

Focus

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Child-to-Child Trust: A Child-Oriented Approach to Landmine Education

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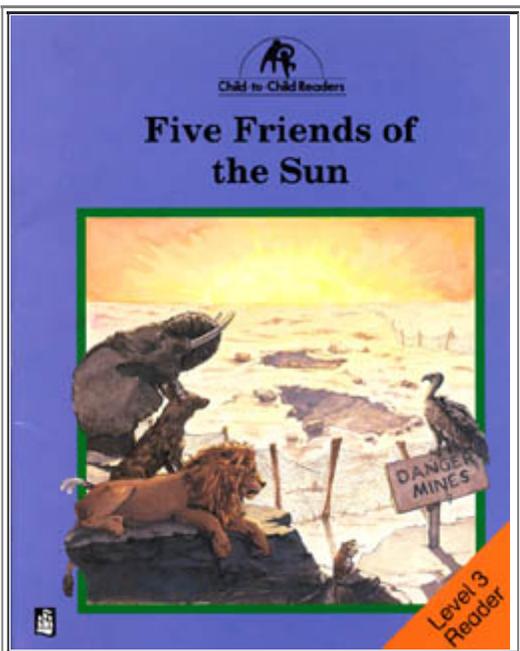


Placing children's issues at the forefront of its agenda, the Child-to-Child Trust promotes the physical and mental well-being of children throughout the world. Operating under the umbrella of the University of London's Institute of Education and Institute of Child Health, the trust has assumed this position since its inception in 1979, the international year of the Child, and has been active in over 80 nations. The trust's objectives include "protecting and preserving the health of communities worldwide by encouraging and enabling children and young people to play an active and responsible role in the health and development of themselves, other children and their families."

While solidly based in health education pursuits, the trust also publishes the Landmine Awareness Activity Sheet 8.5, available from Teaching-Aids at Low Cost (TALC), for demining and other humanitarian organizations to incorporate into their relief activities. The trust has defined its role in mine awareness education by the following principles:

- Providing advice regarding its approach to mine awareness-oriented organizations that contact the trust.
- Promoting inclusion of its approach in publications and other media.
- Working with those managing field-based mine awareness education programs.
- Contributing to training courses concerned with mine awareness.
- Designing and organizing a brief Child-to-Child course to fulfill the needs of field-based individuals in London.
- Documenting, maintaining a resource library and sharing varied experiences drawn from field programs utilizing the Child-to-Child approach.

The Child-to-Child Trust insists that providing education to children inhabiting high-risk areas is essential. Teachers can educate children of the dangers of mines and UXO so they know to avoid areas contaminated with munitions and influence others to follow their actions.



By functioning as an "ideas factory," the Child-to-Child Trust generates copyright free educational materials, allowing the materials to be translated and used effectively on a global scale by organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children and others. For example, the trust generates several Child-to-Child Readers that focus on a variety of topics, one of which, "Five Friends of the Sun," is dedicated to mine awareness education. This reader, published by Addison Wesley Longman, incorporates "animal fables...as well as children and their families to examine reasons why landmines are produced and the devastation they cause."

The Four Categories of Mine Awareness Education

In Landmine Awareness Activity Sheet 8.5, the Child-to-Child Trust has grouped activities into four categories from which teachers can base their educational plans. These categories include Understanding, Finding Out, Planning and Doing and Follow-up.

Understanding

The sheet begins by focusing on the children and community members' comprehension of the extent of the landmine problem. By suggesting that members of the community discuss the landmine problem with local

children, the sheet ties the community together yet still maintains its focus on the children's involvement. Specifically, the trust advocates that community members (including children), who have witnessed or suffered from landmine injuries, should be the center of this discussion, as they can have the most bearing on the children. "Children respond particularly to the stories of other children who have suffered injuries from landmines." Teachers can also invite specialists to discuss the problem and encourage the children to prepare questions in advance to ask the landmine specialist.

