



Mine action and the environment - a field based perspective

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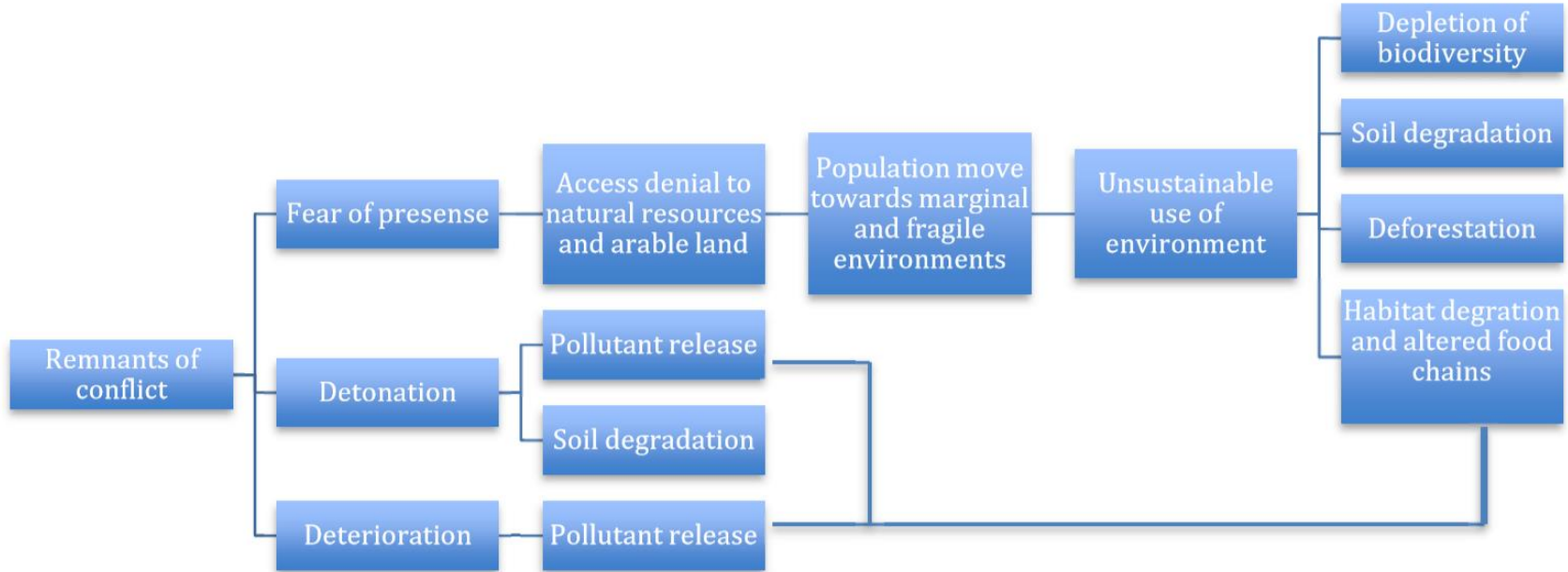
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General

- Many examples of bad practice over the years, tend to be anecdotal rather than formally documented
- It is clear that lessons are quickly learned with approaches being revised in response to negative impact.
- Consensus that we can do better – but impact is generally very positive.



Physical effects of land mine clearance



All interventions – even “do nothing” result in ecological damage

Change happens regardless of mine action activity –

- Does clearance facilitate change or accelerate it?
- The mine action contribution is a small part of a much bigger picture
- What price inactivity?



Aim must be to minimize the negative impact caused
– *“choosing the least bad option”*

Changing operational context in many countries

- Moving from emergency to development,
- Need to consider the bigger picture.
- Consideration of other treaties, CITES, cultural heritage, other environmental codes
- Recognition from donors that there are costs associated with improved approaches and recognition that there is value added

Examples:

- DFID South Atlantic environmental impact requirements
- UNOPS procurement rules

Within the minefield: *Tailor the solution to the problem*

- All actions have a negative effect – therefore minimize the intensity of actions
- Maximize the use of survey – minimize the amount of ground that is actually cleared
- More nuanced approach to the use of machinery; tillers not flails, strimmers not cutters, manual demining not mechanical



A common sense approach to better delivery -operational

- Consider end use and take measures in appropriate to the future use
- Topsoil needs to be returned
- Trees left in place, where there is a long term plan to retain them.
- Minimize the disruption to the root structure - mitigation measures should be mandatory whenever heavy machinery is used.
- Develop understanding of the long term consequences of explosive contamination
- Consider future land use when selecting demolition areas

Increased use of environmental impact surveys to stop operators stumbling in to problems and to ensure the support of the beneficiary community

Common sense approaches to minimizing impact – donor/NMAA

- Impose efforts to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions
- Ban single use plastics
- Insist on better use of renewable energy – rechargeable batteries, solar systems
- Restrict the use of fossil fuels, shorter drive times, more efficient engines
- Insist on better awareness of bio-diversity
- Consider donor linkages to conservation organisations



Clearly there is room for improvement and tightening of standards



But... don't lose sight of the positive change