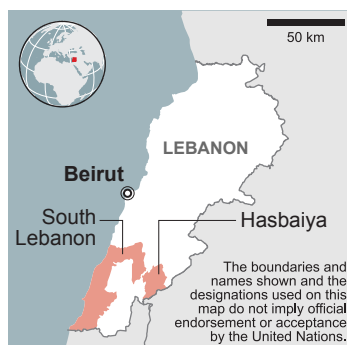


Social and economic empowerment of mine-affected communities: Removing the threat of landmines and UXOs and promoting post- demining rehabilitation in South Lebanon



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Lebanon

Duration: August 2006 to December 2009

Implementing UN Agencies: UNDP; UNMAS; UNOPS

Other Implementing Partners: Mines Advisory Group

Budget: \$2,966,590

Key Words: Post-conflict reintegration; reconstruction and reconciliation; demining; empowerment; sustainable livelihoods

BACKGROUND

By late 2006, as a result of a series of conflicts that spanned over two decades, South Lebanon was heavily contaminated with hundreds of thousands of explosive remnants of war (ERWs). The continued presence of ERWs – landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordinances – was a daily reminder of the critical and pervasive threats faced by the local communities. According to a survey by the Mines Advisory Group in 2003, within South Lebanon's Nabatieh, Jezzina and Hasbaniya areas, mine-clearing efforts had been limited, leaving roughly 3,136,440

square metres of land contaminated by an estimated 26,000 landmines. For communities in the South, the vast number of ERWs not only posed a physical danger to the daily lives of ordinary citizens, but also generated an environment where lack of access to land combined with limited movement within and across communities, thwarted the resumption of agricultural activities and hampered the region's plans to advance a programme of sustainable peace and reconstruction where a return to normalcy could be promoted.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the project was to enhance the human security of those living in ERW-affected communities in South Lebanon by removing the threat of ERWs and by providing meaningful mechanisms to resume economic activities, in particular, in the area of agriculture. Specifically, the project sought: (i) to remove the immediate threat to the survival, livelihood

and dignity of the affected communities through cluster bomb clearance activities; (ii) to strengthen community-based income generation through targeted workshops and prioritized trainings; and (iii) to transition from a culture of conflict to an environment of sustainable peace, reconciliation and enhanced dignity.

BENEFICIARIES

The direct beneficiaries included 33 ERW-affected communities as well as an additional 118 communities within South Lebanon's Nabatieh, Jezzina and Hasbaniya areas who saw their human security

improved as a result of the integrated ERW clearance and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation programme promoted under this project.



Credit: UN/August Fakhri Field



Credit: UNMAS

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The project successfully trained two community Battle Area Clearance (BAC) teams, both of which were accredited in accordance with International Mine Action Standards. The teams verified and/or cleared nearly 600 ERWs within 15 villages spanning over 700,000 square metres of contaminated land. These clearance operations benefited more than 600,000 people by giving them access to land that had been previously unusable. In addition, the newly accessible land enabled the implementation of community-based development projects, which ultimately supported economic development activities in multiple villages and fostered inter-communal relations.

(ii) The project identified and implemented post-clearance livelihood activities based on broad consensus among all stakeholders, including local community leaders. The community-based prioritization process empowered local communities

by encouraging them to make decisions regarding the future economic development of their villages. Through participatory and locally driven projects – including, for example, providing mini greenhouses to 400 families in Aadshit to reconstruct and protect their plantations – the project contributed to revitalizing income-generating livelihoods in South Lebanon.

(iii) The project supported the creation of 18 youth groups. The youth groups received peace-building training and were empowered to play an important role in the political, social and economic development of their respective communities. Through joint meetings with municipal councils, the youth participated in the selection of community projects. Moreover, they played an essential role in bringing together different political parties within the same villages to discuss common concerns thereby contributing to reconciliation efforts.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the added value of the protection and empowerment framework in consolidating peace and development in post-conflict situations. Protection measures aimed at shielding individuals and communities from the direct physical threats of ERWs as well as the indirect consequences of inaccessible land due to ERW contamination. Empowerment measures focused on promoting participatory processes that led to the development of trainings and workshops based on the actual needs and

the priorities of the affected communities. These capacity-enhancing interventions not only strengthened the agricultural sector but also led to the development of local leadership and income-generating activities in other areas. The coherence of the protection and empowerment elements made it possible for the project to advance responses that were mutually reinforcing – thereby providing the affected communities with sustained social and economic benefits in an environment of greater human security.