MINE ACTION ASSESSMENT

NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA (ADAMAWA AND BORNO STATES)
1-15 NOVEMBER 2015

1. BACKGROUND

Nigeria's northeast is currently experiencing a significant humanitarian crisis, which has resulted from the ongoing counter-insurgency operations being conducted by the Nigerian armed forces and MNJTF against Boko Haram. An estimated 10 million people are affected by the conflict that has led to a state of emergency being declared in three northeastern states. Significant parts of northeastern Nigeria remain insecure and inaccessible, including to humanitarian actors, for two main reasons: either they remain under the partial influence or full control of Boko Haram or there is a military offensive taking place against Boko Haram. The states which are the most affected by the crisis are Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, with Borno State being the worst affected.

In response to the humanitarian crisis in northeast Nigeria, several humanitarian organisations have already set up field offices or are in the process of opening up field bases in Maiduguri and Yola. These agencies include ACF, Coopi, DRC/DDG, ICRC, IMC, IOM, IRC, Mercy Corps, MSF, NRC, Oxfam, Save the Children, UN-OCHA, UNDP, and UNICEF. Due to limited access to the affected areas, information regarding the extent of the humanitarian needs is limited. However it is clear that needs are far greater than the capacity of organisations on the ground. Maiduguri in itself has over 20 IDP camps hosting more than 108,000 IDPs, while Yola has three IDP camps with less than 4,500. Some IDP camps have been vacated like the Hajj IDP camp in Maiduguri, but unfortunately the conditions for a safe return are not yet in place.

2. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

In response to the likelihood that areas of return may be contaminated by explosive hazards, Danish Deming Group (DDG), a unit of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) that specialises in mine action and armed violence reduction, carried out a mine action assessment in northeastern Nigeria (Adamawa and Borno states) from November 1-15, 2015. The objectives of the assessment were to:

- Collect data about the nature, scope and location of contamination by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in the northeast
- Collect data about people who may have been victims of mine/ERW-related accidents
- Develop recommendations for future DDG mine action programming

The assessment was carried out by William Maina, DDG's Mine Action Operations Manager in South Sudan. His two-week assessment consisted of the following:

- Key informant interviews in Abuja, Yola, Mubi city and Maiduguri with national and local government officials, the military, police, health personnel, UN and INGO actors
- Focus group discussions with IDP community representatives in/around Yola, Mubi and Maiduguri
- Meetings with security providers and community informants (teachers, religious leaders, medical personnel, etc.) to collect data and map key stakeholders
- Drafting of findings and recommendations

3. PRESENCE OF EXPLOSIVE HAZARDS

Despite the efforts of the Nigerian military and the multinational task force to counter Boko Haram, many areas formerly occupied by Boko Haram remain insecure and unsafe for the return of IDPs. The majority of IDPs interviewed as part of this assessment expressed concern and fear about having to return to their communities. According to the information provided by IDPs and former civil servants who are now displaced, the most affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) are as follows:

- Adamawa State: Madagali, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Hong and Gombi
- Yobe State: Gulani, Gujba and Fika
- Borno State: Askira/Uba, Hawul, Kwaya Kusar, Bayo, Biu, Chibok, Damboa, Gwoza, Bama, Konduga, Kalabalge, Dikwa, Ngala, Kukawa, Monguno, Mafa, Konduga, Jere and Nganzai.

Some of the towns and villages within these LGAs have been completely destroyed.

