

Mine Action Road Map: Northeastern Nigeria, 2016

Context

Nigeria's northeast is experiencing a significant humanitarian crisis, which has resulted from the on-going armed conflict between Boko Haram, the Nigerian military and the Multi-National Task Force. An estimated 14.8 million people are affected by the conflict that led to a state of emergency being declared, for a period, in three northeastern states (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe).¹ It is estimated that over 2.2 million people have been displaced²; 67% since 2014. A process of return has been underway to areas the Nigerian military has recaptured from Boko Haram in 2015, such as northern Adamawa, but large areas of Borno outside of Maiduguri metropolitan remain too dangerous for IDPs to return. The scale of destruction in the areas of northeast Nigeria affected by Boko Haram and military violence is far greater than is usually perceived outside the region or reported in local and international media. High insecurity in the region has made access for humanitarian actors extremely difficult outside of major cities such as Yola and Maiduguri, further exacerbating the situation.

Approximately 74% of IDPs have witnessed violence and many are traumatised after having seen family and community members killed and injured, and watched their homes and communities burned and destroyed. In addition, the rising number of those displaced is contributing to the erosion and breakdown of family and community support systems, and increasing feelings of mistrust.³ In addition to the psychological scars created by the conflict, there are also physical remnants of the conflict, for example in the form of mines and unexploded ordnance, which remain in areas of origin, and which will continue to pose a threat to the lives and livelihoods of IDPs at the time of return, but also at present. Some work has been successfully done in this regard by Nigeria's own military and police resources but these items continue to contribute to a climate of fear, and are amongst the obstacles to the safe and sustainable return of IDPs and refugees in the northeast.

In November 2015, Danish Demining Group (the mine action and armed violence reduction unit of the Danish Refugee Council) commenced the delivery of emergency risk education in Adamawa and Borno states. However there is need for significant scale up in risk education as well as other forms of mine action assistance to enable the Nigerian authorities to effectively address the explosives threat and facilitate the safe return of IDPs and refugees.

Background

Danish Demining Group (DDG) is a unit of the Danish Refugee Council that specialises in mine action and armed violence reduction. DDG's support to mine action follows a set of best practice procedures and processes based on International Mine Action Standards and international conventions addressing anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and certain conventional weapons. In spite of gains in humanitarian mine action, new conflicts that have even greater implications for civilian safety and the threat and risk to people from existing mines and explosive remnants of war remains significant. Mine action involves removing landmines, explosive remnants of war and weapons to prevent harm to civilians and to remove obstructions to securing livelihoods needed for recovery from conflict. It can provide a "multiplier effect" of creating a secure environment for vulnerable people for development,

¹ The states of emergency caused huge economic problems for people, including in places like Yola which were not much directly affected by Boko Haram. These states are no longer under states of emergency, but it is worth mentioning that they were for a time, due to the impacts this had on people's lives and livelihoods etc.

² UN OCHA Nigeria, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2016 - Nigeria, November 2015.

³ Mercy Corps. Trip Report – Adamawa, northeast Nigeria, July 2015.

releasing contaminated land for productive use, and by removing blockages for humanitarian and development assistance to take place. Mine action activities conducted by DDG, therefore, should be part of a larger framework for emergency assistance or national development. Mine action work can establish a basis or trust in communities affected by conflict that enables other community-based programming interventions.

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to outline a roadmap for mine action in Nigeria. It is based on the findings of DDG's mine action assessment undertaken in November 2015 as well as subsequent meetings with government authorities, UN agencies, donors and INGOs. This tentative roadmap will need to be revised following in depth consultation with key stakeholders, not least the relevant Nigerian authorities at national and state levels.

Mine Action in the northeast: Possible areas for international assistance

DDG proposes the following five main streams for mine action assistance that may be appropriate in Nigeria's northeast:

STREAM 1: INTEGRATED MINE ACTION RESPONSE

The most urgent focus in Nigeria is the removal of explosive obstacles to contribute to create conditions for safe and sustainable return of IDPs and refugees. Significant work has already been done by Nigeria's own security providers but there is urgent need to help build on this success through the provision of the following:

- Mine/ERW risk education for IDPs and humanitarian workers
- Recruitment, training, equipping and operating of mobile explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams
- Recruitment, training, equipping and operating of area clearance teams
- Assistance with safe clearance and refurbishment of explosives and weapon stores, particularly those that have been over-run and/or damaged by terrorist action.

Background information on how DDG conducts such activities is set out in Annex A.

Note: in international humanitarian terms, the support of such activities can be considered under a number of different conceptual frameworks, including 'humanitarian', 'returns', 'early recovery', 'protection' or 'resilience', depending on the use of these terms by the agency in question.

