoma Park, Maryland: SAC. <http://www.sac-na.org/pdf_text/afghanistan/AFG_FinalReport_Engl.pdf>. p. 99.

Figure 2: Comparison of Casualties from Road and Mine/UXO Accidents (per 100,000 people)²³

A further look at how many people were falling victim to mines and UXO in Sudan also shows how the risk is significantly lower than in several other countries, though Sudan receives more funding:

Figure 3: New Mine/UXO Casualties (per Million People) in 2005 vs. Mine Action Funding Received, by Country, 2005.²⁴

This overestimation of the level of mine risk, has made it easier for mine action agencies to fundraise, but it does nothing to decrease the general perceptions of fear and insecurity that contribute to the confidence in the peace process and refugees' willingness to return. Said one independent evaluation:

Inflated numbers benefit the Government and SPLM by luring the sympathy and financial assistance of donors into their mine action programmes, over which their respective administration keep control. But it has made it the more difficult to plan for how best to tackle the problem.²⁵

²³ The only readily available on road accidents in Sudan is from 1986, however this figure is likely to underestimate the problem. Road accident casualties per 100,000 people taken from: G. Jacobs and A. Aeron-Thomas. "Chapter 3" Africa Road Safety Review: Final Report. <<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/about/international/africa/chap3.htm>>. Mine/UXO accident data from: International Campaign to Ban Landmines. "Sudan." *Landmine Monitor Report 2006: Toward a Mine Free World*. <<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2006/sudan.html>>. Population statistics in 2005 from CIA *WorldFactbook 2005*, archived here: CIA. (2005) "Sudan People 2005." <http://www.allcountries.org/wfb2005/sudan/sudan_people.html>.

²⁴ Mine/UXO accidents and mine action funding statistics from: International Campaign to Ban Landmines. *Landmine Monitor Report 2006: Toward a Mine Free World*. <<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2006>>. Population statistics in 2005 from CIA *WorldFactbook 2005*, archived here: CIA. (2005) "Country Profiles 2005." <<http://www.allcountries.org/wfb2005>>.

²⁵ Independent Consultant Y. (27 January 2006) Evaluation of NGO X. Document obtained by author. p. 7.

In sum, it may be time for mine action agencies and donors to consider a comprehensive review of whether the level of mine risk requires the level of funding they have allocated to Sudan. The rest of this paper will look at this question in detail.

c. Background to Sudanese Mine Action

In order to understand the situation in Sudanese mine action today, it helps to understand how the program developed, from a small, haphazard operation run by local operators into a massive international intervention. The following gives a brief history of Sudanese mine action.

i. Indigenous Mine Action

Mine action began in Sudan in 1996, when the southern rebel group, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) declared a unilateral moratorium on the use of mines, provided the Sudanese Government also refrained from using them. This was followed by the Government of Sudan signing, though not ratifying the Antipersonnel Mine Ban treaty in 1997.

The SPLA then created two 'national NGOs' – Operation Save Innocent Lives (OSIL) to coordinate clearance and Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service (SIMAS) to coordinate mine risk education and victim assistance. In the north, the Sudanese Red Crescent Society and the Sudan Campaign Ban Landmines (SCBL) successfully lobbied the government to be aware of landmine issues and by 1999 both the SPLA and the government affirmed a commitment not to use mines.

By 1999 OSIL reported that it had cleared 236 miles of roads, 2,179 mines and 20,740 from the south, though this was not subjected to any independent quality assurance and was not conducted to the International Mine Action Standards recognized by the UN. There was some limited external assistance from international NGOs. Mines Advisory Group (MAG) provided some support to OSIL, HALO sent technical advisors and several NGOs and UN agencies provided limited funding.²⁶ Meanwhile Government of Sudan army was doing very limited clearance in the north but lacked the funding and technical capacity for a major effort.

However, a large scale intervention was prevented by the ongoing conflict. Few mine action donors were willing to put money forward while there was the possibility that the factions could renege on their commitment and begin re-mining demined areas, or put the security of demining agencies at risk. Moreover, while the SPLA signed the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment (an equivalent of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty for non-state actors) in 2001, many bilateral and multilateral donors were reluctant to fund mine action in a country whose government had not ratified the Treaty.²⁷ Therefore “the under-funded local initiatives made little headway....”²⁸

²⁶ International Campaign to Ban Landmines. “Sudan.” *Landmine Monitor Report 1999: Toward a Mine Free World*. <<http://www.icbl.org/lm/1999/sudan.html>>.

²⁷ Peter Moszynski. (27 November 2005) “Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict: The Case of Sudan.” *Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict*. Report on the workshop organized by Geneva Call and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Non-State Actors Working Group in Zagreb. Geneva, Geneva Call. p. 31.

²⁸ Peter Moszynski. (27 November 2005) “Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict: The Case of Sudan.” *Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict*. Report on the workshop organized by Geneva Call

Rae McGrath, Nobel co-Laureate and co-founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, felt that by cutting off all mine action assistance to countries at war, donors missed the opportunity to provide life-saving assistance to people living in more peaceful areas of the country, and to gather information on mine contamination. He felt that by assisting mine action in Sudan, the possibility of mine action in conflict could be demonstrated. Through Oxfam and Landmine Action UK, McGrath was able to secure funding from the European Commission (EC) to facilitate a series of ‘crosslines’ meetings between local mine action actors on both sides of the conflict and set up the Sudan Landmine Information and Response Initiative (SLIRI), a joint project with northern and southern mine action groups, in 2001. The focus of SLIRI’s initial work, conducted through 15 country-wide offices, was information gathering.

ii. Nuba Mountains Ceasefire

In 2002, the shuttle diplomacy of US Senator Danforth achieved a ceasefire between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA in the Nuba Mountains region. This was seen by the international community as a major opportunity to build confidence between the two parties and demonstrate to the local populations the potential ‘peace dividend,’ in terms of socio-economic assistance, of an end to the fighting. The intention was to turn the Nuba Mountains into a showcase of peacebuilding and development progress, in order to display what could occur in the whole country if the parties would sign a peace agreement.

The Joint Military Commission (JMC), created to monitor compliance with the ceasefire, saw mine survey and clearance of roads as critical to its mission, and also saw mine action as a possible means to build cooperation across lines. Therefore, the SLIRI project, now managed by Landmine Action UK, shifted its priorities to training teams of deminers and surveyors from both sides of the lines to work together. Meanwhile DanChurchAid set up a similar program working in cooperation with JASMAR, a northern mine action NGO, and OSIL. The US also funded RONCO, a commercial demining company to provide demining support to JMC.

Progress on the ground in the Nuba Mountains was matched by and contributed to political progress toward mine action cooperation. Three years before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Government, the SPLA and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) signed a memorandum of understanding laying out the framework of a mine action program for Sudan. In 2003 the Sudanese government ratified the Mine Ban Treaty, thus making it eligible for many donors’ funds. Recognizing the impact the crosslines mine action work had on the Nuba Mountains, the JMC awarded SLIRI a medal for facilitating the JMC’s mission in May 2004.²⁹

iii. Internationalization

The international involvement in the Nuba Mountains mine action presaged the trend toward greater and greater internationalization as the general peace process between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA picked up pace.

and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Non-State Actors Working Group in Zagreb. Geneva, Geneva Call. p. 33.

²⁹ SLIRI. (n.d.) “Our Activities: Mine Clearance.”

<<http://www.landmineaction.org/sliri/mineclearance.htm>>.

While the full Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was not signed until January 2005, those actors on both sides dealing with mine action were slightly ahead of the curve, having agreed on a joint Sudan National Mine Action Strategic Framework and Sudan National Mine Action Policy Framework in 2004. The parties involved in the mine action discussions at the time attribute this to the confidence built in the process of implementation mine action projects in the Nuba Mountains.

By 2004, the situation in the south was stable enough for the UN World Food Program (WFP) and UNMAS to assess which roads would be high priority for survey and clearance. At the beginning of the year WFP contracted the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) and UNOPS contracted Mechem to begin survey operations. Due to the uncertain status of the roads, WFP had been flying most of its aid into south Sudan and saw demining as a way to drastically reduce the cost of transporting food. UNMAS, which is located within the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, saw mine action as a necessary preparation for the possibility that the CPA might call for the deployment of international peacekeepers in South Sudan. Norwegian People's Aid, which had a long history of aid programs in the south also began a small mine action program around Yei the same year.

The CPA and UN Security Council Resolution 1590 allocated responsibility for mine action technical assistance and coordination to the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which established a UN Mine Action Office (UNMAO) with offices in Khartoum, Juba and Al Fashir. The authorities in the north established the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) and the newly autonomous Government of South Sudan created the New Sudan Mine Action Directorate (now the South Sudan Demining Commission or SSDC) in 2005. However these local government institutions have remained, as one recent independent evaluation put it, "toothless tigers" because "the key decisions on all levels are made by the UN and, for various reasons cooperation with the national centres has not always been good."³⁰

In addition to international dominance at the policy coordination level, the vast majority of mine action implementation is directed or carried out by international actors. Only international companies and NGOs have bid for the UN competitive tenders, bilateral funding goes to international NGOs and there are several international military peacekeeping contingents – from Kenya, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Egypt and Pakistan, conducting demining.

