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Mine Risk Education Strategic Plan - 2006 - Cambodia

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KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation Religion King

MINE RISK EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN



First Edition - 2006

**Prepared by the Secretariat-General
Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority
(CMAA)**

FOREWORD

The Royal Decree No. NS/RKT/0900/160, promulgated on 04 September 2000, on the establishment of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, known as the CMAA, and the Sub-Decree on its organization and functioning have established a suitable framework for developing a national strategic plan for all mine action activities, including mine risk education plans.

This document has been prepared in consultation with all stakeholders including UNICEF, CMAA, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), the HALO Trust, World Vision International (WVI), the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC), Handicap International (HI), the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), UNDP, the Commissariat General of the National Police (Ministry of Interior), the Cambodian Campaign to Ban Landmines (CCBL), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and AustCARE, under the chairmanship of the Secretary General of the CMAA.

This document was prepared taking into consideration the current mine/UXO accident rate in the Kingdom of Cambodia. It also takes account of the Prime Minister's address to the nation on the occasion of Mine Awareness Day 2006, during which he re-iterated the ultimate goal of mine action in Cambodia - to achieve Zero Victims by 2012. This mine risk education strategic plan is designed to help achieve that goal.

As agreed by the MRE Technical Working Group, this strategic plan will be reviewed every 2 years to ensure it remains in line with the evolution of mine action in Cambodia.

Yours sincerely,

Phnom Penh, April 2006

Secretary General

INTRODUCTION

According to Cambodian Red Cross reports, mine and UXO accidents have to date directly affected over 62,000 people in Cambodia. 30% of these mine/UXO accidents have proved fatal. The remaining 70% of accidents have inflicted non-fatal injuries on about 40,000 people. Many of these victims were maimed and are now permanently disabled, having suffered grave injuries such as amputations, burns, blindness or paralysis.

Between 1979 and the end of the Cambodian conflict, the day of signing the agreement in Paris on 23 October 1991, the annual average rate of mine accidents was 2,796. From 1992 to 1998, the annual average remained around 2,800 casualties. Cambodia achieved lasting peace at the end of 1998, and in 1999 as a result of military demobilisation the annual number of mine accidents decreased to 1,153.

Sustained mine removal and mine awareness programmes have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of mine/UXO casualties, which fell from 4,320 in 1996 to 858 in 2000. But the number of people killed or injured by landmines and UXO is still alarmingly high – between 2000 and 2005 there were 5,056 casualties reported (an average rate of 844 per year). The large majority of mine/UXO casualties since military demobilisation have been civilians, and many of them have been injured while tampering with UXO.¹

Over recent years, there has been a steady increase in UXO casualties, so much so that since 2001 casualties from UXO accidents have outnumbered casualties from mine accidents. Mine accidents still outnumber UXO accidents, but UXO accidents often lead to multiple casualties.

On 24 February 2002 the Prime Minister of Cambodia presided over the annual Mine Awareness Day, which that year commemorated the 10th anniversary of demining operations, and was celebrated in Ratanak Mondul district, Battambang province. He appealed to the whole Mine Action community to make a serious effort towards reducing the mine/UXO accident rate to zero by 2012. In response to this appeal, this strategy paper outlines an integrated approach to mine risk education that focuses on education, reporting, coordination and community involvement, activities which can help to reduce overall risk and thus provide a more effective means to reduce mine/UXO accidents.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite significant reductions in casualties in the past years, the number of mine/UXO accidents in Cambodia remains amongst the highest in the world. In 2006, fifteen years after the signature of the Paris Peace Accords and more than seven years after the complete cessation of conflict at the end of 1998, people continue to be killed and maimed by mines/UXO on a daily basis.

Mine Risk Education (MRE) has reached the most at-risk communities, yet there has been no decrease in the number of mine/UXO casualties over the past six years. CMVIS statistics show that over 80% of mine and UXO victims have received Mine Risk Education, but they are still taking huge risks despite knowing the dangers and the possible consequences of their actions.

