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## Landmine clearance in Angola: experiences, challenges and implications for national development and international reputation

Monday 4 – Thursday 7 November 2019 | WP1724

Held in Valley Lodge, South Africa

In association with:



British Embassy  
Luanda





## Report

# **Landmine clearance in Angola: experiences, challenges and implications for national development and international reputation**

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**In association with British Embassy Luanda and Mines Advisory Group (MAG)**

Angola experienced conflict from the 1960s until 2002. As a result, it is one of the most heavily mine-contaminated countries in the world. An estimated one million anti-personnel mines (APMs) were laid, with more than seventy different types of mines used. Significant effort by Angolan national authorities and the international community has seen progress in survey and clearance of contamination, but obstacles and challenges remain.

The conference explored the challenges faced by Angola in landmine clearance, particularly in terms of reaching the 2025 aspiration, and on how to build its own engagement and capacity to address and overcome these challenges as well as working in conjunction with external actors. Further discussions on new ways to further develop Angolan capacity took place, alongside education and awareness raising of mines and their dangers, reintegration of victims into society, stimulating economic activity post-clearance, and alternative financing models for mine clearance programmes.

The meeting took place three weeks before the Fourth Review Conference (RevCon) of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), viewed as a critical moment to identify and overcome obstacles to the goal of seeing Angola free of landmines by 2025. Angola has developed a strong mine action national strategy and implementation, and there is an opportunity and appetite for Angola to demonstrate accountability and resolve and overcome difficulties in reputation and perception.

Meeting participants were strongly of the view that Angola can become a success scenario in the mine action sector and in leadership of the 2025 goal. This would require concerted effort by all stakeholders, the development of a clear brand for Angolan mine action, outreach to other development and economic partners, and enhanced international support.

At the conference, all participants worked together in a coordinated and committed way, with the aim of not leaving Angola behind. There is a sense of common purpose and shared endeavour. Participants acknowledged that the challenges are significant, but also acknowledged the strengths and potential that Angola has to offer. A prosperous and secure landmine free Angola by 2025 is possible.

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## **Angola’s 2025 aspiration: state of play and challenges to come**

1. The Government of Angola has made progress in improving its national capacity, structures and planning. This determination has helped to demonstrate national ownership. The development of a new national mine action strategy and work plan to achieve completion by 2025 is an achievement. The process to develop the strategy and plan has exemplified cooperation between international stakeholders and Angolan authorities, under a principle of national ownership.
2. Angola is one of the few countries that provides a significant proportion of funding from national budgets, with a recent commitment of US\$60m to The HALO Trust over the next five years. This is a demonstration of national ownership by one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world. This should be recognised and rewarded by the international community, particularly APMBC States Parties.
3. The main challenge for mine action in Angola is the lack of funding to implement the mine action strategy and work plan. The shortfall for the 2025 work plan and goal is estimated at US\$213m. With funding being a persistent problem in Angola, new ways of resource mobilisation and international outreach are required.

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## **The mine action programme's strategic orientation: opportunities and challenges**

4. Besides funding, inconsistency and inaccuracy in contamination data was identified as a key obstacle to success. Perception-based survey conducted in the 1990s led to massive over-estimations of contamination. Re-survey, based on ‘non-technical survey’ methodology and now complete in all of Angola’s eighteen provinces, has gone a significant way to rectifying this issue, seeing a reduction in contamination estimates by over 70%.
5. Contamination is now reliably estimated at 92km<sup>2</sup>. This has taken Angola out of the ‘massive’ category (over 100km<sup>2</sup>) as defined by the Mine Action Review. Further work is now required to improve and ensure quality in information management systems and quality management/control.
6. Demining has contributed to Angola’s socio-economic development, including the safe movement of people and goods and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of roads, railways and communication systems. It has also supported the return of conflict-displaced persons to their ancestral land. Angola was once a net-agricultural exporter, with agriculture as the cornerstone of future sustainable economic prosperity. Mine action can have a key role to play in supporting this ambition, alongside new and innovative links to trade, environmental sustainability and conservation tourism.
7. Demonstrating transparency and accountability will be critical to Angola’s progress towards the landmine free 2025 goal. Angola has overcome significant obstacles and now needs to develop and articulate a consistent brand in the international sphere. It will be important to maintain momentum as well as cohesion and national ownership in order to ensure Angola’s image and attract sustainable funding.
8. Discussion at the meeting also considered whether Angola could improve their coordination between CNIDAH (Commission for Humanitarian Demining and Assistance), CED (the Executive Commission for Demining) and other national authorities. The upcoming transformation in CNIDAH status from a commission to ANAM (the National Demining Agency) has the potential to strengthen coordination mechanisms and remove the existing conflict of interest between the different national bodies.

