Exchange for Peace

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Association, UNICEF’s major local partner, has identified almost 200 mine-affected households with people who are unable to meet their basic needs. UNICEF is supporting the mine victims in particular to:

- Undertake mine risk education activities in affected communities in 39 villages of Albania.
- Hold counseling sessions with children and other individuals traumatized during the conflict.
- Represent mine victims interests.
- Help mine victims with logistical support to get medical help.
- Help in lobbying for support from donors. This lobbying has resulted in support from the U.S. State Department for a project aimed at socio-economic reintegration of mine victims through development of household animal breeding activities.

Mine risk education (MRE) continues in three northern districts, targeting communities and schools. The work is coordinated by an LRA committee, representatives by mine victims in each village in collaboration with peace activists and with broad participation by women. There are five MRE sessions in each village and are responsible for ensuring the safety of residents and the dissemination of information to keep the population informed about mine threats and mined areas. Theatrical plays from village to village spreading the mine awareness message. The LRA Committee also report to authorities about incidents and minefields and monitor the presence of warning signs. The Mine Victims Association team provides counseling sessions with children and other people experiencing the stress of the war. Major outcomes of the work include:

- Despite the positive outcomes, many concerns still remain. The mined area is enormous and there is a lack of knowledge and local and basic social services are lacking. Education opportunities for mine victims are rare. Even when people are trained, there are few job opportunities. Even people without physical disabilities find it very difficult to get around because of poor infrastructure, and for mine victims, the situation is even worse. There are not enough social workers, doctors and other professionals to serve the area.

Prevention:

- Decline in the number of landmine incidents, from 169 in 1999 to four in 2003.
- Trained 6,390 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 videoediting.
- Mine victims have found work doing wedding videos and photography in their villages.
- 10 others work 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.

Recommendations for Future Action in Albania:

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

- Mine awareness should be trained to write proposals to win funding that would ensure the sustainability of the projects, and the community-based organisations should be strengthened.
- Home-based work is a good alternative for mine victims and training should be established for animal breeding, tailoring, plumbing, marketing and handicrafts.
- Victims who have moved to urban centres need to be trained.
- Children who cannot go to school need care.

New projects should be established for beekeeping and cattle breeding.

The established system of raising awareness needs to be strengthened so the community can be completely responsible for solving its problems.

Anti-mine committees are a strong institution for community development, and could be used to set up a revolving fund for mine victims and the community.

The Albanian government should be lobbied to include mine victims in the priorities.

More concerns should be held to help spread messages about behavior change.

Former mined areas need to be referred.

Since 2001, UNICEF has provided technical support to the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE), the body that coordinates all mine action in Albania. The AMAE is responsible for ensuring the clearance and certification of the demining process. The National MRE strategy was implemented in 2001–2002, followed by a CARE survey on mine awareness and a workshop to update the strategy. It calls for completing mine clearance of high- and medium-priority areas by 2006 (low-priority areas are not to be cleared and will be closed in coming years), with a modest budget of $5.7 million (US). This would make Albania the second post-conflict country in the region free of mines and UXO.

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JMU: Exchange for Peace

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 organisations (NGOs) working in the field of mine action.

by Kimberly Kline, MAG

Various forms of unicorn armor slowly swoop over our heads and are displayed at an exhibition held at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. In this exhibit, dozens of half-complete suits of armor dangle 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 Al-Adloum, 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 the 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 displays were an accurate reflection of the terrible consequences of war, and the problems faced by those involved in mine action.

Efforts in Cambodia

In the basement cafeteria of the Case Study Campaign Ban Landmines (CSBCL) headquarters in Geneva, I was able to speak at length with two participants from Cambodia. They work for Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) and an NGO that focuses mostly on victim assistance and humanitarian work around the world. Led by a long-time worker with JRS, Cambodia helps victims by providing them with training for the production of handicrafts and by visiting the homes of disabled victims to provide food and medical assistance. JRS also goes out into rural villages and educates children and adults about the dangers of landmine exploditions.

Chhara Seng, a long-time worker with JRS, shared a story about a local farmer who first turned to work for people in his fields. One week, there was a celebration in his village and his workers went to their respective homes to celebrate. Without work, the farmer was forced to plow 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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M. Wiederkehr Insert
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Another victim that Chal was aware of was a young boy. This boy was walking to school with his friend when he had the urge to go to the bathroom. Since action can be taken in and around CHD areas (MRE), a_Technology Officer." This has been made possible through a partnership arrangement with the government of Canada. The post will focus on practical ways that new and existing technologies for mine action can be delivered to the field.

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Program Activities
The activities in the frame of the program have been conducted mainly on the basis of the general survey data on suspected mine/UXO areas and interaction with the people involved in 11 war-oren districts of Azerbaijan. The number of mine/UXO victims in surveyed territories since the start of the conflict is estimated to be 1,248. According to the ANAMA Mine Victim Database, 391 people—mainly civilian women and children—became mine/UXO victims since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in May 1994. That was a main reason for making a decision to implement MRE for the civilian population living in frontier and bordering districts.

Five MRE master trainers were trained in February 2001 and they had two refresher training courses, in March and during July against August 2002, with participation of 18 instructors. During September to December 2001, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Educational authorities, a total of 39 three-day training sessions for 500 health personnel, and 59 four-day training sessions for 1,200 teachers in 12 frontline districts—Beylagan, Agjabadi, Aghdam, Aghlarya, Agdash, Gahvash, Tovuz, Terter, Gandabay, Khankendi, Dashkasan and Gedabey—as well as internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Four hundred volunteers from the villages of targeted districts were trained in August 2002 to implement community-based MRE.

An MRE Technical Working Group formed in early 2001, consisting of representatives of several related ministries and other governmental institutions, as well as international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have played and are playing an active role in implementation and coordination of MRE activities. Training sessions are aimed to disseminate MRE safety messages and safe behavior rules among the population and governmental authorities. A total of 220,000 MRE brochures for adults and children, 150,000 children's notebooks, 10,000 training manuals and 7,000 T-shirts were produced for the purposes of the program. MRE materials were distributed to health and education departments and civil defense headquarters of the targeted districts as well. Ten sets of mine/UXO models were prepared for Azerbaijani children learn about the dangers of mines through MRE programs. c/o JIRC

Azerbaijani children learn about the dangers of mines through MRE programs. c/o JIRC