



HDI

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Communiqué

THE HUMPTY DUMPTY
INSTITUTE

Monthly Communiqué from Sri Lanka

November 2007

The HALO Trust had an excellent month in terms of area cleared. The soil, moistened by the rainy season, facilitated manual evacuation. Mechanically excavated soil, however, had to be processed manually because the machines could not work through the wet soil. 24,946 square meters of HDI's 17 sections were cleared. Five new sites were signed off as future tasks. Since the beginning of the project, the total area cleared is 132,337 sq. meters and the total number of mines cleared is 439.

Our dairy revitalization program led by our partner Land O'Lakes continues to progress successfully. During the month, more than 400 farmers were trained on Dairy Cattle Nutrition. The Land O'Lakes extension staff held on-site, one-on-one field visits with 448 farmers. The Department of Animal Production and Health offered a three-day training on Dairy Livestock Disease Control and a program team member offered a one-day business planning workshop in addition to lecturing 130 University of Jaffna faculty and students on the "Business of Livestock".

Preparation work began in selecting and supporting 10 key model farms, which will serve as examples of proper dairy farming. In the area of cooperative capacity building, a \$20,000 interest-free loan was signed with the Jaffna District Development Cooperative Society (JDDCS) for the purchase of cattle feed materials. The program has been able to increase the monthly production of value-added products, such as yogurt and ice cream, from 569 liters to 3,283 liters. We will also provide equipment and cash grants to JDDCS and select Livestock Breeders Cooperative Societies (LIBCOS) totaling approximately \$20,000 which will go towards the purchase of milk cans, laboratory and measuring equipment, cold storage facilities (freezers/refrigerators) and the renovation of 11 milk sales branches. JDDCS and select LIBCOS are now marketing paneer (a type of cheese), yogurt, ice cream, ghee (a clarified butter), curd and flavored pasteurized milk. New market channels are being developed through grocery stores, institutional buyers (government offices, schools and international NGOs), and door-to-door sales.

An Interview with the new HALO Trust Programme Manager Rory Forbes

This month's profile features Rory Forbes who leads the HALO Programme in Sri Lanka. While he is proud to be Scottish, Rory, 37, has spent most of his life outside of Scotland. His home is split between Geneva where his parents live and Hong Kong where he has a sister and lots of friends. His mother was born in Kenya and his father is from Scotland. Since his father worked overseas, Rory was educated in many places including Athens, Madrid, Geneva and Edinburgh. He has traveled to nearly 60 countries. Rory has a flare for languages and speaks English, French, Spanish, Cantonese and Mandarin. He studied at Durham University, People's University of China, and the Taiwan Normal University. He also has an MSc in Public Policy and Management from the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies. Rory worked with the Hong Kong Police for 13 years prior to joining the HALO Trust.

Has your exposure to different countries/ cultures influenced your professional life?

Very much. I never even considered living and working in the UK after university. There is nothing that I find more interesting than seeing and interacting with other countries and their people. I find the experience enriching and it helps me to grow as a person. Operating as a police officer in Hong Kong, where over 90% of the population is ethnically Chinese, was fascinating but I've also found that police work the world over is very similar. A theft in Hong Kong is the same as one in Colombo or New York but police forces deal with their problems differently as a result of different cultures, training, equipment, legal frameworks and financial and manpower constraints.

The choice to join the Hong Kong Police was fuelled by the desire to somehow put my Chinese language skills into action in a practical setting and by the fact that I'd wanted to be a policeman since I was a kid – to arrest criminals and contribute somehow to the community I live in.

When I joined HALO, the international nature of its operations was, and still is, a definite attraction. I'd never been to Sri Lanka before I was posted here in January 2007. Even during training, we traveled to places like Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh, which are places I would not have visited had I not joined HALO.

Why leave the Police and join HALO?

I had a great time in the Police and never regretted joining. However, after 13 years the work was becoming stale, I felt I wasn't learning anything new and some of the zest for the job had left me. In early 2006 I was looking at several international NGOs for opportunities and then came across an employment advertisement HALO had placed in the Economist magazine. The tone of the advertisement, a mixture of seriousness and dry humor, coupled with the prospect for operational hands-on management in an international setting and the ability to make a direct and positive impact on mined communities were a huge draw and I applied immediately. After going through the interview process I was fortunate enough to be chosen and started training in Cambodia in September 2006.

What have you done with HALO so far?

