



[|Contents|](#) [|Editorial|](#) [|Focus|](#) [|Feature|](#) [|Book Review|](#) [|Making it Personal|](#) [|Special Report|](#)
[|Notes from the Field|](#) [|Country Profiles|](#) [|In Remembrance|](#) [|Research and Development|](#)
[|News Briefs|](#)

Information within this issue may be outdated. [Click here](#) to link to the most recent issue.

Lebanon

by Suzanne M. Tice [[Mine Action Information Center](#)]



Years of conflict and foreign occupation have left Lebanon riddled with landmines and unexploded ordnance. Contamination from explosive remnants of war increased dramatically as a result of the introduction and use of cluster munitions in the July–August 2006 conflict with Israel. According to the *Landmine Monitor's* 2007 report on Lebanon, the use of cluster munitions resulted in the contamination of approximately 500,000 undetonated, unexploded munitions and 15,300 other varieties of UXO.¹ In addition to the

increased cluster-bomb contamination, Lebanon remains contaminated with anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines from the Lebanese War (1975–1990).

Casualties

The increased contamination has, of course, had a direct effect on the level of mine- and UXO-related injuries and deaths. In 2007, the *Landmine Monitor* reported a total of 207 mine- and UXO-related casualties—11 from mines, 182 from cluster munitions, 10 from improvised explosive devices and four from other ERW.² Of the 207 casualties, 31 resulted in death.¹

These casualty levels were a dramatic increase from the 2005 casualty reports. According to the *Landmine Monitor's* 2005 report on Lebanon, there were only 22 landmine- and UXO-related casualties reported between May 2004 and May 2005.³ Of the 22 landmine casualties, only five resulted in death. In order to compensate for this increase, Lebanon and the international mine-action community will have to boost their efforts on mine- and UXO-casualty prevention and the rehabilitation of victims.

Prevention

The mine- and UXO-contamination problem has been the focus of international attention.

Nongovernmental organizations and activists throughout the world have been striving to increase and improve mine-risk education. The 2007 *Landmine Monitor Report* on Lebanon indicated major MRE activity by NGOs and governmental organizations, including funding for and presenting of mine-risk education programs by the Lebanon Mine Resource Center, Norwegian People's Aid, the World Rehabilitation Fund and UNICEF. UNICEF, along with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, also increased MRE by providing extensive mine and UXO alerts after the 2006 conflict.¹ In addition to providing alerts, organizations like the Islamic Risala Scouts Association and NPA distributed informational flyers and banners. On top of all of these efforts, the World Rehabilitation Fund, the Lebanon Landmine Resource Center, Lebanon Mine Action Center (formerly known as Lebanon's National Demining Office) and DanChurchAid provided MRE interventions and information sessions for those in high-risk areas. DanChurchAid in particular provided effective demonstrations, in the form puppet shows and role-play sessions, to help children understand the danger of landmines.¹

Beyond these efforts, the Lebanese government proposed plans for MRE in the May 2007 National Mine Action Policy. The Lebanon Mine Action Center will now lead the Mine Risk Education Steering Committee. This committee, which consists of the Ministries of Education and Social Affairs, will focus on the reduction of mine- and UXO-related casualties through effective, appropriate MRE programs.¹

Rehabilitation

The use of cluster munitions and mines during the 2006 conflict resulted in a significant number of injuries. As a result, Lebanon's health-care system was (and still is) under severe pressure. Lebanon's government covers all emergency- and temporary-care needed by victims; however, long-term care must be paid for (either partially or fully) by the victim. As a result, many Lebanese citizens do not receive proper care for their injuries due to financial constraints. Another major problem with Lebanon's victim-assistance programs is that most of the primary treatment and training facilities are located in major cities, while the highest reports of mine- and UXO-related injuries and deaths occur in rural areas. Individuals from rural areas are, in some cases, not able to find or pay for transportation to get to the correct facilities in time to save their lives.

Realizing the lack of proper care for mine and UXO victims, the Lebanese government created the May 2007 National Mine Action Policy, which, according to the Mine Action Support Group, will "strengthen the national capacity for mine action and ensure increased transparency in the setting of national mine action priorities."⁴ LMAC is also currently working to develop projects that will improve victim assistance in the country. LMAC's goal is to "provide medical services, rehabilitation programs and income generating activities using a right-based participatory approach that is victim centered and which could lead to improving the quality of life of those victims."⁵

Also, in response to the victim-assistance problem, Handicap International, the Lebanese Physically Disabled Union and other NGOs created the Disability Focal Points project. This project, which lasted from October 2006 to June 2007, "provided service information, partly paid-for medical and rehabilitation services for those unable to pay the fees, distributed assistive devices, and contacted municipalities and relief providers to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities."¹

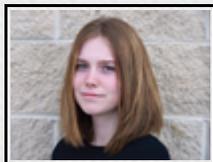
Conclusion

Since the 1970s, Lebanon has been contaminated with dangerous ERW. As a result of the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, landmine and cluster-munition contamination levels have increased dramatically; consequently, mine- and ERW-related casualties have increased as well. Lebanon is struggling to eradicate the contamination issue and provide victim assistance and MRE to citizens in hazardous areas. The Lebanon Mine Action Center is working diligently, however, to provide proper physical and psychological rehabilitation as well as economic support. In addition to the LMAC's contributions,

international organizations such as Handicap International, UNDP and DanChurchAid have provided support for both victim-assistance and MRE programs. Despite the contamination issue, LMAC and mine-action organizations have been working tirelessly to alleviate this problem and remain positive about the future.



Biography



Suzanne Tice was an Editorial Assistant for the Mine Action Information Center from January through August 2008. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in technical and scientific communication at James Madison University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in technical and scientific communication with minors in history and Spanish from JMU.

Endnotes

1. "Lebanon." *Landmine Monitor Report 2007*. October 2007. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2007/lebanon.html>. Accessed 31 March 2008.
2. **Editor's Note:** Some organizations consider mines and ERW to be two separate entities, since they are regulated by different legal documents (the former by the Ottawa Convention and Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the latter by CCW Protocol V). However, since mines are explosive devices that have similar effects to other ERW and it is often impossible to separate the two during clearance operations, some in the community have adopted a "working definition" (as opposed to a legal one) of ERW in which it is a blanket term that includes mines, UXO, abandoned explosive ordnance and other explosive devices.
3. "Lebanon." *Landmine Monitor Report 2005*. October 2005. <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2005/lebanon.html>. Accessed 7 July 2008.
4. "Update from UMNAS." *The Mine Action Support Group (MASG) Newsletter*. <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/wra/90033.htm>. Accessed 7 July 2008.
5. "National Steering Committee on Victim Assistance Action Plan 2008." Lebanon Mine Action Center. [http://www.lebmac.org/files/publications/MVA_Workplan_2008_\(English\).pdf](http://www.lebmac.org/files/publications/MVA_Workplan_2008_(English).pdf). Accessed 7 July 2008.

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