

Demining equipment started operations in African continent to restore “peaceful land”

Africa is far from Japan and not familiar to Japanese. In the African countries mine contamination is spreading for reasons such as confrontations between tribes. Mr. Amemiya, the president of Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery, has been developing demining equipment to handle the situation of mine contamination. He delivered two units of new type of anti-personnel demining equipment to Angola in August 2007. Demining equipment started operations in the African continent.



Mr. Amemiya, the president of Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery, with children in Angola

Mines are being used

Mines were originally developed to defend against a tank attack. Perhaps more than 300 million mines were used to protect cities and camps during World War II. Anti-personnel mines were developed as small mines buried near the large ones to prevent the removal of the large ones. During the Vietnam War, the purpose of anti-personnel mines changed completely. Anti-personnel mines began to be used to injure soldiers severely, rather than to kill them, to reduce the fighting capacity of the enemy by forcing them to rescue injured soldiers. Anti-personnel mines are used in many civil wars and conflicts because they are cheap and easy to handle. So the area of mined land is spreading. It is estimated that about 110 million mines are currently buried in 90 countries and regions. Since mines continue to be active even after the end of war, general citizens including children can be victims. Even now it is said that about 20,000 people fall victim to mines each year. Although the Ottawa Treaty (prohibiting anti-personnel mines) came into effect in

1999, the fact is that many countries have not signed it and mines are still being used.

Mine contamination in Africa

In Egypt which is famous for its pyramids, it is estimated that about 23 million mines remain. This is the highest number in the world. They are buried mainly in desert land in the northwest of the country, scene of fierce fighting during World War II, and in the eastern area including the Sinai Peninsula, the war zone of Middle East War. Mine contamination is also spreading in other African countries, such as Mozambique, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, because of civil wars caused by conflicts between tribes and other reasons. It is estimated that there are about 7 million mines buried in Angola, which had 27 years of civil war on and off.



Two units of new type of anti-personnel demining equipment delivered to Angola

Angola is located in southwest Africa and is producing a lot of various natural resources such as diamonds. Because of the resource boom in recent years, Angola is the country in Africa which is most expected to develop.

Mr. Amemiya, the president of Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery, visited Angola in 2004, two

years after the settlement of the civil war, and studied the situation of mine contamination in the country. During his visit, he realized that a new model of the demining machine for anti-personnel mines, which was under development at the time, was needed because there were more large mines and tripwire mines as well as anti-personnel mines in Angola than in Cambodia.



Large mine (left) and tripwire mine (right). Pulling the tripwire of the tripwire mines causes an explosion and scatters 700 steel balls.



Heavy machinery damaged by a large mine

Development of flail hammer type demining equipment for anti-personnel mines, which would not be badly damaged by large mines, started in 2002. Tests in Cambodia in 2006 confirmed that the new demining equipment can resist large mines. Even after triggering the explosion of a large mine, the equipment can be used again after a couple of hours of welding repair work. Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery received an order for two units of demining equipment for anti-personnel mines which can be fitted with a flail hammer and a rotary cutter (conventional type), from the government of Angola, thanks to the test result and the deliver record. The equipment was delivered to Angola in August 2007. We demonstrated the capabilities demining equipment at a ceremony to celebrate the delivery, which was attended by the Social Rehabilitation minister of the government of Angola, and it was highly appraised. In May prior to the ceremony, seven engineers from INAD (the National Institute for Demining) in Angola



Demonstration of anti-personnel demining equipment

received training in the operation and maintenance of the demining equipment at Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery. They also received technical training including weld repair at a training center in Angola after the delivery. The demining equipment is currently being used to clear land for road construction.



Technical training at Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery



Technical training in Angola

56 units of demining equipment including two units of demining equipment supplied to Angola are operating in six countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam. Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery will continue to provide support to ensure the smooth operation of the demining equipment already supplied, and will supply more demining equipment to countries contaminated with mines in Africa and elsewhere, to eradicate mine injury.

Column International exchange by children from a demining project

While visiting Angola for technical training, Mr. Amemiya, the president of Yamanashi Hitachi Construction Machinery, visited local elementary schools and a rehabilitation center for mine victims to present pictures and folded paper cranes from elementary school children in Japan. After returning to Japan, Mr. Amemiya presented pictures from children in Angola to Japanese children, and informed them of the state of Angola using video tapes and photographs.

Mr. Amemiya gives talks about mines and mine victims mainly at elementary schools and junior high schools in Japan to convey the importance of peace. He made 64 speeches in fiscal 2007. His wish that children who shoulder the future cherish peace is also the message of our group.



Visiting an elementary school in Angola (left)
Visiting a rehabilitation center (bottom left)
Visiting Yamanashi Elementary School (bottom right)

