

# Educating the United States: Landmines In and Out of the Classroom

Enthusiastic students are giving back to their global community as U.S. Department of State-assisted landmine education programs are being launched in grammar schools, colleges and universities across the nation. In these programs, students are given a chance to both learn more about the global landmine crisis and to actively contribute to the mine action community.

by Susanna Sprinkel, MA/IC

## Introduction

Most U.S. citizens cannot even imagine the extent of the landmine threat that exists worldwide, as it is one problem they will probably never have to face. Assisted by the U.S. Department of State, a variety of programs have been enacted to educate students about the global landmine crisis. These programs not only help spread awareness to U.S. communities, but they also get more people involved in mine action. Many people believe that the youth of today hold the future in the palm of their hands; these programs open a win-

dow of opportunity for students to actively improve their future on a global level.

## Southwest Missouri State University Landmine Studies

### Background

In 2000, the political science department at Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU) enacted a Landmine Studies Program that focuses on demining and survivor assistance. This program is coordinated by Ken Rutherford, a landmine survivor and co-founder of Landmine Survivors Network (LSN). SMSU houses a number of resources that

enhance Landmine Studies, such as an extensive UN depository library, an excellent Model United Nations group, and the Department of State's Annual Muskie Fellowship, which allows students and faculty from mine-affected countries to attend SMSU. Aside from spreading awareness in and out of the classroom, this program includes a variety of activities to directly involve students in the mine action community and uses local television and radio broadcasts to extend the word beyond campus.

### On-Campus Activities

Landmine Studies at SMSU includes various activities on and off campus. On-campus demonstrations have included a Shoe Pile Commemoration, a Petition Drive, and a visit from guest speaker Jody Williams, of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). The Shoe Pile Commemoration demonstrated a landmine being detonated every 22 minutes. Students began with a pile of shoes at 8:00 a.m. and added a pair every 22



A few of the SMSU students involved in organizing and/or participating in the shoe-pile event gathered for a mid-morning picture. c/o Ken Rutherford





■ Sophomore Fabiola Gagliardi uses a metal rod to detect one of three trip wires. c/o Ken Rutherford

minutes until they ended with 72 pairs—the average number of landmine victims per day. In the meantime, the group passed out statistics to fellow students and faculty. On February 27, 2001, Jody Williams encouraged members of the SMSU community to get involved in global issues. After her lecture, she discussed her involvement in the mine action community with a group of interested students.

### Off-Campus Activities

Off-campus activities have been perhaps the most influential for those involved in Landmine Studies. So far, students have made two trips to Washington D.C. where they saw and spoke with speakers such as Queen Noor of Jordan, Croatian Ambassador Ivan Grodesic and Pat Patierno of the U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program (PM/HDP). Additionally, students attended a Congressional meeting, a prayer service honoring landmine victims and survivors, a "Mines to Vines" dinner reception, a large shoe pile commemoration and a demining demonstration. After these trips to DC, four graduate students from mine-torn countries helped the ICBL develop parts of the Landmine Monitor Report and another graduate student has continued focusing on the landmine crisis.

One of the favorite activities of the

Landmine Studies program has been a two-day visit to Fort Leonard Wood, a nearby Humanitarian Demining Training Camp (HDTTC). On this trip, 22 students and two faculty members woke up at 6:00am, ate breakfast with soldiers in training, learned about the different types of landmines/UXO, dressed up in demining gear, and prodded for artillery in an inactive minefield. Many of the students earned an even higher respect for deminers across the world as they experienced firsthand how dangerous and frustrating demining can be.

### Internship Experience

Several SMSU students wanted to gain further experience in the mine action community and decided to intern at landmine-related organizations in the United States. During the summer of 2001, four students participated in internships at the Center of International Rehabilitation (CIR), Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA). Of these four, at least two plan to continue working in the mine action field. In addition, two other Landmine Studies students are currently working at LSN.