Finding Out

By directing adults to complete surveys to ascertain the boundaries of mine-infested land, the community is participating in the mine awareness process. The trust adamantly asserts that **"Children must not go looking for mines,"** rather the idea is that children communicate with community members to determine where mines are located; dates of explosions and the effects on the community; local knowledge of signs and warnings; and number of people who know the correct procedure to follow when encountering a mine. After completing these tasks, the children can then draw a map of the affected areas and indicate where the dangers are located and what warning signs are there presently. By permitting children to participate in this process, the children are likely to absorb the content of the program.



*Pristia, Breznica - Elementry School: ICRC program to fight against the effects of mines on school children in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Photo c/o ICRC*

To simplify and standardize the process, teachers can also develop customary procedures for children to follow when spotting a landmine. Teachers can research what procedures are currently in place, modify items where necessary and then create a clear diagram of the appropriate procedure to follow.

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Planning and Doing

To encourage children's participation, teachers can organize talks following a community member or demining specialist's presentation. In an effort to attract children's attention, they can participate in games or design posters and brochures to display in the school or a health center. As children are heavily relied upon to tend to farm animals and lead them to more fertile areas to graze, they often encounter landmines on their own. Therefore, children should know how to give accurate directions to warn people of suspected mine fields.

One activity the sheet proposes is for a teacher to outline a map on the ground with starting and finishing points. Next, the teacher should initiate a discussion among the students about the different features of the map (e.g., trees, streams, roads, etc.). While the other children watch, one student can complete the journey as instructed by another child. Afterward, the children can discuss how accurate the child's directions were with respect to the marked mine fields and other dangers.

Follow-up

The trust stresses follow-up activities in order to create a lasting foundation from which the children can draw from for future use. The sheet suggests publishing school-based newsletters and setting up mine awareness clubs and committees, with the emphasis placed on involving children throughout the process. The coordinators of these programs and the children involved should continuously monitor the program's objectives to ensure that children can

- Understand the dangers and effects of landmines;
- Discover the dangers and effects from people within their own communities;
- Develop methods to lead safer lives and encourage others to follow in their footsteps;
- Implement safety solutions;
- Cooperate together to reach the maximum children and their families; and
- Monitor the progress of the programs.

The Six-Step Framework

In addition to the activities proposed in the four categories, the Child-to-Child Trust also has outlined the six-step framework to demonstrate a possible sequence of activities for instructors. Prior to initiating the six-step framework, the trust encourages coordinators to perform a needs analysis with the assistance of the children to determine if the children identify landmines as a priority.

Step 1: Selecting the Topic and Understanding It Well

Each instructor must tailor the landmine awareness activities according to the local culture and context of individual situations. Possible examples to develop landmine awareness activities include the teacher relaying a story of a child injured by a landmine where the children then discuss “what happened next” and share their ideas; the teacher discusses the different injuries caused by mines using posters, stickers, etc., which is followed by a question-and-answer session; then the teacher assigns the task of talking to a landmine victim, especially a child who subsequently does not attend school.

Step 2: Finding Out More

This step can be performed in conjunction with the activities listed in Step 1, such as when the children visit landmine victims they can ask the victim how the accident happened and the following repercussions of the accident.

Step 3: Reporting, Planning and Practicing

Children can share the details they learned when talking with a mine victim or if the victim was a child, how the injury prevents him/her from attending school and ways to help these children attend school. The teacher can also select two incidents for the children to analyze as a group. Finally, the group can discuss how to raise mine awareness among children and design a plan to implement these suggestions.

Step 4: Action

Children can enact the solutions developed in Step 3, such as visiting other children at home and performing plays and songs for the community.

Step 5: Discussing Results

Together the children and the instructor can examine specific questions such as how the activities can be improved; has everyone understood; what changes have occurred; and in what ways can the activities be improved or continued?

Step 6: Sustaining action and doing it better

In this final step, the children and the teacher implement the solutions discussed and agreed upon in Step 5.

While the Child-to-Child Trust does not participate in these activities itself, it does provide a foundation from which other demining and humanitarian organizations can initiate their mine awareness campaigns. The Child-to-Child Trust was created to protect the physical and mental well-being of children worldwide, not only with respect to the landmine crisis but also to the children’s right to receive an education. Supplying copyright free material enables other organizations to translate the educational and mine awareness sheets and apply them to the context in which they are working without having to produce a new sheet for each campaign, thereby lessening the immense challenge facing these organizations.

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