

# IMAS Mine Risk Education Best Practice Guidebook 1

## AN INTRODUCTION TO MINE RISK EDUCATION

*International  
mine action standards*



*United Nations*

# IMAS

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*Geneva, November 2005*

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## Acknowledgements

The MRE Best Practice Guidebooks were developed on behalf of the United Nations by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

UNICEF would like to thank the United States Department of State for their generous financial support towards the preparation of the Guidebooks.

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ISBN-13: 978-92-806-3967-4

ISBN-10: 92-806-3967-6

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# Foreword

Over the last few years the mine action community has taken major steps towards professionalising its mine risk education (MRE) projects and programmes. A central element in that process has been the development of international standards for MRE by UNICEF, within the framework of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), maintained by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). In October 2003, UNICEF completed seven MRE standards, which were formally adopted as IMAS in June 2004.

The MRE component of the IMAS outlines minimum standards for the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of MRE programmes and projects. The IMAS are largely prescriptive, advising operators, mine action centres, national authorities and donors on *what* is necessary for the development and implementation of effective MRE programmes. They do not, however, guide stakeholders on *how* they might adapt their programmes and projects to be more compliant with the standards.

To facilitate the implementation of the MRE standards in the field, UNICEF entered into a partnership with the Geneva International Centre for International Demining (GICHD) to develop this series of *Best Practice Guidebooks* to provide more practical advice on how to implement the MRE standards. A total of 12 Guidebooks have been developed, using expertise from a variety of different people, countries and contexts. The Guidebooks address a wide range of areas covered by the MRE IMAS, including:

- ◆ How to support the coordination of MRE and the dissemination of public information;
- ◆ How to implement risk education and training projects;
- ◆ How to undertake community mine action liaison; and
- ◆ What elements should be considered to implement effective MRE projects in emergencies.

The primary aim of these Guidebooks is to provide practical advice, tools and guidance to undertake MRE programmes that are compliant with IMAS. They are

also meant to provide a framework for a more predictable, systematic and integrated approach to risk education, and are intended for use by anyone engaged in planning, managing or evaluating mine risk education programmes and projects, such as government ministries, mine action centres, United Nations agencies and bodies, and local and international organisations. Donors may also find them useful in assessing proposals for mine risk education projects and programmes.

But while the Guidebooks seek to provide practical advice for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects, they remain general in nature and will need to be adapted to each new situation in its specific cultural and political context. UNICEF and the GICHD hope that they will prove a useful tool in making mine risk education more effective and efficient.

In addition to being distributed in hard copy, the *Best Practice Guidebooks* can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet at [www.mineactionstandards.org](http://www.mineactionstandards.org) as well as the GICHD website [www.gichd.ch](http://www.gichd.ch) and the UNICEF website [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

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# Introduction

## Introduction to the Series

According to the IMAS, the term “mine risk education” refers to “*activities which seek to reduce the risk of injury from mines and ERW by raising awareness and promoting behavioural change, including public information dissemination, education and training, and community mine action liaison.*”<sup>1</sup> MRE is one of the five components of mine action. The others are: *demining* (i.e. mine and explosive remnants of war [ERW] survey, mapping, marking and clearance); *victim assistance*, including rehabilitation and reintegration; *advocacy* against the use of anti-personnel landmines; and *stockpile destruction*.<sup>2</sup>

The first two editions of the IMAS – in 1997 and 2000 – did not include MRE-specific standards and guides. In 2000, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the focal point for mine-related activities within the UN system, requested UNICEF to develop international standards for MRE. UNMAS is the office within the UN Secretariat responsible for the development and maintenance of international mine action standards. UNICEF is the primary actor within the UN in undertaking mine risk education.

In October 2003, UNICEF completed a set of seven MRE standards, which were formally adopted as IMAS in June 2004. The seven standards are as follows:

- ♦ *IMAS 07.11: Guide for the management of mine risk education;*
- ♦ *IMAS 07.31: Accreditation of mine risk education organisations and operations;*
- ♦ *IMAS 07.41: Monitoring of mine risk education programmes and projects;*
- ♦ *IMAS 08.50: Data collection and needs assessment for mine risk education;*
- ♦ *IMAS 12.10: Planning for mine risk education programmes and projects;*
- ♦ *IMAS 12.20: Implementation of mine risk education programmes and projects;* and