STREAM 2: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF SECURITY PROVIDERS

There is need to train and equip Nigerian security providers (i.e. the Military and the Police) in order to ensure there is sustainable national capacity in place to address residual ERW contamination. Nigeria has a robust security apparatus and the provision of capacity development support must be based on the recognition that such support would serve to strengthen already existing capacity, as well as ensure conformity with international best practice and latest technological developments. Such capacity development support could include:

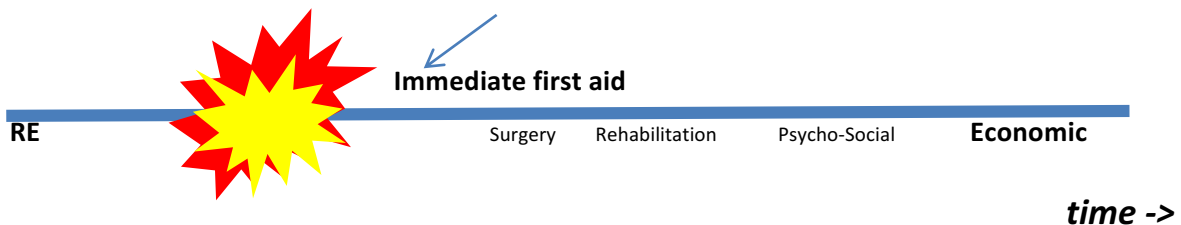
- Training and equipping mobile military and police EOD teams for possible work in high-risk operations
- Training and equipping military area clearance teams
- Training security forces in weapons and ammunition management and safe destruction
- Provision of 'first responder' training to police, volunteer police and civil defence personnel. This training would allow the 'first responder' to confirm the requirement, contact the appropriate clearance team, and clear and cordon a safe area around the possible explosive item.

STREAM 3: MINE ACTION COORDINATION

Reinforcement of national mine action coordination mechanisms and related activities. The international mine action community has developed a number of 'best practices' for the coordination and support of national mine action programmes. One size does not fit all and any such support processes would have to take into account the Nigerian context. These coordination mechanisms are usually under national leadership and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

STREAM 4: MINE/ERW VICTIM ASSISTANCE

While the number of individuals injured by mines/ERW in the northeast is unknown, it is clear that there is need to provide medical and socio-economic support to victims/survivors and their families. Victim assistance programmes normally consist of a number of activities over a period of time, ranging from immediate medical assistance, rehabilitation and psycho-social reintegration for survivors, to their economic reintegration. See below for a graphical representation. In this context, Risk Education (RE) can be seen a form of 'preventative medicine'. UNICEF is one of the main coordinators of support to victim assistance and RE.



STREAM 5: DDR

Support to the Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) process. There may be a need at some point to establish a DDR process to take care of those currently involved in the various informal policing groups in Nigeria. There will be a need to safely collect, store and possibly destroy weapons collected from demobilised personnel, as well as provide alternative livelihoods. This is currently seen as a 'downstream' process (compared to the urgent humanitarian need to support the clearance of explosive obstacles and provide RE) but it may be useful to begin the planning process now and identify the synergies with a mine action programme.

Sequence of events

In order to achieve the activities described above and to source external funding, a fully-costed strategic plan with clear targets is needed. It is not yet feasible to produce such a plan for northeastern Nigeria. Several enabling activities need to take place, which would produce the information required to access external resources. The main initial enabling activities that should be considered are:

- Establishment of an inter-ministerial steering committee (perhaps with UNDP support) to consider the needs and provide a regulatory framework for future activities. At the same time, it is critical to include the requirement for mine action support in strategic action plans by major international organisations (such as the UNDAF or CPAP etc.), in order to allow the provision of substantive support as necessary in future.
- The identification and recruitment of an international Mine Action Advisor by UNDP, to provide technical and coordination support to the Nigerian government in developing the necessary institutional framework.

