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Mine Awareness in Thailand: A Review of Needs and Strategy

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

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MINE AWARENESS IN THAILAND

A REVIEW OF NEEDS AND STRATEGY

Report prepared for the Thailand Mine Action Centre

(DRAFT)

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INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

The Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC) requested the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to review the existing strategies for mine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) awareness education in Thailand and to make recommendations for possible future orientation. The specific terms of reference for the mission were to:

- Review the need for mine awareness in Thailand in the context of the national man action plan, and

- Identify possible future strategies that could enhance the effectiveness of mine awareness in affected communities along the border with Cambodia.

Detailed terms of reference are attached to the present document as Appendix 1.

Methodology of the Assessment

A GICHD staff member and a GICHD consultant (the study team) conducted a mission to Thailand between 28 April and 4 May 2002 on behalf of the TMAC and under the auspices of the Senior Advisor, seconded to the TMAC by the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP).

On 30 April 2002, the study team met with staff from TMAC in Bangkok, representatives of the Ministry of Education, and concerned non-governmental organisations – the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, the General Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation (CCF), and the Thai Campaign to Ban Landmines.

On 1 May 2002, the GICHD staff member conducted a field visit to demining operations in Sa Kaeo province with Humanitarian Mine Action Unit (HMAU) 1. In addition, the GICHD staff member met with representatives from the main hospital and prosthetics workshop in Aranyaprathet, an affected community in Ban Nhong Aean as well as the CCF clearance site near the Sadok Kokthom Castle.

FINDINGS

Finding 1
Thailand is not in an emergency phase as far as mine awareness is concerned but the number of victims each year is significant. There is therefore an ongoing need for mine awareness on a variety of levels.

Preliminary results from the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) indicate that the current rate of landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) victims is around 170 per year. This is around three times the level in Mozambique, and considerably higher than heavily affected countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Albeit on the basis of limited evidence, it appears that the local population living in affected border areas are generally aware of the mine and UXO threat but are forced to take risks due to survival and food pressures or food security issues, therefore a clear and ongoing risk factor exists.

Limited mine awareness has been conducted in Thailand by a number of actors, though there is a continued need to co-ordinate mine awareness efforts and provide services at the following levels:

- National: National awareness of the problem and need for intergovernmental co-ordination and effort in mine action.
- Provincial/District: Greater depth of understanding of the mine problem in the area and need for provincial involvement. Explanation of benefits and incentives in provincial control over mine action.
- Village: Mine awareness and risk-reduction services to the target population. Combination of mass media and direct, participatory education. Specific targeting of risk groups.
- TMAC: Assumption of co-ordination, training and accreditation role in this aspect of mine action.

Recommendation 1
TMAC should develop a national communication strategy for mine awareness that addresses information needs on all levels. A possible strategy would be to develop a year-long campaign of awareness within both the government and local population that culminates in the resource mobilisation opportunities presented by the Fifth Meeting of States Parties in 2003.

Finding 2
Although a number of mine awareness activities have been carried out, none has adequately addressed the baseline data collection needs for mine awareness.

The LIS data collected and housed by the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) system provides a clear and accurate snapshot (albeit one-year-old) of the current victim situation on the border areas. In order for this data to be effectively integrated into the planning process it needs to be constantly revisited and upgraded.

For mine awareness to be both an effective tool of risk reduction and a tool for mine clearance reconnaissance it must be built on the basis of detailed and accurate baseline data. A simple Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice and Beliefs (KAPB) survey (see Appendix 2) would provide baseline information on which such a strategy, as well as further programming messages, could be founded. The necessary social, economic and demographic data could be obtained from existing sources.

Recommendation 2
A KAPB survey should be carried out to provide more detailed baseline planning data for future programmes.

Finding 3
There is no adequate mechanism for systematic, ongoing data gathering for mine awareness/victim assistance in Thailand.

To date, reporting of mine incidents appears ad hoc and sporadic since the completion of research for the Landmine Impact Survey in May 2001. A careful description of the background to any incident is a pre-requisite for monitoring mine awareness and subsequent planning and priority setting purposes for mine action as a whole.

Recommendation 3
As part of the integration process, a standardised victim data form should be elaborated and adopted by all the actors in country.

Finding 4
The need for extensive publication of mine awareness media material appears limited.