¹ All data are obtained from Cambodia Mine/UXO Victim Information System

Mines and UXO pose two main risks:

1. Risk to body through death, injury and disability, and the psychological impact on communities and individuals of mine/UXO accidents.
2. Risk to community development through loss of economic opportunities and limitations of basic social services due to mine/UXO contamination.

Despite knowing the risk to the individual, poverty and livelihood needs often force local people living in contaminated areas to intentionally enter mined areas or to hunt for UXO to sell as scrap. At the same time, children continue to grow up and new families settle in contaminated areas without a clear understanding of the risk posed by mines and UXO. As clearance is currently unable to provide a mine/UXO free environment for many of these people, there is still a need to continue to provide mine risk education and to develop risk reduction strategies focusing on both intentional and unintentional risk taking.

IMAS DEFINITION OF MRE

As adapted from the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), the definition of Mine Risk Education is those educational activities which seek to reduce the risk of injury from mines/UXO by raising awareness and promoting behavioural change; including public information dissemination, education and training, and community mine action liaison. According to the IMAS, MRE is one of the five components of mine action. The others are: demining, victim assistance, advocacy to stigmatise the use of landmines and support of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, and stockpile destruction.

MRE, along with demining (including technical survey, mapping, mine and UXO clearance, marking, post-clearance documentation and the handover of cleared land), contributes to mine risk reduction, reducing the risk of physical injury from mines and UXO which contaminate the land. Advocacy and stockpile destruction aim to prevent the future use of mines and UXO. Victim assistance deals with the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors of landmine/UXO accidents.

MRE IN CAMBODIA

Mine Risk Education (also known as Mine Awareness) activities began in Cambodia in 1993, the initial activities focusing on providing knowledge about mines and UXO to returnees and internally displaced people who were settling in often heavily contaminated areas after the cessation of conflict. MRE was usually provided by roving educational teams who gave presentations in villages, outlining the different types of ordnance, recognizing dangerous areas, international and local warning signs, and the emergency procedures that should be followed to avoid or minimise the risk of accidents.

However, in 2000 MRE in Cambodia reached a turning point in its development, as it became apparent that livelihood issues were starting to affect the way individuals and communities interacted with mines and UXO, including taking intentional risks to clear land. In August 2000, a working group organised by UNICEF and involving all the organisations working in MRE activities in Cambodia, met to discuss and clarify the future MRE strategy. Primarily it was felt that MRE needed to broaden its approach to develop the capacity of mine affected communities

to interact with mine action responses, victim assistance and community development programs, as well as to disseminate mine risk education messages promoting safe behavior to reach a larger portion of the at-risk population.

KEY PLAYERS IN MRE IN CAMBODIA

In September 2002, the coordination role of MRE that had previously been undertaken by UNICEF, was handed over to the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA). Since December 2003, with the installation of an MRE focal point at national level, the CMAA has taken full responsibility for coordinating all MRE activities, with the aim of ensuring MRE integration with other mine action, victim assistance and community development efforts to effect a steep reduction in mine/UXO accidents in the near future.

Several organisations have been involved in mine risk education in some capacity. CMAC, the Cambodian Red Cross, HALO Trust, MAG, RCAF and World Vision International have all operated mine risk education programmes either as a specific activity or as part of their overall mine action programmes. Activities have included mass media campaigns, mobile mine awareness presentations, community liaison, and the setting up of community networks for risk education and reduction. UNICEF has continued to provide a valuable supporting role to risk education activities.

