



SAFER COMMUNITIES

DCA Mine Action

INTRODUCTION

This policy provides a framework for DanChurchAid's (DCA) work for Safer Communities. It outlines the way we will work with communities to reduce the threat and consequence of conflict and armed violence. It is to be used when assessing country contexts, developing country specific strategies, country programming, and assessing project proposals. Partners can use it for inspiration and the policy serves as documentation of DCA's focus and approach to the public and back donors. The policy is valid from 2015 and will be revised no later than 2018.

The policy contains:

- Background Information
- The Changes We Wish to See
- Strategic and Thematic Focus and Priorities
- DCA's Commitment to Partnerships and a List of Partners and Networks

Over 1.5 billion people are affected by instability, violence and armed conflict. For vulnerable communities, conflict, instability and armed violence are not simply threats to life and existence. Conflict removes access to resources, and limits freedom of movement. It stunts development. It instills and spreads fear, despair, and disempowerment among the most vulnerable. Vicious circles can form, with violence leading to loss of livelihood, burgeoning recruitment into armed groups, and

perpetuating conflict. The ability and will of states and duty bearers with responsibility to protect shrivels. And humanitarian access to the most vulnerable is threatened.

Where conflict has passed, its legacy remains in the form of physical and psychological damage, mistrust, and lands contaminated with explosive remnants of war and left unusable, sometimes for generations.

DCA's 2025 scenario analysis identifies several trends that lead us to expect an increasing number of conflicts to occur in future. We see a continued need to support and protect communities affected by conflict and its aftermath, by lack of stability, or by failure of the state to provide for their protection. We will work to make vulnerable communities safer from conflict and armed violence. Communities are the first and often the most important actors in their own protection. By providing rights based assistance to them, we save lives, and we build on affected communities' own capacities and priorities to enhance their resilience. DCA will use its experience - gained through many years of mine action and unique within the ACT Alliance - to responsibly deal with weapons and the instruments of violence, to ensure community participation and empowerment, to support local partners to provide sustainability and ownership and to implement a rights-based approach.

From Mine Action to Safer Communities
Mine Action is defined as 'Activities which aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of mines and explosive remnants of war'. It includes clearance of unexploded remnants of war, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile reduction and advocacy. DanChurchAid (DCA) has been a major contributor to mine action since 1999.

DCA's Safer Communities approach is to see mine action in the context of work to assist communities affected by conflict and armed violence. What guides us is what it takes to make people safe, improve their access to resources and their freedom of movement, and involve them throughout in finding and implementing sustainable solutions to the challenges they face.



PHOTO THOMAS WHITE

POLICY GOALS

Our goal is to protect lives and livelihoods threatened by conflict or its longer-term effect. Safer communities work begins with protection during descent into conflict, and continues during conflict. It is also an essential element of recovery from it, and it contributes to broader peacebuilding efforts.

We want to see these changes:

- Lives saved and free movement secured, because threats posed by armed violence and explosive remnants of war are removed.
- Resilient communities built, because communities' efforts to mitigate and overcome conflict-related needs and threats to livelihood have succeeded, and because sustainable capacity is in place to continue the work as long as it is needed.
- Inequality successfully fought, because of powerful advocacy for the rights of conflict-affected communities with duty bearers, and at international level through disarmament treaties and work to strengthen the norms surrounding the Law of Armed Conflict.

INTERVENTION CRITERIA - WHO WE WILL HELP, WHEN, AND HOW

We regard the rights to life, protection, and freedom of movement as the foundation of our Safer Communities work. Removal of them impoverishes communities, and we regard those affected as poor – in rights terms. DCA will assist where these rights are threatened or undermined by conflict or its aftermath.