### University of Denver's Landmines: Exploring the Hidden Crisis

#### Background

The best time to get people involved in global issues is at an early age. As a result, a number of faculty members from the Center for Teaching International Relations at the University of Denver—supported by a grant from the U.S. PM/HDP—have put together *Landmines: Exploring the Hidden Crisis* educational packets for upper elementary school-, middle school- and high school-age students. These programs involve a series of extensive activities that not only make students more aware of the landmine crisis but also demonstrate how the United States interacts on a global level. Each packet includes instructions for in-class activities as well as a number of handouts and other valuable resources. (Pack-

ets can be downloaded or ordered for free online at [http://www.du.edu/ctir/pubs\\_free.html](http://www.du.edu/ctir/pubs_free.html))

### Upper Elementary Program

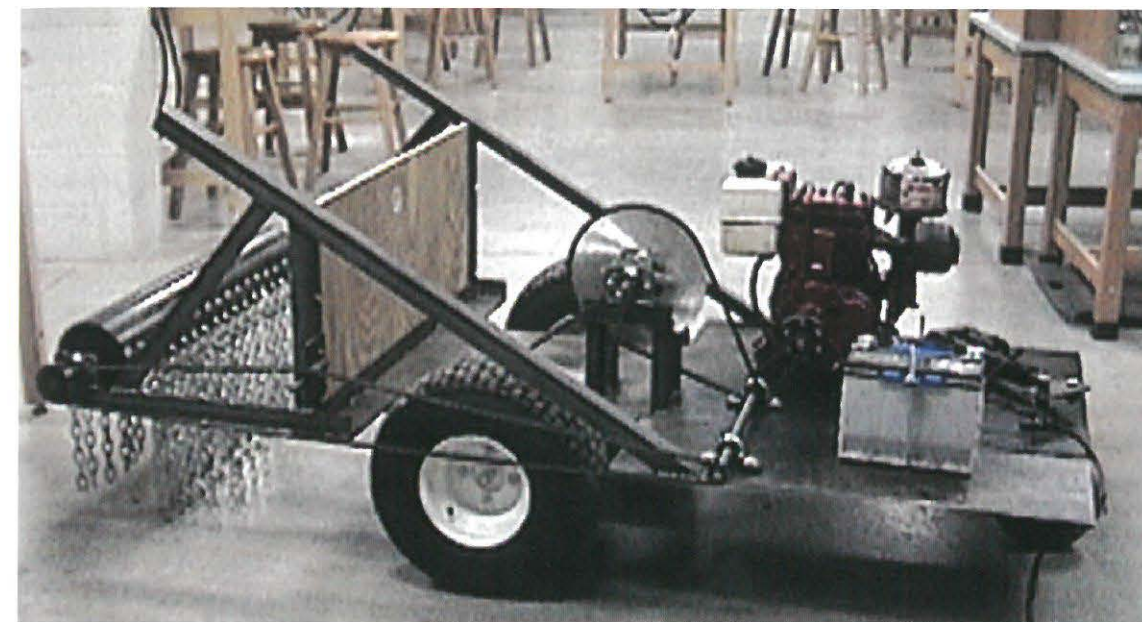
The Upper Elementary Program correlates with a Social Studies class and is designed to teach students about politics, geography, international affairs, current events, analytical thinking and problem solving. The curriculum includes up to 10 hours of in-class education with three major activities: a presentation on a specific landmine-related topic, a persuasive letter to a government official or publication editor and a poster related to mine action. To assess the students' understanding of the global landmine crisis, the course concludes with a final persuasive speech, where students "will pretend that [they] have been asked by the United Nations Fact Finding Committee to testify before their committee as an expert on landmines" (p. 6).

### Middle School Program

The Middle School program is also geared towards a Social Studies class, focusing on geography and civics, and it involves up to 13 50-minute class periods of instruction to complete (if the teacher chooses to complete all activities). For the final assessment, students should complete an essay based on the "My Turn Essay" portion of *Newsweek*. In this essay, students discuss the landmine situation in a designated country, describe the United States' contributions to demining in this country, take a stand on the landmine crisis and suggest methods for spreading the word about the landmine crisis. In-class activities include watching landmine-related videos, learning to create maps that demonstrate specific mine action statistics, studying and discussing the Global Landmine Treaty and the Korea Exception, examining mine awareness techniques, and reading fiction stories about middle school-aged children growing up with the horror of landmines.