Therefore, while mine action in Sudan was started by indigenous actors at their own initiative in the late 1990s, the post-CPA era has actually seen a 'confiscation of capacity,' rather than a building of local capacity, by international agencies. As will be outlined below one could argue that this has happened for good reason, but it does mean that Sudan has an almost unprecedented level of foreign involvement in its mine action. Expatriates influence many of the noteworthy decision in the program, from the strategic policy level within UNMAO to daily management of demining teams. In some organizations the only significant authority left to the local actors is the potential to delay or obstruct decisions. Despite rhetoric of building national capacity, most of the focus of the UN effort has been on operations, and the UNDP position for a technical advisor to build the capacity of the SSDC has remained empty for some time. With no major responsibilities, nor accountability to any well-organized internal political constituency

³⁰ X, Y & Z. (2007) Independent evaluation of one donor's projects in Sudan. p. 11. Obtained by author.

for mine action, the local authorities are neither given the chance to make meaningful decisions nor face political backlash from any mistakes made. With only the authority to drag their feet, as will be shown below, the local mine action authorities have yet to be given the opportunity to use productive authority.

d. Challenges

Mine action necessarily takes place in a country that has experienced conflict. Thus demining programs often take place in countries crippled by destroyed infrastructure, tense political situations and a war economy distorted by conflict priorities and severe scarcity. Sudanese mine action has not been spared these challenges, which seem to have hampered mine action agencies far more than in many other countries. The following subsections examine some particular issues mine action organizations face in Sudan and how they contribute to the high cost of demining.

i. Complicated Logistics

Sudan, especially the south and Darfur, is an extremely logistically difficult place to work, for deminers, humanitarians and businesspeople. Sudan is a very large country – the biggest in Africa – and the distance between Khartoum and Juba is farther than that between Sarajevo and Geneva. This means that moving people, commodities, equipment and even information around the country can take a long time. While Khartoum boasts an eight-lane highway and smoothly paved boulevards, the road network in South Sudan, where most demining occurs, is in appalling condition. Decades of neglect, by both the colonial and Khartoum government, have functioned to isolate areas of rebellion, and keep marginalized people from being able to link up and act together. One could argue that the underinvestment in the road systems of marginal areas is actually integral to the very logic of war in Sudan.

As a result, even major thoroughfares are not paved, littered with potholes and become a muddy mess in the rainy season. As a result, it takes six hours to drive 100 miles on the well-traveled Juba to Yei road, which provides South Sudan with a vital link to Uganda. Lesser roads can become completely flooded in the rains and some exist only on maps. Several demining agencies have received contracts to survey roads only to find out that significant portions of the road, unused for two decades, no longer exist – overgrown by brush and even forest. These conditions prove punishing for vehicles, especially for shock absorbers. Almost every demining agency visited by the author in South Sudan had at least one vehicle out of commission. This is a strain on budgets that may not have expected the level of care needed to maintain vehicles in working order.

Since South Sudan has no modern manufacturing industry or large scale agribusiness, most commodities have to be imported from Uganda, Kenya and even farther afield. Since such commodities must travel the above mentioned Yei-Juba route, by the time they get to the major towns they are extremely expensive. Thus the prices in South Sudan, especially in Juba, are quite shocking. Concerned about hygiene and tropical diseases (exacerbated by lack of running water and waste disposal), many expatriates and South Sudanese elite eat in restaurants or the ‘tented camps’ (explained below) that cost between \$15-20 a meal. A box of cereal costs \$11. Hiring a car for the day costs \$100 plus often scarce petrol – compared with \$45 a day in Nairobi – and the driver, often Ugandan, may not even know his way around the city.

Adequate housing is another major problem for demining agencies. The cost of land has inflated very quickly in the south following the peace agreement. Juba, where most demining agencies have set up shop, has very little built infrastructure to house office space or staff. Many expatriate staff sleep in their offices or in the sprawling tented camps along the Nile. Here a guest can expect to pay \$120-150 a night to stay in a tent or half-container, sharing toilets and showers with 20-30 people.

When conducting demining operations out of Juba and the big cities, the situation is even more difficult, as support infrastructure is completely lacking. Food is even more difficult to procure and store, and if equipment breaks down it can take many days to obtain spare parts.

These problems seem overwhelming, but they might not be insurmountable. Indeed, mine contamination often exists in areas that are remote, undeveloped or destroyed by war. Logistics in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Angola are very challenging too. It is the layers of political and economic contestation, described in the following subsections that seem to make Sudan stand out as a particularly challenging place for demining agencies. Indeed, Jim Pansegrouw, head of UNMAO told the author that it has been issues of management, rather than technical problems, that have been the biggest cause for concern in mine action agencies working in Sudan.

ii. Problems with Labor and Human Resources

Almost all mine action managers interviewed by the author identified ‘labor issues’ or ‘human resources’ as one of their biggest problems in running demining programs in Sudan.

A couple decades of war and underinvestment in social services in South Sudan has resulted in a workforce that is, as a whole, unprepared for the educational levels, skills and expectations of a modern workplace. Most young South Sudanese will have no experience working within a bureaucracy other than the SPLA. Though many are eager to learn, there are few opportunities for them to get a thorough education. Therefore, many mine action agencies have found it very difficult to find sufficient numbers of local staff who have the experience and training to be good managers and supervisors. Moreover, some agencies have struggled to maintain discipline in making sure staff arrive to work on time, do not take unauthorized vacation, do not drink alcohol on the job and use financial resources and equipment wisely. In an assessment of Sudanese mine action, Rebecca Roberts noted that:

The protracted conflict has affected attitudes to work. People can find it hard to apply themselves to regular work and others, used to living day to day because of the uncertainty of life during war, struggle to plan long-term. Formal employment is rare so there is often little understanding of the responsibilities which come with formal employment. This slows progress and can create tensions between national and international staff.³¹

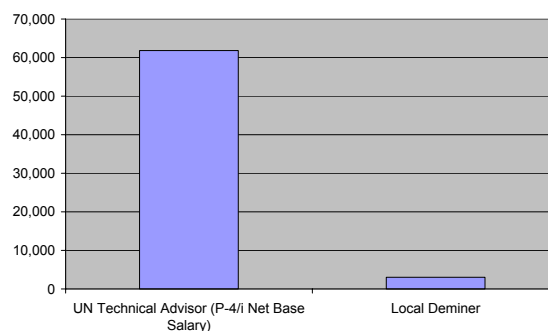
Many organizations have also struggled with maintaining order in their workforces. Demining agencies have lost many days due to deminer strike action over pay and conditions. For instance, Sudan Landmine Response (SLR) staff went on strike seven times in under a year between 2005 and 2006. At the extreme end, two expatriate staff at one demining company were taken hostage at gunpoint for several days by dissatisfied

³¹ Rebecca Roberts. (June 2006) “Developing National Mine Action Capacity in Sudan: The Impact of Conflict, Politics and International Assistance.” <http://www.prio.no/files/file48465_wp_ma_cd.pdf>.

deminers. Moreover, the author saw internal documents of several demining NGOs describing incidents where local deminers had either threatened or carried out acts of violence against expatriate staff. Again looking at the case of HALO, in December 2005 an expatriate staff member was threatened with a pistol by a local senior manager of their partner organization, SLR. In October 2006, witnessed by several UN employees, another expatriate was assaulted by an SLR member.³² Disturbingly, the governmental authorities responsible for mine action in South Sudan have appeared reluctant to publicly condemn this sort of violence.

The problems with local staff in Sudan, especially in the South, have led many mine action agencies to bring in a surprisingly high number of expatriate staff. One demining company initially brought in all its deminers from Mozambique, until prompted by the government to hire Sudanese. Another NGO has an expatriate assigned to every demining team. UNMAO has over 50 expatriate staff, in comparison with about 20 working within UNMACA in Afghanistan (indeed, for most of the 1990s UNMACA only had about five expatriates). Thirteen percent of MAG's staff are expatriates³³ and at the height of FSD's involvement just under 17% of its staff were not Sudanese.³⁴ While these staff bring a great deal of expertise, they are extremely expensive, as shown by the below graph comparing the starting salary (excluding cost of living and hazard adjustments) of a UN technical advisor with that of a local deminer.

Figure 4: Annual Salary Scales in US\$



This has also contributed to tensions; the author found many Sudanese staff were irritated by the huge disparity in income between expatriate and local staff. Unfortunately cultural clashes between expatriate and local staff are also quite common. Many local Sudanese staff are sensitive to anything that smacks of colonialism and can feel uncomfortable about submitting to the authority of foreigners. This is compounded by the fact that several expatriate staff have been known to exhibit subtle or explicit racism in their language, especially when expressing frustration about the situation. One commentator felt international NGOs in Sudan had a tendency “to only understand partnership [with local NGOs] in a white man’s burden sense.”³⁵ For instance, some in Sudan have suggested that the HALO Trust’s top-down management style played into

³² UNMAO employee X. (16 October 2006) “Subject: Assault on HALO International Staff Member.” Internal UNMAO memo. Obtained by author.

³³ MAG employee. (31 July 2007) Personal interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

³⁴ Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD). (2006) *Annual Report 2005*. Geneva, FSD. p. 21.

³⁵ Mine action researcher. (18 April 2008) Personal email to author.

these fears and contributed to its problems in Sudan. For instance, in response to a letter from HALO to its local partner expressing concern that they were “not convinced SLR fully understands” what was required to establish a demining program, SLR’s director said he found it

quite insulting because the South Sudanese who lived here throughout the over two decade long war know the actual size of Southern Sudan... “we” the Southern Sudanese have a very clear knowledge of the landmine problem....³⁶

Finally, many local staff feel uncomfortable about the personal habits of some of the expatriate staff. In the north, many local staff do not approve of expatriates’ use of alcohol. In both parts of the country, several local interviewees raised concerns about the amount some expatriates swear, saying it is not appropriate in the Sudanese context and they feel insulted by the use of vulgar language, even if it is not directed at them. For instance, an SSDC spokesperson said

some international staff...use language which is not appreciated by Sudanese people...either colonial language...or...language of someone who thinks they are superior and better than me...[W]e have this span of two decades fighting for our rights and we don’t want someone coming from far away to come and tell us the use of the ‘F’ language.³⁷

It might be possible to overcome some of these cultural issues through time and effort. The SSDC spokesperson said, ““Sudanese people are not wild people. If you treat them well, they are good.”³⁸ However, as Sudan can be a very difficult, uncomfortable and mentally taxing place for expatriate staff, few stay for more than a couple years. While there has been some stability and longevity at the senior levels of UNMAO, NGO and commercial staff have tended to stay for shorter terms. This means organizations may lose vital institutional knowledge and situational awareness each time they have to replace an expatriate. In a complex political and social environment this can translate into a great deal of lost time and energy as an expatriate learns the ropes.

iii. Political Difficulties

With a few exceptional years of peace, Sudan has been at war with itself most of its independent existence. Its political system is one fraught with tensions and problems are frequently dealt with in an arbitrary, personalized or violent manner. This has meant, as one internal NGO report said, managers of mine action agencies “have found that a substantial proportion of their time is being spent dealing with political issues in order to ensure the survival of the project rather than actually overseeing its implementation.”³⁹

When analyzing Sudanese politics one must be very careful not to make generalizations across the country, for Sudan’s regions have major differences in the distribution and exercise of political power. A basic division of the country can be made by comparing the north, with its locus of power in Khartoum and the south where authority extends from Juba. A crude but perceptive way of understanding the difference between governance in the two regions, as a mine action professional quipped to the

³⁶ Malek Reuben Riak. (24 April 2006) “Subject: Future direction of SLR-HALO.” Letter to HALO Trust. Obtained by author.

