April 2001

The Direct Approach from Kosovo: Mine Awareness Education

Philip Dive
HMD Response

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
The Direct Approach from Kosovo: Mine Awareness Education

HMD Response’s Philip Dive sees the inherent value in the direct approach in mine awareness training and urges the mine action community in Kosovo not to look past this approach.

By Philip Dive, Senior Mine Awareness Educator

Collectively, the managers of mine awareness education programs (MAEP) have helped the people of Kosovo focus on the mine threat through a complex web of approaches. These approaches include child-to-child, soldier-to-child, mother-to-child, puppet theatre, mine museums, and summer days. Other MAEP initiatives utilize soccer players and mosques as the messengers of mine awareness. Still another program educates teachers about mines in preparation for the arrival of mine awareness in school curricula. All of the above programs have been accredited by the U.N. Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC), and together form one of the most comprehensive mine awareness packages in the world.

Among all this creative, progressive and radical thinking, there may be the danger that the so-called “direct” approach has been made redundant in the rush for an “interactive” MAEP. The direct approach simply explains the situation concerning nearby mine fields and offers advice on safe behavior to the adults of a community in the hope that they and their families can avoid these areas until demining agencies are able to clear them.

While the initial estimates for landmine clearance in Kosovo predicted that UNMACC would be busy for many years, more recent studies lean toward a less pessimistic outlook, perhaps requiring only another year to clear the vast majority of mine fields. After January 2001, it is calculated that only about 20 percent of the known mine-affected areas will remain. All of these locations are in the mountainous border areas. In Kosovo, the highest-risk groups tend to be men—usually young agricultural workers—who live non-technical, rural lives. For this group the direct approach is the only guaranteed way to exchange mine-related information and therefore should form the foundation for a national strategy.

This article acknowledges that during the evolution of a MAEP the direct approach often lacked sensitivity to local concerns, tended to be “ad hoc” and offered no alternatives to help change people’s risky behavior. These concerns focus on the lack of management during the early programs, rather than the innate potential of the direct approach itself. To be fair, though, any approach will fail if poorly implemented. As for viable alternatives, I know of no current program, direct or community-based, that actually offers the people of Kosovo a sustainable second option that allows for a real change to their daily mine-affected routine.

The MAEP presented by HMD Response in this article views the simplicity of the direct approach as of lasting importance because mine awareness does not need to be complicated. The direct approach can demonstrate a very high level of awareness of local conditions and can be swift to implement. With competent management, the direct approach can also be easy to administer, control and evaluate.

THE DIRECT APPROACH—MAEP OUTLINE

Program Location

HMD Response’s MAEP is located in the Municipality of Dragash in the south of Kosovo. Dragash is linguistically, politically and culturally divided into two parts. Its 34,000 residents are divided into the Albanian speaking majority residing in 19 villages to the north (an area called Opoja) and the non-Albanian speaking minority (the Goranis) who live in 19 villages to the south. Within the mountains that surround Dragash, many of which reach altitudes of up to 2,500 meters, these 38 villages coexist with few points of contact other than their faith in the Koran.

Purpose

HMD Response MAEP exists to help the people of Opoja and Gora to avoid becoming casualties of mines and UXO through education, mine awareness and other relevant information.

Structure

The program consists of four elements:
1. Information Center
2. Village Mine Education Teams
3. Clearance Information Liaison
4. Mine Awareness Truck

Activities

Static Display: Provide a static UXO and mine display for the public to visit at any time.

IJSMA Maps: Inform the public of known UXO and mine locations.

Dangerous Area Reports: Process UXO and mine information provided by members of the public.

Materials: Design, test and produce additional and appropriate UXO and mine awareness materials.

Establish dialogue: Talk with president and/or religious leader.

Data Gathering: Compile a questionnaire to find out the local level of mine awareness.

Program Presentation:
A 25-minute formal presentation.

Mingle:
A three-hour village visit stopping people in the street/coffee bars to discuss the mine situation.

Liaison:
Visit demining operations.

Information Exchange:
Help both the demining organization and the public with the exchange of mine related information.

UNMACC:
Completion of UNMACC forms clarifying public awareness of clearance operations close to their homes.

