

Provision of Emergency Risk Education to IDPs and Returnees in Ukraine

by Abigail Jones and Edward Crowther [Danish Demining Group/Danish Refugee Council]



Volunteers conduct an MRE session with children, 2015.
Photo courtesy of Sasha Lobov.

While no official survey of the landmine/explosive remnants of war (ERW) situation has been carried out in Ukraine, the humanitarian impact is significant. Mines and booby traps strategically block access to essential infrastructure as well as to forested areas where people gather wood to heat their homes. Important infrastructure across the Donbas region, one of Europe's most heavily industrialized areas, is contaminated, slowing repairs and reconstruction around power stations and water-treatment facilities, and seriously affecting the local population. Similarly, cluster munition use in urban and rural areas blocks access to family allotments and farms.

The media, humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civilian volunteer networks report mine/ERW casualties in Ukraine. Different government ministries formally collect data on these incidents, but it is not available

publically. Although no clear baseline exists, the number of casualties from mine/ERW accidents has risen in recent months as internally displaced persons (IDPs) start to return home, and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of essential infrastructure has taken place. Danish Demining Group's (DDG) informal monitoring of open-source news and data suggests that since May 2014 at least 338 reported accidents occurred involving mines/ERW, with 41 children and 686 adults killed or injured.

A Results-based Approach to MRE

DDG has, over the last 18 months, begun a global change in the way it understands and provides mine risk education (MRE), as explained in a presentation entitled "More than Posters" by Tammy Hall, head of DDG, at the 17th International Meeting of Mine Action National Programme



Training of KAP survey enumerators in Severodonetsk, Ukraine, 2015.
 Photo courtesy of Olena Sadovniko.

Directors and U.N. Advisers in Geneva in February 2015. An earlier article by DDG Chief Technical Advisor Robert Keeley in *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* (Issue 19.2, July 2015), describes the principles of this approach.¹ The DDG MRE program in Ukraine is results-based, and has in turn fed back into DDG’s understanding of how to plan and conduct MRE in other programs.

Implementing the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice Survey

Through a grant funded by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), DDG carried out a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey (KAP) in April 2015, to ensure that MRE messages and methodologies target the needs and capacities of different categories of risk takers in the community. The KAP survey included the following target groups:

- **IDPs:** Adults and children displaced as a result of the conflict, residing in government-controlled areas. IDPs have settled across the country, with the most vulnerable living in collective centers.
- **Returnees:** Adults and children in the process of returning to conflict-affected areas under government

control. Back-and-forth movement and returns continue to be reported from the field, as IDPs and refugees return to secure property, assess the conflict environment and visit relatives either unwilling or unable to leave the conflict zone.

- **Residents:** Adults and children residing in conflict-affected areas under government control, including residents in their place of origin. In terms of residents, limited data is available to show how many people stayed in the regions where the highest intensity fighting took place.

The KAP focused on identifying MRE needs for each affected group, particularly for children aged six to 11 and 12 to 17. While the main focus of the KAP survey was to identify children’s MRE needs, surveyors also took the opportunity to understand more about the risk-taking behaviors of adults.

In total, the KAP survey covered 699 individual interviewees in the government-controlled areas of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. Broad categories of target groups interviewed included a total of 341 IDPs (48.8 percent), 348 residents (49.8 percent) and 10 returnees (1.4 percent) in both



Training of trainers for Luhansk Oblast school teachers, 2015.
 Photo courtesy of Edward Crowther.

oblasts. In Luhansk, 215 were IDPs, 132 were residents and three were returnees, while Donetsk had 125 IDPs, 216 residents and seven returnees. The total sample consisted of 397 (57 percent) female and 302 (43 percent) male respondents.

In eastern Ukraine, the KAP confirmed boys and girls from ages six to 11 are the least aware of the dangers posed by mines/ERW, since a high percentage (42.8 percent) cannot properly identify dangerous items and do not know what is appropriate, safe behavior. The KAP also established that all adult groups and children from the ages of 12 to 17 may be treated as uninformed due to insufficient knowledge about how to handle victims of mine/ERW accidents. A low number of respondents (1 percent), typically males from the ages of 12 to 17 and 35 to 59, admitted **recklessness**. However, analysis of available data on casualties demonstrates that many of the accidents were a result of reckless behavior. Equally, males and females ages 18 to 60 stated survival as justification for their unsafe behavior, citing activities such as farming, grazing

cattle, going to work and gathering firewood. This behavior places these groups in the category of **intentional**. Elderly men ages 60 and over may, as a result of the available data, be characterized as **misinformed**.

