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OAS—AICMA and Mine-risk Education in Nicaragua

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In Nicaragua

From 1979 to 1990, a violent internal conflict ravaged Nicaragua, leaving the country contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance. To help minimize the number of victims within the country, the Organization of American States’ mine-action program, Acción Integral contra las Minas Antipersonal, has been working with mine-risk-education campaigns to help educate and inform communities about landmines and UXO.

The mine-awareness campaigns have been deemed successful, thanks to the involvement of the program educators, community leaders and students who continue to participate in the “For a Nicaragua Free of Landmines” campaign.

Contact winners receive their prizes in ceremonies held in the capital city. The OAS–AICMA MRE program also uses the radio as a tool to remind the population about the landmine risk. Some of the campaigns include popular radio programs hosted by program educators, which air early in the morning before farmers head out to work their land.

The immediate results of these MRE campaigns were the reduction of landmine accidents among the at-risk population and the continued involvement of the at-risk population as volunteer educators themselves after undergoing training in local workshops. These new volunteer educators help sustain awareness after program educators have visited the communities.

Following the conflict in Nicaragua during the 1980s, there were many unmarked landmine fields in the country, as well as areas littered with unexploded ordnance. The MRE campaigns have played an important role in compiling information about the location of landmines and UXO. MRE messengers tell the locals to report landmines and UXO to the authorities so the Nicaraguan Army can remove and destroy the threat. Identification and registration of landmine victims requires medical attention and/or prosthetic replacements is also very important. These services are financed by AICMA under its landmine-victim assistance program.

The beginning of clearance operations gives hope to displaced families of safely returning to their homes and recovering their way of life. MRE advocates tell families what to do when finding explosive artifacts on countryside footpaths, near their houses or around their plots or schools.

In each municipality with ongoing MRE programs, the student population is methodically included. AICMA advocates bring their campaign messages to schools using playful activities that increase interest and creativity among children and adolescents, resulting in improvements that are incorporated into future programs throughout the different communities. The campaign also uses games, activities, competitions in Jalapa, Nueva Segovia department, Nicaragua.

The MRE and Community Leader Involvement

In Risk-prone Colombia

The presence of unexploded ordnance and anti-personnel mines in regions of Colombia has displaced families and stired up fear throughout the population. The Organization of American States’ Acción Integral contra las Minas Antipersonal program is bringing hope to these suffering communities by providing mine-risk education to its leaders and through creative awareness programs in its school systems.

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