Two months of basic demining training took place in Cambodia, followed by EOD training in Nagorno Karabakh and fleet/ mechanical asset training in Abkhazia before I was posted to Jaffna, Sri Lanka, as Operations Manager in January this year. Then in November I was made Programme Manager after the previous incumbent, Blerim Tufa, left. The learning curve has been steep and challenging but immensely enjoyable. It has flattened out a bit now but there isn't a day that goes by without a new issue raising its head.

What do you do as Programme Manager?

As Programme Manager, I am based in Jaffna where I head HALO's country operations and report directly to our HQ in Scotland. My work includes operations, logistics, financial management, human resource management, donor and government liaisoning, and office administration.

A typical day for me starts around 06.30 and finishes at 18.00. The morning parade for the deminers is at 07.30 when deployments are decided, vehicle distribution arranged and equipment



Rory holding an anti-personnel mine



Rory explaining the function of the vegetation cutter

issued. Owing to the shortage of explosives in Jaffna we destroy mines daily using an adapted wood-cutting machine so I supervise that process as and when necessary, which is most mornings. As Programme Manager I visit minefields as often as possible. Due to my other work demands, however, I do not visit the minefields on a daily basis.

There is a lot of liaisoning with the Government Agent, District Mine Action Office, Military Mine Action Office and the other humanitarian demining operator in Jaffna, the Danish Demining Group, over task allocation, unexploded ordnance disposal, community concerns and quality assurance. The Operations and Programme Managers do share this work to a certain extent but as Programme Manager I am also required to make almost monthly visits to Colombo to represent HALO at National Mine Action Steering Committee meetings, maintain more effective communication with donors, embassies and other government departments as well as supervise our small, but vital, Colombo office.

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Human resource management issues are also quite time consuming. This is normal for an operation that employs close to 400 people and requires attention to items such as salaries, promotions, resignations, leave applications, discipline, etc This is the part of the job that I enjoy the most after operations as people are infinitely varied in their personalities, motivation and background so dealing with each one requires a different approach. I think it's important to be consistent and fair but also strict and uncompromising – standards have to be maintained, especially as the result of a mistake or carelessness with explosive items is a serious injury or worse.

Logistics is a big issue for us now in Jaffna as road access to the rest of the country has been cut since August last year. Items can only be brought in by air or sea, the former is expensive and restrictive while the latter is slow and unreliable. Due to the restricted access purchases in Jaffna have become more expensive and the variety of items reduced. A lot of my time has been spent solving sourcing and transport issues for equipment procurement.

How do you see the land mine problem in Jaffna?

Most of the areas laid with mines in the mid-1990s and in 2000/2001 have now been cleared and all high-priority tasks completed. Annual civilian landmine accidents in Jaffna have dropped from 90 accidents five years ago to 9 accidents last year and so far this year there have been none – a gratifying result of intensive clearance. Land use pressure in some areas of Jaffna for residential and farming use is intense and we have farmers working right up to our minefield borders. As soon as we finish clearance the land is ploughed, grazed or built on – a clear indication that landmines restrict access and limit people's livelihoods. In some cases whole communities are cut off from neighboring communities by landmines. The removal of the landmine threat has meant their lives can return to normal and they can live without the fear of a landmine accident.



Rory out of his work gear

The ongoing conflict in Jaffna has meant certain areas are under military control. We have not been allowed to survey these areas and so the landmine situation there is uncertain. However, the general population is not allowed into these areas either and so their lives are not impacted by landmines that may be there. What can be safely said is that we are approaching a 'Mine Impact Free' Jaffna where the civilian population will be able to move about their daily business without fear of or hindrance from landmines. The current aim is to achieve this 'Mine Impact Free' state by the end of 2008. However, we always focus on achieving an end state rather than an end date –

while the latter can be subject to any number of influences beyond our control the former is a statement of fact.

However, if the current conflict situation were to change so that people were allowed to return to their homes in what are now restricted areas there would most certainly be a sudden need for emergency mine survey and mine clearance in Jaffna in order to avoid mine accidents. What occurs in the conflict is obviously outside of HALO's control but we remain ready to respond to any changes as they occur.

For more information on HDI's work, please contact Jeanne Samuel, the Director of the Sri Lanka office of HDI, #05-03, East Tower, World Trade Centre, Echelon Square, Colombo 1. Tel: 2421258. www.thehdi.org.