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Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

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mine-related activities both of the UN and of NGOs. A number of organizations, including UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as local NGOs, have begun a comprehensive program for MRE and survivor assistance. The program focuses on training over 190,000 children in the region. This begins with a train-the-trainer course for 400 teachers, who will in turn pass this information on to children ranging in age from 6 to 17. These children will receive an MRE course plus booklets, posters, t-shirts, sweatshirts, pens, pencils, notebooks and drawing sets with relevant messages. This yearlong program will conclude at the end of 2002.

**Vietnam**

UNICEF Vietnam’s mine awareness activities aim to make an immediate impact on the population’s level of awareness, but more importantly, they hope to develop a “long-term, sustainable approach.” In order to accomplish this, UNICEF proposed a survey to be conducted in Quang Tri province that will determine the level of mine-safety knowledge among local people. Through this survey, UNICEF will be able to determine what messages they should send to the population and who the target audience should be. UNICEF plans to carry out the survey by the end of 2002, and a national MRE media campaign will follow, including print ads, radio spots and TV commercials. Most messages will be aimed primarily at children.

UNICEF Vietnam, with the help of the Ministry of Education and Training, has also introduced a school-based mine/UXO awareness program at schools in 15 provinces incorporating MRE messages into their curriculum. Additionally, UNICEF is supporting child-to-child learning activities that it hopes will bring the messages to children out of school as well as other members of the community.

**International Guidelines**

Due to widespread belief that mine awareness programs were insufficiently structured, UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Programs began developing the International Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education. The Guidelines, released in 1999, were created “in order to promote the effective planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of mine awareness programs.” They are designed as a reference for people involved in mine awareness.

The Guidelines, taking into account that mine awareness is “a process that encourages populations to become involved rather than...an imposed solution,” aims to apply a fully integrated approach to mine action. This means making sure that mine clearance and mine awareness operate in conjunction instead of separately, as they have in the past. Issues are addressed in four sections, namely: Feasibility Study; Needs Assessment; Program Planning; Monitoring and Evaluation.

UNICEF intended the Guidelines to be an overview of issues that are common to mine/UXO awareness, primarily for policy makers and donors. The publication has been endorsed by the Ottawa Treaty States Parties’ Standing Committee on Victim Assistance, Socio-Economic Reintegration and Mine Awareness and translated into French and Spanish for widespread dissemination.

**Conclusion**

UNICEF has proven from its past and current activities to be a world leader in bringing mine awareness to populations in mine-affected areas. The programs listed above are only a few examples of how UNICEF has helped prevent mine incidents. Continuing in this tradition, UNICEF will be releasing some publications in the next few months about mine awareness programs. The first is a new portfolio of their programs with updates from the past few months, which will be released by the end of November. The second is a “Lessons Learned” publication that will include information gained from the experiences of people involved in mine awareness programs. UNICEF hopes to release this document by January 2003.

Endnotes


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**NOTES FROM THE FIELD**

**Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD**

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine action programmes and operators, conducts research, and provides support to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.

by Ian Mansfield, Operations Director, GICHD

During the past 12 months there has been an increase in the general activities of the Centre, the publication of a number of significant studies, and some changes to key staff. By way of a brief review, the GICHD was established in 1998 and it has three primary functions, all designed to support mine action: operational assistance; research work; and support for the Anti- PERSONNEL Mine Ban Initiative (APMBI). This assistance is provided to the mine action efforts of national mine programmes and field operators, as well as the international community and the United Nations. The Centre carries out this work in close cooperation with a total of five individuals seconded from various governments. Funding for the Centre comes from the Swiss government, and a number of other donors.

Operational Support and Assistance

The Centre is well known for the development of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMMSA). Further implementations of IMMSA have been carried out and it has now been provided to 28 different field programmes around the world. Version 2.0 of IMMSA is currently being field tested, and it is planned for release to the field in early 2003. This version will offer enhancements to the database system, and it includes Mine Risk Education data fields.

Work on the next set of the International Mine Action Standards (IMSAs) is well under way, to complement the fine 23 standards endorsed by the UN in 2001. The next 15 standards will cover areas such as the use of mitigation tools, risk education, project formulation and management training. The IMSA outreach programme has continued with workshops in North America, Europe, the Far East and Africa.

The Centre has continued to provide both general and specialized support to the field, by providing formal and informal training to the heads of mine action programmes and national mine action authorities such as Angola, Cambodia, Somalia and Yemen. In addition, the Centre has undertaken a number of evaluation missions on behalf of various parties. This is an area which is set to expand with the forthcoming appointment of an evaluation specialist in the near future.

Research & Publications

One of the primary aims of the Centre is to contribute to the formulation and development of improved procedures, practices and technologies in mine action. This research, to support mine action, includes the writing of technical papers, the theory of demining and the cost-effectiveness of mine action programmes in the field. A number of studies have recently been published including:

- A "Lessons Learned" publication that will include information gained from the experiences of people involved in mine awareness programs.
- UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Programs began developing the International Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education.
- The Guidelines, released in 1999, were created in order to promote the effective planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of mine awareness programs.
- They are designed as a reference for people involved in mine awareness.

**Implementation Support Unit**

The Third Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention mandated the GICHD to form an Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to become operational in January 2002. The purpose of the ISU is to support the activities of States Parties to the Convention especially the work of the Co-ordinating Committees and the International Mine Action Programme (IMAP) as well as activities of the President of the States Parties’ Assembly of States Parties and States Parties to the work of the Convention. In addition, the ISU has commenced work to establish a documentation centre on the Convention and its implementation.

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