We will respond to current conflict and instability where there is a documented need for DCA capacity and thematic competence, and where we have the ability to respond and to reach the affected – whether through partners or directly. In these situations, our immediate response is likely to focus on life-saving actions, such as clearance of explosive remnants to enable access to hospitals, homes, roads and essential infrastructure for local communities and

humanitarian actors. Some of this may be simple, one-off, life-saving action, carried out by DCA. Where we can work through partners to provide additional reach and access, we will do so. And we will work with communities to shape and direct the work, wherever we are able, and to the maximum extent possible.

Where we choose to intervene to address longer-term needs, we will engage where our skills and capacity adds value. Our intervention decision will be shaped by our ability to work with local and ACT partners and by the communities themselves. We will seek to ensure our safer communities work supports conflict resolution and peacebuilding, that it strengthens civil society and active citizenship, and that it provides a platform for development.

STRATEGIC AND THEMATIC FOCUS

DanChurchAid's Gender Equality and Rights Based Commitment

These principles will guide our action:

■ **PARTICIPATION:** To help build sustainable Safer Communities, DCA will aim to ensure meaningful participation by all relevant groups – men, women, boys, and girls – and local ownership throughout. DCA's role will be to build on existing local resources, knowledge, and capacities. To encourage and develop the community's ability to organise and protect itself against conflict-related threats it has identified. We want to see community owned, community tailored and, where possible, community delivered and sustainable solutions to reducing and removing the risks and building resilience. And we will aim to take whatever steps we can to align our work with this as the guiding principle.

■ **ACCOUNTABILITY:** From community level to national and international fora, DCA will work to encourage and assist those who hold a responsibility to protect communities to do so. We will support community leaders, local authorities and police in maintaining accountability, and the communities they serve in demanding it. We will assist duty bearers in discharging their responsibility, for example through technical expertise and training. We will assist national authorities such as mine action centres in efforts to rid communities of remnants of war. We will support efforts to influence decision makers through international advocacy, for adherence to conventions and treaties relating to disarmament and protection of civilians in conflict.

■ **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY:** DCA will work to support the rights and meet the needs of vulnerable groups, equally and without prejudice. We understand that vulnerabilities and needs vary between groups and communities, and we will work with sex- and age-disaggregated data and other relevant information to understand and respond to the needs of each group appropriately. By the same token, we will treat those with the same need, but arising from different causes, equally. We will, for example, provide prosthetic limbs to all in need, and not just survivors of mine accidents – thus upholding the principle of Non-Discrimination, and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability.

■ **EMPOWERMENT:** DCA will build communities knowledge and understanding of individuals and communities' rights and raise awareness of the responsibility of those charged with providing them these rights. We will make this integral to our work, wherever we can do so without putting vulnerable communities or partners at risk. We will aim to incorporate it into each area of thematic delivery where we have access to, and can work with, communities – either directly or through partners.

■ **LINKING TO RIGHTS:** DCA will work with states to secure universalisation and compliance with arms-related treaties such as the 1997 Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty, the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, and other relevant disarmament instruments. We

will support work with non-state armed groups to adhere to the principles enshrined in these conventions. We will work to stigmatize use of indiscriminate weapons and to end all support – including investment – to their production. We will advocate for greater protection of civilians and respect for their rights, and for adherence to international humanitarian law by all parties to conflict.

The Way we will Work

Safer Communities is the goal of all work under this policy. But the most effective route to sustained improvements to community safety will vary. We will aim for the communities themselves, or local partners, to design and implement the activities, especially in situations where community resilience must be built to address a long-term need. But this may not always be the most appropriate response. In emergency situations where lifesaving action is needed and neither communities nor partners yet possess appropriate skills, we may conduct activities ourselves. We may also act directly to provide duty bearers with the capacities they lack or are unable to field effectively. This would be the case, for example, when responding to national tasking for ammunition management, mine clearance, risk education, or survey. And for specific technical activity, such as clearance of minefields, it may be neither feasible nor necessary to build local capacity to do the work. But Safer Communities remains the aim.

Where we engage with communities, we will work to maximise levels of community participation and ownership. How DCA interacts can range from simple engagement with communities to gather information about risks and needs; to community

safety planning and activity design; and, ultimately, to facilitation of community-led initiatives to organise and protect themselves. The aim will be to move as far along that spectrum as possible.