### High School Program

The High School Program can be used in Geography, International Relations or other related courses and is designed to show students how geography,



■ The MCLAP Robotics Team hope to design a low budget robotic vehicle that can safely and effectively deliver tools into minefields. c/o MCLAP

politics, sociology, economics and technology are applied to real life situations. To assess the students' understanding of the curriculum, they are asked to act as United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) representatives in prioritizing six countries, by writing a needs assessment report, comparing each country's needs and developing a mine action plan for the country with the greatest needs. Other suggested activities cover various aspects of mine action, including production trends, the Ottawa Treaty and the Global Landmine Treaty, the Korea Exception and U.S. involvement in the mine action world, and the Adopt-A-Minefield campaign. The program can be altered to include all or some of the activities (completing all nine activities involves nine 50-minute class periods).

### Messiah College's Landmine Action Project

#### Background

Since 1997, students and faculty of Messiah College in Grantham, PA have actively researched Landmine issues, and a number of students have used this research to design low-budget detection and clearance techniques for countries that cannot afford other machinery. In the fall of 2001, a group of students, with the help of Dr. Donald Pratt, enacted the Messiah College Landmine Action Project (MCLAP). Through this project,

students hope to increase awareness in the Messiah community, to further research on the global landmine crisis and to design more projects to enhance the mine action community. Currently, there are nine students actively involved in MCLAP. During the summer of 2001, Aaron Dahlsrom, student and co-facilitator of MCLAP, conducted extensive research on the landmine issue and the number of resources available. This research has provided a foundation for future efforts at the College.

### Senior Engineering Design Projects

In order to fulfill graduation requirements, students in the Engineering Department at Messiah College must complete a Senior Engineering Design Project. A number of these projects have dealt specifically with the landmine issue. Related projects have included using acoustic sound waves and infrared photography to detect buried landmines, training ferrets to sense landmines, building a device to contain shrapnel while it is detonated and designing an enhanced flail system that is more efficient and less costly.

### MCLAP Activities

The MCLAP team is divided into three separate teams: the Vapor Detection Research Team, the Robotics Team and the Education Team. The Vapor Detection Team is continuing work with ferrets by training them to work in the

field. The Robotics Team is designing a robotic vehicle that will deliver tools into minefields. This robotic vehicle is geared towards a desert environment, and students hope that it will be inexpensive and easy to use. The Education Team will focus on providing awareness to fellow students and faculty members. In mid-September, students will host a mine awareness week, which will include games, displays and a shoe-pile commemoration. Additionally, students will take a day trip to Fort Belvoir, VA to watch a Landmine Technology demonstration.

### Newsweek's Issues Today Map "Landmines: Eliminating the Hidden Threat"

#### Background

The *Newsweek* Education Program has developed a number of activities for teaching global issues and current events in the classroom. A part of this program is creating an Issues Today Map outlining the topics covered in their programs. Working with the U.S. Department of State in 2002, *Newsweek* designed a "Landmines: Eliminating the Hidden Threat" wall map. The Department of State requested this project in order to provide humanitarian and mine action organizations with an extensive map outlining current statistics on the landmine threat.



## Issues Today Map

The "Landmines: Eliminating the Hidden Threat" wall map not only color codes each landmine-affected country by severity, but also provides brief profiles of Afghanistan, Angola, Columbia, Croatia, France, Jordan and Vietnam. Other information provided on the map includes descriptions of different aspects of mine action, pictures of common AP mines, a list of basic statistics about the landmine threat and a graph outlining Mine Action Funding by country. This map provides a valuable resource to both the mine action community and educators interested in covering the global landmine crisis. NGO's can obtain a copy of the map by contacting the U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Demining Program; interested schools and teachers who are not a part of the *Newsweek* Education program should contact them for a copy of the map and related activities (1-800-256-2595).