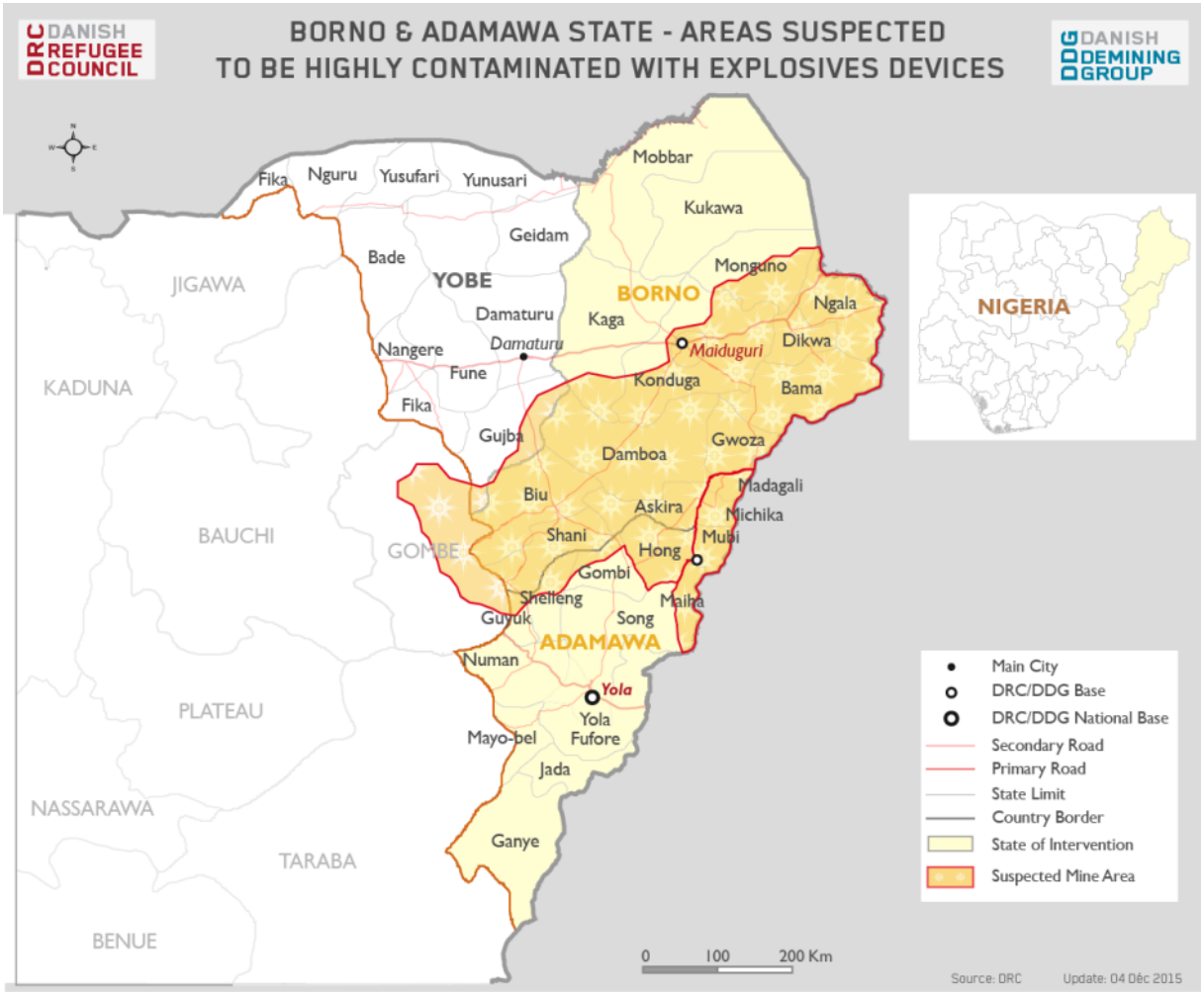
Former civil servants who worked in some of the affected LGAs but now reside with host communities in Yola and Maiduguri indicated that the following areas are suspected of contamination by explosive devices and in need of clearance:

- Borno State, Kukawa LGA: Dikwa, Marte, Doro, Kukawa
- Borno State, Bama LGA: Gamboru and Ngala
- Izige village in Bakwa, Gwoza and Kalabalge

Due to the inaccessibility of most of the areas listed above that may be contaminated with explosive hazards, it proved difficult for DDG to obtain data about suspected and confirmed hazardous areas. Over all, IDPs and victims of explosives devices proved to be the most resourceful in terms of providing information about the nature and location of contaminated areas. The data gathered from interviewees indicates that there is a significant problem with explosive ordnance in northeastern Nigeria. The main ordnance being used includes but is not limited to:

- Mortars and projectiles – various kinds
- Rockets, including rocket propelled grenades (RPGs)
- Grenades
- Mines – both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines
- Cluster munitions – mainly Type GR-66
- Manportable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), probably SAM-7, common in Africa
- Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices [PBIED] and Vehicle Borne IED [VBIED]
- Remote controlled IED [RCIED] – one case reported by the Chadian Army
- Small arms ammunition

The following map indicates areas where there is a strong likelihood of mine/ERW contamination. However, it should be noted that there may also be contamination in Northern Borno and in Yobe state. As well, the map does not indicate the scale of the contamination, which is likely to vary depending on the intensity of conflict and presence of the military and/or Boko Haram.



IDPs currently in camps in Maiduguri and Yola who are being encouraged to return to LGAs in Borno and Adamawa states to areas with suspected mine/ERW contamination are at risk of potential mine/ERW-related accidents upon their return.

