Mine Risk Education in Jordan: A Preliminary Needs and Capacities Assessment

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

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MINE RISK EDUCATION IN JORDAN: A PRELIMINARY NEEDS AND CAPACITIES ASSESSMENT
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Introduction

At the request of the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation (NCDR), the GICHD conducted a mission to Jordan on 16–20 October 2005 to undertake a preliminary national needs and capacities assessment for mine risk education (MRE). It is intended that this preliminary assessment will form the basis for decisions within the NCDR and its partners about future MRE programming in the country.

Summary of methodology

The assessment comprised discussions with key actors in Amman and fieldwork in the north (close to the border with Syria) and south of the country (close to the border with the Occupied West Bank). A list of interlocutors is included in Annex 1.

The layout of the assessment

There are five sections to this report:

- The context for mine risk education
- The explosive threat to the civilian population
- The at-risk groups who should benefit from mine risk education
- Existing capacities to provide mine risk education
- Conclusions and recommendations.

Following a bibliography and a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms, two appendixes contain, respectively, a list of interlocutors during the mission and a suggested framework for a village profile that could be adapted for use in Jordan.
Figure 1. Map of Jordan © ReliefWeb
1. The context for mine risk education in Jordan

The political context

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy, which gained independence in 1946. Jordan, which has a surface area of just over 89,000 square kilometres, is located at the centre of a complex and dynamic political, social and economic sub-system between Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine and Israel.

Demographics

In 2002, the total population of Jordan exceeded 5.3 million, representing a five-fold increase since the 901,000 registered in 1961. The current population growth rate of 2.8 per cent has remained constant since 2000. More than 31 per cent of the population are between the ages of 15 and 29, and a further 38 per cent are below the age of 15. Life expectancy in Jordan continues to improve, rising to 71.5 years in 2004.

The economic context

Jordan is classified as a lower-middle income country whose economy is constrained by limited arable land, and scarce water, mineral and energy resources. Notwithstanding the difficulty of the regional political environment, and the lack of resources, the Jordanian population enjoys today one of the highest per-capita disposable incomes compared to other emerging countries in the sub-region. Jordan’s Gross National Income per capita in 2003 was US$1,850.

Water scarcity is the single most important natural constraint to Jordan’s development. Current estimated water use of 800 million cubic metres per year already exceeds renewable water supplies. Most of Jordan’s economic activities now take place on only 10 per cent of its land. A growing population and an emphasis on economic activity have increased pressure on this limited land resource. Any degradation or permanent loss of land resources endangers current and potential land usage and has a direct consequence on the livelihoods of the population.

Education

Net primary school enrolment/attendance in 1996–2003 was 89 per cent. Literacy rate among males aged 15 and above in 2003 was 95 per cent, and for females of the same age group it was some 85 per cent.

The international legal framework

Jordan has been a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention since 1 May 1999. Its deadline for clearance of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control therefore expires on 1 May 2009. Its current strategic plan – for the period 2005 to 2009 – aims to meet that deadline.
Jordan is party to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Amended Protocol II, but not to Protocol V on explosive remnants of war.
2. The explosive threat to the civilian population

Type of threat

Jordan is affected by landmines (anti-personnel and anti-tank), as well as by an unknown but apparently limited number of items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO).

The threat is the result of a number of armed conflicts dating back to 1948 and the partition of Palestine, especially the 1967–1969 Arab-Israeli conflict, internal conflict with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in the early 1970s, and hostilities with Syria in 1975.

The main threat appears to come from the existence of minefields along Jordan’s borders with Israel, Syria and the West Bank. In addition, there is suspected to be UXO in a small number of areas in Ajloun and Irbid governorates. Jordan’s current national mine action plan claimed that 314 minefields remain contaminated with some 200,000 mines, of which three-quarters are anti-personnel mines. The total affected area is said to be 35 square kilometres of land.

Impact of the threat

The precise extent of the impact of the explosive threat is not known, although it is clear that in addition to the human cost (at least 529 victims since 1967, but see Section 3 below)\(^{10}\) some fertile land is mine-affected. According to the NCDR, “rich agricultural lands have remained uncultivated, irrigation and hydro projects delayed, housing construction postponed, and historical and world cultural heritage sites unexplored… [I]t is estimated that roughly 500,000 people representing 8 per cent of the population are affected by the presence of mines, the majority of whom are women and children.”\(^{11}\)

Jordan plans to conduct a survey of the impact of mines and UXO across the country as soon as possible. The precise nature of the survey has not yet been decided but it is clear that it will provide valuable additional information to prioritise mine action operations. The GICHD mission has suggested adding in specific fields to a survey questionnaire to help to identify ongoing or recent risk-taking in mined or UXO-affected areas. This information would be critical in planning future mine risk education activities.
3. The at-risk groups who should benefit from mine risk education

It is not known with precision how many people are killed and injured by mines and unexploded ordnance each year in Jordan, although it is clear that both military and civilians, adults and children are all affected to some degree. Estimates for new landmine and UXO victims in 2004 vary from 12 (as reported by the NCDR) to 27 (a calculation of the Landmine Monitor, based on data from the NCDR and the Landmine Survivors Network).

