

FROM DATA TO ACTION: THE ROAD TRAVELLED IN IMPLEMENTING THE LANDMINES BAN TREATY IN ZAMBIA

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AIM:

TO DEMONSTRATE HOW LIMITED DATA COLLECTED BY THE ZAMBIAN CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES HELPED ENGENDER POLICY CHANGES THAT LEAD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OTTAWA (MINE BAN TREATY) PROCESS.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Zambia has a significant “nuisance” APL but does not have minefields, according to the Mine Assessment Mission on Zambia Report by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), scattered in six of Zambia’s nine Provinces. Over 200 incidents are on record. The mere suspicion of the presence of an APL renders huge tracts of land unusable. Some of the APL contaminated regions such as The Tonga-Gwembe Valley in Southern Province lags behind in development due to mines and other explosive remnants of war.

Neither formal mechanisms nor sustained Mine Action existed before 1999. Reported incidents were handled on an ad hoc basis by a joint Bomb disposal expert Team in the ministries of Defence and Home Affairs.

Anti-personnel mines compete poorly for time, space and resources against priority areas such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, malnutrition, health and education.. Furthermore, APLs were considered a part of defence and security paradigm thereby limiting public involvement.

METHOD

The Zambian Campaign to the Ban of Landmines (ZCBL), comprising NGOs such as the Zambian Red Cross, OXFAM-GB, AFRONET, IPPNW, AMNESTY-ZAMBIA, among them was formed in 1996 as a vehicle to provoke a paradigm shift in the APLs discourse to a humanitarian issue, through collaboration with Government and other stakeholders through:-

1. Research.

The ZCBL, with limited resources, collected information on APL incidents, amenities, policies and resources needed.

Information came from the Media, UNMAS, the United States Government, hospital records, testimonies of APL victims and survivors, and APL affected communities among others.

2. Education:

The Educational campaign to raise awareness was targeted at Decision-makers and opinion-leaders including concerned Members of the Zambian Parliament, Government Officials, local chiefs, security, law enforcement agencies and the media through workshops, meetings Radio, Television newspapers and profiles.

3. Advocacy

Lobbying Government Officials, interested parties such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees were done, using visits, the media and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines' Landmine Monitor Annual Reports.

OUTCOMES

These were at policy and operational levels thus:

1. An inter-ministerial committee on landmines was formed in 1999 on which the ZCBL also sat.
2. Zambia ratified the MBT in 2001.
3. Demining activities in affected regions.
4. Formation of Cross –border Mine Action Joint Commissions e.g. between Zambia and Mozambique, Namibia Zimbabwe, and Angola.
5. The Zambia Anti-personnel Mine Action Center was established to deal with APLs.
6. The Zambia Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines Act enacted in 2004
7. Over 3000 APLs held in stockpile destroyed in October 2004.
8. The Tonga-Gwembe Valley received US\$ 50 Million from the World Bank and African Development Bank following the de-mining programme.

LESSONS/CONCLUSIONS

With limited data, determination and engaging Government and other stakeholders in the landmines arena, a paradigm shift was engendered from *Data to Action*.