The following are specific examples cited by IDPs regarding the location and type of explosive hazards that they have encountered in the northeast:

- One female IDP originally from Hong LGA in Adamawa State had been held captive by Boko Haram for four months. Her greatest fears upon her return to Hong are insecurity, lack of shelter and the fear of encountering the remnants of explosive devices. Before Boko Haram disrupted their lives, the main economic activity in Hong LGA was farming. There is a widespread fear amongst the IDPs that their farms and homes are contaminated with explosive devices. She revealed that when word got to Boko Haram that the army had initiated a campaign to repulse them, the insurgents placed explosive devices along the approach routes to disrupt the military offensive. In line with the information that IDPs provided, the insurgents were able to set up explosives devices on key points of interests like bridges, water points and even in homes. During the interview with this IDP, a guidebook with photographs of various mines and UXO was used to help her identify some of the devices she saw while held captive by Boko Haram. From the guidebook, she was able to point out RPGs, mortars, artillery projectiles, hand grenades and small arms ammunition. She also pointed out an anti-tank mine similar to the Chinese Type 72. To help understand whether she was able to distinguish an anti-tank mine from an anti-personnel mine, she was asked to draw on the ground the estimated size of what she saw. This

IDP drew a circle whose circumference is close to that of an anti-tank mine. In addition, she was also able to point out a Chinese No.4 anti-personnel mine. While she did not witness these mines being laid, she explained that Boko Haram members would carry them around to their target locations. When asked what action she would take in case she encountered mines/ERW, she responded that she would report them to the army or the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF).

- Other IDPs interviewed in both Borno and Adamawa states were also able to point out specific explosive devices. The same terminology of UXO was echoed by other IDPs. In one case, an IDP from Zangula village in Gombi, and now in Yola NYS IDP camp mentioned that he knew two casualties of suspected anti-personnel mines who were walking along the Hong-Gombi road when one of the victims stepped on the mine killing both victims on the spot [from the damage caused this may have been an improvised explosive device (IED). In addition, the IDP explained that Gombi had been subjected to heavy attack by Boko Haram. Similarly, other IDPs identified different locations where ERW were spotted. Another location cited by an IDP in Yola, who is originally from Lemu village in Gwoza LGA, indicated that he saw a similar device to the anti-tank Chinese Type 72 mine along the Madagali - Gwoza road. It was also on this road that he saw what he described as a damaged armoured personnel carrier [APC] that looked like it had been hit by a mine.

- A blast victim sustained minor injuries while on the run from Boko Haram when his village in Gwoza LGA was attacked. An IED had been concealed under a shady tree. Four women who had sought the shade were killed on the spot while others sustained injuries when the device detonated. The blast victim was hit by fragments on his lower limbs. There was no medical support for him or for the others when this incident occurred.

- On 8 October 2015, the Nigerian military, via its Facebook[1] and Twitter[2] pages, reported that Nigerian Army Engineers has discovered caches of cluster munitions belonging to Boko Haram in contested areas of Adamawa State, and warned that Boko Haram may still have additional stocks which remain undetonated.

4. CURRENT RESPONSE

The military and the police both indicated that they carry out ERW clearance. The state police have explosive ordnance disposal [EOD] units whose main role is to follow the army and assist with UXO and IED clearance. While the army also conducts ERW clearance, their focus is on clearing roads to facilitate access of their combat forces – for the advancing offensive units and keeping the military supply routes clear to support the fighting units.

IDPs from Biu LGA within Borno state confirmed that the main road from Biu towards Azane was being cleared by the army, but the nature of the explosives contamination is unclear. This was an area that was occupied by Boko Haram.

Police officials in Adamawa State expressed a willingness to collaborate and receive external support to address ERW contamination. The state commander of the military joint task force in Maiduguri stated that Borno is likely to be the state with the highest possible levels of contamination. In addition, he stated that even when the army clear these explosive devices, there is a risk that conflict may re-start in the area, or that Boko Haram will return to place mines/IED.

[1] https://www.facebook.com/DefenceInfoNG?ref=hl; https://www.facebook.com/DefenceInfoNG/posts/865967723510684
[2] https://twitter.com/DefenceInfoNG?ref_src=twsrc^tfw

The delivery of emergency mine/ERW Risk Education (RE) is urgently required due to help raise awareness among IDPs of the risk associated with mines/ERW in order to prevent deaths and injuries. There is a strong likelihood that many have already returned without benefiting from RE. NEMA/SEMAs deliver risk education, including on IED.[3] However there is a need to ensure that the RE being delivered is consistent with good practice for risk education. See Annex A for an IED awareness pamphlet currently being used by the NEMA/SEMA information desks.

With regards to marking of areas suspected of contamination in order to warn people of the risks, there is no standardised approach for marking in the northeast. In addition there are no documented records existing of the areas which are suspected or confirmed hazardous areas.