Using the Results of the KAP

The findings of the KAP were used to develop an approach that aims to increase safety and security of school-aged children and their parents in and around learning spaces and schools by increasing awareness of mines/ERW. Utilizing the results of the KAP survey ensured that emphasis was placed on key messages covering identified gaps in knowledge among the target population. For example, the KAP determined that knowledge about mine warning signs was insufficient, and emphasis on this has been included in the training. Moreover, many KAP respondents could not recite the correct number to call for the Ukrainian State Emergency Services to report mines /ERW; this has also been given strong emphasis.

“ In eastern Ukraine, the KAP confirmed boys and girls from ages six to 11 are the least aware of the dangers posed by mines/ERW ”



DRC/DDG children's MRE flipchart, 2015.
Photo courtesy of DDG Ukraine.

The project is ongoing and includes five core activities:

- Training of up to 100 teachers and school psychologists as trainers in partnership with the Ministry of Education to ensure that IDP and returnee children are provided with MRE-integrated school activities. So far, 84 teachers and school psychologists across the eastern oblasts most heavily affected by the conflict have received training.
- Training of up to 127 volunteers from Ukrainian NGOs, church-based groups and other community-based organizations working in conflict-hit communities across the eastern oblasts.
- Peer educators in summer camps were trained to ensure the active participation of youth in MRE activities. Summer camps across Ukraine are places where large numbers of IDP children are sent during the summer, and training summer-camp peer educators can provide these children with MRE in an efficient and entertaining way.
- Innovating mine action through Mine Action Applications (MAApps). DDG is designing, developing and piloting an innovative two-way communication web portal and parallel SMS service that aims to improve the service provision and information exchange between conflict-affected people and the mine action operators assisting these communities. MAApps Ukraine is part of a global pilot project on digital applications for mine action.
- In collaboration with UNICEF Ukraine, DDG is working to design and disseminate an information-education campaign through TV as well as digital and print materials to raise awareness on mine/ERW risks and to promote safe practices. The KAP survey indicated a desire to receive MRE messages via channels such as TV and social media.

DDG also works closely with UNICEF in Ukraine in order to standardize the child- and adult-focused MRE materials used by organizations providing MRE across Ukraine. In this respect, the KAP survey is invaluable in driving the design of such materials.

Despite these activities, the amount of MRE provided in the eastern oblasts of Ukraine is insufficient, and DDG receives daily demands from communities and organizations in the conflict-affected areas to provide MRE training or sessions. Under a new EU€1.57 million (US\$1,730,375 as of 22 February 2016) European Union (EU)-funded project, DDG will significantly scale up its activities providing MRE across Donetsk and Luhansk, working with community-based organizations and the school system. Another aspect of the EU project will provide modern equipment and International Mine Action Standards-level training to pyrotechnical units of the state emergency services working in the eastern oblasts. ©

See endnotes page 66

Abigail Jones

Global Risk Education Advisor
Danish Demining Group/Danish Refugee Council
Borgergade 10, 3rd floor
1300 Copenhagen K. / Denmark
Tel: +45 3373 5000
Email: Abigailjonesmreadvisor@gmail.com



Abigail Jones is the global risk education adviser for DDG. She was seconded from the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP) in early 2015 to start up the KAP survey in Ukraine for DDG. Prior to joining DDG, she worked as the program manager for GMAP conducting gender mainstreaming activities globally and for MAG (Mines Advisory Group) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She holds a Master of Science in development studies from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (U.K.).

Edward Crowther

Head of DDG Program
Danish Demining Group
Email: Edward.crowther@drc-ukraine.org



Edward Crowther is DDG's head of program in Ukraine. Prior to joining DDG in Ukraine, he worked with DDG in Afghanistan and The HALO Trust in Angola and Sri Lanka. He holds a Master of Science in development studies from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (U.K.).