UNICEF: A Leader in Mine Awareness

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A third way mine action agencies can provide MRE is through indirect or community-based programs. This usually occurs in areas where the population is relatively settled. Organizations then send their teams of trainers to the communities to reach volunteers to help convey MRE sessions. Once a community-based volunteer program has been established, the partner-agencies continue to follow up on their progress and address any additional concerns.

Since 1996, HIB has also been instrumental in implementing a Community-Based Mine Awareness Program (CBMAP). The program is expected to continue through 2004 and benefit almost 1,500,000 Afghan people, including rural villagers, Kuchis, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. HIB's objective is to place the responsibility of mine awareness activities on community members in order to "foster a spontaneous and independent spreading of the message." The goal of the HIB CBMAP is to:

- Directly train 559,000 people by HIB staff
- Indirectly train 950,000 people by HIB volunteer Mine Committees (MCs)
- Strengthen and support existing MCs
- Create an additional 1,300 new MCs
- Gather data on activity reports and mine victim and incident reports
- Spread information on mine and UXO locations and accidents
- Identify and refer mine victims

Partners Capacity Building

A final approach to MRE is through the training and capacity building of other non-mine action partners. The MACA and UNICEF locate partners who have educational and/or other social service programs to integrate MRE into their programs. The type and extent of MRE existing determines the type of services the partners provide.

Conclusion

Together the MACA and UNICEF are working in Afghanistan to provide MRE for all at-risk populations.

Technical support and funding are provided to help a wide range of partners run effective programs throughout the country. Continuous efforts by NGOs and other governmental organizations are vital to help protect the lives of millions of Afghan people.

References


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Examples of UNICEF Programs

The following highlights the country programs in which UNICEF has been instrumental over the past year. While the list provided here is not exhaustive, it is meant to emphasize the broad range of impact that UNICEF has on mine awareness around the world.

Albania

UNICEF supports an extensive mine awareness campaign in Afghanistan, which involves 12 districts in Kabul. Mine awareness messages are spread in mosques, on the radio and in schools, where they are being incorporated into the curriculum. Currently, UNICEF is supporting a "quick-impact" mine awareness campaign that targets 3,800 schools in Afghanistan. This program teaches students directly and also trains teachers how to reach students about the risks of landmines.

As the UN's lead agency on mine awareness/mine risk education (MRE), the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has done work in about 30 countries that suffer from the effects of landmines. Their programs help affected populations cope with the problems of landmines and give them the means to carry out their daily lives as safely as possible until their land can be cleared and returned to productive use.

by Nicole Kreger, MAIC

Introduction

UNICEF is the UN focal point for mine awareness. As such, its mission is to "provide appropriate guidance for all mine awareness programs, fostering closely with concerned partners." In many cases, this means that UNICEF oversees or provides funding for projects that are actually implemented by other already established-in-country organizations. While UNICEF's mine awareness responsibilities encompass all groups regardless of age, the organization tends to conduct most of its awareness programs in school-based settings and other locations in which children are the main target audience.

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UNICEF is also implementing the need for community involvement in spreading mine awareness in Bosnia. In order to increase involvement of community members, UNICEF's program involves developing a community action kit with mine injury prevention tools for 20 local communities. UNICEF is working on training select communities in its use. Community involvement like this is important, because without it, "there is little hope of maintaining these activities at a high enough level."

Burundi

UNICEF is the only organization in Burundi conducting mine awareness education. Thus far, they have trained 100 people and developed five educational posters. UNICEF is helping the government of Burundi build up its technical capacity for carrying out mine awareness in affected areas of the country. They have planned to develop Burundi-specific mine awareness materials and use a train-the-trainer approach to educate the population. Unfortunately, as of May, UNICEF said in a press release that its coordinating efforts for the program had been unfruitful. They also stated, "Highlighting the current intensity of fighting in Burundi, UNICEF insists that it is urgent to fund this sector that would enable the implementation of advocacy, mine risk education, victim assistance or mine data collection."

Cambodia

In late 2001, the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC) began a pilot project supported by UNICEF and Handicap International Belgium to conduct community-based mine/UXO risk reduction. This phase ended in May, after which an evaluation was conducted and recommendations were made for a second project. Additionally, UNICEF has been providing technical support to the Cambodian Mine Action/Victim Assistance Authorities (CMAMAs) newly appointed Mine Awareness Focal Point.

In a program targeting 30 districts, UNICEF has planned to teach mine awareness to children in the most affected areas in Cambodia. As the "Children in Post Conflict Project," this three-year program will allow for primary school teachers to provide children with mine risk education. The program aims to educate children both inside and outside of schools and hope to incorporate community participation in mine action.

UNICEF also chairs a recently formed mine risk education working group that consists of all parties in Cambodia involved with such work. The group determined that Cambodia still has a need for mine risk education, since there is still a high number of incidents and the rate of clearance is slow. One recommendation made by the group is the approach of MRE from traditional methods in order to get community participation and make use of community human resources.

Eritrea

Recently, UNICEF and the Eritrean Mine Action Program (EMAP) established an inter-agency MRE Working Group in order to create an MRE program for Eritrea. Together they determined that it was necessary for a long term national MRE strategy, which includes creating a process for assisting MRE managers, distributing MRE materials to returning refugees and organizing MRE activities for IDPs in camps. These projects will be carried out through the end of 2003.