³⁷ SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

³⁸ SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

³⁹ NGO Z employee X. (June 2004) Monitoring visit notes. Document obtained by author. p. 1.

author, is that “In the north there is too much system, in the south there is too little.” In both regions mine action agencies have had numerous run-ins with the local authorities, but the types and nature of the disputes are different in the north and the south.

The Government of Sudan, especially in its core constituency of the riverine region around Khartoum essentially operates as a bureaucratic authoritarian state. It maintains very tight control over demining agencies with complex regulations that must be followed and abided by. Demining agencies are required to register with the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) and provide them with regular updates on their activities. HAC must approve all expatriate’s work permits and in order to travel to the field outside Khartoum, expatriate mine action personnel are required to get a ‘travel permit’ signed and stamped by HAC and military intelligence. Getting these documents in order can take weeks, leaving expensive expatriate staff, who are supposed to work in field operations, stuck in Khartoum with nothing to do. If an agency or individual does something that HAC or military intelligence feels is inappropriate, organizational registration or work and travel permits can be refused, delayed or revoked. Some expatriate staff have even been declared *persona non grata* or expelled from the country. Importing equipment into the country can be equally time-consuming. Several NGOs have had essential demining equipment held up in customs for as long as nine months to a year. These bureaucratic impediments give the impression that the Government of Sudan views demining NGOs as a threat rather than providers of an important and life-saving service. Indeed, it appears that the government would rather not have outsiders in the contested regions that are also the most contaminated by mines and UXO.

The fact that Ahmed Haroun, the Humanitarian Affairs Minister and Secretary General of the National Mine Action Committee, who has also represented Sudan at annual review conferences of the Mine Ban Treaty,⁴⁰ is wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity in Darfur does not build confidence that the Sudanese Government sees mine action as a humanitarian endeavor.⁴¹ Moreover, though they have paid for him to go on a ‘capacity building’ trip to Jordan⁴² and worked closely with him in the past, senior officials in the UN are limiting their interaction with him to avoid bad press. Lacking leadership that is credible to the outside world, the Sudan mine action program may suffer from lack of coordination between the UN and the northern government.

While at the time of the author’s fieldwork no demining agencies were working in Darfur, the UN awarded contracts for explosive ordnance disposal there this year. As mine action agencies expand into Darfur they must expect even more surveillance and control from HAC. The author attended numerous coordination meetings in Washington

⁴⁰ Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction: Sixth Meeting, Zagreb. (2 December 2005) “List of Participants.”

<http://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/pdf/mbc/MSP/6MSP/6MSP_List_of_participants.pdf>. Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction: Seventh Meeting, Geneva. (22 September 2006) “List of Participants.”

<http://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/pdf/mbc/MSP/7MSP/7MSP_List_of_Participants.pdf>.

⁴¹ BBC. (21 September 2007) “Prosecutor demands Sudan arrests.” *BBC News*.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7006180.stm>>.

⁴² UNMAO. (2006) “Capacity Building.” <<http://www.sudanmap.org/CapacityBuilding.html>>.

DC of aid agencies working Darfur, and heard tales of systematic harassment and bureaucratic impediments faced by NGOs there.

The political system in the south is far less organized and bureaucratic than in the north. Indeed it seems to resemble “political instrumentalization of disorder” described by Chabal and Daloz in their analysis of how African political authorities have actively dismantled formal structures and systems in favor of a patrimonial form of governance.⁴³ Many very basic issues, such as labor law, are not yet fully clarified in the law, since the Government of South Sudan only came into formal existence in 2005. In the absence of many formal rules and a well established civil bureaucracy, authority in South Sudan often has a neo-patrimonial and personalized nature. In the case of a dispute, mine action agencies cannot rely on a neutral and impartial arbitration by government officials.

For example, the final precipitating event that led to HALO’s expulsion from Sudan, following months of tension between it and its local partner SLR, was set of leaked confidential handover notes from a leaving country liaison officer to the new one. In it, he gave an unfavorable analysis of political situation in South Sudan, particularly the head of SSDC, Jurkuc Barac Jukuc, and reported hearsay about his personal behavior.⁴⁴ This document was leaked to Jurkuc, who understandably felt insulted by the comments, and, despite a written apology from the author of the report,⁴⁵ decided to “terminate HALO TRUST services in Southern Sudan.”⁴⁶ The reasons given for expelling HALO were that 1) “The top leadership of mine action commission was belittled and disregard,”⁴⁷ 2) “The commissioner was abused and disregarded,”⁴⁸ which he interpreted as “character assassination” and 3) “Halo [sic] Trust has deviated and interfered into Government management”⁴⁹ by writing a “report on Government activities” that amounted to “Subversive activities by Insulting and abusing Government officials.”⁵⁰ In what appears to be a veiled threat, Jurkuc wrote that HALO would “always remain vulnerable in the system and the Commission” if they remained in South Sudan.⁵¹

It is perfectly understandable that an individual should seek to clear his or her name if they feel defamed or libeled by an organization. However, the way in which the SSDC handled the matter was completely counterproductive to mine action. Firstly, the document was intended to be internal and not for public distribution and thus hardly amounts to “Subversive activities.” Secondly, SSDC has not been able to inspire confidence that its decision to back the expulsion of HALO was not based on the commissioner feeling personally insulted. In essence, South Sudan has lost one of the world’s premier demining agencies (along with the potential funds, expertise and institutional knowledge it could bring) partly because the commissioner felt insulted by

⁴³ Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz. (1999) *Africa Works: Disorder As Political Instrument*. Oxford, James Currey.

⁴⁴ SLR-HALO Trust Sudan. (5 August 2006) “HALO – SLO Handover Notes.” Document obtained by author. p. 22.

⁴⁵ HALO employee X. (28 September 2006) Letter to Jurkuc Barac Jukuc. Obtained by author.

⁴⁶ Jurkuch Barach. (5 October 2006) Letter to “The Director of Hallo Trust.” Obtained by author.

⁴⁷ Jurkuch Barach. (5 October 2006) Letter to “The Director of Hallo Trust.” Obtained by author.

⁴⁸ Jurkuch Barach. (5 October 2006) Letter to “The Director of Hallo Trust.” Obtained by author.

⁴⁹ Jurkuch Barach. (5 October 2006) Letter to “The Director of Hallo Trust.” Obtained by author.

⁵⁰ Debarach Jurkuch. (25 September 2006) Email to HALO Trust. Obtained by author.

⁵¹ Debarach Jurkuch. (5 October 2006) “Re: HALKO Sudan Future.” Email to HALO Trust. Obtained by author.

something one of its employees, who was leaving the country, said in a private communication and later apologized for. Surely there could have been a better way to deal with the problem that would not make it appear as though the personal feelings of a civil servant mattered more than Sudanese mine action.

In its internal strategic planning the SSDC claims its “transparent culture” has “endeared her” to other mine action agencies.⁵² However, the SSDC’s handling of the aftermath of the HALO-SLR debacle has also not shown commitment to do due diligence in investigating the possibility of wrongdoing. Despite numerous protests from HALO, and a letter to the South Sudanese President from the ambassadors of the Netherlands, UK, USA and EC, the SSDC appears not to have done any significant investigation into the possibility of corruption or abuse of office by SLR. Indeed, SSDC has hired the former deputy director of SLR and has rented facilities from them in Yei. This appears to many observers as rewarding SLR. This does not inspire confidence in the SSDC’s ability to take a strong stand in ensuring organizations follow basic standards of accountability. When asked to comment on the HALO/SLR affair, an SSDC spokesperson said, “The HALO Trust management was not cooperative and some of them were even insulting the government authority, which is not a good example.”⁵³

Another major political issue in South Sudan is the role of the military in governance of civilian affairs. Throughout the war, the SPLA was never able to develop a meaningful civilian aspect to its movement and civil administration in ‘liberated areas’ remained very basic. As a result, the SPLA continues to exert overwhelming governmental authority and many government ministers and governors are drawn from the military. This has been expressed in mine action by the SPLA intervening in mine action policy and operations, even though it is the SSDC, as civil body (though headed by a military engineer), that is supposed to be responsible for regulating mine action.

While mine action certainly has a security dimension to it and any activity that involves the handling of explosives should be tightly controlled, many mine action agencies interviewed by the author felt the SPLA intervened in their work too often and that they did not feel there was an adequate formal definition of what the respective responsibilities of the SSDC and SPLA were.

For instance, the SPLA have insisted on being involved in the selection of candidates for jobs, intimidated potential candidates who were not members of the SPLM/A, and insisted on accompanying some agencies as they survey the local population about the mine threat. A recent letter from the SPLA to the mine action community also indicated an attempt to gain greater control over demining agencies, imposing several new restrictions. These include requirements to get written permission to handle any UXO or weapons found, handing over all stores of explosives (for destroying mines) to the SPLA for storage and, preventing mine action agencies from disciplining any “SPLA Field Engineering technicians” that are working with them as deminers without notifying the SPLA first.⁵⁴ While some of the new regulations might make sense, it is surprising that it was the SPLA, not the SSDC, which was making new mine action policy.

⁵² South Sudan De-Mining Authority/Commission. (2007) Mine Action Strategy (2007-2012). Draft document, given to author by SSDC. p. 28.

⁵³ SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

⁵⁴ Lt. Gen. Oyay Deng Auak. (16 June 2007) “Regulations for Demining and DDR Programs in Southern Sudan.” Letter to mine action agencies in Southern Sudan. Obtained by author.

Problems with discipline in the SPLA have also hindered relations with mine action agencies, as agencies have reported soldiers insisting on being given rides in demining agency vehicles (violating several agencies' no-weapons policy), insisting that agencies pay for the petrol used by soldiers to attend meetings with them, arbitrarily arresting mine action staff and even stealing a UN mine action vehicle at gunpoint.