These figures include an accident in Ajloun governorate in 2004 in which three schoolchildren were killed close to their school, an accident confirmed by a visit to the school during the GICHD mission. It appears that the children found two hand-grenades of origin unknown which subsequently detonated during tampering. For 2003, the Landmine Monitor reported only six new mine casualties of whom two were killed and four injured.

It is surprising that a country with the level of sophistication of Jordan does not have a fully functioning victim surveillance system. This should be rectified as soon as possible. However, it is expected that data on recent victims (those within the last two years) should be collected as part of the planned impact survey.

The level of ongoing risk-taking is not known, although there is anecdotal evidence of intentional entry into at least one suspected mined area in Ajloun governorate (a former minefield that has been cleared but for which the standard of clearance is questioned) – to collect mushrooms. In this regard, the landmine impact survey will also provide an opportunity to gather more accurate data on those who are entering mined areas or interacting with UXO. A suggested village profile framework included in Annex 2 could help with this endeavour.

The GICHD mission team did not receive reports of people clearing landmines or collect UXO to sell as scrap metal or to extract the explosives, but did hear of reports of spontaneous village demining and UXO clearance arising from frustration at the slow pace of professional clearance operations. There is a clear need for a community liaison capacity to accompany and support ongoing clearance operations, so that the beneficiaries understand the process and the constraints under which demining operates. Moreover, there is a clear reticence on the part of the civilian population to reporting landmines or UXO they find, for fear of being detained or implicated in a police investigation. This climate needs to be changed.

Smugglers are clearly crossing known, fenced minefields, for example those running for 68 kilometres close to the border with Syria, as can be seen from the well-trodden path across the 70-metre-wide minefield in Figure 2 overleaf. Indeed, the minefields were originally laid to prevent smugglers illegally entering Jordanian territory with weapons. When the GICHD mission team visited the area the fencing of the minefields was being maintained.
Figure 2. Jordanian minefield close to border with Syria. © Stuart Maslen/GICHD 2005
4. Existing capacities to provide mine risk education

Existence mine action structure and capacity

The National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation (NCDR) serves as the national mine action centre for Jordan. The NCDR was mandated by royal decrees in March 2000 and April 2002 and became fully operational in May 2004 with the arrival of a UNDP chief technical adviser.

A sub-committee exists for MRE within the NCDR but it is said to have met only once. There is no technical adviser for mine risk education within the NCDR. The ICRC has a regional mine action adviser based in Amman.

In 2005, a royal decree approved the NCDR Board of Directors, composed of representatives of the Armed Forces, government, NGOs, medical and educational institutions, the private sector, landmine survivors and the media. The Board is chaired by HRH Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein.

Mine clearance in Jordan is the sole responsibility of the Royal Corps of Engineers, although the NCDR has been giving consideration to enhancing clearance capacity through inviting an international demining to conduct operations in Jordan, probably along the northern border with Syria.

Existing MRE operators

A number of organisations are involved in the delivery of mine risk education, including the Royal Corps of Engineers, Civil Defence, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Ministry of Education and the Jordanian Red Crescent Society, assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It is generally agreed, however, that MRE activities have been largely ad hoc – hence the decision to request assistance in the assessment of MRE needs.

Currently, most MRE activities are being provided through the project run by the Jordanian Red Crescent Society since 2004 in several governorates. In its first year, it undertook over 100 educational events, reaching close to 12,000 people. It intends to continue the program until 2007, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, ICRC and Royal Corps of Engineers. There are MRE committees in eight governorates, consisting of five male teachers, five female teachers and 50 students each. Methods of delivery include lectures, demonstrations, brochures and workshops.

In addition, the Ministry of Education is implementing a programme on international humanitarian law targeting 13- to 18-year-olds in the North, Centre and South of the country. The programme includes a component on landmines.

