

Spacetoan Kids TV: Educating Kids on ERW

by Daniele Ressler [Mine Action Information Center]



This image was one used for MRE in Iraq in 2005 for MAG. The main “glowing ball” character, Taif, was featured in the MRE campaign and delivered all the safety messages to children through posters, TV cartoon spots and copybooks.
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Spacetoan is known to many across the Arab world for its television channel that is geared toward children, Spacetoan Kids TV. This channel is transmitted 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 Spacetoan Kids TV include being educational, family-friendly and acceptable to Arab culture; promoting positive social values such as tolerance and teamwork; and inspiring creativity. Spacetoan Kids TV and its larger parent media company, Spacetoan Media Group, strive to communicate with children using age-effective and nurturing methods through a variety of communication media.

One important part of Spacetoan Kids TV is its production of public-service programs and announcements that promote issues such as appropriate childcare and respect for the environment. Organizations such as the Arab League, UNICEF and World Health Organization have sponsored Spacetoan advertising and announcements to raise awareness and educate children on a variety of humanitarian issues.

Spacetoan and MRE in the Middle East

Among other educational campaigns, the Spacetoan Kids TV Regional Office in Jordan is working to bring a specific kind

of message to kids: mines and UXO are dangerous. The Jordan office is the only regional office responsible for developing humanitarian-specific educational programs and campaigns on topics such as democracy, human rights and mine risk education, which can then be broadcast to any or all the Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa through Spacetoan media. Hussam Hadi, Regional Manager, and Rami Allawama, Program Planning Manager, say that due to the dangers the Lebanese and Iraqi children face these days, they feel a great need to warn them about the dangers of cluster bombs.¹

The Spacetoan Jordanian office creates humanitarian and educational messages that donors and nongovernmental organizations want to disseminate. The company staff designs a storyboard and characters who deliver these important messages, such as MRE, to children throughout the Arab regions via cartoons, TV documentaries and programs, posters, leaflets, calendars, gifts, activity packets and more. Hadi and Allawama note, “Because the children in the Arab world watch and love this channel, its characters and programs, we are able to communicate effectively timely messages to parents and children alike.”¹

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, 2006.² 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.

Spacetoan 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.”¹ The company is looking for donors who are interested in distributing their educational materials, which are designed to provide MRE in Arabic using child-friendly and culturally sensitive techniques with cartoon characters and popular programming.

Spacetoan’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 Corporation and 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 Iraqi Health and Social Care Organization.

Conclusion

With the help of new donor sponsors, Spacetoan’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 still at great risk. ♦

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