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9. The sustainable national management of residual risk is an issue that national authorities in Angola should start as soon as possible. Capacity support provided as part of recent DFID funding has yielded results and provides a strong platform for the management of residual risk at the provincial and national levels. There is a need for increased clarity in post-completion reporting at a provincial level, particularly around classification of newly-identified contamination that does not include landmines. There is an opportunity for a province-wide advocacy approach.

## **Reintegration for victims in the post-clearance economy**

10. Mine action is broader than survey and clearance, with obligations to support victims and survivors in their recovery and reintegration process into society. Victim assistance is one of the five pillars of mine action and is covered by Article 6 of the APMBBC. There are an estimated 88,000 landmine survivors living in Angola in need of provision of psychological support, physical rehabilitation and assistance with inclusion in society. National authorities are responsible for rehabilitation, medical attention, reintegration and to fight against the stigmatisation that the victims usually suffer.
11. Participants acknowledged the need to promote national ownership of the victims and survivors and the steps taken by Angolan authorities. They also noted that there had been a significant reduction in assistance to survivors and that more needed to be done, particularly in ensuring sustainable assistance on completion of clearance.
12. A successful and sustainable victim assistance strategy will depend on a policy built on awareness raising, linkage to development plans and enhanced synergies with other sectors, especially food security and healthcare. There is a potential for national authority leadership to enhance coordination between different parts of the mine action community, avoid duplication, and prioritise ‘hard to reach’ areas.
13. Survivor-led advocacy could present a strong platform for change, based on shared experience of opportunities and challenges. Victim assistance and related advocacy efforts should consider the experiences of all groups, taking into consideration the ‘double stigmatisation’ suffered by women and girls in these situations.
14. There is an opportunity for the Government of Angola to support civil society advocacy and inclusion as well as advocate for victim assistance to be prioritised as a cross-cutting issue. This would require sustained financial support for victim assistance that extends beyond mine action budgets. There is also an opportunity for a survivor-led forum on victim assistance to be held in Angola in 2022.

## **Post-clearance economic stimulation**

15. Angola’s economy has been in recession for the last four years. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is still contracting and an oil-based economy is no longer sustainable. Economic diversification is therefore essential and must happen soon, with a sustainable future dependant on a more balanced economy. Agriculture has significant potential. As a country with a rapidly growing population, Angola needs to increase its agricultural production in a sustainable way in order to be less import dependant and even, due to its potential, start trading agricultural products abroad. Demining can support this at the community and macro levels.

“A comprehensive approach between humanitarian mine action and socioeconomic development, as well as the connections between land clearance and agriculture, needs to be rationalised and structured.”

16. In addition, eco-tourism and conservation present promising but time-bound opportunities for economic diversification in Angola. This is interconnected with mine action in several parts of Angola, especially in the south east, with significant opportunity to harness interlinkages. Mine clearance could lay foundations for conservation-led development, allowing wildlife and local people to thrive. In conjunction with the clearance of railway lines, roads and other essential infrastructures, it would have a very positive effect on the Angolan economy.
17. A surge in demining activity also raises the importance of an exit strategy that takes into account sustainable futures for demining staff. Completion in Angola would involve hundreds of deminers and other Angolan staff whose futures will depend on training in new skills and expertise. Conservation offers a key area for future employment after completion.
18. Unlocking the economic potential in eco-tourism and conservation economy requires the Government of Angola to invest now in educating local populations on the importance of Angola's heritage and conservation and their role in it. This includes the importance of sustainable agriculture practices and new alternative economies. Failure to do this could result in failed economic potential and further harm to biodiversity and the environment. An integrated approach needs to be coherent at the local, regional and national level.
19. Initial and significant steps have already been taken, especially in the form of Angola's pledge of an additional US\$60m to The HALO Trust for clearance of 153 minefields in the Okavango Delta area in Kwando Kubango province. This is a World Heritage Site forming part of the five-country Kavango-Zambezi Trans Frontier Conservation Area (KAZA).
20. A comprehensive approach between humanitarian mine action and socio-economic development, as well as the connection between land clearance and agriculture, needs to be rationalised and structured. This is an urgent issue which needs to be tackled as soon as possible. It needs to be prioritised, as delays would see opportunities go elsewhere in the sub-region. It is therefore vital to bring investors' attention to Angola, highlighting the opportunities of investment. Success would also depend on demonstrable improvements in levels of transparency and the reduction of bureaucracy.