Mine awareness media material tends best to be used as a conduit for basic information, i.e. informing people of something they are not yet aware. As the mine awareness needs in Thailand are mainly among adult males who are already aware of the risk, printed media materials are of limited value in changing behaviour.

A process of inter-personal communication at the village level would better suit the desired goal of behaviour change.

Recommendation 4
The mine awareness communication strategy should downplay the use of printed media and focus instead on community mobilisation through interpersonal communication.

Finding 5
There is no ongoing co-ordination of mine awareness activities in Thailand.

Effective mine awareness can only come about through a process of co-ordination and the development of a targeted communication strategy. Further, mine awareness actors should be co-operating on the development of minimum standards, curricula, messages and sectors of operation.

Recommendation 5
TMAC should seek funding for a communication officer with experience in mine awareness for at least six months, and preferably a year. The officer should be allocated the following responsibilities:

- ***Development of a communication strategy for mine awareness in Thailand;***
- ***Adaptation of international standards and guidelines on mine awareness to the Thai context;***
- ***Training and accreditation of organisations engaged in mine awareness;***
- ***Curriculum review, material review and quality assurance;***
- ***Co-ordination of mine awareness programmes in Thailand.***
- ***Contribute to the development of mine victim data collection mechanisms.***

Finding 6
Mine awareness in Thailand should be more closely linked to clearance activities.

To date, mine awareness activities in Thailand have been relatively small scale and ad hoc. They have has also been implemented independently of mine clearance activities. The TMAC should seek to strengthen its co-ordination of mine awareness actors engaged in Thailand, perhaps through monthly meetings, together with all other mine action professionals in the area. This may involve the establishment of an accreditation process for mine awareness, perhaps with technical input from UNICEF.

Mine awareness initiatives should move towards community liaison rather than "pure" mine awareness education. Such an approach demands that teams spend time in dialogue with communities (and the mine clearance teams before, during and after mine clearance operations), ensuring that all parties are clear as to the process, its objectives and progress achieved.

Recommendation 6
In general, future strategy for mine awareness with affected communities should focus to a greater extent on community liaison functions and integrating operations with mine clearance activities.

MINE AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Thailand is affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) along all four of its borders as a result of many decades of armed conflict within and outside the country. Preliminary results from the LIS conducted by Norwegian People's Aid on behalf of the Survey Action Centre identified 530 mine-affected communities in 27 provinces.

Article I. The Impact of Mines and Unexploded Ordnance

Mines and UXO have both a direct and a socio-economic impact in Thailand. The Thai living in affected communities along the various borders have been forced to live with mine and UXO contamination for many years and have therefore adopted certain coping strategies.

The LIS recorded 3,472 mine and UXO *Thai* victims in Thailand[1] covering all periods of armed conflict, of whom some 1,500 were killed. At least 350 people were killed or injured between May 1999 and May 2001, most along the border with Cambodia. The vast majority of incidents are said to result from mines as opposed to UXO.

Some 90 per cent of the total victims were adult males, mostly farmers and labourers collecting forest resources or farming along the border; a small number of women were also killed or injured. A brief analysis of 195 recorded victims during the 18-month period to May 2001 revealed 56 fatalities, and a total of 72 amputees among the survivors. Two-thirds of these 195 victims were reportedly killed or injured collecting food or water.

THE MINE ACTION CONTEXT

National Mine Action Committee

The National Mine Action Committee was set up in August 1998 under the auspices of the Prime Minister[2] and was initially chaired by the Minister of Defence. It brings together all concerned ministries to address the issue of mines and UXO in Thailand. It has not met since a new government was elected in Thailand in 2001, but is likely to do so in the very near future.

Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC)

TMAC was established in Bangkok under the Thai Supreme Command of the armed forces in January 1999. The primary task of the TMAC, which is a predominantly military organisation, is to co-ordinate mine action activities in Thailand, including mine survey and clearance, mine awareness, stockpile destruction, training and victim assistance.[3]

The TMAC is a provisional unit of the armed forces and does not, therefore, receive a regular budget. There are ongoing discussions about the need for the TMAC to embrace aspects of a civilian culture and approach to mine action; this would require Cabinet approval and, probably, the adoption of new legislation.