Additional mine awareness activities in Eritrea include weekly and bi-weekly radio broadcasts and a roadside billboard program. An MRE teacher has been trained, and by now, almost all teachers in highly affected areas of the country have received training. UNICEF has also gotten the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) Mine Action Coordination Center (MACC) to incorporate mine awareness into its quality assurance process.

Ethiopia

UNICEF's support for Ethiopian MRE activities began in 1999, and they are carried out by a local NGO. Current efforts are focused on mine-affected communities in 10 districts of the Tigrai and Afrar regions. Their current project is implementing a community-based approach to mine action. UNICEF is working with religious groups, women's and children's organizations and local radio. Since 2001, UNICEF has focused its support on building the country's capacity in MRE based on the International Mine Action Standards by working with the UN Country Team Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO).

Nicaragua

UNICEF supported a pilot program earlier this year called Life Skills. The program included mine awareness training and was scheduled to enter into the curricula of 100 schools and surrounding communities in September. The program will continue through September 2003.

Laos

The Lao National UXO Project (LAO) carries out UXO risk education through its Community Awareness (CA) teams. Much of the funding for such awareness programs comes from LAO. UNICEF conducts the CA team by the two agencies revealed that citizens in villages visited by CA teams had a high level of understanding regarding UXO issues. The study also showed that understanding does not necessarily lead to behavior change; thus, a new study is planned to investigate UXO awareness and the factors related to UXO incidents. UNICEF is also collaborating with the Ministry of Education (MOE), UXO LAO and the Lao Youth Union on a two-year project to educate children on UXO awareness. Targeting children both in and out of school, the project began as a pilot program in four provinces of the country, and plans to expand nationally. The program will encourage participation from the children by having them help create and later disseminate the safety messages. Children in or not in school will receive messages with the creation of safe play areas. Other parts of this program will include "Sports-in-a-Box" activities, which incorporate games and recreational activities with UXO awareness, and popular shows and songs performed by children.

UNICEF's main role in Chechnya and Ingushetia is as the coordinator of all

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Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine action programmes and operators, conducts research, and provides support to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.

by Ian Mansfield, Operations Director, GICHD

During the past 12 months there has been an increase in the general activities of the Centre, the publication of a number of significant studies, and some changes to key staff. By way of a brief review, the GICHD was established in 1998 and it has three primary functions, all designed to support mine action: operational assistance; research; and support for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. This assistance is provided to the national mine action efforts of national mine programmes and field operators, as well as to the international community and the United Nations.

Conclusion

UNICEF has proven from its past and current activities to be a world leader in bringing mine awareness to populations in mine-affected areas. The programs listed above are only a few examples of how UNICEF has helped prevent mine inci- dents. Continuing in this tradition, UNICEF will be releasing some publica- tions in the next few months about mine awareness programs. The first is a new portfolio of their programs with updates from the past few months, which will be released by the end of November. The second is a "Lessons Learned" publication, that will include information gained from the experiences of people involved in mine awareness programs. UNICEF hopes to release this document by January 2003.

Notes from the Field

The socio-economic "Operational Handbook" which was developed from the socio-economic study. An outreach programme is now being planned by UNICEF.

International Guidelines

Due to widespread belief that mine awareness programs were insufficiently structured, UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programs began developing the International Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education. The Guidelines, released in 1999, were created "in order to promote the effective planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of mine awareness programs." They are designed as a reference for people involved in mine awareness.

The Guidelines, taking into account that mine awareness is "a process that encourages populations to become involved rather than...an imposed solution," aims to apply a fully integrated approach to mine action. This means making sure that mine clearance and mine awareness operate in conjunction instead of separately, as they have in the past. Issues are addressed in four sections, namely:

- Feasibility Study
- Needs Assessment
- Program Planning
- Monitoring and Evaluation

UNICEF intended the Guidelines to be an overview of issues that are common to mine/UXO awareness, primarily for project managers and donors. The publication has been endorsed by the Ottawa Treaty States Parties' Standing Committee on Victim Assistance, Socio-Economic Reintegration and Mine Awareness and translated into French and Spanish for widespread dissemination.

Endnotes


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Research & Publications

One of the primary aims of the Centre is to contribute to the formulation and development of improved procedures, technologies and practices in mine action. This research, to support mine action, will be published in forthcoming issues of the "Lessons Learned" publication and will include information gained from the experiences of people involved in mine awareness programs. UNICEF hopes to release this document by January 2003.

Implementation Support Unit

The Third Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention mandated the GICHD to form an Implementation Support Unit (ISU) which became operational in January 2002. The purpose of the ISU is to support the activities of States Parties in the Convention especially: the work of the Coordinating Committees and the International Work Programme; and support to the President of the Meeting of States Parties; assistance to States Parties and States Parties on the work of the Convention. In addition, the ISU has convened workshops to establish a document centre on the Convention and its implementation. The Implementation Support Unit is Kerry Brinkert who can be contacted by e-mail at kbrinkert@gichd.ch.

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