

**ICBL Statement on efficiency in cooperation and assistance**  
**Standing Committee on Resources, Cooperation and Assistance**  
*24 June 2011*



Over the last year, ICBL sought to focus part of the discussions on cooperation and assistance on HOW money is spent rather than on global funding levels. We believe that mine action globally receives substantial amount of funds, but that there is room to improve efficiencies in how this money is actually expended.

Improving efficiencies in the implementation of actual mine clearance activities have been going on continuously and are discussed in other forums. But there are other stages in the process of implementing mine action where inefficiencies exist and have not received much attention, such as mine action funding mechanisms and coordination of mine action activities. The ICBL therefore warmly welcomes the creation of this Standing Committee, and we hope it will provide many opportunities to discuss in concrete terms how to improve the efficiency of all processes surrounding implementation of mine action.

So what are we talking about specifically?

**1. Funding for mine action activities**

There are different ways for donors to give money and obviously it is a donor prerogative to decide where and how these funds should be spent, either bilaterally, or through different multilateral channels. We believe that the use of both systems can be efficient and effective ways to allocate funds, but each also has potential for wasting precious time and/or resources. As wasting time and resources means delays in getting land cleared or less of the land cleared for the end-beneficiaries – communities living in the mine affected countries.

When using multilateral channels we therefore encourage donors to ensure that:

1. Funding is administered and transferred to implementing partners in a timely manner. Donors need to set limits for maximum turnaround time, as waiting for months for funds means that work cannot get done, and that is neither efficient nor effective
2. They set a maximum percentage that can be used for administration, thus ensuring that the maximum amount of funds possible is spent for actual implementation.
3. Transparent reporting on how funds are allocated and spent is provided by multilateral mechanisms.
4. Regular external evaluations of the mechanisms are conducted and published.

In addition, using multilateral channels is more efficient without earmarking of funds, so that the fund can allocate resources based on affected states' needs and priorities. Donors need to insist, however, that there are transparent procedures in place on how allocation of funds to different

mine affected countries takes place. When donors want to allocate the funds for a specific country and /or operator, bilateral channels are usually a better and a more efficient option.

When funds are given bilaterally we recommend that donors:

1. Ensure, before giving funds to an implementing partner, that a specific project is also a national priority
2. Discuss the performance of supported implementing partners annually with national authorities and ensure that they are satisfied with implementing partners as well.
3. Ensure that there is evaluation of implementing partners regularly and that inefficient partners are held accountable

Under the issue of funding, ICBL would also like to briefly address the issue of competitive tendering. We are not opposed to this in principle, as it can be a useful and transparent practice when executed well. However, when executed poorly, it can actually have a significant negative impact on overall efficiency, effectiveness and quality of demining operations, and result in wasted funds through delays in clearance or even poorly executed clearance. Moreover, while mine action today requires an increasing amount of flexibility and new approaches on the part of operators, especially in relation to land release, most of the competitive requests for tenders are still overly prescriptive and inflexible. In such cases, the tendering process might actually prevent the best solutions to the problem from being used.

We would therefore like to appeal to donor states, either those doing tendering processes themselves or those using UNOPS or other mechanisms to tender on their behalf, to conduct tendering in a transparent, timely and accountable process that allows maximum flexibility of approaches and solutions.

In terms of funding mechanisms, we would also like to suggest at a future meeting of this Standing Committee to return to the question of mainstreaming mine action into development budgets. Given the concerns that we and others have raised about the possible limitations of this funding process, we think it would be useful to hear about the experiences of both donors and affected states, including any lessons learned.

## **2. Coordination.**

Another key area for increasing efficiency is in relation to coordination of mine action activities. While clearly there is a need for coordination, quality assurance and quality control on the national level, the size, structure and placement of these coordinating mechanisms should reflect actual needs on the ground and should be established following an assessment of these needs. When coordinating structures are funded by international assistance and not from national budgets, donors need to look into the size of the coordination mechanisms, especially in terms of ratio between funds spent on clearance versus funds spent on coordination structures for these activities. It surely cannot be considered efficient if a quarter of all the funds for clearance are

spent on national coordination structures. Donors should discuss with their partners what they think is an appropriate ratio and ask for these figures to be segregated in the reports they receive.

It is also not a given that large coordinating structures should be established in all countries that have a landmine or cluster munition problem, rather the opposite. If the needs assessment shows that national authorities NEED international support and assistance in coordination, then an appropriate response should be devised. Otherwise the norm should be that national authorities can handle the problem themselves, possibly with the assistance of other governments, institutions, or operators, including able and willing NGOs. Moreover, as the humanitarian problem diminishes due to clearance activities, so should the coordinating structures.

A lot of the issues we have just described are also touching upon work and role of the UN and agencies that are dealing with mine action. As NGOs we have been for some time asking for a better dialog with UN to be able to discuss and resolve some of these concerns. We are happy to say that we have started a constructive dialog in recent months with our UN partners and we believe that it will lead to improvement on many of these issues. We will continue to be actively engaged in that dialogue.

Finally, we would like to touch on the question from the previous session on national ownership, which is clearly crucial for efficient mine action. Real national ownership enables the establishment of an environment for mine action where focused and efficient implementation can take place.

It is important for states to create an environment in the country where funds are not being wasted, while operators are waiting idly for MOUs, importation of equipment, visas for the staff, and similar, due to red tape in a country. There needs to be an environment where all operators and other stakeholders work towards a common goal under a clear national plan, agreed and known to all the actors; and where any deviations from this plan are timely noticed and corrected. And finally there should be an environment where coordination and partnership of all stakeholders is encouraged and taking place, including coordination between UN agencies.

We hope that the above will be helpful for the states parties – both affected states and donors – and can promote a deeper assessment and open discussion about funding mechanisms and other issues related to efficiency in mine action. Only with honest assessment and feedback on both good and bad practises and lessons learnt will we be able to use the full potential of this forum.

Thank you.