An Outline for Mine Awareness Action

Overview of CARE's Mine Awareness Programs in Kosovo and Somaliland

by Lionel Dyck, MineTech, *and Bob MacPherson,* CARE

Kosovo: The Program

Since September 1999, CARE, working with its mine action partner, MineTech, has been engaged in a mine awareness project in Kosovo. The project covers four distinct phases:

Phase 1: Planning & Mobilization

This phase covered the project planning, mobilization and deployment of personnel and resources to and within Kosovo.

Phase 2: Emergency Mine Awareness Presentations

This phase, from October to November 1999, took place following the mass return and resettlement of refugees in Kosovo. The objective was to create awareness among the population threatened by mines and UXO. The main topics of these presentations covered the identification of common-to-theater mines and UXO; ways of identifying dangerous/unsafe areas; actions to be taken to avoid dangerous situations; and actions to be taken when a person finds him/herself in a dangerous situation. This short phase aimed to reach as many people and communities as possible in areas where CARE was carrying out its resettlement, reintegration and reconstruction programs (food distribution, shelter, agriculture, etc.).

In addition to community mine awareness, CARE was responsible for gathering Level 1 (General) Survey information on mines and UXO, as well as socioeconomic information on communities and their areas to facilitate CARE's humanitarian, emergency and response acts. During Phase 2, one problem encountered was the lack of coordination between different agencies conducting mine awareness in Kosovo. It was found that up to four organizations were targeting the same community(ies) with different mine awareness messages. Liaison and consultation by the CARE International CMA Supervisor speedily resolved this disorganized situation. Out of 200 communities, the CARE mine action response was reduced to 166 communities, all of which were reached in the allotted time frame for the phase.

CARE posters used in Kosovo to relay the mine awareness message.
Photo c/o CARE

The importance of this phase was that it was designed to quickly reach as many communities as possible in an emergency situation. Phase 2 also provided the basis for planning and implementing the next phase(s). From the outset, CARE and MineTech realized that community mine awareness training needed to be sustained and that the emergency response phase needed reinforcement. However, there is no doubt that providing training on a rapid-response basis to almost 5,000 people was a success. It saved lives and, at the same time, provided an information and planning base for both mine action and mine awareness training in the future.

A prominent mine awareness banner placed in a community targeted by CARE.
Photo c/o CARE

Phase 3: Consolidation Phase

Phase 3 was implemented from December 1999 to February 2000, and was aimed at reliably providing training to enable communities to live with the residual mine/UXO threat, which will exist until clearance support is provided. The following dialogue is aimed at achieving acceptance by the community—"ownership" of the residual mine/UXO problem. Volunteers were trained in each affected community in the CARE Area of Responsibility (AOR). Their training encompassed the following:

- Reiteration of the CMA message within the community.
- Training visitors and newly arrived returnees.
- Ongoing collection of information of newly identified mines/UXO.
- Maintaining a community "database" through a community map indicating dangerous areas.
- Implementing a marking system maintained by the volunteers for identified dangerous areas.
- Implementing a reporting system whereby members of the community report newly identified mine/UXO threats to the community volunteers who in turn report the information to the relevant authorities.

Phase 4: Monitoring & Evaluation of Community Volunteers

This phase commenced in March 2000 and is ongoing. Activities in this phase are as follows:

- Monitoring and evaluating community volunteers.
- Improving training skills, information collection, dissemination and reporting.
- Training additional replacement and new volunteers where required.
- Working within the UNMACC framework of impact categories for communities. Community areas are classified as High, Medium, Low and No Impact areas. According to the impact

categories, communities are visited regularly. (High Impact—at least twice a month. Low/No Impact—at least once a month).

General Comments

One problem encountered was the initial lack of coordination of CMA/Mine Awareness training in Kosovo. This difficulty was resolved through liaison, communication and coordination between all agencies. Another problem was that community volunteers were asking for remuneration for their services. This problem was overcome by dialogue stressing the importance of taking "ownership" of the threat and the impact of mines and UXO on the community in both the humanitarian and microeconomic senses. Community volunteers come and go for any number of reasons; hence, there is a continuing training cycle, which is presently a main emphasis.

