A Change of Heart

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Somaliland. The project aims to provide an adequate and effective exposure to MRE to children 5–14 years of age working as householders in affected communities in Awdal, Togtologi, Sahil and Galbys regions of Somaliland. Briefly, MRE are often not aware of the danger, and their children tend to tamper with pieces of UXO or anti-tank/anti-personnel mines.

Another target of MRE is adult and younger traveller aged 14–29. Reproducing around 50 percent of all mine and UXO survivors, they are partly to blame for the UXO problem. The UXO threat can be reduced if UXO is a threat which the population and the authorities can help to manage. By conducting a survey, the authorities can help to manage the UXO threat.

In January 2006, the two teams from Radio Hargeisa and Handicap International conducted an Audience Feedback Survey in 32 highly and moderately mine-affected villages in the Galbys region (Hargeisa area) including Gedda Dheenta village. The teams met with Mohamed Gahayr Geele's village,

emphasizing their objectives to create a safe environment for residents. During the survey, the teams collected user data to be used for the production of MRE radio programmes such as interviews and reports. The team sought to discover how many UXO affected the area. During his interview, Gahayr admitted he had hidden some UXO items on his farm, and said he wanted to leave the mines to the demining agencies.

Radio Hargeisa did not notify the authorities; instead, it aired the interview with Gahayr three weeks after the visit. Osman Jumaa Essa, DDG Operations Manager, Handicap International, telephoned Handicap International's MRE team to identify the person who admitted to hiding UXO. Together with Hargeisa journalists and Handicap International's MRE team, SMG Deputy Manager, DDG Operations Manager, a Radio Hargeisa journalist and a representative from Somaliland National Television went to Gedda Dheenta and met with Gahayr. He showed them the stockpile, and the DDG Quick Response Team collected the items safely.

Later, the Radio Hargeisa journalist interviewed Gahayr again, taking notes on what perspectives he could provide to other communities with UXO in their area in their homes. He replied that he was very proud to hand over the UXO. He said he had the same idea to prevent injuries to children. He realized, however, he had begun to think that hiding UXO was not strong enough, that it was necessary to hand over UXO to the authorities.

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