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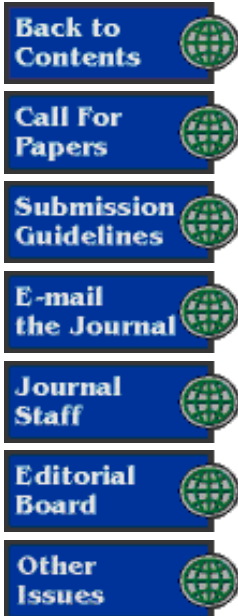
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Aim and Objectives of the Landmine Victims Data Collection

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Introduction

The 20 years of war in Afghanistan, beside other legacies, has left over 850 square kilometers of land and approximately 1,500 villages contaminated with landmines. Although official figures are not available, it is estimated that more than 400,000 people have either been killed or maimed by these perilous weapons. The majority of the over 400,000 victims are civilians, many of whom are women and children. Despite these facts, no proper and reliable data on the landmine victims in Afghanistan has yet been collected by any agency or organization. The Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), with its mandate to conduct landmine-related surveys in Afghanistan and to collect information on landmines and their impact, has collected information on a limited number of landmine victims. Due to financial limitations, this process has been confined to the areas of MCPA's operations only. However, this process can be expanded to collecting information at a country-level if sufficient funding is made available.

With the financial support of the Mine Action Program for Afghanistan, MCPA has initiated a survey to measure the socio-economic impact of landmines and mine clearance operations in Afghanistan in December of 1997. In addition to studying other social and economic impacts of landmines, MCPA has also covered the landmine victims' aspect. The victims' information was collected from their relatives during the first phase of this survey, which was completed in March of 1998. The form was designed from the resulting report to not only cover the landmine survivors, but also to collect information on people killed in landmine accidents.

The nature of humanitarian assistance to landmine victims in a country such as Afghanistan should focus on rehabilitation and development in addition to emergency assistance. On the other hand, to maximize the impact of rehabilitation and development-oriented projects for mine victims, such projects should be implemented based on long-term strategic plans. To ensure the effective use of the limited resources available to mine victims, high-priority targets have to be identified. This is only possible if accurate and reliable information is available on the

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mine victims and their needs. Considerable resources would be wasted if the victims' needs and requirements have not been identified through a systematic data-collection process, and many of the available resources will be wasted if reasonable data is not available at the time of project planning.

Aim and Objectives of the Landmine Victims Data Collection

The aim and objectives of the data collection should be clearly stated prior to the data collection process. The needs and requirements of the victims should be identified, and rehabilitation, development, and social-integration programs for the victims should be recommended based on the analysis of the victims' needs.

At a minimum, data collection should try to achieve the following goals:

- To register human casualties and the reasons behind them,
- To identify and prioritize the needs of the victims,
- To measure the impact of landmines on human beings,
- To define the impacts of ongoing mine-awareness training on the reduction of landmine accidents among people,
- To estimate the rate and the frequency of mine incidents within communities,
- To improve resource allocation and planning capability for mine victims,
- To provide required input to agencies and to plan, implement or assist rehabilitation and development projects for mine victims, and
- To attract more attention and to facilitate fund raising for mine action and related activities.

Achieving these goals will both benefit current landmine victims and help avoid future landmine tragedies.

Types of Data Collection Systems

Data collection in Afghanistan has been classified into three types: up-to-date base-line information, annual data, and regular data.

1. **Base-line Information.** Base-line data is collected only once at the district level. The aim of base-line data is to collect current information on the number of landmine victims involved in accidents. This type of data is collected once and is then stored in a database.
2. **Annual Data.** Annual data on landmine victims is collected once every year. This type of data is preferably collected during the last three months of the year. Any landmine victim data collected during this process is added to already-collected base-line data.
3. **Regular Data.** This type of data is regularly collected on landmine incidents among civilians by MCPA minefield survey teams operating in that area and is reported to MCPA at the end of each mission (in two month periods).

Methodology of Information Collection on Landmine Victims

The data that MCPA minefield survey teams collect on landmine victims in Afghanistan is gathered in a professional manner. The teams use comprehensive questionnaires to collect detailed information on landmine victims and identify the main cause of mine-related incidents. These questionnaires are completed by directly interviewing the victim; if the victim is dead or absent then the information is collected from a close relative or friend of the victim.

Survey Staff Recruitment

Prior to the recruitment of new surveyors, complete job descriptions of surveyors, including their required level of education and qualifications, are announced. The candidates go through prolonged interviews and take tests given by MCPA operations personnel. After their recruitment, surveyors are trained in data collection, interviewing skills, filing forms, etc. A final test is administered to the students at the end of training session, and first priority is given to the students with high marks. Remaining students are kept as reserve surveyors and could be employed only if vacancies arise.

Teams Approach to Communities and Locating the Sources of Information

The survey teams deployed to an area hold meetings with local authorities, tribal leaders, and mosques' Imams to identify any persons involved in a landmine accident. After identifying victims, the team members collect the information either directly from victims or, if the victim is absent or deceased, from their relatives or friends.

