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Unsung Hero: Elnur Gasimov

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Spacetoon Kids TV: Educating Kids on ERW

by Daniele Ressler | Mine Action Information Center |

Spacetoon is known to many across the Arab world for its television channel that is geared toward children, Spacetoon Kids TV. This channel is transmit
ted to over 50 million people in the Middle East and North Africa and features cartoons dubbed into Arabic and child-appropriate TV programs. The objectives of Spacetoon Kids TV include being educational, family-friendly and acceptable to Arab culture; promoting positive social values such as tolerance and teamwork; and inspiring creative Spacetoon Kids TV and its larger parent media company, Spacetoon Media Group, strive to communicate effectively timely messages to parents and children alike.7

Lebanon faces a post-conflict situation in which the need for MRE is great—especially for children. According to the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre of South Lebanon, children have accounted for seven of the 23 fatalities and 49 of the 136 injuries as of November 13, 2006.8 Cluster submunitions can be particularly dangerous because some may resemble toys due to their small size and colorful ribbon. Children playing may find these curious items and touch them, which can detonate the unexploded ordnance.

Spacetoon Kids TV recognizes the need in Lebanon for MRE for children. Hadi and Allawama say that at the Regional Office in Jordan, “we have a full package campaign designed especially for Lebanese children including TV spots, posters, flyers, activity books and notebooks.” The company is looking for donors who are interested in dis
cussing their educational materials, which are designed to provide MRE in Arabic using child-friendly and culturally sensitive techniques with cartoon characters and popular programming.

Spacetoon’s Regional Office has experience providing MRE and awareness-raising campaigns about the dangers of mines and explosive remnants of war through its work with Iraqi children. RONCO Consulting Corporate, which the U.S. Department of State funded two projects in 2004 through Iraq’s National Mine Action Authority and the Ministry of Planning, and in 2005 Mines Advisory Group funded a one-year project through the Iraq Health and Social Care Organization.

Conclusion

With the help of new donor sponsors, Spacetoon’s Regional Office in Jordan plans to address the urgent need of ensuring children’s safety in Lebanon, as well as continue to deliver MRE activities in Iraq where children are also at great risk.

See Endnotes, page 113

Elnur Gasimov is all too familiar with the physical pain of being involved in a UXO incident. In 1993, his family was living in an area of military con
flict in the Republic of Azerbaijan. When he was 13, a dummy metal object along the road caught his attention. Unknown to Gasimov at the time, it was filled with an unexploded hand grenade.

Some areas were occupied by Armenian forces and there were a lot of military munitions spread around. At that time, there was no mine
kiddish education in Azerbaijan.” Gasimov recalls. This lack of MRE proved to be very dangerous for the young Gasimov. When he tried to touch the unknown object, it exploded, causing him to lose three fingers on his right hand. After receiving treatment in a local military hospital for about one month, Gasimov was able to return to school and finish his education.

Seven years after the incident, Gasimov made the decision to purs
ue a career in mine action. “One day I got an encouraging opportun
ity to join the humanitarian mine action movement. I started working with a national NGO [non-governmental organization] and eventually with ANAMA.”

In 2000 after graduating from university, Gasimov began working as a surveyor for the International Eurasia Press Fund—an NGO working under the ANAMA umbrella. Gasimov briefly explained his work at the IEFP. “One year after starting, I worked as a surveyor around the border collecting information from villages about contaminated land and mine victims.” After a year with the IEFP, Gasimov went to work with ANAMA as an instructor in humanitarian demining with the monitoring and training team. As part of his work as an instructor,
Gasimov's commitment to this work in mine action helped him receive the promotion to Team Leader of the Training and Quality Assurance Team at the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), an important component of the mine action program in Azerbaijan. The T&QA Team at ANAMA was created specifically to oversee the clearance operation of the demining companies and to identify and address any problems that arise during the de-mining process.

As part of his training for the T&QA Team at ANAMA, Gasimov attended a number of courses in mine action. He provides the following description of the main functions of this team: “We conduct trainings, work on capacity building, conduct monitoring evaluations at a year or two, and ensure that the land clearing by the demining companies has been done in accordance with the National and International Mine Action Standards.” He adds, “We make sure that nothing remains and there was no ordnance missed.”

Gasimov recognizes mine clearance is at its most difficult undertaking, as it is marked by unexplored barriers. “All of my achievements in this field have been so far a mysterious process. We work, we lose, and we learn.” Sometimes we learn [by making] mistakes, but our first goal is to make the land free from mines using the accepted standards. Gasimov is happy to dedicate his life’s work to the de-mining operations that are so harmful. “Each destroyed mine and each neutralized piece of ordnance means someone’s rescued life or protected health.”

In spite of the difficulties that accompany working in minefields, Gasimov feels his work as mine activist has been rewarding. He hopes one day all countries, including his own, will be free from the complications indicated by mines and UXO. The young T&QA Team Leader would also like to see the injury and death caused by mines and UXO cease from the world. “Some of our people will try and reach us to help their animals and they are injured by landmines,” Gasimov laments. “It is very hard.”

When asked about his suggestions for the mine-clearing community, Gasimov believes communication is essential to solving the mine problem. “My suggestion is to work closely, share the experience from other countries, and to work as one force against the problem. We can learn lessons that we have learned so that others do not have to learn from our own mistakes.”

It is Gasimov’s sense of hope, compassion and unity that makes him a valuable member of the demining community. He not only contributes, he uses his knowledge and dedication to the field, but he also has taught mine victims that recovery from tragic situations is still within each. See Endnotes, page 111.