Colombia

Country Profile

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Education in schools in close proximity to minefields, which CNAD, local NGOs and the Ministry of Education are running,7 CNAD is also working in collaboration with the National Tourism Service to promote MRE to domestic and foreign tourists, in addition to local corporations.7

Conclusion

Chile is a State Party to the Ottawa Convention, but has not yet created national legislation to fully implement the requirements; however, Chile has shown commitment to the Convention through its efforts to destroy its stockpile before the Ottawa-imposed deadline. Active participation with the convention and the creation of CNAD have allowed Chile to collaborate with other countries and learn new techniques for landmine removal and mine-risk education. There have been very few landmine casualties, and those that have occurred are being investigated by officials. According to Philip von Michaud at MineWolf, “Chile is well-prepared to make significant progress in clearing their minefields in the years to come.” This fact is obvious, as Chile has taken many positive steps beyond its mandated requirements, and the country is becoming a leader in mine-action initiatives with national and international assistance. 

See Endnotes, Page 134

Profiles

Albaigl-Diexy graduated from James Madison University in May 2008, with a Bachelor of Arts in justice studies and a minor in French. She was also in the JMU Honors Program. She is from Arlington, Virginia, and worked an Editorial/Research Assistant at CGSR from August 2008 through May 2009.

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Profiles

Art Exhibit Spotlights Mine Victims

Award-winning photographer Gervasio Sánchez’s latest work, Mined Lives: Two Years Later, published in 2007, has been on tour around the world since 2008, and will continue to be showcased in numerous cities in 2009. Sánchez began the “Mined Lives” series in 1997, and he followed up with the featured survivors five years and, most recently, 10 years after originally photographing them. The series of books, published by Editorial Norma, share the message that there is still a vast amount of work to be done to solve the landmine problem around the world as victims continue to suffer.

Born in Cordoba, Spain, in 1959, Sánchez became a journalist in 1984, and has worked with the BBC, the Telegraph, The Daily Telegraph, and Le Vanguard. He has published numerous photographic works focusing on areas involved in conflict, including The Siege of Sarajevo, Victims of Pitfall, and now the Mined Lives series. In 1996, Sánchez was awarded the Cirolo Rodriguez Award, the highest award the Spanish government extends to journalists working abroad. He has also been awarded the Human Rights Award for Journalism. On the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1998, Sánchez was named United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Special Peace Envoy.

Mined Lives: Two Years Later focuses on landmine survivors in some of the world’s most mine-affected countries, including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Nicaragua. The 2007 edition of the series also includes Iraq and Colombia. The goal of the traveling exhibition is to raise awareness of the landmine problem not just with the general public, but also with the media and political institutions that may not place as much emphasis or awareness on the landmine issue that is needed for substantial change to occur.

Colorado

Colombia, a country overwhelmed by four decades of war, has the highest concentration of contamination from landmines and other explosive remnants of war in the Americas.8 The conflict, which was and continues to be waged between the Colombian government and various non-state actors, reached its peak during the early 1990s.9 The use of improvised explosive devices, anti-personnel landmines and other forms of explosive ordnance has rapidly increased in Colombia since then, due to heavy usage by NSAs such as the Fuerzas Armaadas Revolucionarias de Colombia.10 In the past, the Colombian government laid landmines around 14 military bases to protect key infrastructure, but it renounced their use since 1997. Landmines are primarily used by the NSAs to protect their home bases and illegal drug crops, which fund the conflict. The Landmine Monitor Report observes that landmine usage may not be limited to use by NSAs against the Colombian government, but may also be employed by different non-state actors against one another.11 The use of landmines has become increasingly common; during 2005 and 2006, over 1,200 landmine victims were reported each year, about three victims a day since then, the number of new casualties has decreased, yet the rate remains at an alarming level, with 769 victims for 2008.12

Casualties

Reported casualty rates due to landmines, IEDs and other ERW are higher in Colombia than in any other part of the world. The majority of these casualties are attributed to IEDs; however, rather than traditional landmines.13 The prevalence of IEDs is due to training that the two Colombian rebel groups, the Eln and Farc, have received from the Iraqi Republic Army and the Israeli army that has resulted in explosive devices that are very difficult to detect, and cause immense injuries,” according to Pablo Esteban Parra Gallego, Director of Humanitarian Demining for the Programa Presidencial para la Acción Integral contra Minas Antipersonal, Colombia’s mine-action program.14 The way that IEDs explode is fragmented, due to the numerous materials used to build them, making them very deadly and unpredictable.15 Furthermore, it is thought that the civilian casualty rates are under-reported, especially in high-conflict areas, rural areas and among displaced populations. Hospitals often neglect to document civilian casualties for security reasons.

Mine Action

Colombia’s approach to its mine problem is comprised of many different components. The Colombian government works along side the United Nations, the Organization of American States, various nongovernmental organizations, international organizations and local authorities to combat the problem. The government of Colombia also receives financial contributions for its mine-action program from donors, including the European Union and the governments of Canada, Japan and the United States. Colombia became a State Party to the Ottawa Convention on 1 March 2001, after signing the Convention on 5 December 1997. In October 2001, the Comision Nacional Intersectorial para la Acción contra las Minas Antipersonal was created in order to execute the Convention in Colombia. CINAMAX’s responsibilities are varied, “including development of a national plan, policy decisions and coordination of international assistance.”16 It also has committees dedicated to the implementation of victim assistance and mine-clearance activities.17 By 2010, the Colombian government plans to have 14 demining teams involved in high-conflict areas, where hospital staff face constant threats of kidnapping and raids from NSAs, greatly disrupting their ability to provide care to victims of landmine accidents.18

Survivor Assistance

Although mine-risk education began to expand in 2006, it is still insufficient throughout...
Humanitarian Demining Workshop Held in Bogotá

From 9 to 12 June 2009, the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement hosted the Taller de Planificación del Desminado Humanitario en Colombia (Colombian Humanitarian Demining Planning Workshop) in Bogotá, Colombia. The workshop was facilitated by the Mine Action Information Center at James Madison University, and was attended by representatives from the U.S. and Colombian governments, international organizations, and key stakeholders in Colombia’s work against landmines.

More than 40 participants worked together to draft a plan of action for Colombian humanitarian-demining activities. They will use the plan as a guiding document for future mine-action activities. The plan emphasized integration and cooperation among military forces, national authorities and international partners.

Peru

Situated between Chile and Ecuador, next to the South Pacific Ocean, Peru faced a decade of military rule in the 1980s and internal conflict in the 1990s when democracy was reestablished. These periods of conflict, as well as a border dispute with Ecuador in the 1990s, have resulted in landmine problems.1 The Ottawa Convention went into force for Peru in 1999, mandating its total for mine clearance should be reached in 2019. Peru requested, and was granted, a deadline extension through 2023 for clearance. Peru’s landmine clearance in 2008 included a total of US$372,110 from Germany and the Republic of Korea.2

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See Endnotes, Page 134