## Related Activities

Along with the "Landmines: Eliminating the Threat" wall map, *Newsweek* also created a Study Guide with information and discussion questions about the landmine issue and additional online activities that could be used in a Social Studies classroom. The Study Guide includes an overview of the landmine crisis,

survival stories of a person, a minefield and an entire nation, descriptions of the different demining techniques, and a look at future mine action endeavors. Discussion questions in the guide include finding out different world leaders' opinions of the landmine crisis, researching opportunities for landmine survivors and profiling the landmine crisis in a specific country. The online portion of the program (<http://www.newsweekeducation.com/landmines>) includes a list of useful web links and two intensive activities that correspond with the Issues Today Map and mine awareness programs.

## Tenaflly Middle School and Global Care Unlimited

### Background

Students at Tenaflly Middle School (Tenaflly, NJ) were first introduced to the global landmine crisis during an inspiring speech from Ken Rutherford at a student-organized Human Rights Day. As a result, interested students, with the help of middle school teacher Mark Hyman, organized a Student Landmine Awareness Club and started taking steps to sponsor demining in a sister city in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Once fundraising efforts began, students and other interested parents and community members formed

Global Care Unlimited, a separate non-profit organization that receives donations and handles all paperwork. Students used butterflies to demonstrate how much money had been raised (the butterfly was chosen as a symbol because the butterfly-shaped landmine, which can easily be mistaken for a small toy, is most harmful to children).

### Previous Accomplishments

By October 2000, the group had raised \$17,000 (U.S.), and they received a matching grant for \$15,000 from the U.S. Department of State as part of an agreement with the Slovenian International Trust Fund. (They saved the additional \$2,000 for future projects.) The funds were handed over to the Slovenian International Trust Fund at a signing ceremony in February 2001, and demining was conducted by a local NGO.

Since then, students have formed the Youth Coalition for Mine Action with the hopes of spreading awareness to other schools in the area and eventually across the United States. On March 8<sup>th</sup> 2002, the Youth Coalition for Mine Action held a countywide landmine conference with student representatives from 16 other middle schools and high schools in the area. The conference included a number of speakers such as Ken Rutherford and other landmine survivors, deminers and U.N. representatives. At this event, the group donated \$1,300 to the Organization of American States (OAS) to support landmine survivors in Nicaragua and \$5,000 towards another small (\$9,000) demining project in Bosnia.

### Future Endeavors

During the upcoming year (2002, 2003), six other schools in the community will contribute to the Youth Coalition for Mine Action's fundraising efforts. Most likely, donations will be geared towards operations in Nicaragua. The activities of these children will be recognized in an upcoming *Hallmark Entertainment Channel* film on landmines in Nicaragua, *The Garden*. Mark Hyman hopes to distribute this film, along with an educational guide that he created for the March landmine conference, to other middle schools throughout the United States.

(For more information see Mark Hyman's contact information below.)

## Additional Programs

### United Nations CyberSchoolBus: Schools Demining Schools

In an effort to spread awareness to students around the world and encourage schools to support the clearance of mine-infested schools and play areas, the UN CyberSchoolBus program has created the Schools Demining Schools initiative. Participating schools have been able to correspond with deminers in Afghanistan and Mozambique through e-mail, allowing students to ask specific questions about the deminer's job and how to answer common questions that have arisen during fundraising efforts. Some of the students have even made pen pals with young landmine survivors in their adopted country.

The Schools Demining Schools program also includes three in-class teaching units covering the scope of the landmine crisis and different aspects of mine action. These activities, as well as sample correspondence between students and deminers/survivors, can be found on their website (<http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/banmines/index.asp>). Schools can register with this project by sending an email with the subject "Ban Mines" to [cyberschoolbus@un.org](mailto:cyberschoolbus@un.org).

### Creativity-Action-Service Landmines Removal Project

As a part of the Creativity-Action-Service requirement for the International Baccalaureate diploma, high school students from Oregon and Washington have decided to adopt a minefield in Cambodia. Efforts include spreading awareness to the local community and raising money for the adoption. As of April 7, 2001, the goal for each participating high school was to raise \$1000. Since then, the designated minefield has been cleared and over 100 schools across the United States and Canada have joined the effort to adopt additional pieces of land.

