Landmine and unexploded ordinance (UXO) contamination in Somaliland is the result of the 1964 and 1977–78 border wars with Ethiopia and the 1988–91 civil war between the Siyad Barre regime and the Somali National Movement. The Barre regime and post regime of the landmines, using mines to threaten the civilian population and protect military installations and civilian infrastructure against SNM attacks. The Republic of Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in May 1991, however, since the international community does not recognize it as an independent state, it is unable to accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Somaliland officials have expressed their commitment to the Convention, but no legal measures have been taken to prohibit use, production, trade or stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. Somaliland has also not formally acceded to the Geneva Call-proclaimed “Day of Commitment” to the Convention. According to Nick Bateman, a representative for Danish Demining Group, the biggest blockages due to landmines are old roads that were mined during the civil wars, but communities quickly set up decontamination activities to manage the problem. This has largely been achieved, ERW in Somaliland is now a "minor blip on the humanitarian screen." DDG workers are enthusiastic about the achievements.

Mine-risk Education

MRE in Somaliland has been unplanned and limited and no national standards have been developed. UNICEF and HI are highly active in MRE, collaborating with SMAC. The Village by Village EOD Clearance Program delivers MRE through community radio. Barman says MRE is done on a limited scale because communities are managing the ERW contamination so there is no need for large-scale MRE. The MRE message is kept simple: “Don’t touch. Report.” The Village by Village program has conducted 2,600 community-based mine risk education activities to establish sustainable EOD and mine clearance teams based on existing local police and army capacity, and the creation of mine action centers in affected regions to coordinate activities. The UNDP focuses on local and national capacity building. In southern and central Somalia, an untenable security situation blocked coordinated mine-risks planning throughout 2004. The UNDP is planning coordination with regional authorities and has begun discussions with the Transitional Federal Government. Until a central mine-action authority is created, the UNDP and non-governmental organizations will carry out mine-action coordination in these areas. It is hoped that between 2006 and 2008 a mine-action center will be established in each of three different regional capitals.

To view endnotes and references for this article, visit http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/10/1/profiles/somaliland/somaliland_profile.html.

Newswire Canadian Group Holds National Yard Sale for Peacekeepers

The Canadian Landmine Foundation recently held a special event to mark the 50th anniversary of Canadian peacekeeping efforts. Between May 19 and August 9, CLMF encouraged Canadians to register their yard sales online and receive a tax benefit for any proceeds that were then donated to the group.

The entire project is designed to increase Canadian awareness of the country’s tradition of peacekeeping and current peacekeeping and current mine-action projects. Learn more at www.clmf.org.