Existing public health actors

Mine survivors are entitled to medical care and rehabilitation under the standard healthcare system in Jordan. Some 90 percent of the population are said to live within a mile of a health
facility and can use a range of providers from the public, NGO and private sectors. All known survivors reportedly receive prosthetics, although there is limited local outreach for physiotherapy and rehabilitation services for mine survivors. While Jordan has relatively well trained personnel and well equipped medical facilities, there are said to be challenges in providing the specialised care needed by mine survivors in the area of prosthetics, orthopaedics and physical rehabilitation.¹²
5. Conclusions, findings and recommendations

This section sets out the conclusions, findings and recommendations of the preliminary assessment based on the GICHD mission in October 2005.

Conclusion 1. Based on available evidence, there is no need for a major mine risk education programme in Jordan. There may, however, be merit in specific educational activities targeted to communities living close to mined areas and former combat zones.

Findings

Although it is not known exactly how many people are killed and injured by mines and unexploded ordnance in Jordan each year, it is clear that it is comparatively low. Moreover, there is no evidence that the numbers will increase over the coming years as the location of mined areas is known and the areas are, to the extent of available knowledge, fenced to prevent unintentional entry. The precise extent of UXO contamination is not known but appears to be limited.

However, casualties continue to be recorded as a result of risk-taking among the civilian population and further educational activities targeted to communities and schools close to affected areas could be justified. These should concentrate on reinforcing basic safety messages, including encouraging the reporting of suspicious objects to the police or army.

Recommendation 1a. Existing mine risk education activities, in particular those conducted by the Jordanian Red Crescent Society, should be pursued. Further selective training of teachers to deliver mine risk education in schools should be considered in and around affected areas.

Recommendation 1b. To keep the issue of mine-safe behaviour on the public agenda, the NCDR should consider promoting a mine awareness day each year in Jordan until clearance is completed.

Conclusion 2. Data gathering and dissemination on the victims of mines and unexploded ordnance and the level of risk-taking at community level need to be strengthened.

Findings

In a country with the level of sophistication of Jordan, it is surprising to see that the exact number of victims from mines and UXO is not known or recorded systematically. Estimates of the number of casualties annually differ and it is believed by several key actors that the figures recorded in the Information Management System for Mine Action database understate the true total.

The proposed impact survey for Jordan represents a golden opportunity to both create a baseline of knowledge for mine risk education and to set up a system for future comprehensive recording of casualties. The survey could be easily adapted to gather the necessary information. The data collected then needs to be analysed and disseminated to all
actors within the mine risk education programme, including through regular coordination meetings.

**Recommendation 2a.** The ongoing information needs for mine risk education planning and management should be met by adapting the impact survey instruments to include data on risk-taking within affected communities. Analysis of data should feed into future planning for mine risk education.

**Recommendation 2b.** A standardised victim form should be developed for the landmine impact survey which should serve as the data gathering instrument in a future victim surveillance system.

**Conclusion 3.** There is a need for support to the demining process through community mine action liaison.

**Findings**

A number of interlocutors have spoken of the need to reinforce trust in the process of clearing affected land. This is one of the objectives of community mine action liaison teams, which prepare communities for demining, and work to build the confidence of the community during and after clearance operations. Although the army engineers are respected in Jordan, they are not necessarily the most appropriate body to conduct community liaison. A non-governmental organisation (NGO) may more easily acquire the trust and confidence of the community and could reinforce the success of the ongoing clearance operations in the country.

**Recommendation 3a.** A community liaison capacity should be established in Jordan to support the demining process. This would require training and guidance for programme partners and additional staff within the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation.

**Recommendation 3b.** The community liaison capacity should include the use of teachers trained by existing mine risk education projects during school holidays.

**Conclusion 4.** There is a need to further strengthen national capacity to plan, manage, implement and coordinate mine risk education, including community mine action liaison, in Jordan.

**Findings**

Mine risk education activities have, to date, been sporadic and ad hoc. The information generated by the planned impact survey needs to feed into the planning process, which requires capacity development of analytical skills. In addition, the sector would benefit from enhanced coordination and information exchange.

**Recommendation 4a.** Regular meetings should be convened by the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation of mine risk education actors, including with other mine action operators, especially those engaged in mine clearance.
Recommendation 4b. UNICEF or another suitable organisation should be requested to supply a short-term technical advisor to develop the capacity of the NCDR to monitor and coordinate mine risk education, particularly community mine action liaison, and the relationship between MRE and other mine action.

Recommendation 4c. The NCDR, with the support of its partners, should coordinate the development of national standards for mine risk education, including community mine action liaison, supported by a practical guide to MRE.

Conclusion 5. Further clarification of the mandate of the NCDR through the adoption of national mine action legislation appears to be warranted.

Findings

National mine action legislation, as envisaged by the NCDR’s strategic plan 2005–2009, would be an enabling activity also for information management, including the reporting of explosive ordnance and mine and UXO victims, as well as respect for mine marking and fencing.