- An initial scoping mission to provide a broad estimate of resource requirements, supported by UNDP. Such scoping missions are commonly carried out as short, time-bound consultancies by qualified and experienced mine action personnel.
- Conduct of a knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) survey to identify the requirements for a sustained risk education programme. Such KAP surveys are normally conducted by qualified, experience mine action implementing agencies, and DDG is expecting to begin a KAP survey in Borno and Adamawa States during the second quarter of 2016.
- Conduct of a non-technical survey (NTS) in the areas of potential contamination as identified by the initial scoping mission described above. An NTS will identify the extent of contamination and its impact on the surrounding communities, and thus provide the basis for establishing the resource needs and the priorities for action. As for the KAP, NTS are normally carried out by qualified and experienced mine action organisations and draw heavily on the use of social science techniques such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).
- Support to the establishment of coordination mechanisms. This support can be done at a national level, through the establishment, training and equipping of a national mine action authority (NMAA). At a local and regional level, coordination sub offices can be set up to allow provision of local coordination between agencies. The NMAA can act as the secretariat to the inter-ministerial steering committee referred to above, as well as acting as the guardian of operational doctrine for technical activities such as area clearance, EOD and MRE. These operational level doctrines are variously known as 'National Mine Action Standards' (NMAS) or National Technical Standards and Guidelines (NTSG). UNDP is normally involved in providing support to coordination at a national level, while development of local coordination mechanisms and centres can be provided in the form of 'train and equip' projects.

A graphical representation of a possible sequence of events is set out in Annex B.

In parallel, a number of urgent initiatives should be initiated to facilitate humanitarian assistance and the return process. These activities are described under Stream 1 above. It would be valuable to begin with some initial humanitarian life-saving activities, namely risk education and mobile EOD teams. The scoping process will then reveal the optimum amount of resources required and the initial capacity can be reinforced accordingly.

For further information, please contact:

Sharmala Naidoo
Regional Manager - West Africa
Danish Demining Group (DDG)
Tel: +225 56 93 14 00
regional.manager@ddgwestafrica.org
Skype: s.naidoo.ddg

Dr Robert Keeley
Chief Technical Advisor
Danish Demining Group (DDG)
Tel : +44 (0)7788 585828
bob.keeley@drc.dk
Skype: rokx.drc

Shah Liton
Country Director
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Tel: 081 4425 8903
cd-nigeria@drc.dk
Skype: shahliton

Annex A. Description of DDG mine action activities

Area Clearance

Mine/area clearance can contribute to two outcomes: the release of cleared land for future use and development, and the reduction of casualties in circumstances where people were previously coming into contact with the mines/ERW in the cleared areas. Mine clearance is the last resort use of resources in releasing land contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war: wherever possible DDG focuses on comprehensive surveys of suspected minefields to collect and analyse data about the presence, type, distribution and surrounding environment of mine/ERW contamination. This enables DDG to define better where (or not) mine/ERW contamination is present and to support land release prioritisation and decision-making processes through the provision of evidence. Where surveys indicate that mine contamination is present, and has a direct impact on the population, mine clearance is carried out to remove the contamination, or the suspicion of it, to specified international standards. Clearance is undertaken if any reasonable doubt persists that the safety of communities (or aid workers) could be at risk. Battle Area Clearance is undertaken for areas that have been the site of armed confrontation and where no mines are suspected, there often remain large areas that are contaminated by unexploded ordnance that needs to be cleared. These pose physical risks to communities in proximity and heighten risks to aid workers, since injuries can occur when people who want to make use of land move or tamper with explosive items.

Mobile Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Response

In many cases, the ERW contamination is scattered and not found within defined 'battle areas'. In such circumstances, it is not efficient to carry out widespread search/clearance on a 'just in case' basis and in these circumstances mine action programmes establish mobile EOD teams to react to reports by the community of items of ERW found in their area. DDG supports the training, equipping and operating of mobile EOD teams and links their activities to other work undertaken by risk education and community safety teams, as these are common means by which ERW items are reported. EOD teams do not release large areas by clearance but their work is critical as they provide a rapid response to remove explosive hazards that directly threaten communities, and thus reduce the loss of life and risk of serious injury from explosions. A mobile EOD capacity is commonly one of the most critical early responses in areas newly recovering from conflict.

