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Youth Supervisors Trained in Mine Awareness in Jordan

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Mine Awareness In Quang Tri Province



Mark Pirie distributes notebooks featuring mine/UXO awareness messages to the province's school children.

Photo c/o MAP

by Jason A. Sims,
MAIC

The U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Demining Program Office (PM/HDP), in an effort to help establish a sustainable mine action program in Vietnam, sponsored the Mine Awareness Project (MAP) in Quang Tri Province, the site of the former demilitarized zone. The MAIC at JMU was tasked to pursue that goal as an activity of the Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism and Demining-related (NADR) fund. JMU was asked to plan, coordinate, and implement various activities, which would constitute an educational program designed to help families living in this province avoid the dangers of latent landmines and unexploded ordnance.

The mine awareness campaign consisted of various educational thrusts, partnerships, and strategies. First, the MAP had to organize itself for action. The JMU staff established a partnership with a non-governmental organization with recent successes in Vietnamese relationship building—PeaceTrees Vietnam. Next it established professional and friendly relationships with a number of local government organizations and other NGOs located in Dong Ha town, the province capital. This phase involved selecting and depending on local administrative expertise, as well as receiving both formal and informal permission to work in Vietnam.

While the strategy and overarching plans of the Mine Action Project were planned and directed by the JMU co-directors, Dr. Anne Stewart, Associate Professor of Psychology, and Dr. Terry Wessel, Professor of Health Sciences, most tactical and “on-the-ground” decisions were the result of collaborative efforts of the MAP staff and their Vietnamese counterparts. It was one of the core assumptions of the campaign that the activities that the team planned were to be coordinated with, and subject to, host nation aims and community cultural focus. Therefore, the Vietnamese people were deeply involved in every step of the team's efforts.

To accomplish these goals—both strategically and operationally—the MAP was staffed at various times with from one to three members who lived and

worked in the Dong Ha community. One of these coordinators, Douglas Patt, was eventually based at JMU, while the other program coordinator was based in Quang Tri Province. The Dong Ha MAP coordinator, Mark Pirie, lived and worked alongside the citizens of Dong Ha town, forming a close bond and alliance with the people and officials which the MAP was serving. He hired several Vietnamese to staff the MAP positions of office manager, translator, and driver/interpreter.

MAP Partnerships

The MAP had several noteworthy accomplishments in Quang Tri as a result of partnerships with popular organizations in the province. The People's Provincial Committee of Quang Tri Province (PPC) was the primary planning partner of the MAP, while the Women's Union (WU) and the Committee for the Care and Protection of the Children (CCPC) worked with the MAP on the implementation level. Some organizations that helped support this nascent effort included the Mines Advisory Group, UXB International, Kids First, Prosthetics Outreach Foundation, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA), OXFAM Hong Kong, and the UNDP. It is doubtful if the MAP could have succeeded without their help and guidance.

In order to provide the carefully balanced MAP—working as the “new kid on the block” with government agencies, local groups, and NGOs in Quang Tri—with appropriate and creative plans, materials, and equipment, the JMU team came into play. Under the supervision of the co-directors, JMU students created a number of prototype materials such as the Family Needs Assessment Survey, a puppet show, comic books, games and puzzles. These

JMU-designed products were then sent to Vietnam and refined through a process of evaluations, focus groups, and field tests that the MAP and its Vietnamese counterparts refined and modified. The prototypes were either transmitted electronically or brought to Vietnam by Drs. Stewart and Wessel, who made several trips to Vietnam to ensure a seamless process. The materials were then adapted or edited and produced locally in Vietnam. JMU also provided a variety of media resources to help produce the prototype educational materials in the media or computer labs.

Poster Contest

One of the most important outreach activities of the year was an unplanned poster contest for the children. While not called for in the original plan, communications between the Vietnamese and the MAP made it clear that the contest would greatly complement the more structured activities taking place. A mine awareness poster contest was a joint activity of the MAP and the CCPC, challenging children in Quang Tri to artistically illustrate the dangers of UXO and mines. The question posed to the children was, “How Can My Poster Keep Children Safe from Bombs and Landmines?” The well-publicized contest generated a great deal of interest in Quang Tri. It was the object of television reports, radio spots, and newspaper articles. With over 800 entries, a panel of five professional Quang Tri artists were asked to judge the entries. All the posters were displayed at the awards ceremony in Dong Ha's Danaan Parry Landmines Education Center. Each of the winners and their parents were brought to the awards ceremony where a Vietnamese produced video, “Through the Eyes of Children,” was shown to the winners and their parents. In this video, children who had entered the contest were asked to explain their posters. The poster contest fostered discussion and development of child-focused mine awareness messages for the teachers and the children in the community. The posters the children created not only served as educational safety messages generating interest in mine and UXO awareness, but also publicized the MAP's presence and acceptance in Quang Tri.

Data Collection and Surveying

A concurrent task for the MAP was to facilitate key data collection and provide survey training for Quang Tri Women's Union representatives. After the training was completed, the WU surveyors collected data on mine awareness throughout the province.



Children enjoy the opportunity to display their contributions to the calendar contest.

