December 2002

Need To Know? Mine Action Education Resources

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Mine Awareness Education

Range of Indicators

The following is an abbreviated list showing the broad range of the generic mine action training course covered in the “Mined Area Indicators – Mozambique” pack.

A list like this will leave many readers cold. Using the same teaching approach as the resource, the following examples “show” you what the resource is like.

1. The context, covering why mines were placed.
   - Defensive, military, Defensive - infrastructure to defend power lines, bridges, buildings, railway lines, observation points, etc. Defensive - to defend crops and settlements. Route and area denial. Bandity, individual defensive. Offensive (ambush).

2. Basic mine and UXO information.
   - Explaining the appearance of each type and how it may be set off. Covering AP blast, AP fragmentation (stake mounted), AP fragmentation (bounding), AP fragmentation (directional), anti-vehicle mines, UXO, and generic identification of other ordnance. Also covering the kinds of injury associated with mines.

3. Official and improvised marking.
   - Covering official warning signs, fencing and examples of the locally improvised marking in use.

4. Indicators of suspect areas.
   - Evidence of military presence and/or fighting. Visible parts of mines / UXO. Evidence of defensive works in the form of mounds, hollows or trenches. Unmaintained areas alongside roads where ambuses were carried out. Ports of clothing or footwear. The remains of camps, latrines or temporary structures. Wire defences. The debris of vehicles damaged in fighting or explosions (civilian). Abandoned military vehicles and equipment. Remains of ammunition cases or packaging and munition boxes, ration tins, etc. Ruined buildings marked by battle. Road damage in ambush or checkpoint areas. Unused abandoned areas close to land that is used. Fruit and nut trees that are not harvested. Wooded areas close to villages where wood is not gathered. Unexpected diversions on roads or paths. Abandoned roads and paths. Abandoned buildings, especially where items of value (contents, but also doors, window-frames, guttering and roofing material) have not been removed. Washout areas where water may have carried items from their original place. Casualties, people and animals (remains or victims).

5. Technical detail.
   - Direct indicators of mine and UXO use in the area such as packaging, wires, spikes, stakes, safety pins/caps and parts discarded when munitions are used. Mines, detailing the common mines and UXO found in Mozambique and covering how mines age, fuses and detonators, and booby traps.

Example 1: Recognising Mined Areas

For most audiences, a trainer will want to show how to recognise areas that are obviously dangerous. The scenes above all include an obviously suspicious area.

There is not enough space to explain each image here. The general message is that while sometimes you can recognise a suspicious area, more often you can tell when an area is safe, which is just as useful.

Example 2: Levels of Detail

(Below) The resource uses appropriate scenes like these to introduce each topic.

(Below) Technical audiences want to know more about the devices and how they work. So in many cases a third level of detail is included.

The pictures are selected from both the Angola and the Mozambique packs.
A Revolutionary Approach to Mine Awareness: The Demining Support System

This versatile tool is designed to provide support to a mine action program on a range of topics. Its high-tech components are designed to provide on easily accessible, customizable, professional and portable element to any mine awareness campaign.

by Nicole Kreger, MAIC

Background on the System

The Demining Support System (DSS) is the wave of the future in humanitarian mine action, a wave that is quickly catching on. As 22 countries are already employing it in their mine action activities, it simultaneously serves as an aid in training staff, managing equipment, maintaining databases and developing instructional materials, among other things. Being customizable, mobile and rugged, the DSS is designed to cater to the needs of any mine action center (MAC) or other demining programs. Created by Star Mountain, Inc., at the request of and with assistance from the U.S. Department of Defense, Humanitarian Demining Program, Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate at Fort Belvoir, the DSS has been used by U.S. Army Special Operations Forces.

So what exactly is the DSS, and how can it be so flexible? The System is "a suite of multi-media, audio-visual computer equipment." It makes use of modern technology with features like a touch-screen display, digital camera and portable color printer, and its versatility displays itself through the many ways in which it can be used. For example, the medical modules trainees on everything from saturation to trauma medicine, while the manual module can produce manuals on operations and training. Additionally, the DSS Content Manager software can be translated into any one of several languages, such as Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Portuguese or Cambodian. Also, the System can integrate with existing applications such as the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSSMAs). In addition to all these features, probably the most important aspect of the DSS in mobility. The System is designed to work out in the field, not just sit in a headquarters where few have access to it, as often happens with other equipment. It is designed specifically to travel, and is even capable of surfacing the harsh conditions of the locations where it will be deployed. Thus, no matter where the user is, the system can travel to him or her, as opposed to vice versa.

MAC in a Box

The DSS has more recently spawned a new design known as the "MAC in a Box." It was "designed to be an easily deployable MAC technology base" that can "support a MAC office with any or all of the following operational services: mine and UXO clearance database (IMSSMA) mine awareness, administration, finance, operations, logistics, training, information management and other MAC functions." It uses commercial off-the-shelf hardware and software and is designed to be lightweight and therefore easy to transport. It contains many of the same resources as the original DSS platform, but it is designed to be a ready-to-use wireless network that serves as the foundation of a mine action operation. The hardware is more compact, containing several laptop computers and network equipment, and peripherals such as a scanner and projector are available as well.

GWMFH is a non-profit foundation based in the USA. It is dedicated to supporting humanitarian mine action. Andy Smith is an independent JRA consultant.

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Acknowledgements

The following individuals were consulted when planning this programme or gave help and advice during it. Any weaknesses in the resource do not reflect on them.

Matthew Chambers, Herencio Chongu, Ken O’Connell, John Dingler, Justin Bradely, Mike Wilson, Dieter Guelle, Roger Hess, Havard Bach, Robert Huang, Robert Thomson (Tomm), Chris Ponce, John Flanagan, Mario Nunes, Bob Kadler, Tim Lusher, Steve Pieck, Jim Cog Romholt, Frederik Paller, Jacly D’Almeida, Helke Con, Mark Manning, Filipe Maunia, Felix Anduta, Doug Favaro, Christian (Burg) Giel, Maria Ishida, Hugh Lawrence, Theo van Dyle, Derek Bunn, Andy Fried, St. Vincento, Nicolas Finazzo, Thomas Auger, Willy Lawrence, Muratao van Zyl, Hendrik Eiken and Hans Gerhard Krausen. Thanks also to the main translators, Amanda Bach and Claudia de Souza.

During dissemination, the following organizations were of great help: INAD (UNADAP), HFI, NPA, MaH and MineTech.

Finally, our thanks to all at U.S. DoD for the funding support that made this possible.

The Demining Support System

DSS Mine Awareness Uses

While the DSS has many other functions that are more commonly used than the mine awareness module, many users see the DSS as a helpful means of spreading the word about the dangers of mines. There are some pre-made mine awareness materials provided with the DSS, demonstrating such mine-related messages as to how to avoid a mine area and what to do when encountering mines. However, according to an assessment study conducted after the DSS was deployed, in most cases, the DSS helped disseminate mine awareness through the hardware components, not through the images provided with the DSS.

This further demonstrates its customizability of the System. Users are encouraged to actually create their own materials, so that they can use the most relevant information for their audience. This method is especially helpful for customizing the materials for the country in which they will be used, since no one

The DSS hardware components include a scanner, digital camera, camcorder and printer, all of which can help mine action personnel create their own mine awareness materials, c/o Star Mountain, Inc.