In addition to problems with the authorities, demining agencies have also faced problems from other armed groups operating in South Sudan. Mine action operations in the area near Uganda have been disrupted several times following attacks on demining personnel, blamed largely on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan rebel movement that has bases in southern Sudan.⁵⁵ These attacks have largely ceased as a result of the current LRA and Ugandan government ceasefire. However, they illustrate the potential for insecurity that continues to exist in Sudan. Again, mine action agencies should be warned that if they move into Darfur, they can expect possible harassment by government and rebel militias. Moreover, if war were to break out again between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA (a distinct possibility if the CPA does not hold, especially since the SPLA has now withdrawn from the Government of National Unity), demining agencies should not expect that their humanitarian status will necessarily afford them protection.

While governments are entitled to regulate activities of and hold accountable organizations operating on their territory, the manner in which HAC and the SSDC have operated actually discourages mine action productivity. They see their role not as a facilitator of mine action but as a controller of organizations. Whether there is some ulterior motive for preventing mine action agencies from getting on with their work, such as wanting their presence as a way of reaping legitimacy without letting agencies actually do anything significant, is open to speculation. However, for whatever reason it occurs, the patience of donors and mine action agencies may not be infinite.

iv. A Rent-Seeking Economy

Numerous scholars (notably Minear,⁵⁶ De Waal,⁵⁷ Johnson,⁵⁸ Keen⁵⁹ and Reno⁶⁰) have shown the critical role of external funding and oil sales in sustaining the main factions involved in the Sudanese civil war. In the 1980s the Sudanese government, seen as strategic partner in containing leftist Libya and Ethiopia, received significant assistance from the US government. Following the end of the Cold War, and the US' growing uneasiness with the Sudanese government's Islamist leanings, the Sudanese

⁵⁵ UN OCHA. (15 October-15 November 2005) *Sudan Humanitarian Overview*. 1(3) <<http://www.unsudanig.org/docs/Sudan%20Humanitarian%20Overview%20Vol1%20Iss3%20Nov05.pdf>>
UN Security Council. (17 April 2007) "Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan."
<<http://www.unmis.org/English/2007Docs/SG-Rpt-sudan-213.pdf>>.

⁵⁶ Larry Minear. (1991) *Humanitarianism under Siege: A Critical Review of Operation Lifeline Sudan*. Trenton, New Jersey, The Red Sea Press.

⁵⁷ African Rights. (May 1997) *Food and Power in Sudan: A Critique of Humanitarianism*. London, African Rights.

⁵⁸ Douglas H. Johnson. (2003) *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*. Oxford, James Currey.

⁵⁹ David Keen. (1994) *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

⁶⁰ William Reno. (August 2002) "Economies of War and their Transformation: Sudan and the Variable Impact of Natural Resources on Conflict." <<http://www.bicc.de/events/sudanws/5reno20august02.pdf>>.

government has sought assistance from prominent Middle Eastern businesses and increasingly from China. The current bullishness in the price of oil has made Khartoum a boom town, with massive infrastructure projects, rising incomes and a growing consumerism.

For their part, the SPLA initially relied on the financing of the Ethiopian government, and the potential to ‘farm’ refugee aid in the camps along the Sudanese-Ethiopian border. With the fall of the Mengistu government, the SPLA turned to neighboring states such as Kenya, Uganda to play its patrons and also relied, to a certain extent, on ‘taxing,’ diverting and appropriating humanitarian assistance.

Foreign aid and oil money are both examples of what economists called ‘rents’ – profits earned in excess of the value added to a good or service. That is, the income earned on a barrel of oil can be many times the cost of pumping it out of the ground. Likewise, foreign aid can be secured simply for strategic interest or political reasons – a country does not have to economically produce something value-added to obtain it. While rents exist throughout an economy, and are sometimes required to encourage people to do necessary, but unpopular, work, rents also draw people away from productive economic activities. If one can earn \$100 simply as a result of one’s political connections, why would one do several hours of labor to earn the same amount? Economists call the processes by which agents try to obtain rents (whether legitimate, such as petitioning and lobbying, or illegitimate, such as bribing or stealing) “rent-seeking.”

One of the challenges that demining in Sudan has to deal with is that it is embedded in an economy that is profoundly oriented toward rent-seeking rather than productive investment. This is especially true in the South, where there is no major industry to speak of. There is only one factory in South Sudan – a water-bottling plant in Juba. Most people who do not work in agriculture are involved in economic activities which include at least some element of brokering rents. Informal traders in town markets exploit their ability to avoid taxes and customs. Soldiers and police supplement their income by extracting bribes along roads and in interactions with citizens. Talented and educated people find jobs in the government bureaucracies and aid agencies, who oversee the transfer of international rents – economic and humanitarian assistance – to the population.

Thus it is possible that foreign aid for demining could be seen by many Sudanese not as a voluntaristic and humanitarian endeavor but rather a source of rent to be exploited. With few other ways to earn an income, this is neither surprising nor necessarily to be morally judged. However, it does mean that rather than seeking to use money in the most productively efficient way for demining (i.e. conduct the most demining for the least money), the local economic bias, especially in South Sudan, will be toward extracting as much money as possible for personal or organizational interest. This can be done directly, through expropriation or forcing an increase in salaries, or indirectly through distortions in market prices of the goods and services that demining agencies have to buy.

The most extreme case of direct rent-seeking in Sudanese mine action is the dramatic melt-down of the HALO Trust’s partnership with its local partner Sudan Landmine Response (SLR). As one of their own internal reports put it, “The HALO-SLR partnership alone, in the end, cost \$3,278,562. Sadly there is no definable success from this intervention and if anything it has had a negative effect with regards to the lost

humanitarian capital equipment.”⁶¹ In their experiences working with SLR, HALO staff found that SLR staff paid far more attention to growing their organization than mine action activities – in an evaluation of the partnership presented by SLR to HALO, little mention was made of mine action, the very purpose of the partnership.⁶² Indeed, several of SLR’s activities contradicted their own constitution. The author has evidence that SLR provided security services, in the form of vehicles with SPLA soldier acting as armed guards, for a fee from international organizations.⁶³

As the relationship between SLR and HALO deteriorated, SLR’s rent-seeking become more and more drastic, including attempts to seize money in the HALO bank account.⁶⁴ Following SLR successful maneuvering to have the HALO staff expelled from the country, they refused to allow HALO to recover donor-funded equipment from the compound, despite the donors’ wishes. Concerned about the security of this equipment, particularly because some of it included ‘dual-use’ technology that could have military applications, donor countries even wrote to Salva Kiir, the President of South Sudan appealing for him to ensure the return of “equipment and funds” to the “respective donor governments that contributed to the operation.”⁶⁵ Demonstrating dwindling confidence, they declared in surprisingly direct language for diplomats, that

The current handling of this situation including apparent attempts of SLR to confiscate equipment and prevent access to funds that donor governments have provided to HALO Trust – which also appear to have the tacit consent of the SSDA – is not a satisfactory way to solve the problem.⁶⁶

The UN was eventually able to recover most of the vehicles. However, these now sit in limbo at an UNMIS compound, and are not being used. Moreover, contrary to his instructions from the Minister for Presidential Affairs, calling for all HALO equipment to be transferred for safekeeping at UNMAO,⁶⁷ the head of SSDC allocated one Landrover to the director of SLR⁶⁸ and a Yei SSDC employee also prevented UNMIS from recovering one DAF truck, a JCB and trailer and additional assets, such as metal detectors, VHF radios and spare parts, stored in containers on the SLR compound.⁶⁹ In

⁶¹ HALO Trust. (2007) “HALO Sudan Report.” Internal report. Obtained by author from HALO. p. 9.

⁶² SLR. (April 2006) “SLR 1st Quarter Evaluation Report of 1st Year to Partnership Implementation: October 2005-30th March 2006.” Document obtained by author.

⁶³ Sunday Rosaline. (24 July 2006) “Subject: out standing payment.” Invoice issued to a UN agency from SLR Yei Main Office. Obtained by author. See also: SLR-HALO Trust Sudan. (5 August 2006) “HALO – SLO Handover Notes.” Document obtained by author. pp. 6-7.

⁶⁴ Peter Duku Wani. (11 October 2006) “Subject: Changing signatories to HALO TRUST accounts (UK and US) in NCB.” Correspondence from Acting Director of SLR to Director of Nile Commercial Bank, Yei. Obtained by author. Philip Chol Kander. (23 August 2006) “To: Manager of Nile Commercial Bank in Yei.” Letter. Obtained by author.

⁶⁵ Johan Wolfe, Ian Cliff, Kent Degerfelt & Cameron Hume. (22 October 2006) “Ref: Demining in Southern Sudan, termination of HALO Trust’s activities.” Correspondence to H.E. Lt. Gen. Salva Kiir. Obtained by the author.

⁶⁶ Johan Wolfe, Ian Cliff, Kent Degerfelt & Cameron Hume. (22 October 2006) “Ref: Demining in Southern Sudan, termination of HALO Trust’s activities.” Correspondence to H.E. Lt. Gen. Salva Kiir. Obtained by the author.

⁶⁷ Luka Biong Deng. (18 December 2007) “Subject: SLR-HALO Assets and Equipment.” Letter to Jurkuch Barach. Obtained by author.

⁶⁸ Jurkuch Barach Jurkuch. (13 February 2007) “Subject: Transfer of SLR/HALO TRUST Partnership equipment to UNMAO compound in Yei.” Correspondence to Director of SLR. Obtained by author.

⁶⁹ UNMAO employee Y. (16 March 2007) “Report on HALO/SLR equipment recovery and relocation 13-15 March 2007.” Document obtained by author. p. 1.

all, HALO estimates \$500,000 worth of equipment was not recovered.⁷⁰ Finally, even though it was SLR that had initiated the dissolution of the partnership and expulsion of HALO staff, the SSDC and Ministry of Labor forced HALO to pay \$66,000 in compensation and redundancy to all SLR staff.⁷¹ In interviews with other demining agencies, none had had as drastic an experience as HALO, but struggles with the direct rent-seeking from staff and authorities were seen as a daily part of the job.

