

Thailand

Experience of Mine Affected States

The Kingdom of Thailand signed the Mine Ban Treaty on 3 December 1997, ratified it on 27 November 1998, the first country in Southeast Asia to ratify. The treaty entered in force for Thailand on 1st May 1999, thus committed the country to the obligation under the treaty.

Abided by the convention, the Thai government established Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) in January 1999 to deal with the nation's Humanitarian Mine Action tasks. TMAC has main obligation to clear all anti-personnel mine under Thailand's jurisdiction no later than ten years after entering into force of convention of the country, or within yeas 2009 .Other mine actions responsible by TMAC are Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance in which TMAC coordinates its works with governmental and non- governmental, national and international organizations.

Under TMAC there are four Humanitarian Mine Actions Units undertaking Humanitarian Mine Actions mainly demining in the contaminated areas, especially along the borders, where before were battle field or military sites. There are also three training centers preparing personnel for mine action tasks, Humanitarian Demining Training Center, Mine Awareness Training Center, and Mine Detection Dog Training Center

Since signing the treaty, Thailand has been an active supporter of the Mine Ban Convention in the international arena especially in Asia Pacific region. Thailand has attended every annual meeting of States parties, showing strong will and firm commitment to the obligations under the Mine Ban Convention. In 2003, Thailand successfully hosted and served as President of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties in Bangkok , with over 400 delegates from 119 countries participated.

During May 2000 - May 2001, Landmine Impact Survey conducted by NPA (Norwegian people's Aid) identified 934 landmine contaminated area, the total of 2.557 sq.k.m. In 27 provinces along the border areas of Thailand, affected about 500,000 people living near the hazardous areas.

Progress of the implementation

Destruction of stockpiled landmine

In accordance with the Mine Ban Convention, on 24 April 2003, Thailand completed the destruction of stockpiled antipersonnel mines, a total of 337,725 mines, only 4,970 anti personnel mines were kept for training and research purposes.

Victim Assistance

According to Landmine Impact Survey conducted by NPA, a total number of 503,682 people have been affected, of which 1,497 killed and 1,971 injured. Up until now a total number of 3,649 landmine victims . They are people living in risk area. The majority of recorded incidents occurred in the Thai- Cambodia border region. The number of casualties tend to decrease due to effective Mine Risk Education.

After the incidents landmine survivors need medical treatment as well as physical and mental rehabilitation.. Generally in Thailand assistance available to landmine survivors is adequate Medical and rehabilitation services are available in both state and privately owned hospitals and healthcare units. However, it has some shortage of medical and health personnel in some rural areas.

Since 1999 TMAC has included victim assistance in its mine action program, coordinated with the Ministry of Public Health for emergency and medical care, the Ministry of Interior for rehabilitation and other governmental and non- governmental organizations for education and vocational training.

Thailand has established Master Plan for Victim Assistance 2007-2011 providing assistance for landmine victims systematically by integrating work of various organizations through its sub committee.

As long as legal and policy frameworks concerned , it has been affirmed that national legal and policy frameworks effectively address the needs and fundamental human rights of mine victims

Mine Risk Education

The four Humanitarian Mine Action Units of TMAC and NGOS conducted Mine Risk Education (MRE) activities in the affected communities along the border areas. Obviously, Mine Risk Education and Mine Awareness proved to be an effective action since the number of land mine victim has been deceased each year However, Thailand well continue MRE activities. By establishing MRE Master Plan 2007-2011 mainly aims at organizations for the full benefits of people in mine risk areas

Humanitarian De-mining

Under Article 5, Thailand has obligation to destroy all anti personnel mines no later than 1 May 2009. From the Landmine Impact Survey by NPA, Thailand has 2,557 square kilometers of mine contaminated areas. Demining is undertaken mainly by four Humanitarian mine action units under TMAC supervision, and two civilian organization, PRO (Peace Road Organization) and GCCF (General Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation). Up until 30th September 2006, TMAC has cleared the area of about *20,000,000 square meters or 20 square kilometers* which is less than 1% of all contaminated areas in Thailand. It is challenging for Thailand to clear the rest within 2 years time. Besides, considering that the rest dangerous areas of 2,536 square kilometer, using traditional demining, it would take years and huge budget to clear.

Area Reduction

TMAC believed that area reduction could lower the amount of land requiring clearance to around 500 square kilometers or less by conducting technical survey. Land already in use for some years, such as cultivating areas for two or three years or site of construction, the areas where no record of mine and UXO incidents or casualties, were targets for Area Reduction Survey. Field teams will revisited the area, interview local people, check for recent casualties, check land use and do spot check with Mine Detectors, Mine Detection Dog, or Mechanical Equipment then conduct the Quality Assurance before release safe areas to the community. It is planned to start Area Reduction in 2007. The project takes a years time with estimated budget of 120 millions baht to operate.

Problem encountered

For the past 8 years TMAC found limitation and problems in operating mine action as follow:

1. Government policy

Although the Thai government always places the utmost importance on the issue of landmine problem due to its effect on human, economic, and social development of the country, the policy, budget, and efforts of each government varied. It should be reviewed in a more comprehensive manner, in comparative with other urgent factors and national priorities which came up at each time.

2. Implementation of Mine Actions

Mine actions especially mine clearance is a difficult tasks, time consuming, high risk working in remote area. It needs necessary expertise, high budget, appropriate and affordable technology and man power. The progress of de-mining was slow, and Thailand will not meet its mine clearance deadline under the treaty. The reason for slow progress was that mine action had not been a government priority, and had not received adequate financial support. Besides, TMAC was placing under military control which constrained its ability to find international supports and mobilize skills need for some tasks.

These problems prompted TMAC to become a civilian agency. At the Humanitarian Mine Action Committee Meeting chaired by General Surayuth Chulanond, the Prime Minister. The Meetings agreed that TMAC be transformed to civilian agency . The Meeting also approved the Area Reduction Project proposed by TMAC which would be the instrument leading Thailand to meet obligation under the convention. The new structure of TMAC will allow its ability to find supports and cooperation from both internal and international supporters (donors).

The Way Forward

At national level

1. Thailand will continue to seize every opportunity to promote mine action at the national level.
2. TMAC will accelerate the process to transform TMAC to be the appropriate civilian agency.
3. Thailand will encourage all concerned agencies to implement the Master Plan on Victim Assistance and Mine Risk Education.
4. Start the process of Area Reduction Plan as soon as possible.

External cooperation

1. Promote the technical cooperation, information exchange and other mutual cooperation within countries in the region, for example, training for making artificial limb, training on mine clearance.
2. Encourage the involvement and active cooperation including financial and technical support from friends, international community and all relevant partners to enhance effectiveness in mine action with cost effective approaches.