In its Safer Communities work, DCA will aim to build capacity in civil society partners where possible, and where sustained longer-term engagement is required. The policy will be to move DCA from self-implementing to partnership wherever we are able. We will therefore seek out local organisations and partners that can work to mitigate the threat and consequence of conflict and armed violence on communities. We recognise that training and transfer of skills to national partners is an essential step in building sustainable national ability to assist communities affected by explosive remnants of war and their affects. Where we are able, we will select partners at an early opportunity, and work to transition from DCA implementation to partner-implemented work.

DCA's aim with Safer Communities is to protect lives and livelihoods in communities threatened by conflict or its longer-term effects. All the activities in Safer Communities have this goal, but we recognise, and will look to enhance, overlaps and linkages between Safer Community activities and DCA's other policy areas. Specifically, we will seek to identify synergies with Active Citizenship, with Humanitarian Action, and in longer-term engagements, the Right to Food.





PHOTO DCA ARCHIVE

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

CLEARANCE OF MINES AND EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR:

Explosive remnants of war, including landmines, pose a serious and lasting threat to civilians. They may prevent access to resources and restrict freedom of movement. They prevent the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced people and hamper the delivery of humanitarian aid. DCA conducts clearance of mines and explosive remnants of war in accordance with DCA's own operational standards, national standard operating procedures and International Mine Action Standards. Included here is the requirement for accurate, detailed technical and non-technical survey in support of clearance. Clearance and survey work involves communities in data gathering and identification of threat areas, and subsequently in providing communities with the confidence that released land is safe for use. The highly technical nature of the clearance itself, and the requirement for complete oversight of clearance activity, mean that clearance work will be carried out by DCA's own employees or by partners only where quality assurance by DCA staff is possible.

Examples of activities:

- Survey, conducted as a combination of technical assessment and non-technical survey involving community focus groups, to define the boundaries of suspected hazard areas as accurately as possible.
- Battlefield area clearance of unexploded ordnance, to provide access to infrastructure, agricultural or other resources, and demining of suspected mined areas.
- 'Spot Tasks' in response to request from a community for the removal of single items of unexploded ordnance.

RISK EDUCATION: Risk Education saves lives by imparting knowledge to communities to enhance their ability to recognise risks posed by explosive remnants of war and protect themselves. DCA's mine and explosive remnants of war risk education activities are guided by the DCA Risk Education Toolkit, which is developed

according to International Mine Action Standards. But, working to the Local 2 Global (www.local2global.info) concept, DCAs will also seek to build on, and enhance, existing protection strategies developed by the communities themselves. DCA strives to make its risk education activities as sustainable as possible through e.g. community risk education focal points and partners.

Examples of activities:

- Awareness raising and promoting behavioural change through public-information campaigns, education and training, and liaison with communities. Activities can be conducted in collaboration and integrated with our Humanitarian Action activities to address inherent risk in unstable environments and for when people return home.

ARMED VIOLENCE REDUCTION: DCA will work to reduce the incentive and opportunity for acts of armed violence against communities, to enhance community resilience against them, and to limit ready access to small arms and light weapons. DCA will help communities identify and prioritise their safety and security needs and bring together communities, local authorities, police and other relevant actors to address them. Armed violence is highly gendered in both patterns of perpetration and victimisation. Across cultures, young men are overwhelmingly the most frequent perpetrators of armed violence and men and boys also account for most firearms-related deaths. Our armed violence reduction interventions are multi-faceted, and follow an analysis of perpetrators, victims, and institutions involved with, or exposed to, armed violence. While the activities under Armed Violence Reduction will vary widely, DCA's Armed Violence Reduction interventions have the single, common aim of improving community safety by reducing levels of armed violence. This is the test that should be applied to discriminate Armed Violence Reduction activities from other goals.