Recommendation 5. Early drafting of appropriate national mine action legislation that takes into account the needs of mine risk education should be considered a priority.
Endnotes

2 UNDP (2005: 17).
3 ibid.
4 ibid.: 18.
5 ibid.: 21.
6 ibid.: 17.
8 UNDP (2005: 18).
10 NCDR (2005: 1).
11 ibid.
12 ICBL (2005).
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Websites

www.undp.org

www.unicef.org

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Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms

AXO  abandoned explosive ordnance
GICHD  Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
ICRC  International Committee of the Red Cross
MRE  mine risk education
NCDR  National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation
UXO  unexploded ordnance
Annexes

Annex 1. List of interlocutors

ICRC

- Srajan Jovanovic, Regional Delegate for Mine Action
- Rabab Al Rufa’e, Media Coordinator

Jordanian Red Crescent Society

- Lena Al Hadeed, Programme Officer

Ministry of Education

- Secretary General
- Malak Khatib

NCDR

- HRH Prince Mired Raad Zeid Al-Hussein, Chairman, Board of Directors
- Mohammed Breikat, National Director
- Olaf Juergenson, UNDP Chief Technical Adviser
- Islam K Bawa’neh, Mine Risk Education Officer

UNICEF

- Nasser Moeini, Programme Officer

Field visit to Ajloun (18 October 2005)

- Governor of the district
- Representatives of affected communities

Field visit to Al-Mafraq (17 October 2005)

- Governor of the district
- Representatives of affected communities
- Military commander of region
Annex 2. Village profile framework

NAME OF VILLAGE:
LOCATION:
IMSMA ID NUMBER:

A. DEMOGRAPHICS
- How many people live in the village?
- How many families live in the village?
- How many people are girls or women?
- How many are children?
- Do the people all live in the centre of the village or are they spread out?
- Did people flee the village during the conflict?
  - Have they all returned?
  - Are more expected to return soon?
  - How many?
  - When?
  - Where are they going to live?
  - What are they going to do when they return to survive?

B. LIVELIHOODS
What are the main livelihoods in the village?
- Farmers?
  - Both male and female?
  - What ages?
- Shepherds?
  - Both male and female?
  - What ages?
- Traders?
  - Both male and female?
  - What ages?
- Seasonal workers?
  - Both male and female?
  - What ages?
- Construction workers?
  - Both male and female?
  - What ages?
- Other? Please specify.

C. EXPLOSIVE THREAT AND AT RISK GROUPS
- Are there areas containing mines in or near the village?
  - If so, where are they?
  - Do people go there?
  - Who?
  - Why?
  - How often?
- Are there areas containing unexploded bombs, grenades or shells (UXO) in or near the village?
  - If so, where are they?
  - Do people go there?
  - Who?
o Why?
o How often?
• Are there areas containing stockpiles of weapons or ammunition in or near the village?
o If so, where are they?
o Are the stockpiles locked/guarded
o Do people go there?
o Who?
o Why?
• Do people have explosive devices (e.g. grenades, mines) in their houses?
• Have any animals been killed or injured by explosive devices in the last 12 months in or near the village?
o If so, where?
o How many?

D. VICTIMS
• Any human victims in the last 12 months?
• How many?
• What ages?
• Sex?
• Where were they injured?
• Why had they gone there?
• Did they know it was dangerous?
• If they know it was dangerous, why did they go there?
• What happened to them after the explosion?
• Are there people needing medical attention?
o If so, what medical attention do they need?
• Are there people needing an artificial limb?
o If so, why do they not have one?

E. COMMUNITY RESOURCES
• Are water points blocked by mines or ERW?
o If so, where?
o How are people collecting water?
• Is the school blocked by mines or ERW?
• Is the forest/access to firewood blocked by mines or ERW?
• Are fruit trees or orchards blocked by mines or ERW?
• Is the church blocked by mines or ERW?
• Is the river blocked by mines or ERW?
• Is the road blocked by mines or ERW?
o If so, how are people travelling to other villages?

F. CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH THE THREAT
• How is the community managing the risk from mines and ERW?
o Clearance by villagers themselves of mines or ERW
o Informing people not to touch mines or ERW
o Marking certain areas as being dangerous
o Other actions? Please specify
• Has rehabilitation or development work taken place in the village?
o What was done?
o When?
o By whom?
• Has demining (survey or clearance) taken place?
• Has mine risk education been provided in the village?
  o When?
  o By whom?
  o Was it helpful?
  o If not, why not?
• What institutions are present in the village?
  o Schools
  o Health posts
  o Community associations
  o Churches/mosques
  o Other? Please specify