Maintain Public Interest:
Use a 4-ton truck as a large mobile platform from which mine related information is offered to the public. The truck is parked at sports events, market places and busy road junctions.

Curriculum

Through the four program elements the public should be able to do the following as a result of the HMD Response MAEP:

• Be able to recognize dangerous areas through warning signs.
• Be able to recognize mine fields through the presence of warning signs.
• Be able to take appropriate action after realizing that you are in a mine field.

Understand safe behaviors:
• Understand that the best solution is to stay out of mined areas.
• Understand that safe paths must be used at all times.
• Understand that mines and UXO must not be touched.
• Be able to recognize above ground and below ground mines.
• Be able to recognize cluster bombs and grenades.
• Be able to recognize ammunition, fuses and rockets.

Know the local mine field situation:
• Know the agencies that are demining Dragash.
• Know the locations of mine fields in Opoja and Gora.
• Know that mine warning signs must be left in place.

Know that clearance is a slow and dangerous activity.

Management

The above results are implemented via three sequential objectives:

Sequential Objectives

1. Organize, equip and train a specific team for a public information program in the Dragash Municipality.
2. Implement a public information program that is focused on MAE to the many communities within Dragash.
3. To depart from Dragash in an organized and planned manner ensuring that, where possible, non-technical tangible assets are disposed of in the best possible way.

Each objective has associated performance indicators that are tested by the director of HMD Response during his three planned visits to the program. These verification visits are copied to our donor.
The Direct Approach from Kosovo

As a part of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo’s education, training and management style was summed up by the Soviet doctrine “order is preferable
to change because change infers a risk. Many agencies in Kosovo, both large and small, usher in well-meaning albeit fundamentally new ways of working in a manner that appears to violate the political norms and routines of the local community. Managers were not advertised, but rather internally appointed from the initial mine awareness education teams within our own pool. The professional growth of the team leaders and the office manager in the second half of our program is a mutually beneficial, realistic "capacity building" goal. These three individuals will very soon be running the program for short periods in the absence of the two international managers who will be needed to assess other proposals for MAEPs.

Concepts like authority, autonomy and trust are all inexplicably contained within the concept of "capacity building" and they are achieved slowly with very small steps. Random MAEPs, typically with only 12 months of funding, cannot expect to have the impact of long term developmental agencies such as Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) or the Peace Corps, who hope to observe local human resource advances over a period of two or three decades. If any capacity building can occur within short, isolated MAEPs, it would probably be an improvement of existing methods, rather than newly developed teaching methods.

Clearance Integration

Mine clearance and mine awareness must be integrated. Agencies that work in the same geographic areas on these activities need to talk to each other, exchange information and follow agreed upon procedures to ensure that the local people are given every opportunity to stay safe. HMD Response has been able to establish a good relationship with the clearance companies working in the south of Kosovo for the following reasons:

• HMD Response prioritizes work that relates to assisting clearance operations. UNMACK procedures insist that clearance operations require mine awareness be undertaken in nearby villages before, during and after the demining has taken place. For HMD Response, these villages immediately become the main focus of our activities and due to the simplistic nature of our approach, we can react within hours of being informed of a new clearance operation. This physical presence will ensure that the deminers and the local people who will work in the same area teach our awareness teams about the technical aspects of their work, which was followed up by several educational visits to clearance operations. When information concerning a clearance operation is gathered for a village briefing, we encourage our teams to talk directly with the deminers in order to prevent any misunderstanding. The cross checking of IMSMA maps is now a standard procedure. This physically puts our staff alongside the deminers and alongside the mine fields. Without such visits, our credibility with the demining companies and the local people would be lost.

In short, HMD Response is implementing a program that clearance agencies can relate to very easily. Deminers tend to view the direct approach as an ideal and simple way to deal with a clear and simple problem—a view that HMD Response in Kosovo accepts.