Examples of activities:

- Support to communities to develop community safety plans, and to identify sustainable measures to improve community protection, for example through simple SGBV prevention strategies
- Distribution of gun cabinets and trigger locks to limit immediate access to weapons, and as a tool to change in attitudes towards weapon possession and safety
- Public Armed Violence Reduction campaigns, and support and capacity building to CBOs and partner organisations intent on carrying out Armed Violence Reduction campaigning
- Youth-at-risk livelihoods programmes with the aim of reducing incentives to join armed groups

VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT: Victim Assistance is about medical support such as the provision of prosthetics, but about a much broader range of support activities too. We will therefore work to provide or facilitate longer-term and much-needed psychological support to the victims of armed violence – including victims of gender-based violence used as a means to wage conflict. Our work focuses

both on direct support to victims and on working with duty bearers to provide it. Support to victims extends to livelihoods and work to enable victims to play an active part in society. DCA adheres to the ACT Alliance's Guiding Principles for Community Based Psychosocial Support. DCA will both conduct psychosocial projects and mainstream psychosocial support where able into the remaining aspects of its Safer Communities work.

Examples of activities:

- Provision of limb prosthetics to disabled persons. This is also done via mobile clinics thus reaching marginalised communities not served by any other means
- Livelihood activities in order to facilitate the reintegration of landmine survivors into communities – some activities could be linked to our Right to Food work.
- Support to recreational, creative, educational, media and sports activities, creating Child Friendly Spaces and organising community events.
- Support to stand-alone psychosocial support activities with a focus on community and family support, through targeted interventions in e.g. schools, community centres, churches, mosques, local organisations, social and community structures.

PHYSICAL SECURITY AND STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT:

Physical Security and Stockpile Management is about working to remove the threat posed to communities by unsafe storage of small arms and light weapons and explosives. There are two main risks arising from the unsafe storage of ammunition. Firstly, the population and environment close to ammunition storage areas are at risk from the unintended explosion of ammunition. Secondly, unless sufficiently protected, ammunition storage areas are vulnerable to theft exacerbating problems with the proliferation of small arms and fuelling armed violence. In developing countries ammunition storage areas may also be targeted for theft by civilians seeking to earn income from the sale of scrap metal or explosives. Stockpiles of small arms and ammunition can also pose safety problems.

Examples of activities:

- Assistance and training provided in ammunition storage management to International Ammunition Technical Guidelines standards. This includes the need for safe and secure management to reduce the risk of accident and loss of ordnance and the processes to implement safe storage and accounting.
- Support to community-based initiatives for arms management and control.
- Delivering firearms safety education and installing safe-storage devices for firearms to reduce the risks associated with unsafe storage of small arms and light weapons and misuse.
- Support to states and non-state armed groups to implement effective and efficient management of weapon stockpiles, and to limit the impact of armed violence by reducing illicit proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons.



PHOTO DCA ARCHIVE

PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES

Partners

Working with duty bearers, and entering into partnerships with civil society organisations, including faith-based organisations, is fundamental to DCA's way of working. All aspects of DCA's work can be partner-implemented, and where we are able, we will enter into partnerships and work to build capacity to carry out Safer Communities activities. We will transition from self-implementation, which may be the case initially, to partner led implementation.

Working in partnership can provide access to some of the most difficult geographical areas, where self-implementation may be impossible for security, cultural or other reasons. Partnership is therefore both a means to implementation of our work, and an end in itself for generating sustainable national capacity and strengthen civil society. Sometimes we work in areas where organised civil society structures are not present. We will therefore also aim to work with smaller CBOs/CBAs who often have legitimacy and authenticity within their own communities.

External Alliances and Networks

DCA continues to be the only mine action agency in the ACT Alliance and will offer its services to ACT partners and

through ACT platforms. DCA will work with the ACT Alliance and other faith based organisations and networks as well as with key secular organisations and networks at local, national and international levels with whom we share values. Joint ACT advocacy will continue to be an important part of DCA's international advocacy work.