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[1] There are an unknown number of foreign mine victims, particularly Cambodians.
[2] Order No. 151/1998 from the Office of the Prime Minister, as amended by Order No. 15/2000.
[3] See <www.tmac.go.th>.

The Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA)

IMSMA has been installed in the TMAC and is functioning effectively. In addition, the Thai Campaign to Ban Landmines (TCBL) has envisaged the development of its own database on landmine victims. However, there is, as yet, no standardised victim data form being used in Thailand.

Mine and Unexploded Ordnance Survey

A Landmine Impact Survey of Thailand has been conducted by Norwegian People's Aid. Although research was completed in May 2001, the TMAC is still awaiting the final survey report.

Mine Mapping and Marking

So far, relatively few minefields in Thailand have been marked or retain marking signs. This is one of the tasks of Humanitarian Mine Action Units (HMAUs) deployed to the field.

Humanitarian Demining

Humanitarian demining in Thailand is a combination of mechanical demining, mine detection dogs, and manual demining. To date, almost all mine clearance in Thailand has been carried out by the TMAC, with the Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation also contributing a small scale capacity.

There are two operational HMAUs working on the Thai-Cambodian Border, each made up of 100 staff, including deminers, who were trained by the Thai Royal Academy with support from the United States and RONCO. There are plans to train, equip and deploy an additional three HMAUs to focus on the other areas affected in Thailand, namely the Thai-Myanmar, Thai-Lao and Thai-Malay Borders.

Landmine Stockpile Destruction

Thailand is effectively implementing its obligations to destroy anti-personnel mine stockpiles under its jurisdiction or control, and is expected to complete destruction ahead of the deadline of May 2003. It is retaining just under 5,000 anti-personnel mines for the permitted purposes of training in mine detection and clearance.[4]

Mine and Unexploded Ordnance Victim Assistance

The health care infrastructure in Thailand is quite well developed, though as is often the case suffers from funding shortfalls and increasing demands. The example of the main surgical hospital in Aranyaprathet is broadly representative of the rest of the country.

The hospital is capable of performing surgical amputations, physical rehabilitation, prosthetics and training. The hospital does this essentially free of charge and appears

[4] In accordance with Article 3 of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines.

generally to meet the needs of the community. In addition, the hospital provides services to the Khmer who are injured close to the border area.

Though the services are adequate, there is little follow-up or information on the needs of survivors once they leave the hospital. This sort of epidemiological data should be actively sought, whether via the Thai public health system or through the mine action structure. A specific needs assessment for mine disabled has not been carried out.

Mine Ban Advocacy

Thailand became a State Party to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (the Ottawa Convention) on 1 May 1999. It has offered to host the Fifth Meeting of States Parties in Bangkok in September 2003. In 2001, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines reported that it had not yet enacted domestic legislation to give effect to the requirement for penal sanctions for violation of the Convention. (ICBL, 2001:478)

Mine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education

Limited mine awareness has been conducted in Thailand by a number of actors. There is a continued need to co-ordinate mine awareness efforts and provide services on the following levels:

- National: National awareness of the problem and need for intergovernmental co-ordination and effort in mine action
- Provincial/District: Greater depth of understanding of the mine problem and need for provincial involvement. Explanation of benefits and incentives in provincial control .
- Village: Mine awareness and risk-reduction services to the target population
- TMAC: Assumption of co-ordination and leadership position in this aspect of mine action.

Risk-taking Behaviour

Knowledge of risk-taking behaviour is essential to designing a communication strategy for mine awareness, including the messages to be disseminated. Are people being injured because they are unaware of the mine and UXO threat; because they are unaware of safe behaviour around mines and UXO; because they are reckless; or because they have no alternative to intentional risk-taking? This information is typically collected in a mine awareness needs assessment or by a specific KAPB (Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, Beliefs) survey.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a major percentage of the victims are the result of intentional risk-taking behaviour in mine-affected areas as a result of survival pressures and food security concerns.

Target Groups

Children in the mine-affected areas in Thailand should not be heavily targeted by mine awareness since they are a negligible risk category according to available statistics. The highest risk group appears to be adult males between 20 and 40 years of age.

Available communication channels

There is a relatively high degree of literacy in Thailand and there are a number of mass media channels. Television, radio and newspaper (local) would all be an appropriate medium for the target audience. In addition, the village level civilian protection infrastructure is also a potential source.

