

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 16

Issue 1 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 12

March 2012

World Education, Inc.

CISR JOURNAL

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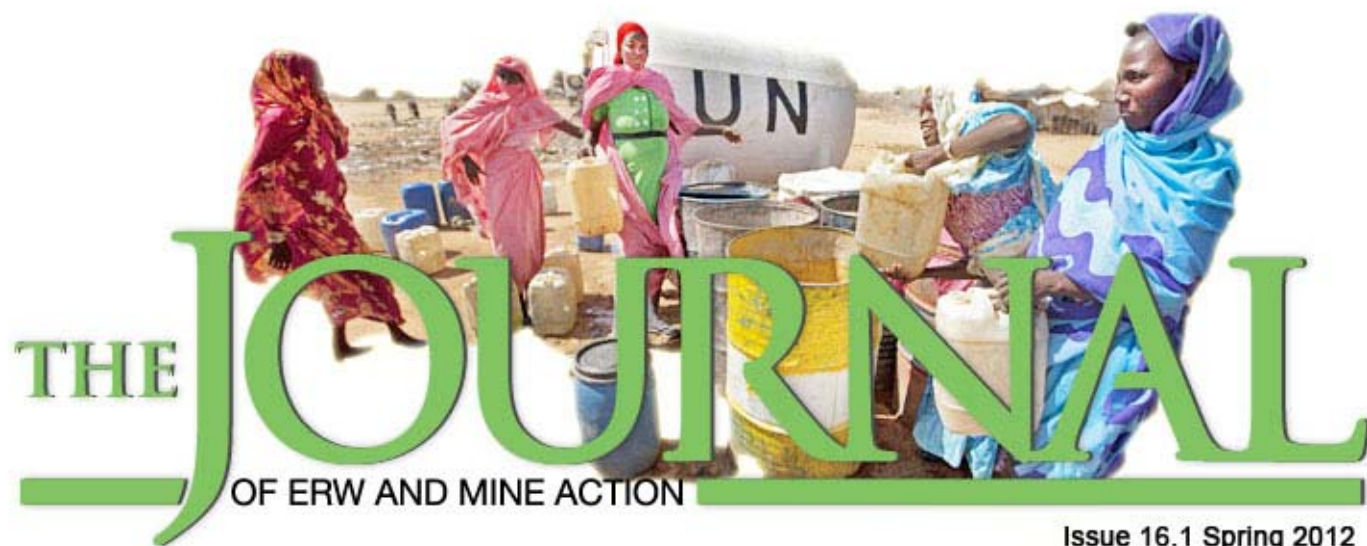
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Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2012) "World Education, Inc.," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 16 : Iss. 1 , Article 12.

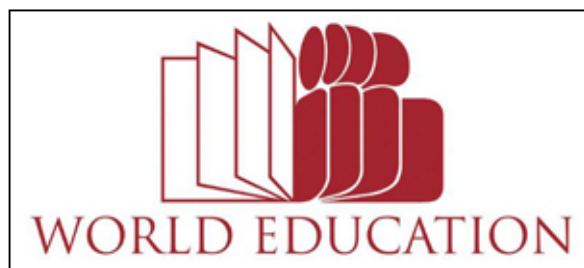
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World Education, Inc.

After nearly a lifetime of work as an educator in China and throughout the world, Welthy Honsinger Fisher returned to India to continue her work in education at the request of Mahatma Gandhi in 1947. She founded the Literacy House, a small school providing basic education and agricultural training for disadvantaged adults. Observing that literacy training was needed to empower men and women worldwide, in 1951, she and others founded World Education, an international nonprofit dedicated to world literacy.¹



Today, World Education, Inc., based in Boston, Massachusetts (U.S.), supports literacy training and assistance programs in more than 30 countries, enabling individual and collective development.² World Education's core focuses include the education of women and girls, basic education for adults, vocational training, and improving access to and quality of formal education. In its literacy programs, World Education works to integrate "life skills in health, economic development, environmental protection, and civil society development."³ As a part of this emphasis, World Education collaborates with partners to include mine-risk training in its educational programs and to rebuild conflict-torn communities.³

World Education Laos

In 1992, World Education established a field office in Laos to support rural and community development in nine unexploded-ordnance-affected provinces.⁴ As a result of U.S. bombing campaigns between 1964 and 1973, Laos remains the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world, and decades later it remains contaminated by UXO.⁵ In 2010, 23 deaths and 91 injuries occurred from explosive remnants of war explosions. To date, landmines and ERW have claimed more than 50,000 casualties in Laos.⁶

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from 1992–1998, World Education Laos worked with partners, including Save the Children U.S., World Learning, Inc. and the Lao Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, on a comprehensive repatriation program focusing on food security, health care, education, microfinance and economic sustainability.⁴ World Education Laos continues much of this comprehensive work with the Laos Government and other donors.

Between 1996 and 2012, World Education partnered with the Laos Ministry of Health, USAID and the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) to provide medical training to more than 800 survivors in eleven provinces and train 1,160 medical-service providers (from surgeons, nurses and lab technicians to village health volunteers) in emergency medical techniques.

Emergency/trauma medical curriculum has been developed and is used in these workshops. All course material is designed to “train the trainer” so that those who attend can teach others.⁵

Paying for treatment for survivors often devastates Lao families, taking most of a family’s annual income. In response to this challenge, the War Victims Medical Fund, co-managed by World Education and Lao provincial Departments of Health, distributes support to pay for complex treatments. The War Victims Medical Fund has assisted 855 survivors and their families since its inception in 1996. PM/WRA, the McKnight Foundation and the Dutch Embassy in Bangkok are among the contributing organizations. Personal donations also support this fund. Despite this support, not all survivors receive necessary medical treatment.⁷


Vocational training and economic support are also essential to help survivors reintegrate into society and daily life. World Education’s Survivor’s Economic and Technical Assistance project helped 160 survivors through vocational training in animal husbandry, fish-raising, tailoring and weaving. The participants in the SETA training program regularly report making 30 percent profits in their work.⁸

In World Education’s other projects for sustainability, in southern Laos microfinance loans allow villages to create credit and savings programs to help families invest for the future.⁹ To support economic development in the Houaphan and Xiangkhouang provinces, World Education Laos organized a project enabling 40 communities to increase annual income by developing silk manufacturing and trade, capitalizing on local traditions of weaving and dying silk. This project was funded by the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.⁴

UXO incident survivors and their families, with the assistance of World Education, have set up a local association in Xiengkhoang province, where there is heavy UXO impact. This nonprofit, the Quality of Life Association, is now “educating the general public about the UXO legacy in Laos, providing psychosocial rehabilitation and livelihoods programs for UXO survivors and their families, and advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.”¹⁰

World Education Laos implements a mine-risk education program for schoolchildren in the nine UXO-affected provinces in the region near the Plain of Jars using interactive and creative methods, including puppet shows and role-playing. Today, more than 150,000 children and nearly 5,000 teachers throughout the country have participated in the program since 1997. USAID, UNICEF and PM/WRA have funded this program.¹¹

Organization

Overseeing its multi-faceted approach to clearance and recovery efforts, World Education Laos employs 20 Lao staff members at its national office in Vientiane. A 24-member board of trustees and 72 staff members oversee the work and international partnerships of World Education, Inc. at its main office in Boston. From a basic literacy course with cell phones for women in Egypt to using the community-care structure to provide homes for more than 3,000 orphans in Tanzania, World Education works to help communities meet needs throughout the globe. In the future, World Education hopes to extend mine-action work to Myanmar (Burma), assisting landmine survivors in meeting their medical needs.¹² 

~ Rachael Weber, CISR staff

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