Weapons and Ammunition Management

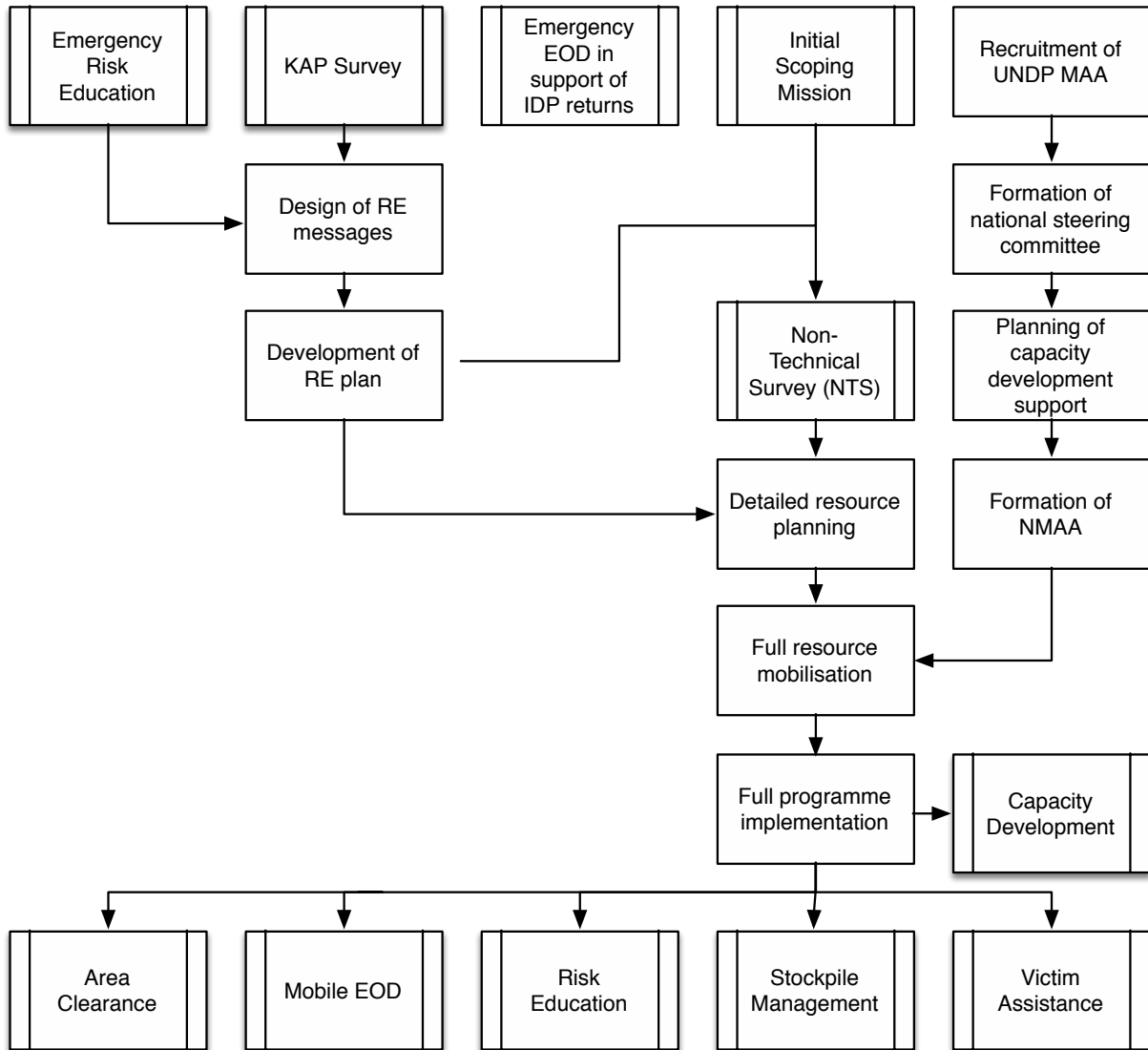
Safe weapons storage practices help to decrease the number and incidents of armed violence, weapons related accidental injuries and improved feelings of safety within communities. DDG supports communities and state entities to construct well contained and secure storage sites at safe distances from populated areas and to develop appropriate management procedures to ensure the safe handling, transportation and storage of weapons. We also work with individuals and institutions to develop safer behaviour in weapons and ammunition management, including developing locking systems and safe practices that are appropriate to a given context. When the conditions are right, DDG can help establish secure processes for individuals and communities hand in their weapons and thus remove altogether the risk that they can be used for violence or cause accidents.

Risk Education (Mines, ERW, IEDs and SALW)

DDG provides education activities that encourage safe behaviour around mines, explosive remnants of war, and small arms and light weapons. Risk education is both a tool for preventing suffering and promoting security amongst populations. For mines and ERW, our risk education is a process intended to reduce casualties by modifying behaviour practices by communities living in the presence of explosive hazards. We reach communities through various appropriate media to

communicate knowledge that enables them to take responsibility for reducing their risks to a level where they are able to live safely in spite of those hazards. We also deliver risk education for humanitarian actors to promote safe behaviour in conflict zones. Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) risk education targets weapons owners and communities separately. Risk education for weapon holders aims to impart safe behaviour and storage knowledge to reduce risk of weapons being mistreated or falling into the wrong hands. Risk education for communities sensitizes communities to the dangers of weapons and discourages people, in particular youth, from taking up weapons.

Annex B. Possible sequence of events



Note: activities in 'double boxes' are suited to execution as 'projects'. Activities in single boxes are processes.