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### **Evolving funding models and donors**

21. Increased levels of sustainable funding are essential for Angola to succeed in this goal to achieve completion by 2025. Mine action in Angola is underfunded and has depended on a small group of international donors, namely the European Union, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. Despite a clear estimation of remaining contamination at 92km<sup>2</sup>, there is still a significant funding deficit at US\$213m on which achieving the 2025 goal depends.
22. Closing the funding gap will require concerted and coherent advocacy by Angola in conjunction with international mine clearance operators and existing donors. Mine action in Angola must be presented as relevant to donor strategies beyond APMBC compliance in order to attract and secure funding.
23. The relevance of Angolan mine action to the Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals) is an untapped opportunity given its relevance to many, but not all, international donors.



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24. As mentioned above, the link between mine action, agriculture, climate change and environmental conservation brings new opportunities for funding. Achieving the 2025 goal would also depend on predictable and multi-year funding options, and the ability to demonstrate results beyond mine action outputs and in terms of measurable impact. Responsibility for a coherent resource mobilisation strategy should lie firmly with the national authority. There is an opportunity for further capacity development in this area, building on the core components of the mine action strategy.

### **Non-traditional actors and funding models**

25. Current resource mobilisation for Angola depends on traditional funding mechanisms, comprising primarily institutional and governmental funds. Funding levels are often at the mercy of donor priorities and budgetary constraints. There is a need and opportunity to be innovative in the way of reaching our targets, including new financial and funding mechanisms scoped and tested.
26. One of the models discussed is the one used by the International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm), created by GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. This established long-term funding commitments from governments which were used to raise issue bonds on capital markets, administered by World Bank, and disbursed through accelerated financing to fund vaccination programmes.
27. Through this model, significant funding commitments for demining could potentially be pledged for extended periods of time, ensuring a sustainable and steady access of funds for demining activities. There is an opportunity for the mine action sector to explore this mode or a variant of it further in order to address the funding gap for the 2025 goal. A next critical step is an economic feasibility study.
28. Harnessing the time-bound interlinkages between mine action, conservation, agriculture and sustainability could also support wider funding opportunities through private organisations, development banks, international and regional organisations working in sectors unrelated with mine action, UN programmes and other development agencies. Additionally, private companies, especially the extractive sector, could provide new funding if interests on both sides are matched. Corporate social responsibility from private companies could also provide extra support to demining operations. There are new mechanisms and tools that could be used in the Angolan context, such as UN Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Bonds and development impact bonds.
29. Angolan authorities highlighted during the session the possibility of including these innovative options in their strategic plan within the already existent resource mobilisation plan for Angola. Some partnerships would need to be built from the bottom and grow upwards. It is necessary to work together in a collective effort to be able to see these innovative mechanisms working in the future. Common messaging with a unified voice is vital so these mechanisms can be applied and attract the attention of the investors.

### **Towards the RevCon: Conclusions and next steps**

Success in achieving the goal of an Angola free of landmines by 2025 will depend on strong partnership between national authorities and partners, and a prevailing spirit of national ownership with strong and cohesive messages which highlight all the collective efforts and the achievements that make Angola a unique opportunity. The new strategy provides a solid basis for this.

The narrative of the strategy must be clear and linked with reaching completion in 2025 and the socio-economic development that this entails. It will also depend on continued improvements in transparency and accountability, showing the very positive prospects for the future and the value added by investing in Angola.

Angola will benefit from being honest and transparent around future challenges and needs, including areas that need further development and support. Among these, priorities should be capacity development, quality management, information management and residual contamination.

The main element that needs to be discussed at the RevCon is, with no doubt, the need for more financial resources. In doing so, it would be beneficial for Angola to explore new opportunities, such as the Country Coalition or the Individualised Approach under Article 5 of the APMBC. This could create a very strong basis and interest for the future.

Angola needs to have a clear brand and messaging in the areas requiring further development. There are four areas of outreach that need to be further explored: environment, infrastructure, tourism and trade. The value of the Angolan heritage in mine action could become an opportunity to reframe the narrative, so new stakeholders and partners join in the future.

In the past, Angola benefited from Diana, Princess of Wales as a champion for the cause and mine action at the national level. More recently, the Duke of Sussex (Prince Harry) has brought attention to Angola, particularly around innovation in mine action's linkage to conservation. This is a unique but time-bound opportunity that Angola and its stakeholders should harness to expand this network of influencers and in order to reach new funding opportunities.

In order to attract international support, it is vital to create a positive environment for engagement, with aligned ideas and common messaging across all actors. The interlinkages between tourism, mine action and the environment could be key in the long term. In addition, there is potential in attracting funding through the approach of linking mine action with the SDGs and other important topics in the global agenda, such as the environmental crisis and climate change.

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