

How to Get More Value for Money in Humanitarian Mine Action?

Benefits of Multi-year Funding: Different Perspectives, Common Interests

A need to improve effectiveness of resources

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) has served as an important framework for promoting technical and financial support to affected States working to realise their convention obligations. However, more could be done to improve the effectiveness of resources being provided. The Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership all demonstrate there is a growing commitment from the international development community to ensure effective, efficient and economical use of often limited resources. But how is this best achieved? Varying solutions have been considered and tested to ensure the greatest impact on the ground, whilst also ensuring better value for money is achieved. Multiyear funding has proven to be one of them.

The experience of the Netherlands and other donors demonstrate that multiyear funding can offer numerous benefits. In 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands consulted several Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) operators on what funding mechanisms they thought would deliver the greatest impact and best value for money. The Netherlands decided to continue with a programme of bilateral multiyear, multi-programme funding; the Humanitarian Mine Action and Cluster Munitions Programme (2012-2016). Four organisations (MAG, HALO Trust, Handicap International (HI) and Danish Church Aid (DCA)) are currently enjoying the many benefits of this bilateral multiyear funding mechanism.

Collectively, these organisations recognise that multiyear funding is not just advantageous from an operator's perspective. In a time when resources for HMA are becoming under pressure from other competing priorities it is an approach worth considering – especially from a donor's perspective. This paper focuses on the benefits of multiyear funding from the donor, operator and national perspectives, demonstrating benefits for each. It is not exhaustive, but aims to serve as a starting point for further discussion amongst stakeholders who all share a common interest: more effective, efficient and economical use of limited resources for HMA.

The Donor's perspective

The Netherlands is one of only a few donors that has chosen multiyear financing in mine action. For many donors the economic context, and procurement and funding regulations determine funding systems and modalities.

Funding mechanisms that span several years often raise concerns that problems which arise early on within the funding period can be exacerbated across the remainder of the project. There needs to be a degree of flexibility to ensure that if assumptions turn out not to be correct, or if the external environment changes, that multi-year mechanisms can respond and adapt to this. This concern is easily managed by ensuring operators work to and report on adjustable operational plans adjusted that meet the realities on the ground.

The Netherlands has opted for multiyear financing because the advantages significantly outnumber the downsides. Moreover, the downsides can easily be overcome as long as the right mechanisms are in place. So what exactly are the advantages?



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Administrative efficiency

A significant and fairly self-evident benefit of multiyear funding mechanisms is that **fewer administrative resources** are spent on developing, issuing and awarding funding agreements over the project period. Instead of spending valuable resources on developing and managing annual tender processes, it is done, for example, only once every three or four years.

Strategic relationships

Multiyear funding also enables donors to develop **strategic relationships** with operators and national authorities to focus on thematic areas that require committed and sustained development. For example, a longer project period means that cross-cutting issues such as impact monitoring or gender can be addressed systematically within the lifecycle of the project. Management of these initiatives across multiple annual or smaller funding cycles is possible but complex, especially given that a substantial amount of time is often required to capture baseline and follow up data at several points throughout the project.

Common interests

Greater value for money is achievable when donors, operators and national authorities are able to plan together over the long term. As such, benefits for donors arise from the advantages for operators.

The Operator's perspective

The benefits of multiyear funding from an operational point of view are numerous.

Administrative efficiency

Administrative efficiency is one of the key advantages as multiyear funding incurs **lower administrative / programming costs**. Greater value for money is achieved by enabling operators to negotiate with local contractors and exercise a long-term more economical approach that **spreads capital asset investments** across a multiyear commitment.

Capacity building

Another advantage of multiyear funding is that it better supports **effective capacity building**. Efficiencies can be achieved when the capacity of national staff is built and the need for supporting national capacity with international personnel is reduced. Importantly, an operator's capacity to design and implement structured capacity building programmes for its national staff impacts positively on staff morale and employment confidence by offering job security.