CARE volunteers practice on-site first aid procedures.
Photo c/o CARE

Teaching the Danger of Mines/UXO in Kosovo

CARE has found that stories and case studies of actual incidents with mines/UXO in Kosovo work well in addition to audience experiences. A viable method is to initiate discussion and invite and encourage participation—even if it is second-hand: "I heard about a man in … who …."

Cultural/Tribal Impediments

Due to the Islamic culture prevalent in most of Kosovo, women often do not attend CMA presentations in an equal number with respect to the men. This problem is overcome by training local women as trainers for specific woman-to-woman training.

Challenges for Integration of MA Into a Larger Program

MA/CMA has to be seen as a part of mine action. It provides the best platform for community involvement in the mine action process through information-sharing, reporting and self-management activities. It also provides an excellent communication opportunity and a chance to gather meaningful Level 1 (General) Survey information on mines/UXO. Also, it is an opportunity to gather useful socioeconomic information on existing and needed facilities and infrastructure. These inputs facilitate better planning for limited mine clearance resource-allocation and for reconstruction and development activities.

The real challenge is to see MA/CMA as a part of integrated mine action operations and not as a stand-alone separate activity. There are a plethora of organizations that, unfortunately, do not see this assimilation. They see MA/CMA as a "soft option" and a means by itself. It is not. The greatest reinforcement of MA/CMA activities is for necessary mine clearance to take place and for MA/CMA to be supported by Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)—destruction of devices such as hand grenades, rockets, mortar bombs and cluster bomblets. CARE/MineTech advocates EOD support for the destruction of isolated mines and/or UXO reported as a result of MA/CMA activities as an *integral* part of the mine action program. If communities see that reporting leads to action, they will continue to report and participate. If nothing happens, interest will soon wane.

The sustainability of MA/CMA training is an important issue. Mine action operations providing EOD and clearance supports to MA/CMA activities have an important impact. What happens when mine action/EOD operations cease in an area? Sustainable local EOD support linked to local MA/CMA training capability is an obvious answer. However, longer-term donor engagement is needed in addition to a realization and willingness by country authorities that they must take 100 percent responsibility for the residual mine/UXO threat in their own countries.

MA/CMA has to be seen as a strategic tool in mine action—not a short-term tactical tool. It has to be integrated in to mine action operations to be fully effective. Its opportunities have to be recognized beyond the purely humanitarian lifesaving horizon.

International & Graphic Tools Used

Solely using the media and posters is not enough. CARE/MineTech also employs life-size models of common mines and UXO. Many communities have commented positively on this technique. The cynic will argue that they will not see a buried mine—which is true, but he might see part of a mine uncovered, a tripwire, a tripwire-spool or a mortar bomb on the surface. Knowing the size, shape, silhouette and color of dangerous objects is a useful reinforcement.

Somaliland: The Program

CARE, in cooperation with MineTech, is in the midst of a seven-month program in Somaliland from February to August 2000. The project is essentially a Level 1 and 2 Survey project with CMA as an integral part of the operation. Based on MineTech's previous experience in Mozambique and Somaliland and the CARE/MineTech Kosovo experience, CMA has been integrated into the Level 1 Survey process. This incorporation has been successful, and there is a notable improvement in the quality of Level 1 Survey information and socioeconomic information, which assists with the development prioritization to which MineTech has attached one ex-Consultant CMA trainer to the project. The Consultant CMA trainer has instructed two ex-Somali CMA trainers. There is also a Somali driver in the team. The Consultant CMA trainer has spent three months initiating the program and will withdraw, returning for a two-week monitoring and evaluation visit toward the end of the program. He has also assisted with the development of a national mine awareness program while in Somaliland and carried out a separate project within refugee camps for Somalis in Ethiopia.

