

## Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

Founded in 1939, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is one of Norway's largest non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although NPA is currently involved in more than 300 projects in thirty countries, the organization still adheres to the basic principles set forth by its labor movement founders; solidarity, unity, human dignity, peace, and freedom. The range of NPA's projects is diverse, from extensive outreach programs for the people of Palestine, to short term emergency relief programs and long term development cooperation in over twelve countries in Africa, and more. One of NPA's most notable efforts is its humanitarian demining activities, centered in Asia and Africa.

### A History of Excellence

It should come as no surprise that the founding principles of the NPA should have guided it to take a place as a driving force behind the world-wide humanitarian demining effort. Starting in 1992 with mine work in Cambodia, NPA has expanded their operations into several other countries, especially Mozambique, Angola, and Iraq. In accordance with the spirit of its founding principles, NPA not only tackles the physical problem of landmines, but the social and political factors that make mines such a detriment to the development process of these recovering countries. The landmine must be addressed not only as a physical threat, but also as a symbolic canker on the efforts to rehabilitate and rebuild a country.

With this in mind, NPA has developed a multi-faceted mine program that is easily adaptable to individual local needs, but always contains the following elements:

- Mapping of mine fields – NPA is quick to point out that the mapping of mine fields is nothing new, but the social angle which the organization imparts to the activity is. To NPA, mapping is not only an aid to the operation of demining, but an important psychological step to empowering the local population by limiting their paralyzing fear of the mines.
- Training – NPA has developed a three step program for training deminers, and a two step program for training accompanying medical personnel. The eventual goal of both programs is to make the local population self-sufficient, and eliminate the need for Norwegian presence within five years.
- Demining – NPA's demining operations are based on models used by the Norwegian Army, altered to fit peacetime goals. NPA point out that it has set the official United Nations (UN) standards for demining in many areas. One of the most successful elements of the organization's demining programs is the dog-sniffing project, started in October 1994. The dogs make a vital contribution to the demining effort by sniffing out mines and helping to determine the borders of minefields, so miners do not waste time and resources clearing areas where there are no mines in the first place.
- Mine Awareness – NPA realizes that the extent of the landmine problem is so great, that even with the best of clearance efforts, the local populations of seriously affected countries will have to live with the daily threat of mines for at least the next thirty years. The organization's mine awareness program consists of instructor training and day-long courses for the local population. The secret of the program lies in the choice of instructors. NPA points out, "It is not enough for the person to be a good instructor, he or she must also be an important resource person that most of the local people will trust. In this way we ensure that the projects will continue for a long time without our presence."
- Methodology – NPA is actively involved in the development of new demining equipment, with experienced project workers collaborating with organizations such as the Norwegian Armed Forces, the Norwegian Institute for Industrial Design, and The Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (SINTEF).
- International campaign – Motivated by the everyday tragedy NPA bears witness to in project countries, NPA supports the international ban on landmines, and takes an active part at both the national and international level in the international battle to ban landmines.

### **Some Individual Successes**

Employing 350 deminers, 18 dogs, and 2 demining machines, NPA is the largest operator in the mapping and clearance of mines in Angola. So far, the NPA surveying unit has managed to register the dimension of the landmine problem in ten out of eighteen provinces and turn this valuable information over to the National Landmine Institute of Angola. Recent efforts include the use of new, time-saving technology to collect and analyze air samples to check for the presence of mines along roads. The samples are collected by mine proofing vehicles, and then given to specially trained dogs to sniff out the presence of mines.

In Mozambique, 1997 was a milestone year for NPA's demining efforts. Control of the demining program was handed over to Mozambican personnel. NPA continues to support its Mozambican partners in their quest to achieve sustainable development through measures for regional development, mine clearance, and organizational and institutional development. So far, almost 2 million square meters of land have been cleared of landmines, 39% more land than NPA originally planned.

### **The Future of NPA's Mine Program**

One of the only voluntary organizations that specializes in mine work, the NPA continues its efforts in accordance with the organization's founding principles of solidarity, unity, human dignity, peace, and freedom. To NPA, it is not enough to address only the physical problem of landmines, the political and social implications of the mine problem must also be addressed as an integral part of an affected country's redevelopment and rebuilding process. And for as long as the mine problem exists, NPA will be there to guide part of the solution.

### **Contact Information**

Norwegian People's Aid  
Mr. Per Jacob Nergaard  
Landmines Project Coordinator  
P.O. Box 8844 Youngstorget  
Oslo, Norway  
N-0028  
E-mail: [Per.Nergaard@npaid.no](mailto:Per.Nergaard@npaid.no)  
Website: <http://www.npaid.no/npaid/npa.html>.