Evaluation

In each village about 20 adult interviews were carried out before any MAE teaching occurs to better understand the aptitudes and previous knowledge of locals. The interview subjects are always asked if they wish to be interviewed and no attempt is made to challenge those who decline. A trained member of HMD Response staff is present throughout the entire interview. The questionnaire forms the basis of the discussion, and the questions are read out slowly and clearly and repeated as often as the subject requests. The interviewer is allowed to explain the questions to the interviewee if necessary. The interviewer checks the appropriate responses as the discussion takes place.

At the end of the discussion, the interviewer shows the completed questionnaire sheet to the interviewee and checks that the answers are a fair reflection of the interviewee's responses. If the interviewee has made mistakes, then those questions are discussed again and, where necessary, HMD Response staff will explain the reasons for the corrected answers.

Prior to going into the villages, HMD Response staff practiced their interviews with ONCE staff members at its NGO Resource Centre in Prizren. These practice sessions served to check and modify the draft questionnaire; ensure that HMD Response staff understood the need to explain any corrections to the interviewees after the interview; and to adjust the approaches and styles of all the interviewers so that they presented the questions in a similar manner.

The final questionnaire was carefully prepared in English, Albanian and Goraiz. See Annex A for the English version.

In Kosovo, the direct approach can be used even when the normal routines of children and adults are disrupted. It also has the potential to reach high-risk groups, in this case young men and adult agricultural workers, who do not typically interact in conventional social structures. The direct approach should not be disregarded because it appears to be too easy, too cheap and too simplistic. If good Needs Assessment exercise leads to the outcome that a direct approach will be the most effective and efficient solution for a particular landmine problem, then a direct approach should be utilized and respected as a reliable commonsense approach.

This article has been written to give the direct approach renewed credibility at a time when many MAE managers may be opting for unnecessary, albeit innovative, complexity in mine action.

Contact Information

Philip Dive
Senior Mine Awareness Educator,
HMD Response
E-mail: hmdresponse@btinternet.com

Philip Garvin
Chief Executive, HMD Response
2 Pembroke Square
London W2 4DR
Tel: +20 7229 7447
Fax: +20 7229 3434

All photos courtesy of the author.
U.S. Office of Global Humanitarian Demining Works Toward Demining 2010 Goals

Since 1994, the United States has committed approximately $400 million to worldwide humanitarian demining efforts. With its sights set on 2010, the U.S. Office of Global Humanitarian Demining is working to establish partnerships in the private sector.

By Elizabeth Cramer, MAIC

The United States has long been committed to the universally shared vision to rid the earth of the threat of landmines. On Nov. 28, 2000, U.S. Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining Donald K. Steinberg addressed the U.N. General Assembly, outlining U.S. Global Humanitarian Demining (GHD) plans for 2001. The plans include nearly $100 million (U.S.) in funding for the upcoming year, and continued work with over 56 nations toward the goal of making the world "mine safe" for civilians by the end of this decade. The address was a continuation of the U.S. "Demining 2010 Initiative," first announced in 1997.

Demining 2010 Initiative

On Oct. 31, 1997, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Secretary of Defense William Cohen jointly announced President Clinton's "Demining 2010 Initiative," with the goal of creating a mine safe world by the year 2010. The initiative was created in response to the severe threat to civilians posed by landmines. In 1997, it was estimated that 100 million landmines in over 64 countries cause about 26,000 casualties per year. The goal of the 2010 Initiative is to accelerate demining efforts, increase international coordination, and increase public and private resources dedicated to demining.

The initiative included several elements. The first element of the initiative was the appointment of a Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for GHD and the creation of the Office of the Special Representative to oversee the 2010 Initiative. One element was a conference held in Washington D.C. in May 1998, to develop specific goals and strategies for achieving the initiative. The most obvious element was the continuation of U.S. funding, with the United States committing $80 million for 1998, a two-fold increase from its $40 million in contributions in 1997. The final element was to encourage and support public-private partnerships to augment government and international organization activity.

Creation of GHD

The Office of the Special Representative for GHD and the new position of special representative of the president and secretary of state for GHD were established in October 1997, with the announcement of the Demining 2010 Initiative. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl E. Inderfurth was assigned as the first special representative.

The position of special representative was designed to provide the international demining community with a coordinator to bring together donors, deminers, landmine accident survivors and mine victims with governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector.