October 2012

Mine/ERW Risk Education in Afghanistan

Samim Hashimi
MACCA

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Mine/ERW Risk Education in Afghanistan

Afghanistan continues to face many challenges from landmines and explosive remnants of war. The Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan and its many partners coordinate to reduce risk for affected communities. Teacher training, mass media and a revamped mine risk education curriculum for schools are important facets of recent efforts. In addition, regular monitoring of MRE ensures quality education for all citizens in at-risk areas.

by Samim Hashimi [Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan]

Mine/explosive remnants of war risk education refers to all educational activities seeking to reduce mine and ERW injuries by raising awareness and promoting behavior changes among at-risk groups. The objective of MRE is to provide sufficient information to recognize and report these items to the appropriate authorities. The authorities can then remove the items, making the area safe for people and creating an environment where economic and social development can occur free from the constraints imposed by contamination.

The Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan represents the 40 nongovernmental organizations working in humanitarian mine action in Afghanistan. MAPA is involved in every aspect of mine action, including advocacy, clearance, stockpile destruction, victim assistance and MRE.3 After Coalition Forces ousted the Taliban-controlled government, the Afghan Transitional Authority asked the United Nations to assume control of mine action in Afghanistan. In 2002, the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan, funded by the United Nations Mine Action Service, assumed national responsibility for the coordination of all mine action activities throughout Afghanistan, with the eventual objective of returning responsibility tomapa.4

Before 2003, MRE activities were not standardized within MAPA. Each MRE implementing partner used its own methodologies and materials when delivering MRE. In order to ensure that MAPA's MRE activities met national standards for Afghanistan's MRE, MACCA started working with MAPA MRE-implementing partners and UNICEF. In 2003, MAPA's MRE program shifted from an emergency modality to a long-term, community based approach. This program was designed using the standard mine/ERW package developed by MACCA/MAPA in 2003 to ensure all MERA MRE activities are coordinated under the MACCA umbrella and comply with the new standards package (guidelines and materials) in Afghanistan. This coordination also enabled the creation of a network of community volunteers throughout Afghanistan to act as focal points for mine/ERW-related issues.

The community based MRE program aims to understand the needs of mine/ERW-affected communities, provide MRE training for community members and volunteers, and link mine action and the affected communities to ensure the awareness of threats posed by mines/ERW. The program also encourages community members and volunteers to mobilize, take responsibility for their safety in mine/ERW-impacted areas, educate others on mine/ERW risks, liaise with survey, demining and MRE mine action teams, and share any recent changes with their communities, in particular by reporting mine/ERW as well as new hazards/minefields.

The community based MRE program consists of the following: MAPA mine/ERW risk education implementing partners:

- Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation
- Afghan Red Crescent Society
- Association for Aid and Relief
- Mobile Mini Circus for Children
- Danish Demining Group
- MACCA conducted two Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Beliefs surveys in Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005 and another KAPB survey in 2009 and 2010 to assess the impact of mine/ERW risk education on affected communities as well as returns. The KAP surveys highlight target areas for future MRE programming.6 Following the community based MRE program, all MAPA MRE implementers and other entities including the Ministry of Education, community networks and media, made an effort to extend MRE's reach using standard messages and materials distributed through religious leaders, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, UNICEF vaccination teams, police officers and community based first-aid volunteers of the Afghan Red Crescent Society networks. From 2010–2011, MACCA and the Department of Mine Clearance, under the supervision of the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority, began working with the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the National Solidarity Programme. This last organization works under the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and has 29 facilitating partners in Afghanistan to support MRE activities. Joint field visits and spot checks started in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Department of Mine Clearance and area mine action centers to monitor MRE activities and ensure MRE teams were allocated to the most-affected communities. In 2010, MACCA began working with the Ministry of Education's Educational Radio and Television to release MRE radio and TV advertisements.

MACCA, in collaboration with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Afghanistan's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and MAPA implementing partners, facilitated the Mine Action Sustainable Livelihoods Surveys (2010–2011). The results of the surveys indicate the requirements for prioritization of mine action programs and specify the need to target specific groups with MRE, e.g., reaching women in their homes through MRE female teams and distributing additional MRE materials in contaminated communities.7

The Afghan Mini Mobile Circus for Children performs an MRE presentation.

All photos courtesy of Afghan Mini Mobile Circus for Children.
Priority Settings for Mine/ERW Risk Education

As seen in the previously mentioned surveys, MACCA con-
tinuously analyzes MRE activities with the intent of improving outreach and outcomes. Communities are classified according to their MRE needs. Any community where an incident has oc-
curred every year for the past five years (called a killing zone) is automatically classified as high priority. The classification of remaining communities is dependent on scores resulting from the indicators shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Community need indicators for risk education and associated scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages located within the last 34 months (suffer &amp; victim. not per accident)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities with mines</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities with victims</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community with ERW (Exposure more accident result from ERW than mines)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casualties aged 18 or younger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community population &gt; 200 families</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community with mines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims recorded in the last 24 months (score is per victim, not per accident)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These trained teachers also received MRE kits to use in their classrooms. Recently, a joint action plan was developed be-
tween MACCA/the Department of Mine Clearance and the Ministry of Education to monitor the implementation of MRE activities within target schools.

MRE lessons appear in textbooks that are printed and dis-
tributed to most of the target schools throughout the country. MRE messages have been translated into the Pashto and Dari languages and integrated into the new national curriculum for grades seven to nine (ages 13–15). The MRE lessons in-
cude "Malamat-e-Madani," a program that teaches Afghan children about social issues. MRE messages were also inte-
grated into the curriculum for grades 10–12 (ages 15–18). In-
tegrating MRE messages in grades one to six (ages seven to 12) was delayed due to recent changes the Ministry of Educa-
tion is making in textbooks; these textbooks are expected to be published after the changes are finalized in 2013.

MACCA and the Department of Mine Clearance provide technical and management support aimed at the development of the Ministry of Education Mine Action/MRE Directorate. Ministry of Education mine action advisors are responsible for the national curriculum, school and textbook development,

Continued teacher training and monitoring of MRE activities in schools. The Directorate ensures that the child-
protection officer project is implemented to:

- Provide MRE training for new teachers/new schools
- Conduct refresher trainings and distribute MRE materi-
als to trained teachers throughout Afghanistan
- Regularly monitor MRE activities in Afghanistan
- Report regularly to MACCA and the Department of Mine Clearance on MRE activities within the Ministry of Education, including Directorate and Educational Radio and Television of Afghanistan activities as well as field and mission reports.

Mass Media

To reach the general public and pro-
vide MRE messages in remote or inse-
cure areas, in 2003, mass media began
broadcasting MRE messages at different
times on different days and through dif-
ferent radio and TV channels.

The MACCA MRE department and partner NGOs, including the Associa-
tion for Aid and Relief Japan, devel-
oped the MRE radio messages, which are broadcast through local public and private radio stations, on national TV and in government newsletters. To date, 443 radio programs and 12 TV adver-
isements were developed and broadcast through national radio and TV, as well as Arvaya, Arman, Salam Watandar, Killeed, Takharistan and Lahza radio stations. Countryside coverage focuses on areas with high impact and commu-
nities with no or limited access to MRE teams in the southern, southeastern and eastern areas.

The MRE radio and TV ads tar-
get community members, particu-
larly children. The media spots focus on risky behaviors according to the MACCA/MAPA victim data and risk analysis. They are transmitted in local languages: Dari, Pashto, Uzbek, and Balochi. In addition to these regularly programmed messages, more than 10 radio and TV messages were developed and broadcast supporting the annual International Mine Awareness Day and other mine action related events.

Quality Assurance

MACCA continues the review and updating of Afghanistan Mine Action Standards for MRE. The MACCA MRE department ensures the accreditation of MRE implementing partners through a desk and field review process and pro-
vides feedback to the MACCA Quality Management department and MRE im-
plementing partners.

To ensure the overall quality assur-
ance of MRE activities, MACCA’s MRE/ Victim Assistance department and the Department of Mine Clearance conduct regular monitoring missions of MRE field activities. The MRE department conducts regular MRE technical work-
ning group and materials development review activities, providing a venue for MRE agencies and the government to discuss planning, methodologies, mate-
rials development and implementation.

Conclusion

Following 20 years of MRE delivery, MACCA conducted an evaluation of its MRE activities in 2012 through an in-
dependent organization, Samad Hall.

The evaluation assessed the effecti-

ness of MACCA’s MRE approaches to change public behavior. The final report is available on MACCA’s website.4 An action plan was developed with MAPA implementing partners to execute the recommendations to further strengthen Afghanistan’s MRE activities.

See endnotes page 66

References

1. See endnotes page 66.

2. SAMIM HASSAN
Senior Project Manager-MRE/VA
Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan
PO Box 225,
Kabul / Afghanistan
Email: samimh@unops.org

3. SAMIM HASSAN
Senior Project Manager-MRE/VA
Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan
PO Box 225,
Kabul / Afghanistan
Email: samimh@unops.org

4. SAMIM HASSAN
Senior Project Manager-MRE/VA
Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan
PO Box 225,
Kabul / Afghanistan
Email: samimh@unops.org