### Shenandoah Minefield Adoption Project

A group of student employees from

the MAIC, along with a number of volunteers from the JMU community, have developed the Shenandoah Minefield Adoption Project (SMAP) in order to promote awareness in the JMU community and surrounding areas. This past spring, SMAP members sponsored a landmines awareness week where they passed out statistics and discussed the landmine problem with interested students and faculty members. In addition, Ken Rutherford from LSN shared his story, and Amelia Kahaney from Adopt-A-Minefield presented the logistics of minefield adoption. SMAP participants were amazed by their fellow classmates' enthusiasm towards the subject. This following year, SMAP will further their efforts by adopting a minefield in a country that will be selected by interested community members in September. Planned fundraising activities include a Field Fest with food and music, a raffle, and an International dinner. Eventually, the students hope to expand involvement to other nearby high schools and Colleges.

## Useful Resources

There are a number of useful resources available for educators interested in adding the global landmine crisis to their curriculum. Listed below are a few of the ones recommended by the programs mentioned in this article.

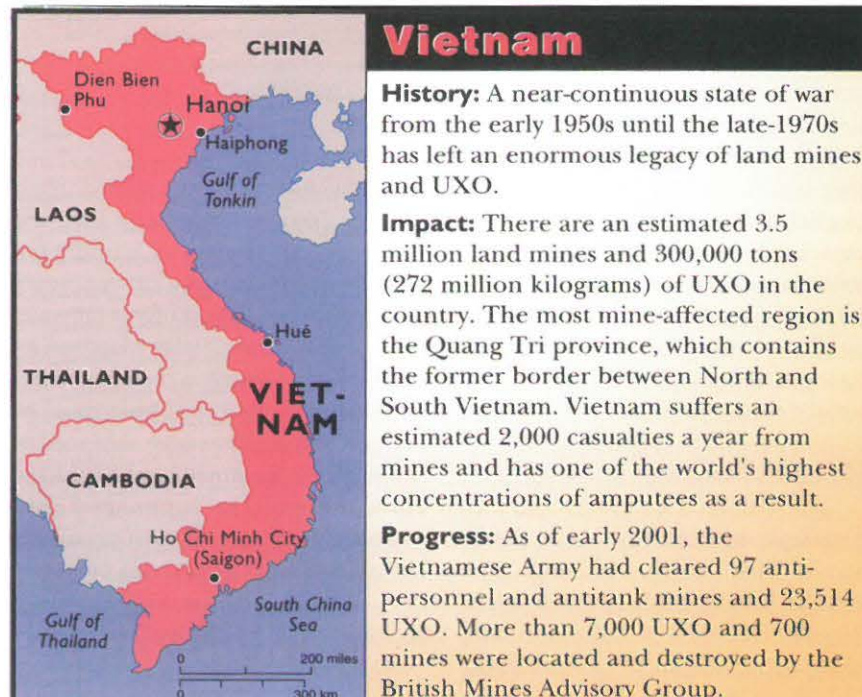
## Articles

"A Time to Plant Mines, a Time to Make Amends": This article, originally published in *Siem Reap Journal*, tells the story of a man who planted mines for a guerrilla movement as a child and has since dedicated his efforts to clearing his native land. This article is available for \$2.50 from the *New York Times* (<http://query.nytimes.com/search/>).

"Connecting Global Education with Activism: Building A Local and Global Community": This article, written by Education Liaison for Mercy Corps Marta Colburn, describes methods for getting students involved in global activities. It also includes a Landmines In Afghanistan classroom activity for students in 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade. The article and activity were published in issue 6.1 of the Journal (<http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/6.1/features/colburn/colburn.htm>).

"One Step at a Time: A Landmine Removal Initiative": This article, written by Mark Hyman of Tenaflly Middle School and Global Care Unlimited, Inc., describes the steps that his middle school went through in developing a Student Landmine Awareness Club and adopting a minefield in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was published in the May/June 2001 issue of *Middle Level Learning* and can be ordered for \$7.50 (while supplies last) through the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) publication services at 1-800-683-0812. Copies of *Middle Level Learning* may also be available at your local

■ A sample of the information available on the "Landmines: Eliminating the Threat" wall map. c/o Newsweek



## Vietnam

**History:** A near-continuous state of war from the early 1950s until the late-1970s has left an enormous legacy of land mines and UXO.