Another possible example of competition for rents was the attempt by the SSDC to raise precipitously the standard salary rates for deminers. This was done seemingly without consultation with mine action agencies, when the SSDC released a new draft ‘Human Resource Policy’ in early 2007. The SSDC defended the increase citing the rising cost of living in South Sudan and saying that it was unfair for expatriates to complain about an increase in pay for local deminers when they earned several times more. An SSDC spokesperson said the current pays scales were “exploitation.”⁷² For their part, mine action agencies felt the salaries were already in line with deminer salaries around the world and a precipitous change would simply mean laying off deminers in order to stay within the line item budgets provided them by their donors.

Demining agencies also pay for a whole host of indirect rents found in the numerous market distortions in an economy that is shaped by rent-seeking. As mentioned previously, prices in South Sudan are extremely high. When paying for imported goods, the demining agency has to pay a price that includes all the rents extracted from the merchant as the goods moved through borders and checkpoints. Likewise, without effective regulatory bodies to prevent monopolistic behavior, companies are able to corner markets and control supply. For example, during the author’s fieldwork it was very expensive to buy a SIM card associated with a particular mobile telephone operator – rumors had it that speculators had bought them all up and were constricting sales.

In short then, there is an institutional bias in the Sudanese economy toward rent-seeking, especially in the South. This poses a challenge to demining agencies as they are seen by many as a potential source of rents rather than representatives of a voluntaristic humanitarian mission.

g. Is It Worth It?

According to a study conducted by the UN World Food Program, their combined demining and road rehabilitation program has yielded significant dividends for the people of South Sudan. According to interviews with local residents, opening these roads has reduced trip times by around 50% and the cost of transportation by 40%. In one particular location, WFP noted a 65% increase in the number of businesses following the opening of a road. It has also greatly reduced WFP’s overheads for moving food. Prior to rehabilitating the roads, the vast majority of WFP’s food assistance was flown in.

⁷⁰ HALO Trust. (20 March 2007) “Missing \$500,000 – HALO Sudan Update 20 Mar 2007.” Email correspondence. Obtained by author.

⁷¹ HALO Trust. (2007) “HALO Sudan Report.” Internal report. Obtained by author from HALO. pp. 9-10.

⁷² SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

Switching from airlifting to ground transportation has led to overall reductions in transport costs of 75%.⁷³

Opening up the major thoroughfares to traffic, commerce and the return of refugees is mine action's signal achievement in Sudan, one that should not be diminished or underestimated. Assuming WFP's statistics are correct (the sample sizes of their interviews were pretty small), the benefits of their demining efforts have outweighed the costs, though they could perhaps have done more cheaply. Other major road survey and clearance operations probably yield similar dividends. Though these operations have not removed much in terms of mines or UXO, they have effectively been in the business of clearing the perceived fear of mines. The value of this would not show up in a quantitative analysis such as the graph in the introduction, but still should not be underestimated.

However, most of the major roads in South Sudan have now been cleared, or will be in the next year. The remaining contamination will, generally, be less high density, have lower impact on human communities and be more difficult to package neatly into commercial contracts. The question now is whether the current high levels of investment need to be sustained into the future, while countries like Angola and Cambodia, which have much more severe mine contamination problems and more efficient demining programs, receive significantly less funding.

Part of this question will depend on whether the governmental authorities in both the north and the south will take responsibility for making Sudan a friendlier environment for conducting demining. The continual harassment and bureaucratic delays from the Khartoum government faced by demining NGOs are sapping their energy to do actual clearance operations and wasting precious time and resources. As long as the government is able to do this without facing the prospect of a withdrawal of donor money they will continue to do so. Likewise, the South Sudanese Demining Commission must take a firmer stand against the corruption, excessive rent-seeking and violent behavior that is seriously hindering the work of demining agencies in the south. It is not a good sign that the embassies of the Netherlands, UK, US and EC felt it necessary to write to the President of South Sudan "to convey our concerns" about the mine action sector.

It must be understood that the HALO/SLR crisis has the potential to make donors very wary of committing further funds to Sudan, especially to local NGOs. While HALO's experience is particularly extreme, it is indicative of a broader pattern of problems throughout the demining community that is making many demining personnel seriously question whether their work is worth the time, cost and hassle of operating in Sudan. With the currently extremely high cost of clearance, it will become increasingly difficult to argue against this perspective.

However, one must realize that removing landmines may actually be only one of several objectives of the Sudanese demining program. There may be other benefits, other reasons, for investing heavily in Sudanese mine action that justify at least some of the high costs.

Sudan is of critical geostrategic interest to many actors. By ending the one of Africa's longest running armed conflicts, many countries in the international community

⁷³ World Food Program. (2005) "WFP Southern Sudan Emergency Road Rehabilitation Programme: Socio-economic Impact Assessment: A Report of 2004 and 2005 Road Rehabilitation Activities." Document given to author by WFP South Sudan. pp. 16-22.

are banking on the success of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The slaughter in the south over two decades, and the ongoing brutality in Darfur are an embarrassment to the international community. The UN, whose mandate it is to preserve global peace and security, is heavily invested in Sudan. Its peacekeeping mission there is one of the largest and most expensive in the world.

The reason the international community is pouring money into Sudanese mine action may thus actually have less to do with mines than an attempt to support the peace process. Indeed, most of the money for mine action in Sudan comes from the UN's assessed peacekeeping budget and a key objective of UNMAO is to make it possible for UN peacekeepers to have access to the whole country. Donors may also be using mine action as a means of communication, or a symbolic language, intended to communicate the message that "thanks to the international community and the peace process, this country is becoming safer." For example, the title of the section on Sudan in MAG's 2007 annual report, entitled "Promoting Peace," framed MAG's work in terms of encouraging "peace and stability through its conflict recovery activities."⁷⁴ Having mine action agencies travel around Sudan and fly the flag in its communities may function as a means to build confidence in the peace process and its international guarantors.⁷⁵ The mystique that surrounds deminers, as a profession which defuses hidden dangers, serves as a metaphor for the role that the international community itself longs to play in Sudan – that of midwives of the transition from war to peace.

If framed in this way, then one can discern peacebuilding benefits to Sudanese demining that do not show up in simple quantitative cost/benefit analyses, or measures of productivity.

For instance, experience of working together in the 'crosslines' projects certainly did create links between actors in the north and the south. Said Roberts and Frilander, "Professional working relationships have been developed at the national, intermediate and local levels, and in some cases personal friendships have followed."⁷⁶ Even local Sudanese who later fell out badly with Landmine Action, admitted to the author that if it were not for their involvement in crosslines work in the Nuba Mountains, trusting their counterparts when negotiating the mine action elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement would not have been so simple. Roberts and Frilander noted that mine action has "laid foundations for further peacebuilding in Sudan"⁷⁷ because

progress made in mine action has been symbolically important and has highlighted the potential for peace in Sudan. Actors which access to the peace process argue that the international

⁷⁴ MAG. (2007) *Arms Reduction. Conflict prevention. Conflict recovery: Annual Review 2007*. Manchester, MAG. p. 9.

⁷⁵ See for example how mine action donors frame their intervention in terms of supporting the peace process in: Natalie Kohli. (May 2005) "Report of the MASG-Fieldtrip to Sudan." *Mine Action Support Group Newsletter*. <<http://mineaction.org/downloads/1/May%202005.pdf>>.

⁷⁶ Rebecca Roberts & Mads Frilander. (2004) "Preparing for Peace Mine Action's Investment in the Future of Sudan." *Preparing the Ground for Peace: Mine Action in Support of Peacebuilding*. PRIO Report 2/2004. Ed. Kristian Berg Harpviken & Rebecca Roberts. Oslo, PRIO. p. 18.

⁷⁷ Rebecca Roberts & Mads Frilander. (2004) "Preparing for Peace Mine Action's Investment in the Future of Sudan." *Preparing the Ground for Peace: Mine Action in Support of Peacebuilding*. PRIO Report 2/2004. Ed. Kristian Berg Harpviken & Rebecca Roberts. Oslo, PRIO. p. 5

community has been more willing to facilitate negotiations between the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A because of their joint mine action efforts.⁷⁸

Since the CPA, mine action has continued to contribute to the peace process in a number of ways. Firstly, by opening access to roads and settlements, mine action agencies open the country to peacekeepers, humanitarian aid, commerce and the census-takers who will prepare the way for the elections mandated by the CPA.

Secondly, mine action has contributed to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Both MAG and DDG (which is funded by UNHCR) have focused their efforts on clearing areas that would have the maximum impact on returning refugees and displaced persons. The UNOPS and WFP programs have also taken into consideration return issues when determining which roads to prioritize. Facilitating refugee return has become an important element of international intervention in conflict zones, for it is seen by donors as a way to reverse some of the impact of the war. Moreover, by assisting refugees to return, one builds confidence in the peace process, for the very act of a refugee returning suggests discursively that south Sudan is a place where people feel confident enough to return home. In other words, the international community is trying to create ‘facts on the ground’ that support its hope for a recovery from war.

Thirdly, many of the deminers are former soldiers, and employing them in demining may be a good way to help with the demobilization process. There is still some political contestation over the status of demobilized SPLA soldiers, but if this can be resolved, mine action agencies may be a logical ‘half-way house’ between military and civilian life. That said, the currently low numbers of former soldiers employed are unlikely to make much real difference to the peace process – much larger numbers of combatants would need to be demobilized – at least in the thousands – for this to make a discernable impact.

Fourthly, many mine action agencies are also engaged in securing and destroying abandoned caches of mines, ordnance and weapons that are discovered in the communities in which they work. This ‘humanitarian disarmament’, as it is sometimes called, is helping to prevent arms getting into the hands of armed groups or bandits. MAG’s small arms and light weapons project, for instance, is “focused on reducing the threat posed by unsecured caches in potentially volatile border areas.”⁷⁹ DDG is also removing weapons caches from returnee communities.

Finally, mine action may have had small but important effects on the behavior of the Sudanese government’s military and possibly the SPLA. The significance of the Sudan Campaign to Ban Landmines’ successful lobbying of the Sudanese government, in calling for a landmine ban and reminding them of their commitments, should also not be downplayed. The Sudanese government has a history of suspicion toward NGOs, and the fact that the SCBL was able to get the Sudanese government to cede the right to use a weapon, and to allow non-state actors to engage in gathering information about a security threat (when NGOs assess the mine situation), should be considered a small victory for

⁷⁸ Rebecca Roberts & Mads Frilander. (2004) “Preparing for Peace Mine Action’s Investment in the Future of Sudan.” *Preparing the Ground for Peace: Mine Action in Support of Peacebuilding*. PRIO Report 2/2004. Ed. Kristian Berg Harpviken & Rebecca Roberts. Oslo, PRIO. p. 18.