Best Ways to Teach the Danger of Mines/UXO in Somaliland

CARE has found that stories and case studies of local incidents with mines/UXO (i.e., dangerous practices, injured people, etc.) work well in addition to discussing the impact of mines/UXO on the community. Trainers with technical knowledge and competence are required. Somalis are quick to spot weakness and will take more notice if they trust those providing the training. Teachers who are respected community members make good local/community trainers provided they have been trained in mine and UXO awareness.

Best Format for Children

As children love to play, small groups using games, such as role-play games and playlets, are effective methods of teaching safe practices. Youngsters are receptive individuals with good retention levels, meaning they will hopefully incorporate the safe practices at an early age and use them throughout their stay in the affected area.

Two teams can be formed. Each team has one "message" (don't touch, marking, reporting, etc.). This method also has great "multiplier" effects, and the children can even make presentations in their

Mine awareness trainers who are respected in the community make good trainers.
Photo c/o CARE

communities, further spreading the message. Running and ball games underscore how important the limbs are and can provide a good base for emphasizing how important it is to avoid threatening situations.

Cultural/Tribal Impediments

You must always be sensitive to the culture and religion of the country. For example, you cannot put pictures/posters of people in mosques due to religious sensitivity. Mine awareness posters showing mines and UXO are fine—not people! It is best to have a female instructor to conduct woman-to-woman training. Be aware of current and past political strife—former soldiers in past conflicts, political and clan differences and religious differences. Local conditions reign supreme. If your Somali trainers come from a clan or sub-clan with strong differences with other clans, they are not well accepted in the other area.

Challenges of Integrating MA Into a Larger Program

These challenges are the same as those mentioned under the Kosovo Program. Other development programs provide focal points for conducting mine awareness training. Education is the most obvious. Health centers, boreholes, shelter distribution and food/water distribution points are all good places to communicate the message about mines/UXO. Liaison and communication are the key. Information gathered from communities must find its way to the relevant sector to use it. The mine action center serves as an efficient collection point for mine/UXO information where locals and managers of the development and reconstruction programs can access the information.

Innovations

Most importantly, flexibility and sensitivity to local customs, religion and culture must be stressed. In Somaliland the mine awareness message has (inter-alias) been conveyed through the following: public schools, Koranic schools, radio, newspapers, community elders, police, drama groups, singing groups and public gathering points (markets, boreholes, etc.).

Instructional & Graphic Tools

The following tools have been used as effective methods of relaying the mine/UXO message in Somaliland: mine/UXO models—they create a better understanding of what the threat looks like; posters; community maps; jigsaw puzzles; songs and drama for radio broadcasts; children's and adults' newspaper cartoons; and "Mine Action News" on the radio. ■

Challenges in setting up a mine awareness program:

1. Getting the base information to plan the program's format.
2. Getting the right people for the country's needs. In Kosovo in the Emergency Phase, this meant sending in trained specialists. Where there is a long-term threat such as in Somaliland, there needs to be partnership between experts and new local trainers.
3. Getting the right information to fashion the message for local conditions and culture.
4. Getting the people to listen and keeping the motivation to maintain awareness.
5. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This means setting measurable objectives and ones which can be verified. M&E is the key to improved project design and implementation.
6. Being flexible. Recognize opportunities, and identify and correct problems.
7. Creating sustainable community management of the threat into the future/long term.
8. Getting people involved in mine action to understand that mine awareness is an integral part of the overall strategy.
9. Maximizing the benefits of working in and with communities. Mine awareness is part of mine action, and mine action is the cornerstone of reconstruction and development in countries with mine/UXO threats.

Contact Information

Lionel Dyck
MineTech
Box HG 632
22 York Avenue
Highlands, Harare, Zimbabwe

Bob MacPherson
CARE
151 Ellis Street NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-2439
Tel: 1-800-521-CARE, ext. 999