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From Interventions to Integration: Mine Risk education and Community Liaison

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From Interventions to Integration: Mine Risk Education and Community Liaison

Mine risk education has become an integral part of humanitarian mine action, as emphasised by the recent adoption of the International Mine Action Standards on MRE.1 This article explores the development of MRE from the perspective of one HMA agency: the Mines Advisory Group. As with many other HMA operators, in MAG programmes, MRE and community liaison—alongside Technical Survey, explosive ordnance disposal and area clearance—have been part of MAG’s overall strategy to reduce risk in communities affected by the explosive remnants of war. The article looks at how MAG’s approach to MRE has developed and shifted in focus from MRE to community liaison, unlike, for example, the Mines Advisory Group sees as being far broader in scope than MRE.

by Jo Durham [Mines Advisory Group]

MAG’s mine risk education programmes have been based on the medical model of injury prevention and supported by situative theories of behaviour change such as the Health Belief Model2 and Social Cognitive Theory.3,4 Cognitive theories of behaviour change such as the Health Belief Model are based on the idea that people are more likely to adopt health-related behaviours if they believe there is a likelihood of positive outcomes for themselves and that the benefits of action outweigh the costs of action. MAG’s mine risk education programmes were based on the idea that people are more likely to adopt mine risk education programmes if they believe that there is a likelihood of positive outcomes for themselves and that the benefits of action outweigh the costs of action.

As with many mine risk education programmes in the 1990s, MAG MRE programmes targeted mainly the end users or recipient communities through what was essentially a message-based process. Most MAG programmes utilised two main strategies:

1. Public awareness approaches, including the use of the mass and traditional media, such as radio and television
2. Educational approaches (i.e., developing school-based curricula)

Concept Supporting MAG’s Community Liaison Approach

Unlike IMAS, MAG views community liaison as an essential part of every MRE programme. In MAG’s perspective, MRE is a component of international mine action standards. According to the organization, the community liaison team is concerned with the safety of communities affected by explosive remnants of war. MAG CL teams have either operated as stand-alone units or they have been integrated with other parts of MAG’s operations. In northern Iraq, MAG has a community-based programme working with schools and educational institutions.

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The following figure illustrates the relationship between MRE and Community Liaison:

![Image: A diagram illustrating the relationship between MRE and Community Liaison]
New playgrounds in mine-affected areas of Croatia provide a safe gathering place for children, families and the community. This local project of the Croatian Red Cross helps to bring a little more carefree childhood to another part of the world.

Since 1997, the Croatian Red Cross has conducted mine risk education cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross in 14 mine-contaminated counties and in 49 towns and municipal Red Cross branches. Sixty-five MRB-trained instructors and local Red Cross heads are providing education on and promotion of safe behavior for children and adults in order to protect them from the threat they are facing.

The MRE program of the Croatian Red Cross is one of the elements of the national mine risk education system of the Republic of Croatia. In 2001, the Croatian Red Cross helped to pass MRE into law.

Thanks to the riches of ideas, interesting Red Cross “local projects” (like the children’s playgrounds) encourage exhibitions, concerts, theatre performances, plays, sporting competitions and other events in the community. So far, almost 100,000 visitors have attended these events and learned about the danger of mines.

Developing a new playground and gathering space for families has made a significant difference in the quality of life for the people of Croatia. It is an idea that can help other war-torn and mine-affected countries around the world. In fact, UNICEF, with additional funding from the Canadian Mine Action Development Agency, recently began setting up “alternative safe play areas” in the Gaza Strip, bringing MAG’s mine action strategy to life.

See “References and Endnotes,” page 108
That Landmine Thing: Students Take On the Landmine Crisis, Hudson and Fuentes [from page 77]

Endnote

From Interventions to Integration: Mine Risk Education and Community Liaison, Durham [from page 80]

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Playgrounds Without Mines, Roseg [from page 81]

Endnote