⁷⁹ MAG. (n.d.) “SUDAN: Clearing Small Arms & Light Weapons.”
<<http://www.mag.org.uk/news.php?s=2&p=2775>>.

civil society. As one evaluation of SCBL noted, “SCBL managed to transform the image of...landmines from a military and security issue to its humanitarian dimension.”⁸⁰ Indeed, exposure to mine action, and a local political constituency committed to the landmine ban may have been why the Sudanese government has largely avoided the use of mines in Darfur. This will make the post-war clean up there much easier.

However, the Darfur crisis should caution those who make excessive claims to demining’s peacebuilding properties. Mine action in Darfur will not stop the war there. And while it played a small role in the CPA, mine action was not responsible for the cessation of hostilities between the north and the south. Much greater political forces determined that. Indeed, Peter Moszynski has argued that ‘crosslines’ mine action has generally “been more reflected in rhetoric than by reality.”⁸¹ While the programs intended to make northern and southern deminers work together, they ended up merely coordinating two sets of teams working on ‘their side’ of the lines. Indeed, although “Crossline mine action was envisaged as a confidence-building measure ... the lack of confidence between the two parties appears to have instead delayed the implementation of planned programmes as well as prevented the free flow of information.”⁸² In short, mine action “has mostly been conditional on the existence of appropriate peace processes, rather than enabling them.”⁸³ Indeed some have commented that asserting that the main impact of mine action is on the peace process is ‘moving the goalposts.’ Since less impact than expected is seen in clearing mines, agencies are pointing to less definable and measurable impacts on peace as a way of justifying the high expense.

Thus demining is not a solution to conflict, though it may act as a part of one. No matter how much demining is done in South Sudan, it will not change the fact that most South Sudanese want independence from the north, the north will not let that happen unhindered and both sides may be willing to return to arms to achieve those goals. A cynic might recall Michael Ignatieff’s critique of the Afghanistan mine program during the 1990s: “It’s clear there is the international will to get mines out of Afghanistan but there isn’t an international will to stop the civil war in Afghanistan.”⁸⁴ It may be that demining in Sudan is a means by which the international community is able to ‘manage’ the effects, rather than the roots, of chronic insecurity in Sudan, framing it as a humanitarian rather than a political issue. It is possible that mine action can function as a convenient excuse for the inaction caused by diplomatic and political deadlock.

⁸⁰ Save the Children Sweden. (December 2004) “Organizational Capacity and Impact Assessment to Selected Partners in Sudan.” Unpublished document obtained by author.

⁸¹ Peter Moszynski. (27 November 2005) “Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict: The Case of Sudan.” *Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict*. Report on the workshop organized by Geneva Call and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Non-State Actors Working Group in Zagreb. Geneva, Geneva Call. p. 37.

⁸² Peter Moszynski. (27 November 2005) “Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict: The Case of Sudan.” *Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict*. Report on the workshop organized by Geneva Call and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Non-State Actors Working Group in Zagreb. Geneva, Geneva Call. p. 37.

⁸³ Peter Moszynski. (27 November 2005) “Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict: The Case of Sudan.” *Mine Action in the Midst of Internal Conflict*. Report on the workshop organized by Geneva Call and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Non-State Actors Working Group in Zagreb. Geneva, Geneva Call. p. 38.

⁸⁴ Michael Ignatieff in: Monin, L. & Gallimore, A. (2002) *The Devil’s Gardens: A History of Landmines*. London, Pimlico. p. 170.

In sum, donors must ask the question, “Is Sudanese mine action a massive misallocation of aid?” Calculated in terms of pure productivity or an economic cost/benefit analysis an independent observer is tempted say that it is unclear that maintaining the current high levels of funding for Sudanese mine action are really worth it. However, there are other considerations that are critically important. Mine action may function as a tool for the international community to support and build confidence in the peace process. As one internal NGO evaluation concluded:

the number of mines cleared is very small, most of the clearance work is concerned with confidence building rather than eliminating a direct threat ... [and] the value of the land is unlikely to justify the cost of clearance... [Thus] in evaluating cost-benefit it would be necessary to make some assumptions about the value to the peace and reconciliation process of clearance activities.⁸⁵

Conceiving of the high cost as an investment in stabilizing a country that has been a source of enormous instability in Africa may justify a significant expense in time, talent and treasure. That said, donors must critically reflect on whether mine action really is the most cost-effective way of bringing about lasting peace in Sudan. Ultimately then, the answer will depend on a value judgment on the part of the donor or agency – a judgment of the value of the possible positive impact mine action might have on building a sustainable peace in Sudan. Since different organizations place different values on this, they have had a variety of responses to the problems within Sudanese mine action. The next section will explore a few of the responses implemented by agencies operating in Sudan.

f. Responses to the Problems

i. Pulling Out

The Mine Awareness Trust, an NGO that tried to start a program in late 2002 was one of the first mine action NGOs to pull out of Sudan, citing “frustrations caused by NGO registration and corruption.”⁸⁶ However, they have not been the only NGO to do this. Following a review of the situation in their programs in 2006, Landmine Action determined that the productivity levels and the fraught organizational politics were too much for them to handle as a small mine action organization. They thus pulled out and handed over some of their South Sudanese projects to the HALO Trust.

However, the HALO Trust, despite being one of the world’s largest demining organizations, with experience in some of the most complex political situations in the world, was not able to report any concrete successes from the program in the year they were operational. Following their ordeal of endless strike action, staff members threatened and subjected to physical violence and crude attempts to seize their funds and equipment, HALO was finally expelled from the country. When they were offered the chance to return by HE Luka Biong Deng, Minister of Presidential Affairs,⁸⁷ HALO

⁸⁵ Independent Consultant X. (November 2006) Evaluation of NGO X. Document obtained by author. p. 31.

⁸⁶ Mine Awareness Trust. (n.d.) “SUDAN October 2002 – January 2003.” <http://www.minesawareness.org/programms.asp?pageID=4&programm=38&title=SUDAN%20October%202002%20-%20January%202003>

⁸⁷ Luka Biong Deng. (18 December 2007) “Subject: SLR-HALO Assets and Equipment.” Letter to Jurkuch Barach. Obtained by author.

determined that the financial costs, emotional investment and risk to its reputation were too great. Comparing operating in Sudan to “swimming in treacle” they cited having to “work through a quagmire of obstructiveness, disinterest, ineptitude and split loyalties.”⁸⁸ Finally, HALO’s personnel felt that it would be disingenuous to sell a Sudan demining program to donors when the costs of such a program would outweigh the benefits of clearing relatively few mines a year.

Landmine Action and HALO’s dramatic pull-outs, have been considered too drastic a move by the other demining agencies operational in Sudan. While acknowledging the seriousness of some of the problems, they feel that the mine contamination is still serious enough to warrant some kind of international response, and can still yield significant benefits. To pull out, they argue, would abandon the Sudanese people to what remains a dangerous, even if limited, problem.

Instead, various agencies have taken different routes in an attempt to manage the extensive difficulties and/or reduce the high costs of operating in Sudan. The following subsections look at these in detail.

ii. Internationalization

As noted previously in the section on labor and human resources, several international agencies, including the UN, have responded to the low levels of qualified local staff and the concerns about potential misallocation of resources by internationalizing their workforces. In comparison with many mine action programs, where expatriates are often present in limited numbers and scopes of work, Sudanese mine action is incredibly top-heavy with internationals. For a time, at least one commercial organization was recruiting the vast majority of its workforce – even deminers – from outside the country. Others have not resorted to this extreme, but many companies and NGOs continue to have expatriate managers even at the team level.

This is bringing significant expertise to the country, and may be part of the reason that donors continue to have confidence in the administration of their demining funds. However, it has caused other problems, including the afore-mentioned cultural clashes and high turnover of management staff. Moreover, while hiring experienced expatriates may have reduced the possibility of funding disappearing nefariously or being wasted, it has come at the very high cost of expatriate salaries. It may be that donors are paying a premium to expatriates in the hope of avoiding the premium of lining the pockets of local elites. Ultimately this is another value judgment of the donor – whether the risk of possible costly corruption is high enough to warrant such extensive oversight that also comes at a high cost.

Donors must also examine the common assumption that expatriates are immune to the temptations to abuse their office. In an incident in January 2007, Sudanese security officials visited the UNMAO compound on suspicion that UNMAO officials had been using their privileges to illegally import a shipment of alcohol to the country.⁸⁹ Whatever the particulars of this case, it points to the possibility that international staff may also act in ways that are inappropriate for their position.

⁸⁸ HALO Trust. (8 March 2007) “Re: Request for Information: Landmine Monitor Report 2007.” Email to Landmine Monitor researcher. Cc’d to author.

⁸⁹ UN Mission in Sudan. (19-25 January 2007) *The Week in Focus*.
<<http://www.unmis.org/English/2007Docs/WeekInFocus19-25Jan.pdf>>. p. 2.

iii. Indigenization

Some agencies have actually taken the opposite approach— actually reducing the number of expatriates and indigenizing their programs. Both the northern and southern Sudanese authorities are calling for a transfer of increased responsibilities to Sudanese staff in order to eliminate the high expenses of expatriate salaries, problems with international staff turnover and clashes due to cultural misunderstanding.

When FSD lost its UN contracts it was no longer able to sustain the high level of expatriate presence in Sudan. It has largely pulled out of Sudan, but has maintained one Mozambican technical advisor on the ground, embedded with a demining team run by FSD's local partner SIMAS. This is the only demining team in South Sudan operated and managed by a local NGO; FSD's role is only training and capacity building. The FSD advisor lives and works with the deminers out in the field and FSD has turned over most of its local assets to SIMAS. At the time of the author's fieldwork, the team had a small demining task in a village outside Juba. An SSDC spokesperson said they were "very impressed" with FSD's capacity building of SIMAS, which it considered "really a good example" of how international NGOs should interact with local NGOs.⁹⁰

Another effort to build a locally-managed demining capacity has been the Joint Integrated Demining Units (JIDUs) incorporating Government of Sudan and SPLA soldiers and under the joint management of the northern and southern Sudanese demining authorities. In mid-2006, around 140 soldiers were trained at the British and Kenyan Army International Mine Action Training Centre in Nairobi.⁹¹ There was some delay in getting these units operational, but by June 2007 they reported clearing the 446 km Babanusa-Wau railway in less than five months.⁹² A spokesperson for the SSDC said, "It was a great achievement. ... if they are equipped with the right equipment and the best training, they will manage to do a lot, they can help."⁹³ However, for reasons that are not entirely clear, this project was not submitted to the ordinary UNMAO accreditation and quality assurance process. Therefore, there has been no independent verification that the railway was properly cleared.