Flexible and stable programming frameworks

Multiyear funding can act as a **flexible** and **stable** programming framework. Operators can adapt to fluid contexts, adjust plans and respond to emergencies as they arise and cushion the impact of funding gaps between shorter funding commitments. Flexibility within the current Netherlands multiyear mechanism enabled a quick response to the influx of Syrian refugees in Dohuk (Iraq) by clearing 650,000m² of land where 40,000 refugees are now living, and delivering emergency risk education along the Shilikye crossing point that continues to provide an entry point from Syria towards the camp.



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It should be noted that flexibility is not an inherent characteristic of multiyear funding. As mentioned above, in the design of the multiyear programme, adjustments along the programme cycle have to be/remain possible.

Strategic relationships

As mentioned above, cross-cutting issues such as gender and impact are better addressed within longer term funding modalities. Multiyear funding provides a framework in which operators commit to these issues with stakeholders, staff and beneficiaries over the long term. A demonstrable sustained commitment to working with a community will lead to greater **beneficiary satisfaction** in the long term. Similarly, multiyear funding also enables operators to develop strategic relationships and commit to plans with National Mine Action Authorities (NMAAs) & local authorities. Practically speaking, these relationships are key for successful support to national ownership. Additionally, they allow partners to develop linkages between mine action strategies and National Socio-Economic and Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans.

The ability to demonstrate results during the first phase of a multiyear project also increases the ability of an operator to **leverage funding** for follow on or additional support to remaining activities.

Project design and development

Combined with more long-term strategies, multiyear funding should lead to a more informed response, supporting the delivery of sustainable high quality outcomes.

Multiyear funding and planning facilitates sustained **participatory approaches** and **monitoring and impact assessment**. In single-year funding cycles, impact assessment (IA) is often implemented outside of the project cycle meaning results are missed in shorter reporting cycles. Consequently outcomes are clear but impacts are not. An extended funding commitment enables operators to commit resources to sustained information gathering within communities. Examining whether certain enabling factors promote or limit clearance, both in terms of the development phase in which countries find themselves and the type of contamination/national tasking structures/amount of external investment.

The National Authorities' perspective

For national authorities, the ability to plan effectively and coordinate HMA is greatly increased by predictable and sustained financial and technical support. Funding commitments over several years increase the likelihood of full national ownership, and a systematic approach towards the completion of treaty-based clearance obligations.

Strategic relationships

Multiyear funding facilitates the development of strategic and long-term relationships. The majority of National Mine Action Authorities (NMAAs) are undergoing capacity development processes. Sustained funding is a significant catalyst, as it allows for implementation of **long-term national strategies** that support this process. While some operators do make longer term plans under the presumption that they will receive funding, or by underwriting activities with funding from other budgets, clearly this does not sit easily as an on-going strategy.

Support to treaty compliance and reporting



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Last but not least, multiyear funding enables more effective support to national authorities in fulfilling their obligations under the APMBBC. By increasing planning capacity, affected states are able to report in greater detail and communicate remaining support needs in line with Article 7 of the Convention. This leads to **more systematic and structured approaches** to achieving end states.

Conclusion

Examining the multiyear approach from these three perspectives broadly highlights three main advantages as a funding modality: (1) Increased administrative efficiencies; (2) stronger long-term coordination between donors, operators, national authorities and affected communities; (3) more flexible, responsive programming driven by evolving needs.

Importantly it should be reiterated that the impact of multiyear funding is wholly dependent on the flexibility that is given to planning within the project cycle. In order for this model to be effective, it must be flexible enough to respond to changing demands within the operating context. Moreover, the APMBBC's Article 7 reporting obligations provide an important framework to ensure that where needs do change, states and implementing partners remain accountable and open with respect to subsequent reallocation of funding. Flexible multiyear funding is therefore a pragmatic solution to a complex problem that benefits greatly from a framework in which it is possible for all stakeholders to plan in and for the long term.