It is the intention of the RGC, through the CMAA, to undertake and sustain the task of coordinating all mine action operators, in order to protect all Cambodian citizens from the physical, social, economic and psychological impact of landmines and UXO, by pursuing the following goal:

GOAL

To reduce the number of mine/UXO casualties by empowering affected communities to identify appropriate and effective risk education/reduction approaches, and by coordinating and integrating all risk reduction efforts with broader humanitarian and development activities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Promote the roles and responsibilities of affected communities in providing risk education and risk reduction strategies for their communities.
2. Advocate to mine action, community development, relevant ministries and other social services to contribute more effectively to risk reduction.
3. Continue to develop appropriate and effective mine risk education approaches targeting high-risk communities and individuals.
4. Strengthen national coordination.

ACTIVITIES

Implementing objective 1 - Promote the roles and responsibilities of affected communities in providing risk education and risk reduction strategies for their communities

Challenge: Many mine risk education programmes focus on information dissemination, often treating local people as passive audiences. While this method continues to be effective in warning people who have little knowledge of the risk of mines and UXO, there has been a growing realisation that to effectively reduce risk in affected communities where people have an awareness of the dangers, the local people have to be involved in defining the risk and developing alternative strategies. In Cambodia mine risk education approaches are already acknowledging the importance of local level knowledge and involvement. Both MAG and World Vision utilise community resource people to mobilise, educate and advocate at community level and in 2002 CMAC launched the Community Based Mine/UXO Risk Reduction (CBMRR) project, which builds up networks of mine/UXO representatives with the aim of empowering affected communities to fully participate in the planning and prioritisation of the mine action response to the risk in their community and to provide mine risk education. These approaches build on community liaison techniques which actively involve local people in the mine action process.

However, such approaches are only effective if the identified needs of the communities are responded to by the mine action operators. For example, the lack of a suitably swift EOD response to mines/UXO identified by communities has led to a lack of trust of MRE teams operating in those communities. It is imperative that all main operators establish EOD rapid response teams, who can react to community-generated requests for disposal to be carried out within 48 hours. Small-scale emergency mine clearance identified by local communities also requires a quick response from small mobile teams tasked for risk reduction.

To facilitate such a rapid response, reporting mechanisms from community level to mine action operators, the national police and the RCAF need to be established and refined.

More effort should be invested in community-led initiatives in order to reinforce community ownership to meet the short and long-term needs of affected communities, as the impact of mine/ UXO problems belongs to those communities, and no one is in a better position to define their issues than communities themselves.

Activity 1

- *Continue to promote and support participation of communities in the mine risk education and risk reduction process.*
- *Establish a reliable and robust mine/UXO reporting system.*
- *Convince demining operators, national police and Royal Cambodian Armed Forces to establish rapid response EOD teams and small-scale clearance teams.*

Implementing objective 2 - Advocate to mine action, community development, relevant ministries and other social services to contribute more effectively to risk reduction

Challenge: Risk taking often results from livelihood pressures, which in turn can be exacerbated by social, environmental, political and legal factors. This suggests that the value of mine risk education is limited if it exists as a stand-alone activity. It must be integrated with a clearance response and also with broader development responses that can help to provide alternative livelihood options, social support and legal protection, all of which can work to reduce the need for local people to take risks in mine affected areas. Examples of this could be a community development agency providing a well in a village with a contaminated water source, or home gardening activities to people who rely on collecting forest vegetables from mined areas.

Land security through the provision of land titles may also mitigate the perpetual cycle of poor families being evicted from one area and moving to contaminated land. Mine risk education practitioners need to promote and advocate for a more integrated response to the mine threat that can reduce risk while allowing clearance agencies to complete the physical clearance of contaminated land. Efforts also need to be made to ensure that clearance for development projects does not divert mine action resources from higher priority areas within a mine affected community.

The Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) will:

- Advocate for the total ban on anti-personnel landmines and integration of mine risk education and risk reduction activities in mine action sectors, social services, relevant ministries and community development programmes.
- Promote adoption of the best practices identified, development of national MRE policies, guidelines and standards, and undertake periodic evaluation of their effect.
- Support the Landmine Monitor in verification of implementation, providing MRE statistics and other information as requested.