The problem with both these projects is that, while a good start in terms of organizing local mine action, they are unlikely to be able to tap into international sources of funding. The HALO/SLR debacle seems to have made international donors slightly wary of providing amounts of funding directly to local NGOs (though some were open to the idea). While the JIDUs have received training from the British military and some technical assistance from UNDP, few countries or aid donors will be willing to provide extensive assistance to the Sudanese military.

⁹⁰ SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

⁹¹ UK Ministry of Defence. (12 July 2006) "Landmines unite former Sudanese enemies." *defence news*. <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/LandminesUniteFormerSudaneseEnemies.htm>>.

UNDP. (Summer 2006) "Peacebuilding in Sudan: Conflict prevention and recovery initiatives." *CPR Newsletter*. 3(1) <http://www.undp.org/cpr/newsletters/volume_3/CPRNews-Vol3-Iss1.pdf>. p. 2.

⁹² United Nations Mission in Sudan. (August 2007) *The CPA Monitor: Monthly Report on the Implementation of the CPA*. <http://www.unmis.org/common/documents/cpa-monitor/cpaMonitor_aug07.pdf>. pp. 42-43.

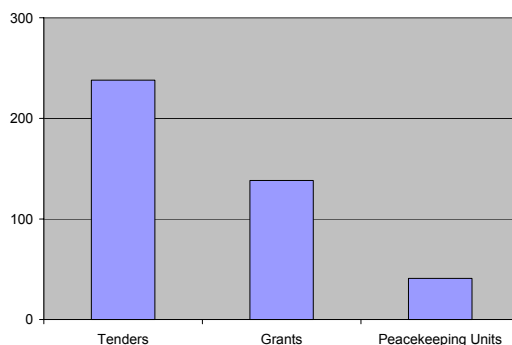
⁹³ SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

iv. Commercialization

Another way UNMAO and WFP have attempted to reduce the cost of demining is the use of commercial tendering systems to fund programs. WFP's original projects in Sudan were conducted on 'cost-plus' contracts – in which the implementer is paid a premium on top of any costs incurred in conducting operations – that while useful for rapid reaction have a tendency to incentivize overspending. WFP thus switched to a tendering model, where implementers bid on specifically defined clearance tasks, which has also been used for UNOPS-funded projects. This is in contrast with the funding by UNHCR and bilateral donors which has generally been in the form of grants to NGOs, which have more freedom to determine the areas and speed of operations. The rationale behind tendering is that the increased competition between agencies encourages them to make the process more efficient.

The author found it difficult during the fieldwork to obtain precise cost data to allow for a proper statistical comparison of costs between the tendering and granting models of funding because many organizations were wary of releasing what they saw as proprietary information. However, UNMAO statistics did show that organizations which received the majority of their funding from tenders (including one NGO), cleared more square meters per work hour than peacekeeping units or agencies funded by grants. While not a direct measure of cost, this would suggest that the tendering model of funding was more efficient in terms of area cleared.

Figure 5: Speed of Clearance (Square Meters Cleared per Work Hour) by Organization's Dominant Funding Mode, 2005-July 2007⁹⁴



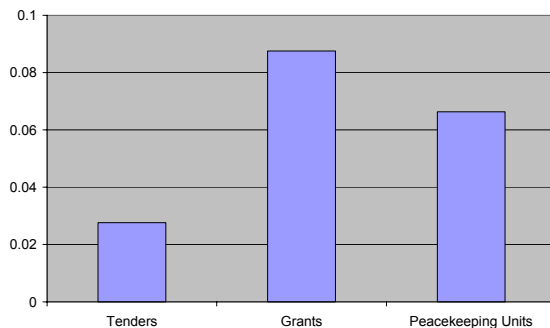
That said, one must be extremely careful about drawing hard and fast conclusions from the above graph – for not every square meter is equally difficult to clear. Research conducted by the author in other cases indicates that the density of a minefield (number of mines per square meter) can have a significant impact on the cost of clearance.⁹⁵ In Sudan, peacekeeping units and organizations funded by grants have been clearing areas that have a much denser concentration of mines. This is probably because most of the demining tenders have been for roads (which lend themselves to being made into tenders), while NGOs (generally funded by grants) have opted to concentrate significant efforts on areas where the impact of mines is higher. Therefore, when measuring

⁹⁴ Data from UNMAO IMSMA database, obtained by author. July 2007.

⁹⁵ Density of UXO has a smaller impact on cost because it is much easier to clear.

efficiency by number of mines cleared from an area, those agencies funded by grants are much more efficient.

Figure 6: Speed of Clearance (Mines Cleared per Work Hour) by Organization's Dominant Funding Mode, 2005-July 2007⁹⁶



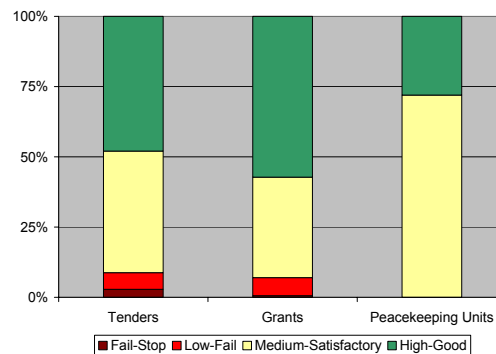
Moreover, confirming the author's findings from field research in Bosnia⁹⁷ and Afghanistan,⁹⁸ the tendering model appears correlated with a slight reduction in quality of demining in Sudan, as measured by how many high and low quality assurance ratings an organization's work receives. While smaller than in the other two countries, there is still a difference in quality of the work done by organizations funded by tenders and those funded by grants. In the case of Sudan, organizations funded by tenders were more likely to receive an order to stop work due to work practice that posed a risk to life, and received less "High-Good" ratings than those funded by grants.

⁹⁶ Data from UNMAO IMSMA database, obtained by author. July 2007.

⁹⁷ Bolton, M. & Griffiths, H. (Sept. 2006) *Bosnia's Political Landmines: A Call for Socially Responsible and Conflict-Sensitive Mine Action*. London, Landmine Action.
<http://www.landmineaction.org/resources/Bosnias_Political_Landmines.pdf>.

⁹⁸ Matthew Bolton. (2008) "Goldmine? A Critical Look at the Commercialization of Afghan Demining." Centre for the Study of Global Governance (LSE) Research Paper 01/2008.
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/ResearchPapers/RP_0108.pdf>.

Figure 7: Quality Assurance Record, by Organization's Dominant Funding Mode, 2004-July 2007⁹⁹



In Afghanistan, the author found that an increase in poor quality assurance ratings was correlated with higher accident rates. However, in Sudan there have been few demining accidents (possibly because of the low levels of contamination) and so it is unclear whether this is the case also in Sudan.

Nevertheless, donors should be aware that in calling on organizations to increase the speed of their demining, or by introducing competition through tenders, they may pay for this in a reduction in quality. Whether it is worth risking the lives of deminers in order to more quickly reduce the risk to the lives of civilians in proximity to dangerous areas is a value judgment that needs to be considered carefully by the donor.

Thus whether costs are really reduced by the tendering model of funding, and the extent to which this might increase the risk of poor quality demining, requires further analysis and study. In the meantime, the author would argue with confidence that commercializing the process is not the panacea to problems of high cost that it is sometimes touted to be.

Moreover, the commercial companies in Sudan (which do the bulk of the work tendered by UNOPS and WFP) are doing very little to build local capacity to conduct mine action. In fact, other than training their local staff in technical issues, they actually have a disincentive to build capacity because their contracts, won in competitive tenders do not leave adequate resources to be spent on things outside the primary purpose of the contract. In addition, companies are loath to build the capacity of or create local companies because in doing so they would create potential competition for contracts. The lack of local capacity left behind if a commercial operation leaves the country wastes resources, because all the institutional knowledge and goodwill developed by the organization vaporizes. A good case of this is FSD, a demining NGO which had obtained most of its funding from tenders. Priced out of the market by competition from commercial companies, FSD's operation in Sudan, once the biggest and one of the oldest,

⁹⁹ UNMAO. (July 2007) "IMSMA Monthly Report." Obtained by author from UNMAO. p. 13. This data is generated by UNMAO quality assurance personnel who conduct random spotchecks on demining tasks. At the end of the inspection they issue a quality assurance report rating the task as "High-Good", "Medium-Satisfactory", "Low-Fail" and "Fail-Stop." A Low-Fail rating would indicate that the task is being cleared in a manner that could pose a danger to the life of a deminer or a future user of the land. A Fail-Stop rating indicates a deviance from standing operating procedures that is so severe that the task must be stopped until the situation and the problem can be properly reviewed. This graph consolidates all of the quality assurance reports and compares their distribution as a percentage of all the reports issued about that organization.

has all but collapsed precipitously. While FSD is trying to build up the capacity of SIMAS this is a very small operation and the vast majority of the experience and knowledge FSD had built up is now lost.

v. Operating with Local Partners

Almost all international NGOs that are or have been operational in Sudan have worked in partnership with one or more local partner NGOs. Generally the international NGO is responsible for securing funding from international donors and providing technical advice, and the local partner recruits and manages the local staff, including deminers and surveyors. Some NGOs made the choice to do this, out of a commitment to build a national capacity for mine action, other have done so because it was stipulated by their donor or encouraged by local authorities. For instance, a spokesperson for the SSDC said “capacity building of national organizations and local personnel is very important to us. We encourage partnership with the local organizations.”¹⁰⁰

When it has worked well, this model has enabled international NGOs to save money by hiring local staff and having Sudanese staff deal with human resources issues and negotiations with vendors that would be less successful if done by an expatriate. Typically, labor disputes have been defused more easily when Sudanese staff have been involved in liaising between expatriates and other local staff.