DCA will be actively involved in the activities of the national ACT forums where local and international ACT members work together to identify common areas of interest and map activities and projects to avoid duplication. DCA will strengthen programmatic cooperation with other international ACT members in all DCA focus countries to ensure that resources are shared and used in the most effective, coordinated and cost-efficient way.

DCA will continue to facilitate strategic linkages with external networks and institutions beyond the ACT Alliance in programme countries. These linkages are channels for exchanging information and best practices, improving overall coordination and the impact of technical and advocacy activities. Linkages will include theme-specific national networks, non-governmental organisation (NGO) forums, research institutions and the UN, as well as international networks.

DanChurchAid works in partnership with a variety of actors. Some are loose relationships and others are formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding.

THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES is a global coalition of non-governmental organisations working for a world free of anti-personnel mines and the implementation of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty. DCA is a member.

THE CLUSTER MUNITION COALITION is a global coalition of non-governmental organisations intent on universalisation and implementation of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. DCA is a member.

GENEVA CALL is a neutral and impartial non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting respect by armed non-state actors for international humanitarian norms in armed conflict and other situations of violence, in particular those related to the protection of civilians. DCA has a Memorandum of Understanding with Geneva Call, for mutual support and information sharing.

LIST OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

VUMBI MARTHA, ANGOLA

COMING HOME

On a plastic chair in the shade of her small corrugated tin hut, Vumbi Martha is sitting reading her Bible. The 48-year-old mother of six is relaxing while her youngest son is asleep, and the other children look after themselves playing somewhere nearby.

She is not nervous about letting the kids run around in the former minefield, she says.

"There has not been a single accident since the area was cleared," she says.

"Previously it was terrifying to be near the area, but since the mines were removed, we have felt very safe."

Vumbi was born and raised in Alto Campo in Angola, but during the Civil War, she had to move to the edge of the area, where there were no landmines. She lived there most of her life, but as soon as DCA had completed the clearing, she moved back home.