Schools, although a context that is accessible for which is it relatively easy to design a strategy, should not be the first choice communication channel as children make up a very small percentage of victims.

Existing Capacity

There is a limited existing capacity for mine awareness in Thailand, which could be strengthened through effective training and co-ordination. It should be noted, though, that Thailand has considerable capacity for media, education and public health communication programmes as evidenced by the very successful HIV/AIDS campaigns run in the country over the past decade.

Whatever path is charted for mine awareness in the future, genuine training must be based on internationally-recognised standards and curricula. Accordingly, the TMAC should seek funds for, or the secondment of, a mine awareness communication specialist, who could provide the necessary technical expertise.

Key Actors and Ongoing Initiatives

The **Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC)**, based within the Asian Institute of Technology, carried out mine awareness activities between December 1999 and September 2001 using funding partially from the Thai Government and partially from the private sector. A total of 13 training seminars of two days each gave instruction to government officials from the provincial level in various aspects of the landmine problem, including how to communicate mine awareness messages. A trainer from the ADPC used United Nations international guidelines on mine awareness to prepare the course, which received input from an experienced mine awareness programme manager based on Cambodia.

In addition, the programme used radio and the press to disseminate mine awareness information. A poster drawing contest was organised in Se Keao province for schoolchildren. An evaluation workshop held in the province in November 2001 after the programme had ended recommended that mine awareness activities should be organised in schools.

The **General Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation** has provided mine awareness services in a number of impacted village areas. In addition, it has begun deminer training and currently has 18 demining staff working under the guidance of HMAU 1 on the Thai-Cambodian Border.

Handicap International is carrying out mine awareness in areas along the border with Myanmar.

The **Ministry of Education** is planning extracurricular mine awareness extension activities in primary and secondary schools in the 27 affected provinces but needs technical support. It is their intention to link mine awareness activities to the already-established school safety programme that advises on fire, water, traffic safety and so on.

TMAC HMAUs have previously carried out mine awareness activities, but these have not occurred for more than a year. An extensive publication centre, set up with the support of the United States, is located at Lopburi. This Centre is capable of all manner of media production.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Landmine Monitor Report 2001: Toward a Mine-Free World, Human Rights Watch, Washington DC, August.

UNICEF (1999)
International Guidelines for Mine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education, UNICEF, New York, May.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Terms of Reference for a Community Mine Risk Education Needs Assessment in Thailand

1.0 Introduction

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) is seeking to collaborate with the Thai Mine Action Centre (TMAC) in order to undertake an in-depth needs assessment for mine risk education activities in Thailand.

The GICHD hopes to provide a comprehensive and participatory needs assessment that adds to the existing body of knowledge in Thailand. Further, it is hoped that through the process and development of specific recommendations the local capacity and breadth of experience will be enhanced, this leading to a potentially improved programme.

2.0 Needs Assessment Goals

In addition to the overall process of research and analysis of the current MRE situation in Thailand, the GICHD believes an additional goal of the needs assessment is to improve field-based tools and strategies for community mine risk education through a process of internal staff development. Through the involvement of local operational partners in the development of the methodology and the implementation of the needs assessment we believe the capacity and general understanding of the programme will be enhanced, thus leading to more local involvement in programming issues.

3.0 Intended Beneficiaries of the Needs Assessment

The needs assessment will provide guidance and focus primarily to programme planners and managers within TMAC, but also to the various community mine risk education activities underway. The ultimate beneficiaries of the needs assessment should of course be the affected communities themselves who will benefit from the improved delivery of community mine risk education services.

4.0 Proposed Methodology

Through country specific research that engages discussion with affected communities the needs assessment will document, the current operational status of community mine risk education in Thailand.

The needs assessment will begin with a detailed overview of community mine risk education initiatives, both past and present, highlighting the development of existing community mine risk education initiatives. A detailed implementation plan and participatory methodology can only be developed in close consultation with local partners and adequate time at the beginning of the mission would have to be allotted for this. In general however, there are some broad methodological issues to be considered.

- Undertake an operational review of local media/communication strategies.
- Undertake a needs assessment for media/communication strategies.
- Produce specific recommendations to address findings of the needs assessment.
- Assist in the design of a communication strategy for mine risk education in Thailand.

