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The OAS Mine Action Program has established a priority in providing not only basic education and medical attention, but also technical and productive training for victims. The selection criteria are diverse. Prior medical and psychological treatment is the first requirement. A second criterion includes the distribution of affected zones. The first generation of students came from the three different areas with the most accidents in Nicaragua—Guarne, Nueva Segovia, and the North Atlantic Autonomous Region. The training period lasts approximately one year and depends on the particular skills and experiences of each victim. The National Technological Institute, a governmental organization in Nicaragua, provides technical training. Students receive a scholarship, a monthly stipend, a per diem, transportation and daily meals. Job skills training includes carpentry and mechanics, welding, and computing. The first generation of students started its course in April 2002 and concluded eight months later. Of the 24 students who graduated, 11 were trained in woodworking, six in carpentry and mechanics, five in welding and two in computing. In addition, seven students were provided extra help in literacy classes.

Work Training

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Exchange for Peace

A project organized by the office of the National Councilor Roland Wiederkehr (Member of the Swiss Parliament), Exchange for Peace brings young people from all over the world together to discuss and share their experiences and hopes for a brighter future. The theme of this year’s event was landmines and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of mine action.

by Kimberly Kinn, MAG

Various forms of antique armor slowly spoke out loud in an uncontrolled display of arms at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. In this exhibit, dozens of half-complete suits of armor shrouded from invisible wires in the form of large mobiles, hanging from the ceiling of a large room, “I cannot take this anymore, would you like to come see some other exhibits with me”? whispered Safana Hadi Ali-Adilson, a young Iraqi woman who works for an Italian NGO. As we walked out of the exhibit, she said, “I could not stand it any longer in there, they looked like ghosts of dead soldiers. It is a horrible display.” We looked at an exhibit of 17th-century Swiss poetry in silence. Safana was right about the exhibit: the displayed arms were a reminder of the terrible consequences of war, and the problems faced by those involved in mine action.

Recommendations for Future Action in Albania

Based on the analysis of the current mine accidents in Albania and the results of previous mine action activities, the following suggestions are recommended for Albanian mine action in the future:

• Anti-mine committees should be trained to write proposals to win funding that would create the sustainability of the projects, and the community-based organizations should be strengthened.

• Home-based work is a good alternative for mine victims, and training should be established for animal husbandry, carpentry, plumbing, and handicrafts.

• Victims who have moved to urban centers need to be trained.

• Children who cannot go to school need care.

Prevention:

• Decline in the number of mine incidents, from 169 in 1999 to four in 2003.

• Training of 6,190 school children to spread awareness messages.

• Distribution of leaflets, posters and 60,000 booklets.

• Conducting of 39 monthly MRE visits.

Assistance to Mine Victims:

• 30 mine victims and 30 members of mine victim families have received vocational training in English, computers, drawing, and videocasting.

• Nine have found work writing wedding videos and photography in their villages.

• 10 others are working in beekeeping.

• A revolving loan fund has been created to set up sustainable support for the victims.

• Local authorities are paying more attention to mine victims, including distribution of small grants to 18 families who lost houses and property during the conflict.

• Logistics assistance is being provided, including information on rehabilitation and transportation to medical appointments.

Contact Information

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He showed me photos of detainees in Sri Lanka undertaken by a staff of human rights activists who had ventured and were very little, if any, personal protective equipment (PPE). Despite the efforts of UNICEF in Sri Lanka, the government and the United Nations are currently frustrated by failed negotiations between Sri Lanka and the rebel group Tamil Tigers and Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Kirian explained that the LTTE is thinking about signing the Geneva Call, but he had not yet been told what they would do, so, since their demands for signing included cooperation from the Sri Lankan government. Without a binding agreement to stop the use of landmines, the LTTE continues to plant mines in the northern part of the island. A colleague of Kirian, explained how many of the victims of landmines in Sri Lanka are unable to get prostheses because they are not manufactured within the country. Most of these victims are children who play in the jungle.

Efforts in Cambodia

In the basement cafeteria of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) headquarters in Geneva, I was able to speak at length with two participants from Cambodia. They work for Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), an NGO that focuses mostly on victim assistance and humanitarian work around the world. Led by a member of JRS, Kiran explains how JRS helps victims by providing them with training for the production of handicrafts and by visiting the homes of disabled victims to provide victim assistance. JRS also goes out into rural villages and educates children and adults about landmines.

Chetara Song, a long-time worker with JRS, shared a story about a local farmer who lost his land to landmines, and who worked the land after he was de-mined.

He worked the land alone for the first time. As he was plowing, he drove the tractor over a part of the land usually avoided by his workers. His tractor rolled over an AT mine and exploded. A chest cavity was all that was left of his body.

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