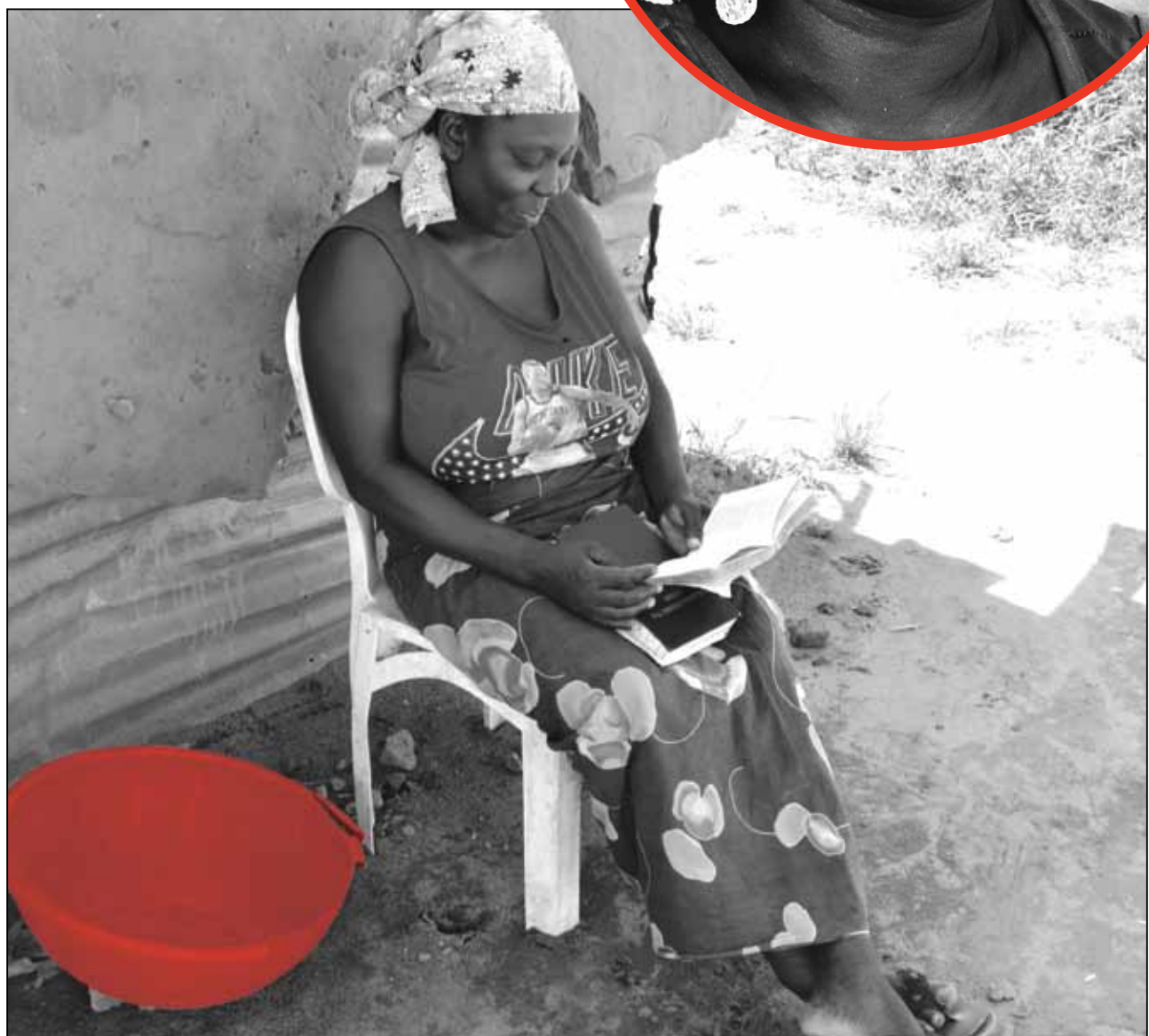


PHOTO NIKOLAJ SØNDERGAARD



EBENGO CHAMULONGO, DR CONGO

WHEN EBENGO FOUND A GRENADE

The encounter with an unexploded grenade could have had a fatal ending for 12 year old Ebengo Chamulongo, if he had not known exactly what to do in such a situation.

Ebengo Chamulongo was recently just one piece of good advice from having a serious accident with what appeared out to be an unexploded grenade. Ebengo is 12 years old and in the 6th grade at Masoka School in the village of Mwandiga. The good advice he got from his teacher shortly before sounded: "Don't touch objects that you don't recognise. They can be very dangerous."

In the South Kivu province of Eastern DR Congo the impact of continuous fighting between the army and various armed groups is still felt. The unexploded ordnance that is left behind after armed conflict pose a serious threat to children in the province, and 77% of all victims of accidents involving unexploded ammunition are children below the age of 18.

Ebengo's teacher and a colleague have participated in a three-day 'training of trainers' course, where DanChurchAid's risk education officers trained schoolteachers in how to sensitise children on how to recognise mines and unexploded ordnance, the risk they pose and what behaviour to adopt in areas contaminated by explosive remnants of war.

On this particular day, Ebengo's mother had sent Ebengo and his older brother off to work in the field. There in the middle of the high manioc they spotted a mortar grenade: "I recognised it from class. I didn't know exactly what it was, but I knew it was dangerous, so I told my older brother that we shouldn't pick it up, but rather tell our mother."

On the way back to the house, they saw one of DanChurchAid's cars. They stopped the car and told DCAs EOD operators what they had seen. The team responded quickly and the grenade was detonated already the following day.

"It went BANG!" says Ebengo.

Ebengo is proud of his teacher and thankful for the risk education.

"Today I look out wherever I walk, and if I see something I don't know I always ask the grownups what it is. If I hadn't known that it could be dangerous, we would have definitely picked up the grenade that day," he says.

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