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2008, A Year of Advances and Accomplishments

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To identify and locate landmine accident survivors simultaneously, AICMA launched a program to support vocational training for 421 landmine survivors. By the middle of 2008, 11 victims of landmines in Nicaragua, supported to provide follow-up services to victims in the future. Sustaining mine-clearance efforts in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well as assistance to many landmine victims and transitioning its victim-assistance structure into a new NGO run by landmine victims to provide follow-up services to victims in the future. Sustaining mine-clearance efforts in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well as assistance to many landmine victims and affected communities that still struggle to recover from the effects of landmines, pose a difficult challenge for several more years; however, with continued international support, these countries can also overcome formidable obstacles to joining the other nations of the Americas that have become mine free.

Effectiveness of AICMA

The AICMA program has proven its effectiveness in carrying out the request of the OAS member countries that have sought its benefits in clearance operations, stockpile destruction and munitions destruction. Likewise, the integrated, multi-laterally nature of its work has successfully created capable organizations where none existed, completed seemingly insurmountable tasks and leveraged the experiences in completed national programs to assist other countries still facing difficult and complex mine problems.

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reported the destruction and certification of 11,856 mines and explosive remnants of war in 200,107 square meters (51 acres) thereby bringing the total number of anti-personnel mines destroyed or certified through clearance operations to 375,320 by December 2008.

MRE Campaigns are designed after considering several elements:

- National mine action standards
- Validated effectiveness in a given community
- Language and cultural aspects of the target population
- Capacities of the Comité Nacional de Desminado (National Demining Commission)
- Distance from affected communities to known danger areas

Frequency of incidents

The methodology includes school visits, radio campaigns and house-to-house visits. Portable posters are used as the main informational material, supplemented by distribution of school materials such as pens, pencils, notebooks and backpacks.

The objective of mine risk awareness and MRE campaigns supported by the OAS–AICMA program is to reduce the risk of injury or death by promoting safe behaviors and to correct risky practices seen among some in the communities. Frequent visits to affected communities and a variety of national radio messages and school programs strengthen—MRE campaigns for civilian populations.

Victim Assistance. The OAS’s AICMA program coordinates and pays for transportation, lodging, meals, medical, physical and psychological therapy, and specialized medical attention for survivors of accidents from mines or explosive remnants of war. In similar fashion, the program provides for follow-up, and coordinates physical rehabilitation and transportation to and from survivors’ homes. Additionally, AICMA co-ordinates with Instituto Nacional Tecnológico (INATEC) to support landmine survivors as they establish micro-enterprises. AICMA identifies survivors, coordinates their transportation and counsels on the appropriate- ness of each small enterprise. AICMA has provided assistance to more than 1,100 landmine survivors since the program was established in 1997 with the support of the Swedish government (see Table 3). From its beginning, the program has sought to provide those services men- tioned above to enable the victims to reach and stay at the centers so they can avail themselves of these services.

Comisión Nacional de Desminado (INATEC) has provided technical support, the victims to reach and stay at centers so they can avail themselves of these services.

In collaboration with INATEC, the OAS–AICMA program initiated an innovative training and job placement program for survivors in Nicaragua (see Table 4). Landmine survivors have a wide choice of training according to their aptitudes, ranging from auto mechanics, carpentry, sewing, shoe repair and farming to cosmetology and word processing.

Construction of obsolete munitions. Use of the latest components of the AICMA program is destruction of excess, expired or obsolete munitions. In Nicaragua, as a result of the armed conflict during the 1980s, great quantities of obsolete munitions remain stored in military facilities. Some facilities are near civilian populations, posing a threat to the communities as well as for the military personnel in charge of keeping the munitions. To assist Nicaraguans in resolving this prob- lem, the OAS–AICMA program implemented two phases of a munitions-destruction plan. Canada, Italy and the United States provided funding, and the Golden West Humanitarian Foundation de- voted technical support. The results of the first two phases are listed in Table 5.

Conclusion

The OAS’s mine-removal assistance program in Nicaragua made steady progress in 2008. The partnership with the national authorities, including the Nicara- guan Army and its Corps of Engineers, has brought significant results to within sight of completion. In conclusion in 2009. The accomplishments in Nicaragua in mine-removal efforts are outstanding, results of different factors—among these, the will of the national authorities, the commitment of the national authorities, the participation of the Organiza- tion of American States.

Survivors Provided Rehabilitative Services from January to December 2008

Survivors Benefiting from Social Reinsertion Assistance from January to December 2008

Excess Munitions Destroyed from April to September 2008 and January to April 2009

In response to the international decrease in funding for mine action in Afghanistan, the U.S. Department of State is providing an additional $105 million to mine-action groups in the country. These funds will be distributed to Afghan Technical Consultants, Demining Agency for Afghanistan, Mine Clearance Planning Agency, Mine Detection Center, Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghanistan Rehabilitation, and The HALO Trust. The additional funds will enable 34 more mine-action teams to be fielded to remove the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war across the country.

Afghanistan has been heavily contaminated with mines, small armslight weapons, unexploded ordinance and munitions since 1979, following the invasion of the Soviet Union. Estimates indicate that more than four million Afghans are affected by these weapons, which contaminated an estimated 2.229 communities in the country.

The funds will help the demining teams clear three square kilometers per month affecting 19 communities in Afghanistan. These communities have been highly affected by landmines, where 1,162 families living in the area have experienced 78 mine-related accidents in the past few years. The land, once releasing, will help the communities return to grazing livestock and growing crops, and ensure their safety against landmine casualties.

The funds are provided in addition to the $25 million already contributed for the 2009 fiscal year by the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.