November 2006

A Change of Heart

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol10/iss2/30

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This project focuses on the population mainly affected by the mine and UXO risks, as identified by the Landmine Impact Survey. The overall goals of the project are to contribute to the national reduction of mine and UXO-related accidents in the affected communities of Somaliland. The project aims to provide an adequate and effective exposure to MRE in children 5–14 years of age working as herders in affected communities in Awdal, Togdheer, Sahil and Galbiso districts of Somaliland. Being MRE they are often not aware of the danger, and children tend to ramper with pieces of UXO or anti-tank/anti-personnel mines.

Another target of MRE is adult and young adults aged 14–29. Repackaging around 30 percent of all mine and UXO survivors, they are often in the same area. This group is not aware of the nature of the threat of the location of dangerous mined areas. Other groups, the little children from these communities and refugees and the population in general, especially people who have never been educated on mines and UXO dangers.

In January 2006, the two teams from Radio Hargeisa and HAVOCO conducted an Ambiance Feedback Survey in 32 highly and moderately mine-affected villages/communities in the Galbiso region (Hargeisa area) and including Gedalka Dheenta village. The teams met with Dahib Mohamed Geele’s village,

emphasizing their objective was to create a safe environment for its inhabitants. During the survey, the team also collected raw data to be used for the production of MRE radio programmes such as interviews and dramas. The team sought to discover how mines/UXO affected the area. During his interview, Gele admitted he had hidden some UXO items on his farm and said he wanted to hand over the UXO to the demining agencies.

Radio Hargeisa did not notify the authorities; instead, it aired the interview with Gele three weeks after the visit. Onaila Jamal Enna, DDG Operations Manager, stated that the programme and telephoned Handicap International’s MRE team to identify the person who admitted to hiding UXO to hand over the UXO to the demining agencies. Together in late February, HI’s MRE team, SMAC Deputy Manager, DDG Operations Manager, a Radio Hargeisa journalist and a representative from Somaliland National Television went to Gedalka Dheenta and met with Gele. He showed them the stockpile, and the DDG Quick Response Team collected the UXO.

Later, the Radio Hargeisa journalist interviewed Gele again, asking how he felt and what perspectives he could provide to other communities with UXO in their area or their homes. He replied that he was proud to hand over the UXO. He said he hid the UXO under the tree to prevent injuries to local children. He explained that he was very proud to hand over the UXO. He said he hid the UXO under the tree to prevent injuries to children. Recently, however, he had begun to think the hidden UXO was not secure enough, that someday heavy rain or children might bring them up and it might kill or injure them. So he decided to hand over the UXO and decided to turn the items of UXO over to authorities.

A CHANGE OF HEART

by Darsh Mohamed Odwaa

Handicap International

Gedalka Dheenta is a small village in Somaliland located 45 km

northwest (126) east of Hargeisa in a mountainous area on the road between Hargeisa and Barwa. With a population of approximately 390 inhabitants according to the Landmine Impact Survey conducted in 2003, its climate, usually dry, was suitable for the capital of Somaliland to sell their products. The village’s main income comes from small irrigation farms surrounding the village where rice, fruits and vegetables, such as papayas, oranges, greens, and tomatoes, as well as some fish farming.

During the civil war that broke out in Somalia in 1988, this farming community was a battlefield area; former Somali National Movement camps were located nearby. When the SNM captured Somaliland (previously the northern sector of Somalia) in 1991, SNM troops scattered into towns, leaving empty camps open to the public.

Mohamed Gahar Geele was an SNM guerrilla fighter and

lived in Gedalka Dheenta. He later said journalists had inter-

viewed him on television in navy-laden cars. In 1995, the

war was over, and he came upon several areas of unexploded ordnance that he collected and kept buried under a tree in his farm. To keep it safe, he buried it as well. From 2000 to 2005, demining agencies, especially the Danish Demining Group, visited the village several times to advise and remove unexploded ordnance, but Gele never mentioned this UXO.


If MRE teams also developed an MRE radio pro-

gramme that continuously ran on the local radio. The produc-

tion teams of Radio Hargeisa and HAVOCO Voluntary Youth Committee, a local non-governmental organization, issue these public-service announcements every three months and then Police Explosive Teams and demining agencies’ mobile teams collect the UXO from areas. The MRE is directed at the people as a whole, and Radio Hargeisa journalists and HAVOCO youth groups were trained to produce MRE radio programmes such as dramatic programmes, radio spots and feature programmes.

This project focuses on the population mainly affected by the mine and UXO risks, as identified by the Landmine Impact Survey. The small goals of the project are to contribute to the traditional mine-action efforts in decreasing the socio-economic impact of landmines and UXO and to contribute to the reduction of mine/UXO-related accidents in the affected communities.