Information Collection Process

The surveyors who are trained in interviewing skills ask the interviewee every question on the questionnaire. The collected information is reconfirmed by the interviewee and is stored in the surveyor's file. Photos of all mine victims interviewed by the surveyors are entered into a computerized database for filing and storing. The collected information is then submitted to MCPA regional offices at the end of each survey mission. The information is fully collated by the operations section staff of the MCPA regional offices and is passed on to the MCPA data section

Information Processing

The collected and collated information is entered into the database at MCPA headquarters and is made accessible to any interested agency. The work on scanning photos and linking them with the victim record at the database is in progress and will be completed in the near future.

Assistance for Landmine Victims in Afghanistan

The last 20 years of war has shattered the economy of Afghanistan. Agricultural products, natural resources, trade with other countries, and import and export systems have been severely affected or collapsed. The currency has been devalued from 25 Afghanis to 1 US dollar to 35,000 Afghanis to 1 US dollar. The authorities currently in power are also not financially stable enough to fulfill the needs of the people. The assistance coming through national and international agencies is insufficient to address the requirements of the people and to allow for the implementation of victim rehabilitation projects.

There are no proper vocational training facilities available and no existing programs to assist the victims' social and economical integration into the society.

Currently, there are only a few agencies including the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), that have established prostheses workshops or vocational training centers. MCPA, with the help of Eden Welfare Foundation in November of 1997, has distributed 500 wheelchairs to the landmine victims.

CDAP's implementing partners provide physiotherapy services and orthopedic workshop activities to the disabled and to the landmine victims in Herat, Kandahar, Balkha, Takhar, Wardak, and Ghazni provinces. However, comparing the existing facilities to the number of landmine victims and their needs makes these efforts seem like a mere drop in the bucket. Rather, assisting Afghan victims with integrating into society requires different types of rehabilitation and development projects.

Programs for Mine Awareness

MCPA's 1993 general survey of mine situations in Afghanistan has reported an average of 20 - 25 landmine accidents every 24 hours. The

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mine awareness training and mine-clearance operations taking place in Afghanistan played an important role in decreasing these numbers and has reduced the number of landmine accidents by almost 50%.

Mine awareness training is provided to local populations, newly returned or returning refugees, internally displaced persons, agencies working the mine-contaminated areas, or donor agencies visiting their funded projects in a landmine contaminated area.

The training sessions differ from one another, and they are organized in accordance with the needs and the requirements of the people, the level of education of trainees, and the presence of landmines or unexploded ordnance in or around the area. All reported current civilian accidents are investigated to find the reasons for the occurrence of such accidents. MCPA then uses the findings of these investigations to design special mine awareness programs.

Methodology of Mine Awareness Training

After receiving requests for mine clearance from the local or central authorities or receiving new reports of landmine accidents from the ICRC or any other sources, the Mine Action Program revises its operational plans and arranges the deployment of mine awareness teams for conducting mine awareness training sessions and minefield survey teams for mine-situation reconnaissance.

Mine awareness training is conducted in

- Afghan refugee camps,
- schools, hospitals, and mosques, and
- governmental and non-governmental organization offices.

Mine awareness training is conducted through

- media, both local and international (BBC),
- megaphones at emergency situations, and
- warnings or information signs at busy locations.

Using these measures can greatly decrease the numbers of persons injured or killed by landmines.

Conclusion

To assist landmine victims with re-integrating into society both socially and economically, focus from emergency assistance should be shifted to long-term rehabilitation programs that enable the landmine victims to earn a living and to contribute to the development of society. Sustainable

rehabilitation projects, such as handicrafts, tailoring and other vocational training, could play an effective role in the economic integration of landmine victims back into society.

Mine awareness training, which is also a key component of any mine action program in the world, plays a leading role in the reduction of mine incidents among civilians. In the case of Afghanistan, it reduced the landmine accidents since 1993 by almost 50%. To minimize landmine accidents among civilian populations and assist mine clearance operations, efforts should be maximized to enhance and improve mine awareness training programs as well.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will hopefully help improve both the quality of mine awareness programs and the quality of the lives of landmine victims.

- It is recommended that all global anti-landmine campaigns should be supported morally and financially.
- Landmine victims should be given more opportunities to participate in mine awareness meetings, seminars, conferences, and workshops in order to share their experiences, to exchange their views with each other, to discover solutions for their problems and develop victim assistance programs according to their own needs and requirements.
- Mine awareness organizations everywhere must undertake fund-raising campaigns in order to secure sufficient funds for the implementation of rehabilitation projects for the social and economic integration of landmine victims into society.
- Donor communities are asked to focus on funding long-term, income-generating, and vocational projects rather than the short-term relief projects.
- Workshops on the development of effective, long-life, and easy-to-maintain prosthesis for mine victims should be organized.

While none of these recommendations is a "quick fix" solution to the landmine problem, all of them can lead to long-term successes in reducing the annual numbers of people killed or maimed by landmines.