This could be done through development of effective mechanisms to coordinate MRE projects, such as establishing national MRE working groups, undertaking MRE joint field monitoring and associate training activities for practitioners, in addition to providing direct technical assistance to relevant government ministries and other partners.

Activity 2

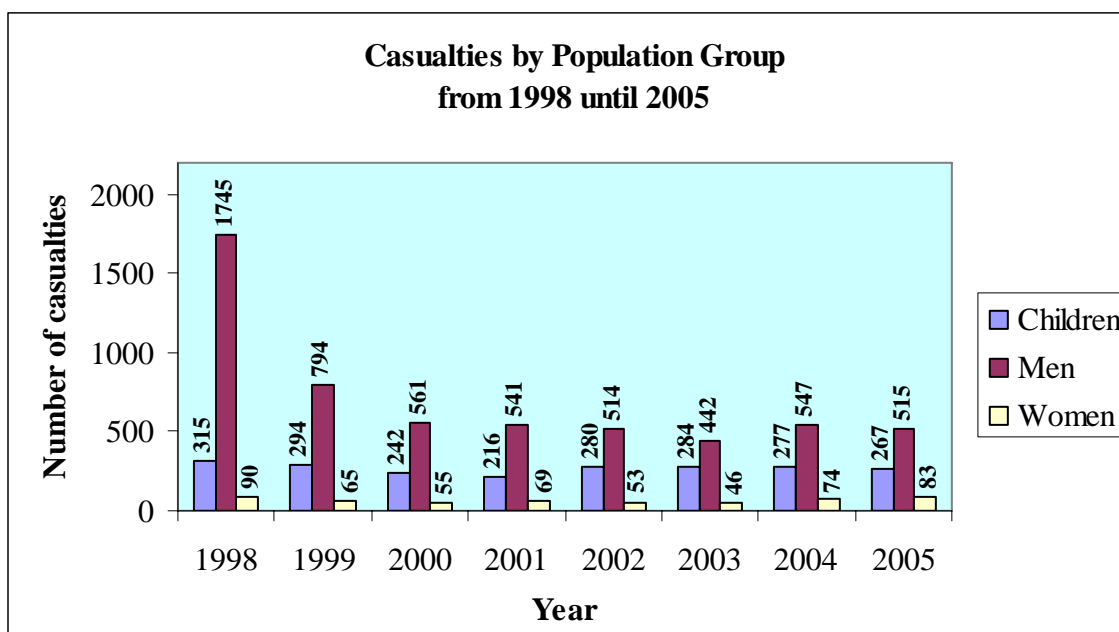
- *Establish effective national mechanisms to coordinate MRE projects, which can involve development agencies and social services working in mine affected communities.*
- *Advocate and promote integration of MRE with other relevant government, mine action and community development programmes through fora, seminars, workshops.*
- *Undertake joint field monitoring with MRE operators and provide technical assistance, and document lessons learned and best practice from integrating MRE, clearance and development*

Implementing objective 3 - Continue to develop appropriate and effective mine risk education approaches targeting high-risk communities and individuals

Challenge: Men and boys are most at risk from mines and UXO in Cambodia. In 2005 adult men represented 60% of all reported casualties while boys under the age of 18 represented 25%. Landmines caused 58% of the adult male casualties, and the majority of these accidents occurred while the victims were engaged in livelihood activities. The remaining 42% of adult male casualties resulted from UXO incidents, with tampering as the primary cause.

The casualty data indicate that children, particularly boys, are far more likely to be injured and killed by UXO than by landmines, and that tampering with UXO, often for reasons of curiosity or for the purpose of collecting and selling the scrap metal, is the main cause of accidents. Of the 267 child casualties reported in 2005, 232 (87%) were caused by UXO. Although there tends to be fewer UXO accidents than mine accidents, the number of casualties associated with each UXO accident tends to be higher, as bystanders are often injured and killed. Over half (59%) of the total reported casualties during 2005 were UXO-related.