**Impact:** There are an estimated 3.5 million land mines and 300,000 tons (272 million kilograms) of UXO in the country. The most mine-affected region is the Quang Tri province, which contains the former border between North and South Vietnam. Vietnam suffers an estimated 2,000 casualties a year from mines and has one of the world's highest concentrations of amputees as a result.

**Progress:** As of early 2001, the Vietnamese Army had cleared 97 anti-personnel and antitank mines and 23,514 UXO. More than 7,000 UXO and 700 mines were located and destroyed by the British Mines Advisory Group.

■ SMAP members discuss the landmine problem with interested students during Landmine Awareness Week. c/o MAIC





University library, and free online copies are available to members of NCSS (sign up at <http://www.socialstudies.org>).

"Schools Demining Schools: A Global Teach-In": This article, published the September 1998 Issue of *Social Education*, provides a number of materials for teaching the landmine crisis in the classroom and for getting students more involved in the mine action community. A copy of this article can be ordered for \$7.50 (while supplies last) through the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) publication services at 1-800-683-0812. Copies of *Social Education* may also be available at your local University library or high school Social Studies department, and free online copies are available to members of NCSS (sign up at <http://www.socialstudies.org>).

## Books

*The Cinnamon Tree*: This 208-page novel tells the story of a young girl who loses a leg in a landmine accident and how she struggles to regain her life and to help spread awareness to those around her. This novel can be ordered for \$7.95 (list price) or less from Amazon.com: (<http://www.amazon.com>).

## Videos

*Documentary Film on K-9 Demining Corps by the Marshall Legacy Institute*: This documentary provides an overview of mine dog teams and can be ordered by contacting the Marshall Legacy Institute: [info@marshall-legacy.org](mailto:info@marshall-legacy.org) (<http://www.marshall-legacy.org/>).

*The Menace of Landmines*: This documentary, created by UNMAS, provides graphic footage of mine-torn countries, an overview of the global landmine crisis, and descriptions of the different areas of mine action. It can be downloaded from the Adopt-A-Minefield website (<http://www.landmines.org/Multimedia/index-mm.asp>).

*The Silent Shout*: This animated video, created by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), illustrates four children injured by landmines and how it affects their lives. The video also demonstrates various mine awareness techniques and precautions that should be taken in a mine-affected area. It can be

downloaded from the Adopt-A-Minefield website (<http://www.landmines.org/Multimedia/index-mm.asp>).

## Websites

*ICBL Media Reports* (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/icblmedia/messages/>) contains a collection of news articles on recent activities in mine action. Interested users can also subscribe to the ICBL Media Report mailing list at <http://www.icbl.org/media>.

*Oneworld.net Full Coverage: Landmines* ([http://www.oneworld.net/themes/topic/topic\\_126\\_1.shtml](http://www.oneworld.net/themes/topic/topic_126_1.shtml)) contains over 100 documents related to landmine topics as well as a number of useful guides and links to other affiliated organizations.

*U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Demining Program* (<http://www.state.gov/t/pm/hdp/>) contains information about U.S. involvement in demining including their policy and budget as well as fact sheets and reports on recent activities.

*U.S. Department of State Office of Mine Action Initiatives and Partnerships* (<http://www.state.gov/t/pm/maip/>) contains information about U.S. involvement in other areas of mine action including detection and clearance, awareness, survivor assistance, and research and development.

## Glossaries and Abbreviations

MAIC:  
<http://maic.jmu.edu/research/glossary.htm>  
<http://maic.jmu.edu/research/acronyms.htm>

U.S. Department of State:  
[http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/rpt\\_9809\\_demine\\_nxf.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/rpt_9809_demine_nxf.html)

University of Denver:  
pp.133-137 of the *Landmines: Exploring the Hidden Crisis* High School packet ■

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