- Assist in the development of appropriate messages as well as methodologies for community mine risk education in Thailand.

5.0 Proposed Activities

The primary activities of the needs assessment will be to:

- Identify and agree upon participatory methodology for the needs assessment items to be evaluated.
- Identify high need/impact areas for assessment based on results of the Landmine Impact Survey data analysis.
- Though mindful of the contamination in the Lao, Myanmar and Malaysian border areas the assessment will focus primarily on the areas on the border with Cambodia,
- Finalise the report on the needs assessment, including specific recommendations on a communication strategy, messages and methodologies.

6.0 Timeframe and Assessment Team

The review team will be composed of two individuals, with collective experience in mine risk education, evaluation and assessment, impact survey and previous work in Thailand. Further, it is the intention of the assessment team to engage in the field needs assessment over an approximately two-week period.

Reporting and final writing of the report will take place back in Geneva and will be completed within two weeks of the mission's end.

7.0 Output

The initial output of the needs assessment will be a detailed report with recommendations.

Appendix 2. A Sample KAPB Survey from Eritrea

INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRE
KAPB ON MINES AND UXO

Interviewer name:	Date:
Organisation:	
Location/village:	Sub-zone:
Zone:	

Introduce yourself to the interviewee and explain: who you are, for which organization you work, purposes of this interview.

First of all, you ask some information about the person you are going to interview. Explain that all information is confidential, and that his/her name will not be asked.

Age:	Sex:	M	F
Occupation:			
Education level:			

Start now the questionnaire. Use the instructions in italic to complete it. Whenever there is a , tick the appropriate answer.

1. Have you ever heard about mines/UXO?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If you have, can you describe them?

2. What can mines/UXO do?

(Do not read answers; tick what the person mentions)

Kill you
Maim you
Nothing
Don't know
Other specify) _____

3. Where mines and UXOs are most likely to be?

(a) Trenches
Abandoned houses
(b) Military posts
Destroyed bridges
Riverbanks
Water points
I don't know
Others (specify)_____

4. How are places where there are mines and UXO marked?

(Wait for the response and tick the mentioned one. DO NOT READ OPTIONS!!)

Warning sign
Red flag
Cans
Crossed sticks
Piles of stones
Skull and crossbones
Painted stones
Others (specify)_____

5. What would you do if you see a mine and you were in a safe place?

(*Wait for the response and tick the mentioned one. DO NOT READ OPTIONS!!)*

Run away/go back
Continue on my way
Go and tell a friend/neighbours
Go and tell the local authorities (moukhtar, UNIFIL, army)
Mark the spot in some way
Take the mine/UXO to authorities/police
Take the mine/UXO home
Don't know
Other (specify)_____

6. What would you do if you think you are in a minefield?

(*Wait for the response and tick the mentioned one. DO NOT READ OPTIONS!!)*

Stop, stand still and shout for help
Go to a safe area
Retrace my steps carefully
Don't know
Others (specify)_____

7. If you saw a friend or family member lying injured in a minefield, what would you do?

(Do not read answers; tick what the person mentions)

Run to their assistance
Run away
Get an expert/deminer
Don't know
Others (specify)_____

8. What makes a mine/UXO explode?

(Do not read answers; tick what the person mentions)

Tampering with it
Throwing things at the mine
Fire
Pressure of foot

Movement of the mine
Pulling a wire
Don't know
Others (specify)_____

9. How can you avoid a mine/UXO accident?

(Do not read answers; tick what the person mentions)

Walking on known/used paths
Asking locals about dangerous areas
Keep away from suspicious/marked areas
Don't know
Others (specify)_____

10. Why do people risk going into dangerous areas?

(*Do not read answers; tick what the person mentions*)

Farming
Grazing cattle
Fetching water

Hunting ڤ
Making a journey ڤ
Don't know ڤ
Other ڤ

Appendix 3. Glossary of Acronyms

ADPC	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
CCF	General Chatichai Choonhavan Foundation
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
HMAU	Humanitarian Mine Action Unit
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
KAPB	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, Beliefs (survey)
LIS	Landmine Impact Survey
MRE	mine-risk education
NMAC	National Mine Action Committee
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
TMAC	Thailand Mine Action Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UXO	unexploded ordnance