The number of child casualties due to mines and UXO has remained constant since 1998 around an average of 272, demonstrating that MRE alone does not reduce child casualties, and an integrated mine risk reduction approach is required to remove dangerous items from communities as quickly as possible. The chart below shows the annual numbers of casualties by population group:



Mine risk education in Cambodia today is conducted through presentations to mine-affected villages, through village level volunteers providing MRE information to their peers, through billboards and TV spots, and through the primary school and teacher training curriculum with the support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). In

school, teachers continue to deliver MRE to their students, and to train students to conduct child-to-child education to reach out-of-school children who are at risk.

However, mine risk education messages and approaches need to be continually improved and updated to meet the challenge of addressing the rising number of UXO accidents among men and boys caused by tampering activities. Messages and approaches should be regularly evaluated to ensure that they are reaching the individuals and communities most at risk and that the messages are appropriate to the real situation.

Activity 3

- *Mine risk education operators should improve and update MRE approaches and materials to ensure that they address UXO tampering among men and boys.*
- *Messages and approaches should be regularly evaluated by operators (individually and jointly) to ensure that they are reaching the individuals and communities most at risk, and that the messages are appropriate to the real situation.*
- *In cooperation with line ministries and other stakeholders, the CMAA will provide overall coordination and support for the MRE operators.*

Implementing objective 4 - Strengthening national coordination

Challenge 1: While there are several operators conducting MRE activities, there is a need for better coordination and sharing of experiences and lessons learned. Increasing community participation in risk reduction efforts and the integration of MRE with broader development activities also points to the need for strengthening national coordination.

With regard to the strengthening of national coordination to ensure consultation among all Mine Risk Education operators and to integrate Mine Risk Education with other mine action components and with broader development efforts, the CMAA's co-ordination of MRE will involve the following partners:

- Ministries, including those of Education, Youth & Sport; Rural Development; Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; and Interior, in order to get in touch with all communities beyond the mine action sector;
- MRE operators such as CMAC, CRC, MoEYS, WVI etc
- UNICEF;
- Demining agencies such as CMAC, MAG, HALO Trust and RCAF;
- Development agencies and victim assistance operators;
- Local community representatives.

The CMAA will be responsible for coordinating a regular MRE working group, wherein operators will have the opportunity to share information on their geographical coverage areas, update MRE messages and materials, share lessons learned and apply best practice for a better future MRE implementation in responding to community requirements.

Challenge 2: National MRE standards have not yet been adopted.

Cambodian Mine Risk Education Standards will be developed in line with International Mine Action MRE Standards (IMAS-MRE) and with full consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and adopted by the end of 2006. Once implemented, they will be monitored on an on-going basis and updated as required.

Challenge 3: A reporting mechanism at national level is not in place. Indicators for measuring the effectiveness of MRE projects are not identified and agreed by all MRE operators. Suitable reporting tools and guidelines are to be developed to ensure regular reporting flow.

Having established a regular line of communication, the CMAA will continue to collect annually from all participants the following data and indicators on actions undertaken by stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Locations – i.e. villages – having received MRE information (collected via MRE reporting form);
- Number of mine/UXO accidents that have happened after MRE intervention, other mine action and development interventions in these locations;
- Number of families having received MRE information and number of communities covered by MRE projects;
- Number of communities benefiting from the overall intervention of MRE coordinated efforts;
- Number of responses for mine action intervention such as Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), marking, clearance and development;
- Number and type of activities being undertaken by villages to reduce the risk;
- Number of teachers and children having received MRE education and training.

Information collected before 2006 in this matter having been very poor, the benchmark year will be 2006.

Activity 4

- *Strengthen national coordination of MRE by holding regular meetings involving all relevant partners, including line ministries,*
- *Develop National MRE standards in compliance with IMAS-MRE and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.*
- *Develop a reporting mechanism to monitor the reach and impact of mine risk education activities.*

* * *