5. SUMMARY OF KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Given the ongoing conflict and inaccessibility of most parts of Borno state, it is not yet feasible to conduct Non-Technical Survey or humanitarian EOD clearance.
- There is an urgent need to deliver emergency mine/ERW Risk Education to IDPs who are being leaving IDP camps and returning to LGAs with areas suspected of mine/ERW contamination.
- There is need to urgently develop mine/ERW warning signs in collaboration with national and state authorities and to deploy these signs to suspected areas.
- Future Risk Education teams should also have the capacity to conduct Non-Technical Survey given the need to collect and document data on suspected contaminated areas in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). Given the rapidly changing context, RE teams will also need to be flexible.
- The Police in Adamawa State expressed the willingness to collaborate with any organisation providing Risk Education. This should be followed up with the Police Public Relations Officer in Yola, Adamawa. This should also be pursued at each of the police HQs in each affected State.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DDG

- While it is not yet immediately advisable to commence EOD clearance or NTS, engage in discussions with the government on the possibility of providing capacity development support to the police/military in the areas of EOD and/or NTS/TS, if required.
- Follow up with the Police Public Relations Officers in Yola and Maiduguri to explore potential collaboration/capacity development in the delivery of risk education.
- DDG should take the lead in developing national mine/ERW risk education standards and mine/ERW warning signs, in association with relevant government agencies like NEMA, SEMA and humanitarian agencies.
- DDG should help establish an in-country information management data system (e.g a simple GiS system) capable of providing information in regard to:
    - Suspected and confirmed hazardous areas, including roads
    - Maps indicating the exact spots of suspected and confirmed hazardous areas
    - Records of accidents/incidents sites related to explosive devices

[3] DDG started delivering emergency MRE in Borno and Adamawa states in December.

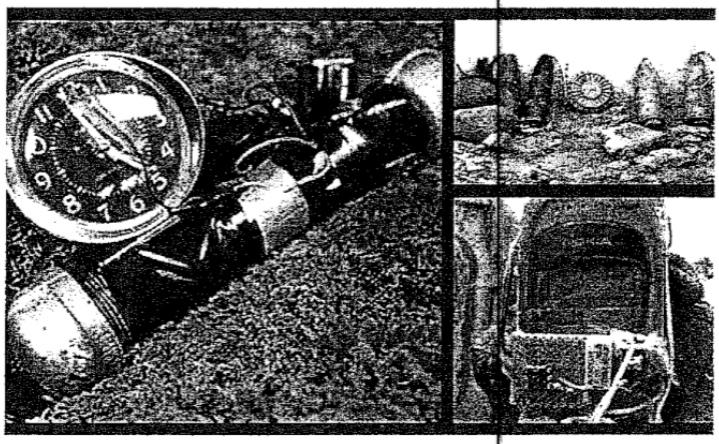
ANNEX A: RISK EDUCATION FLIER CURRENTLY BEING USED BY THE SEMA/NEMA INFORMATION DESK

Land Mines / Unexploded Improvised Explosive Device Awareness

BE SAFE

Watch out for suspicious objects that may look like these:

An improvised explosive device is any device that consists of an explosive and igniter modified from its original structure.



CALL FOR HELP – if you locate a suspicious package or device, immediately contact trained personnel, such as a bomb squad; never attempt to deal with the device on your own.

DO NOT TOUCH OR MOVE THE DEVICE – never touch a suspicious package or device, as you may trigger proximity or pressure charges.

SHIELDING – protect yourself by positioning your body behind a solid structure, such as a brick wall, steel building, or vehicle, which may shield you from the blast waves and initial impact of the explosion and shrapnel. Keep in mind, however, that if you are too close to a large explosive, your shield may cause secondary blast injuries.

EVACUATION – remove yourself and the public from the vicinity of an explosive device, if possible. The table below suggests evacuation distances based on the amount of explosive in the device.

AVOID USING ELECTRONIC DEVICES – electronic communication devices emit electromagnetic radiation, which may trigger the explosive device, depending on the design. Avoid using *cellular phones, radios, or other electronic devices within 10 meters of an explosive device.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT HOTLINE NO. 555 5555

ANNEX B: DDG 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, 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.

DDG MINE ACTION PRODUCTS

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. As part of the process, DDG focuses on comprehensive ***surveys*** of suspected mine fields 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.

Risk Education (Mines, ERW, IED 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 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.

DDG's mine action projects have made a significant contribution to reducing incidents/accidents involving mines and weapons through area clearance and risk awareness, with parallel increases in perceptions of safety in beneficiary communities. It is also well documented that our programmes have improved access to land and the productive used of land through the return of pre-conflict agriculture or private sector activity.