Photo c/o MAP



The JMU co-directors present the mine awareness poster calendar to the People's Provincial Committee in Dong Ha.

Photo c/o MAP





Mine Awareness poster contest sponsored by the MAP.
Photo c/o MAP

From the data collected, the MAP tested and created several mine awareness educational materials and developed a mine awareness curriculum. The Women's Union selected 40 women for the program and hosted the training in their facility. With the assistance of translators, Dr. Stewart, Pirie, the MAP in-country program coordinator and Madam Sang, the Women's Union chairwoman, the two days of training session was a great success. At the end of the training, the MAP provided each woman with survey forms, working supplies and uniforms.

After the survey training was completed, the newly trained WU representatives visited the seven districts and two towns in Quang Tri and conducted over 1,000 interviews. Survey locations were predetermined to accurately reflect the various perceptions and needs of the diverse population of Quang Tri. The purpose of surveying people throughout the province was to enable the curriculum developers at JMU to create effective mine awareness prototype materials. As with all of the MAP activities, the materials were further reviewed and approved by its Vietnamese partners. The surveys indicated that basic mine/UXO awareness education was needed throughout the province. The surveys also suggested that comic books, flash cards, coloring books and

Dr. Wessel and Stewart use mine awareness texts to instruct local children.
Photo c/o MAP



puppet shows would be appropriate "teaching" materials.

Educational Materials

From the surveys, the MAP assisted in the local production of several mine awareness products. While some of the materials were adaptations of mine awareness materials previously used in Cambodia, Mozambique and Laos, each was uniquely modified to incorporate the dominant ideas and beliefs of the Vietnamese culture. Local officials, teachers, Women's Union members and school children evaluated the educational materials. The most important feedback to these evaluations was that the children and adults in the materials needed to look more "Vietnamese" and that the test should appear in both English and Vietnamese. Once the evaluations were completed, a local artist was hired to produce illustrations for a mine awareness display. The Landmine Education Materials display was completed and exhibited in the Danaan Parry Landmine Education Center in Dong Ha, which was also the location for the children's poster contest award ceremony. The MAP and the CCPC also designed two brochures to give out as guides for visitors to the exhibition.

Mine Awareness Curriculum

Dr. Stewart and Dr. Wessel also created a sample mine awareness education curriculum and a trainee trainer curriculum. These curricula were based upon U.N. guidelines for mine awareness education as well as feedback from the Quang Tri Steering Committee, an ad hoc organization formed as a result of activities begun by the MAP, and Vietnamese partners. The curriculum included the rationale for developing the mine awareness education program, a discussion of the importance of mine awareness education and sample mine awareness lessons and activities.

These curricula were used in a two-day mine awareness class developed for educators. Forty adults, teachers and children's advocates from throughout Quang Tri attended this class. The two principal instructors were personnel from the CCPC and the Women's Union. In this class, mine and UXO awareness was evaluated by quizzes taken at the beginning and end of the course. This data was then relayed to the MAP staff at JMU to evaluate the effectiveness of the curricula.

The results indicated that the staff and the teaching materials were effective in conveying the mine awareness messages. While the class was successful in

relating mine awareness messages to the attendees, most who attended indicated that further instruction geared toward teaching others would have been a great benefit.

The Monsoon—and the Future

As the one-year project was winding down, the worst monsoons in 75 years wracked central Vietnam. The storms and devastating floods played havoc with transportation and agriculture—and also destroyed a major portion of the children's school supplies in Quang Tri. The MAP made its vehicle available for life-preserving services and purchased and distributed thousands of emergency meals. But the MAP did not forget its mine awareness mission. The MAP purchased and provided 100,000 notebooks featuring mine/UXO awareness messages and illustrations on the front and back covers to replace the children's destroyed writing tablets.

One further enhancement made by Mark Pirie was his determination that the Quang Tri residents' ability to identify the most commonly found landmines and UXO among those found in the region was greatly lacking. Accordingly, he fashioned "flashcards" featuring pictures of UXO commonly found in Quang Tri to be used as mine awareness teaching tools. This information was also created in flip chart format. These mine awareness materials joined other products, such as "message" hats, pens, waterproof book bags, backpacks, calendars and wall posters provided by the MAP for use by the Mine Awareness Steering Committee in Dong Ha.

The MAP completed its mission for the State Department in March 2000, but the work of increasing mine awareness has not ended. The MAP products, goods, and services which the MAP helped produce are still being used in Quang Tri Province, and are being employed by the Mine Awareness Steering committee. It is hoped that the mine awareness tools and training techniques that have been imparted will foster the continued development of mine awareness techniques throughout the province.

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The MAP staff distributes emergency food to isolated villagers during the monsoon.
Photo c/o MAP

Teaching Materials Included in the Sample Curriculum

- A mine awareness message embedded in a dot-to-dot drawing for children.
- An illustration with "hidden" dangers that children find and circle.
- Graphical and textual descriptions of those who have lived in chronically unsafe conditions or have survived mine/UXO accidents.
- Recommendations for adults to reduce psychological distress in children and other adults.



The distribution of mine awareness notebooks to areas hit by monsoon floods.
Photo c/o MAP