- ♦ *IMAS 14.20: Evaluation of mine risk education programmes and projects.*

To facilitate the implementation of the MRE standards in the field, in 2004 UNICEF contracted the Geneva International Centre for International Demining to develop a series of best practice guidebooks for MRE programmes and projects.<sup>3</sup> The following 12 *Best Practice Guidebooks* have been developed:

- ♦ *1: An Introduction to Mine Risk Education;*
- ♦ *2: Data Collection and Needs Assessment;*
- ♦ *3: Planning;*
- ♦ *4: Public Information Dissemination;*
- ♦ *5: Education and Training;*
- ♦ *6: Community Mine Action Liaison;*
- ♦ *7: Monitoring;*
- ♦ *8: Evaluation;*
- ♦ *9: Emergency Mine Risk Education;*
- ♦ *10: Coordination;*
- ♦ *11: The Collected IMAS on Mine Risk Education; and*
- ♦ *12: Glossary of Terms and Resources.*

The *Best Practice Guidebooks* seek to address the particular needs of MRE as an integral part of mine action. Each Guidebook is intended to serve as a stand-alone document, although some include cross-references to other Guidebooks or to other sources.

## Introduction to Guidebook 1

This Guidebook, number 1 of the Series, provides an introduction to MRE. No previous experience in MRE is assumed or necessary in order to understand the Guidebook. Indeed, it is intended that the Series also serves as an overview of MRE for those concerned with mine action but not necessarily with direct responsibilities for implementing or managing MRE projects or programmes.

## Layout of the Guidebook

**Section 1** looks at the definition of MRE, including its main goals, activities and beneficiaries.

**Section 2** discusses the role of MRE within mine action as well as in the context of broader relief and development work.

**Section 3** provides a brief history of the discipline for newcomers to MRE.

**Section 4** summarises the MRE project cycle.

**Section 5** lays down guiding issues and principles for MRE projects and programmes.

**Section 6** reviews the national coordination of MRE projects and programmes.

**Section 7** provides some concluding remarks to the Guidebook.

A glossary of abbreviations and acronyms, the IMAS definition of key terms, and a selected bibliography and list of resources for all the *Best Practice Guidebooks* in the Series can be found in *Best Practice Guidebook 12*.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> IMAS 04.10, Second Edition, 1 January 2003 (as amended on 1 December 2004), 3.157.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.147.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of the IMAS and these Guidebooks, a project is defined as an activity, or series of connected activities, with an agreed objective. A project will normally have a finite duration and a plan of work. An MRE programme is defined as a series of related MRE projects in a given country or area.



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# 1. What is mine risk education?

## 1.1 The IMAS definition of mine risk education

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As noted in the Introduction, the term “mine risk education” refers to “*activities which seek to reduce the risk of injury from mines/unexploded ordnance by raising awareness and promoting behavioural change, including public information dissemination, education and training, and community mine action liaison.*”<sup>1</sup>

Although the discipline is called *mine* risk education, it seeks to prevent harm to civilians<sup>2</sup> from all types of victim-activated explosive devices. MRE therefore covers the dangers not only of landmines (whether anti-personnel or anti-vehicle) but also of explosive remnants of war (ERW). ERW are defined under international law<sup>3</sup> to mean unexploded ordnance (UXO – bombs, shells, grenades and other munitions which have been fired or dropped but have not exploded as intended) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO – abandoned stockpiles or weapons caches).

There are a number of different reasons why individuals are at risk from landmines and ERW. Risk-takers are broadly put into five categories:

- ♦ **The Unaware** (the person knows nothing about the dangers that mines or ERW represent – typical examples are refugees or young children);
- ♦ **The Uninformed** (the person knows that mines and ERW exist and are potentially dangerous but doesn’t know about safe behaviour – typical examples are the internally displaced or older children);
- ♦ **The Misinformed** (the person has been given the wrong messages or thinks, wrongly, that he or she knows about safe behaviour – typical examples are former soldiers);
- ♦ **The Reckless** (the victim knows about safe behaviour but deliberately ignores it – typical examples are adolescent boys playing with mines or other explosive devices); and
- ♦ **The Forced** (the victim has little or no option but to intentionally adopt unsafe behaviour – typical examples are adults in highly-impacted

communities who need to forage for food or water for their families to survive).

As we will see, understanding who is at risk from mines and ERW and why is critical to an effective MRE project or programme.

