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## The Utilization of Level One Survey Data for Mine Awareness

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# THE UTILIZATION OF Level One Survey Data FOR MINE AWARENESS



*Community mapping with a representative group of community members formed the base for the data collection. Each affected area identified was analyzed to specify the terrain, resources and any victims associated with it.*

Photo © MCPA Yemen

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With its conclusion in July 2000 and certification a month later, the level one landmine survey in Yemen has provided the Yemeni authorities with a wealth of reliable information from which to plan and prioritize activities. For many people this means planning for mine clearance, but the utility of the level one data goes far beyond clearance. It also provides a foundation for all aspects of mine action, including mine awareness. Yemen is the first country to successfully com-

plete the new level one format in cooperation with the U.N. Mine Action Service (UNMAS), U.N. Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and with the Survey Action Center (SAC) and its implementing partner, the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA). The format combines the traditional "mine find" associated with level one surveys performed in the past, along with detailed socioeconomic and victim data that puts those suspected areas into context. The survey provides national authorities with the necessary

information required to develop content and plan the execution of mine awareness programs throughout Yemen.

Mine action in Yemen falls under the authority of the National Demining Committee (NDC), an inter-ministerial body, and its chairman, Dr. Mutahar Al-Saidi, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs. Mine awareness policy is assigned to the Mine Awareness Advisory Committee, which is composed of various ministries, agencies and NGOs involved in mine awareness. The NDC also has an implementing agency, the National Technical Executive Unit (NTEU), a MAC equivalent that contains a mine awareness section. In addition, the Yemen Mine Awareness Association, an independent NGO, has been implementing mine awareness programs with assistance from Radda Barnen in the southern regions for the past five years.

The level one survey collects information on many aspects of landmines in a community and the impact they have on people's lives. In each community, data collection was conducted with representative groups of principally male informants. Methods used included community mapping and visual verification of suspected areas. The survey had to be signed and certified by the leader in each community prior to its completion. A mine awareness by-product of this activity is the development of a newsletter for affected communities. To involve communities in the process, the newsletter will be addressed directly to each community leader and offer program developments, general awareness messages and contact details should they have any new information.

The survey data facilitates the program cycle of a feasibility study, needs assessment and subsequent planning contained in UNICEF guidelines. However, the utility of the data collected is best illustrated through examples.

In order to conduct effective mine awareness operations, the NDC first determines the location of affected communities and collects general information on these communities. The survey identified 592 affected communities and recorded the exact location of each using GPS, which can then be projected in the Geographic Information System linked to the

Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database. IMSMA was developed by the Geneva International Center for the United Nations. It contains a level one survey module developed simultaneously with the new survey format. Currently, a mine awareness program is being developed for IMSMA to assist mine awareness managers in conducting their work. General community information includes population, local government infrastructure, schools, health facilities and other data for each community.

The general community information allows the NDC to profile at-risk communities and plan activities for optimal impact. Profiles can be made based on population, type of settlement, level of infrastructure development and economic situation. For mine awareness purposes, simple queries of general community information in the IMSMA database can highlight communities with schools where awareness

## *The Survey Collects the Following:*

- Information on each suspected area,
- Detailed information on victims from within the past two years,
- General information on victims from more than two years ago and
- Past and current mine action and basic community information.

can be integrated into the curriculum or communities with health facilities or administrative centers that can be used as awareness resource centers. Information on roads, telephone service and electricity will assist mine awareness operations in determining the level of support teams require once in the field. One omission in the Yemen survey was information on the availability and diffusion of television and radio coverage in communities. It is hoped that this information will be included in future surveys.

First, the NDC needs to determine priorities for mine awareness activities. The level one survey automatically generates priorities based on the presence of mines and UXO, resource blockage and mine victims. The survey priorities, including the use of country specific weights, are geared toward communities that have had mine-related casualties in the past two years. From a mine awareness perspective, one could assume that members of such communities are at



greater risk. Recent accidents may indicate that community members are unaware of the exact location of mined areas or that the mined area contains resources otherwise unattainable, thus forcing people into the mine-laden areas. If these situations were true, the survey priorities would seem to be valid for mine awareness planning as well.

Data shows that the majority of communities with recent victims experienced only one accident, rather than several indicating a recurring phenom-



*After the community meeting, guides accompanied enumerators to a safe viewing point, where a GPS reading was taken, to visually verify the affected area. Enumerators created sketch maps for each area and verified the information provided by the community.*

Photo c/o MCPA Yemen

enon. An accident can be the most effective form of awareness, causing people to be more cautious and respectful of mined areas. However, it could be that singular accidents are no more than accidents, thus indicating no pattern of dangerous behavior on the part of the community. The data may allow us to avoid this type of guessing in determining mine awareness priorities. The survey report includes an analysis of the factors contributing most heavily to the likelihood of a mine accident. In Yemen, the most significant factors include blocked water sources and all factors related to intensity of conflict, especially proximity to other communities with mine victims and low technology. The value of this analysis and other methods of priority determination are being explored further in a five month follow-up data utility project conducted by SAC, MCPA and Cranfield

University in Bedfordshire, England, in cooperation with the NDC and the NTEU.

Once priorities have been established, the level one data allows planners to tailor awareness content to each district and community. Information on suspected areas, including size, topography and blocked resources and the demographics and activity of recent victims at the time of accident, help planners identify high-risk groups and activities in each setting. From the survey results, the program recognizes the significant differences in the nature of the mine problem depending on the age of the conflict and the geographic location.

At the district level, the survey information allows for a tailored message. The awareness planned for primary and secondary schools will include district modules detailing the nature of the local mine threat and will hopefully lead to more substantive discussion in the classroom. At the community level, mine awareness teams are already equipped with the necessary materials to work with high-risk groups within the community. This allows the mine awareness message to be more specific and sensitive to each community's situation.

The intent of mine awareness is to modify behavior in mined areas. In order to be successful, mine awareness discussions must be centered on people's actual situations, not just general rules that may not correspond to the realities on the ground.

The uses outlined here are by no means exhaustive. Data has only been available to the national authorities for a short time and its full implications have not yet been realized. However, with each new problem and proposed solution, we find ourselves returning to the data to help make informed decisions. Just as people refer to the demining "toolbox," so there is a mine awareness toolbox. In Yemen, the mine awareness "toolbox" just got a lot bigger. ■

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