Moreover, it means that there is at least some attempt to build local structures to potentially take over from the international agencies when they drawn down their efforts. For instance, while FSD’s collapse detailed above did not leave behind anything near its size, it did leave its local partner SIMAS with a small core of trained staff, equipment and a compound. Indeed, if local NGOs could slowly take over responsibility for the management of demining, it would significantly reduce the costs.

However, it is unclear how much capacity and responsibility has really been transferred to the local NGOs. This is because most meaningful decisions in these partnerships continue to be made by expatriates within the international NGOs. The responsibilities left to the local NGOs tend not to be significant. Indeed, since the managers of the international NGOs have often tended to be from a technical demining background, rather than an NGO capacity building background, more focus has been placed on developing the technical capacity of the local deminers, than on the organizational development of the local NGO.

More critically, the structure of these partnerships has probably encouraged rent-seeking, because while the international NGO provides funding and has some influence over staffing within the local NGO, the local partner is still an independent organization, has considerable autonomy in organizational decisions and usually has better relations with local authorities (enabling them to influence the outcomes of disputes between them and their international partners). This means the international NGOs have less control over staffing and resource allocation than if they had hired their own deminers. As one internal evaluation of an international NGO program noted,

The structural anomaly of having [local NGO X] as both counterpart organization and also beneficiary led to some problems. The duality appears to have been exploited by [local NGO X] to seek control without commensurate accountability. ... [I]t gave [local NGO X] the opportunity to insist that they had to be the recipient of funding (as beneficiary) but had to decide how the

¹⁰⁰ SSDC Spokesperson. (21 August 2007) Interview with author in Juba, Sudan.

money was used (as counterpart). ... A culture developed where [local NGO X] felt that [the international NGO] was responsible for [local NGO X's] own shortcomings.¹⁰¹

Moreover, the local NGO is not always a particularly strong and effective partner anyway, and is often protected by political patrons in the government. Rather than teaming up with existing local NGOs that had strong track records in other humanitarian sectors, international demining NGOs have chosen to partner with organizations that are relatively newly established, but have a mine action focus. As one recent independent evaluation put it,

progress in building capacities within local demining NGOs has been difficult due to the limited education and skills of local personnel, the militancy of the work force, alcohol abuse, high absenteeism and, more generally, a lack of commitment.... More fundamentally, there are real questions whether the local mine action NGOs are truly NGOs, as they appear to have strong connections with their respective governments, and proper governance structures do not seem to be in place.¹⁰²

This actually echoes experience mine action agencies have faced elsewhere. Building local NGO capacity can be a very tough and seems to be more difficult when the relationship is organized with the international NGO operating as a kind of parent agency above the local agency.¹⁰³

vi. Capacity Building From Within

Evaluations of the Sudanese mine action program, and several of the interviews, have raised the possibility that, counter-intuitively, the best way to build the local capacity of Sudanese mine action may be to do so within an international NGO. Rather than partnering with a local NGO, an international NGO can maintain close control but train up Sudanese staff, indoctrinate them in their organizational culture and slowly have them replace the expatriates. The advantage of this method is that it maintains the level of accountability over funds that is expected from an international NGO, fosters links and exchange of information between the local office and operations in other countries and yet maintains a link to the grassroots through its local management staff. HALO's internal soul-searching about its failure in Sudan has concluded that it would have been more effective had it operated on this model.¹⁰⁴

Several international NGOs have found this to be an effective capacity building model in other countries. For instance, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in Bosnia is completely run by Bosnians, though it took some 10 years before all expatriate presence was phased out. However, NPA is a much more professional and sustainable

¹⁰¹ Independent Consultant X. (November 2006) Evaluation of NGO X. Document obtained by author. p. iii, 23.

¹⁰² X, Y & Z. (2007) Independent evaluation of one donor's projects in Sudan. p. 25. Obtained by author. p. 35.

¹⁰³ See, for instance, GICHD's discussion of Handicap International's problems building up Akcija Protiv Mine in Bosnia: Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). (2004) *A Study of Local Organisations in Mine Action*. Geneva, GICHD. <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/pubs/ph/details.cfm?lng=en&id=26816>>. p. 51.

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance: SLR-HALO Trust Sudan. (5 August 2006) "HALO – SLO Handover Notes." Document obtained by author. HALO Trust. (2007) "HALO Sudan Report." Internal report. Obtained by author from HALO. p. 3-4.

organization than many of the local NGOs operating in Bosnia.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the HALO Trust in Afghanistan is also run by locals (with a few expatriate technical advisors that rotate in and out) but has a better record than the local NGOs in terms of quality assurance and accidents..

In Sudan, NPA and Danish Demining Group (DDG) are the only groups following this model. Both organizations have relatively secure and generous funding which has given the luxury of time and resources to dedicate to intensive training of local staff. For instance, NPA has developed a detailed capacity building plan, which, stating the intention to draw down the number of expatriates by two-thirds over the next five years as “talented local candidates [are] educated and promoted,” outlines training courses and mentoring relationships to be offered to local staff in both technical and management issues.¹⁰⁶ An SSDC spokesperson spoke glowingly of NPA, saying they were “impressed” with the organization’s capacity building and “gender balance” and saw it as a “good example” for other groups to follow. Interviews with local and international staff at NPA revealed fewer of the same kind of tensions and problems that many other demining agencies currently face.

However, this must be said with some caveats. It is difficult to measure because so many agencies guard information about their budgets tightly, but it is possible that this model is more expensive than others, because it invests in training and education. It is also quite possible that NPA’s advantage over other agencies is simply the result of the goodwill NPA has in the community, due to its over 20 years of experience in South Sudan and close relationship with the South Sudanese leadership. Indeed, several people working in the SSDC once worked for NPA. This may mean they are able to avoid some of the political difficulties other agencies face.

g. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, even though the risk of mines and UXO in Sudan is lower than in many countries which receive significantly less assistance, demining in Sudan is an incredibly expensive, difficult and politically contested operation. Mine action donors and agencies must thus think very seriously about whether the potential peacebuilding externalities of demining are valuable enough to justify the high cost in financial and other terms. HALO and Landmine Action determined it was not worth the cost to their organizations. In contrast, many other NGOs and commercial companies have decided that the potential benefits of being in Sudan are much higher than the potential problems. This is a value judgment on the part of each organization involved.

If they want to dissuade further donors and agencies from pulling out, the national authorities in the north and south will have to do more to treat mine action agencies as assets to be encouraged and welcomed rather than viewed as a threat or source of rents. That said, the power structure in Sudan, in which most meaningful decisions are made by expatriates and international bodies, leaves the local bodies little authority other than the power to obstruct and stall. Handing over some meaningful authority to the local

¹⁰⁵ Bolton, M. & Griffiths, H. (Sept. 2006) *Bosnia’s Political Landmines: A Call for Socially Responsible and Conflict-Sensitive Mine Action*. London, Landmine Action.
<http://www.landmineaction.org/resources/Bosnias_Political_Landmines.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ Rune Kristian Andersen. (11 June 2007) “Capacity Building Plan.” Obtained by author from NPA.

authorities, and making them accountable for any mistakes they might make, may encourage a more responsible exercise of authority.

The following makes a set of recommendations to the main actors in Sudan, to encourage them to look for ways to make Sudanese mine action a more efficient and effective program:

To Mine Action Donors:

- 1) Examine whether the some of mine action resources allocated to the Sudan might be better spent in underfunded programs such as Cambodia or Angola.
- 2) Invest in completing survey projects to get a better picture of the mine problem.
- 3) Focus funding on areas of high mine impact.
- 4) Be aware of the potential reductions in quality that come from tendering mine action.
- 5) Pressure UNMAO and mine action agencies to improve the efficiency of their operations and build local capacity.
- 6) Be aware of the limits to the peacebuilding impact of demining.
- 7) Pressure UNMAO and the SSDC into opening a public investigation into the HALO-SLR affair.

To UNMAO:

- 8) Look for ways to build local mine action capacity, through handing over some meaningful authority to local organizations.
- 9) Invest in completing survey projects to get a better picture of the mine problem.
- 10) Encourage mine action agencies to become more efficient, through contract incentives and other measures.
- 11) Assist mine action agencies in overcoming bureaucratic impediments imposed by local authorities.
- 12) Consider the potential quality risks involved in tendering mine action contracts.
- 13) Pressure local authorities to take a stand against excessive rent-seeking of mine action agencies, and violence by demining staff.
- 14) Open an independent public investigation into the HALO-SLR affair.

To WFP:

- 15) Consider the potential quality risks involved in tendering mine action contracts
- 16) Consider ways to encourage contractors to build the capacity of local mine action professionals.

To the National Mine Action Authority and Humanitarian Aid Commission of the Government of Sudan:

- 17) Halt the imposition of excessive bureaucratic impediments on mine action agencies, especially in terms of visas, travel permits and clearing equipment through customs.
- 18) Submit the JIDUs to the accreditation and quality assurance process of UNMAO.

To the South Sudanese Demining Commission:

- 19) Publicly condemn excessive rent-seeking of mine action agencies and violence by demining staff.
- 20) Stop renting office space from SLR.
- 21) Contribute to an independent public investigation into the HALO-SLR affair.
- 22) Submit the JIDUs to the accreditation and quality assurance process of UNMAO.

To the Sudan People's Liberation Army:

- 23) Discipline soldiers that abuse their authority in their treatment of mine action agencies.
- 24) Allow the SSDC, as a civilian organization, to take the lead in making mine action policy.

To the commercial demining companies working in Sudan:

- 25) Avoid cutting corners in quality when cutting costs in order to remain competitive.
- 26) Make efforts to build local capacity in mine action.

To the international NGOs working in Sudan:

- 27) Focus on implementing long term projects focused on areas of high mine impact, rather than commercial tenders.
- 28) Be aware of the potential problems in partnering relationships with local NGOs.
- 29) Work to build the capacity of local staff.

To the Sudanese national NGOs:

- 30) Raise donor and partner confidence in local NGOs by remaining focused on operations (rather than building up a top heavy management), limiting rent-seeking and seeking opportunities for effective training.
- 31) Build the capacity of the organization to function independent of international NGO sponsorship.