Summary of the external, final evaluation of DanChurchAid’s Humanitarian Mine Action programmes in Libya, Lebanon and Burma/Myanmar

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Through an evaluation of DanChurchAid’s Humanitarian Mine Action programmes in Myanmar, Lebanon and Libya, this report sought to evaluate DCA’s Mine Action programmes’ outcomes and impact in the three target countries and to analyse and assess DCA’s management structure.

Overall, the evaluation found that DCA’s HMA programmes in Myanmar, Lebanon and Libya “reflect a deep understanding of the local contexts and a capacity to adapt to identified needs and opportunities.” Furthermore, the report concludes that: “Unlike other HMA actors that may be tempted to provide the same set of services globally, DCA has developed an array of programmes and activities specifically tailored both to respond to beneficiaries’ needs and that allow DCA’s teams to work in different environments.” DCA’s new approach to Mine Action, described in the “Safer Communities” paper, has been paramount in allowing for this flexibility and broad range of programmes. The report concludes that: “DCA’s understanding of Mine Action, as presented in the “Safer Communities” paper, was found to be significantly broader than other organisations’. It places a strong emphasis on enabling national entities and actors to assist communities affected by conflicts.”

According to the report this new approach and its broader understanding of Mine Action is reflecting “an ambitious step forward in the realm of Mine Action.” However, the shift also entails a number of challenges for DCA’s organisational structure and the evaluation shows that the country programmes “show different levels of advancement and of achievement” in the implementation of the new approach. In order to address these challenges the report gives a number of general recommendations for DCA Mine Action on both an operational and structural level, which are intended to the main question:

“What can DCA learn from its existing programmes that can help it become more effective, efficient and improve delivery when implementing mine action programmes?”

In a summarised version, the recommendations are:

1) Needs Assessment: All three visited teams show a good understanding of local needs and how DCA can address them. In some cases, however, a thorough needs assessment at an early stage would have allowed DCA to draft a more relevant strategy from the start, ensuring a more appropriate allocation of resources.

2) Capacity Building: If programme resources are insufficient to address all capacitation needs at once, the initial needs assessment must inform DCA on the most urgent recipients of capacity building efforts.

3) National Entities: The different levels of national capacity for coordinating and managing Mine Action in the three visited countries provide a spectrum of different scenarios with direct implications for DCA’s ability to provide HMA services. DCA therefore needs to consider, from the initial needs assessment, how it can effectively engage with and support relevant national entities until they are fully operational.

4) Ownership and inclusivity: All involved DCA staff must “own” their Mine Action programmes. A tendency to focus on technical operations has in some cases left support staff on the margin. A better understanding of risks posed by explosive remnants of war and armed violence will ensure deeper involvement, even by administrative staff. This will also help address the staff retention challenge.
5) **Community Liaison**: Where DCA has Community Liaison Officers, their role must be fully integrated into other areas of work. They will have primary access to information on the communities’ needs, and should be the favoured channel to consult with the communities throughout the programmes.

6) **National Partners**: As part of the concern for creating sustainable national capacity, DCA should consider – from an early stage of the programmes – transferring capacity and responsibilities to local partners for the delivery of Mine Action activities.

7) **ACT Network**: DCA is the only Mine Action agency within the ACT Alliance, and is therefore expected to contribute to strengthening of the alliance by working through ACT partners. Although the ACT network can provide a good basis to establish partnerships, it can also be problematic where churches have limited local authority or have overtly taken sides in the conflicts (e.g. in Lebanon or Syria). In identifying suitable local partners, the priority should be given to the representativeness and competence of Community-Based Organisations, whether they are faith-based or not. The ACT network should hence be only used as one potential source of collaboration, and not present a required set of stakeholders that the programme has to work with.

8) **Interaction with other programmes**: Where other DCA programmes are being carried out, potential synergies must be sought for. These can be at an administrative level, by harmonising financial and procurement tasks, or at programmatic level.

9) **Programme Managers (PMs)**: Although interviewed PMs reported good and regular communication with both their respective Programme Coordinators and Headquarters, there seems to be limited interaction between PMs in different countries. The annual PM seminar is reportedly a very fruitful gathering, and should be complemented by more regular virtual meetings to share lessons learned and ensure coherence among DCA’s HMA programmes.

10) **DCA MA Structure**: DCA Mine Action’s structure is very flat, with all PMs reporting directly to the Head of DCA MA, who is also in charge of all MA staff at headquarters. This represents a significant workload for a single person (…) Roles and responsibilities do not always appear to be clear. Formally transferring more responsibilities to Technical Officers, PCs and other headquarters staff clearly would reduce the Head of Unit’s workload, and facilitate coordination among different countries.

11) **HMA Structure for Safer Communities**: In line with the previous point, a more holistic approach to Mine Action, as presented in the “Safer Communities” paper, will require specific expertise and support for programme staff. Each thematic area of intervention must have its own line of operational support, even if ultimately reporting to the same management line.

**Alternativt, i stedet for alle ovenstående, kan bruges opsummeringen af anbefalingerne:**

1) **Human Resources**: Staff capacity building and staff retention are two recurring challenges. DCA must therefore provide sufficient incentives (a clear personal development plan, salaries and benefits) and a sense of ownership for all involved staff, including administrative personnel (a shared understanding of DCA’s vision for Mine Action, and improved inclusivity in decision-making).

2) **Needs Assessment**: A more thorough assessment of actual needs before implementation will save a considerable amount of time and resources. This will identify the nature of services needed, as well as the primary targets for capacity building. If needs are to be determined by the local communities, funding needs to be sufficiently flexible to be adapted and reallocated to evolving priorities.
3) **DCA Mine Action Structure**: The current structure, both at country level and overall, is very flat. All programme staff report to a Programme Manager, which in turn reports to the Head of the Unit. The Head of Unit is also responsible for the Headquarters team. To ensure successful expansion into new areas, a more decentralised structure is needed. This report recommends separating administrative aspects from programmatic concerns. In particular, project coordinators should each refer to a relevant, thematic technical officer, similarly to what is currently set up for Clearance activities.

4) **Harmonisation of DCA’s programmes**: There are several levels at which Mine Action could realise financial and operational efficiencies through better integration with other DCA activities. These include sharing administrative resources for finances, procurement and human resources management, as well as using the same national partners to provide a wider spectrum of services to the same targeted communities.