## 1.2 The goals of mine risk education

MRE has three main goals:

- ♦ To minimise deaths and injuries from landmines and other ERW;
- ♦ To reduce the social and economic impact from landmines and other ERW; and
- ♦ To support development.

These goals are interlinked and interdependent, though each has distinct elements as part of the strategy to achieve them.

### 1.2.1 *Minimising deaths and injuries*

The first goal of MRE is to minimise deaths and injuries from ERW. The main strategies employed to achieve this goal include information provision and exchange, advocacy and capacity development. This means:

- ♦ Providing information and training to at-risk populations;
- ♦ Wherever possible, *exchanging* information with affected communities; and
- ♦ Providing information to, and advocating with, the mine action, relief and development sectors.

The activities corresponding to these strategies are discussed in greater detail below.

### 1.2.2 *Reducing the social and economic impact from landmines and ERW*

The second goal of MRE is to reduce the social and economic impact from landmines and other ERW. The main strategy to achieve this is by facilitating other mine action activities, that is to say supporting:

- ♦ Demining (survey, marking and clearance of landmines and ERW);
- ♦ Victim assistance (physical and psychosocial rehabilitation and social reintegration of the survivors of explosions of landmines and ERW);
- ♦ Stockpile destruction (of landmines, AXO and other weapons or munitions retained by civilians in their homes); and
- ♦ Advocacy against anti-personnel mines (including support for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and other international law regulating landmines and ERW).

MRE can also support some of the other enabling activities for mine action, such as coordination, quality management, assessment and planning, priority selection and setting, and broader advocacy for mine action, including resource mobilisation.

It achieves these goals by exchanging information between affected communities and the mine action sector. This process of linkages and advocacy is called community mine action liaison. The role of MRE in supporting other mine action is discussed in greater detail in Section 2 below.

### 1.2.3 *Supporting relief and development work*

At its broadest — as with mine action itself — mine risk education seeks to support community development. MRE organisations have often found that the main obstacle to safe behaviour is not ignorance or irresponsibility, but a lack of suitable alternatives to “forced” risk-taking. Most of the people living in especially vulnerable communities will know that an area or an activity is potentially hazardous, but may need to enter an area to collect water, firewood or food in order to survive, or decide to collect ordnance for its scrap metal value in order to earn some money. So simply telling them that what they are doing is dangerous is both pointless and disrespectful.

We therefore need to identify realistic solutions to help the community. Some of these may be mine action related, as referred to in Section 1.2.2; others are more generally found in the relief or development spheres. Thus, for example, if access to water is the key problem because of explosive contamination around a well or water point, perhaps a new borehole can be sunk in a safe area by a development organisation supporting water and sanitation projects. If income-generation is the prerequisite for safe behaviour, perhaps micro-credit or other self-sustaining solutions can be identified in collaboration with relief and development organisations or local/national government departments and ministries. As already mentioned, this process of linkages and advocacy is called community mine action liaison.

Moreover, the process of community liaison itself can contribute to effective development, as one of its primary tasks is to support people in a community in their efforts to take responsibility for managing the mine and ERW contamination that is affecting them. This is done by developing community capacity for participatory approaches to planning, assessment and management, which are the backbone of good community liaison. The result of this capacity development is social capital, which enables the community also to better manage the many other problems it must face.

## 1.3 **Mine risk education activities**

We will now look in turn at the three main MRE activities, namely:

- ◆ Public information dissemination;
- ◆ Education and training; and
- ◆ Community mine action liaison.

### 1.3.1 *Public information dissemination*

Public information dissemination as part of MRE refers primarily to the provision of information to at-risk individuals and communities to reduce their

risk of injury from mines and other ERW. It seeks to raise their awareness of the dangers and to promote safe behaviour.

Public information dissemination is primarily a one-way form of communication transmitted through mass media, which can provide relevant information and advice in a cost-effective and timely manner. In contrast to the other MRE activities, public information dissemination projects may be “stand-alone” projects that are implemented independently, and often in advance, of other mine action activities.

In an emergency post-conflict situation, due to time constraints and lack of accurate data, public information dissemination is often the most practical means of communicating safety information to reduce risk. Equally, this may form part of a more comprehensive risk reduction strategy within a mine action programme, supporting community-based MRE, demining or advocacy activities.

Public information dissemination is addressed in detail in *Best Practice Guidebook 4* of this Series.

### **1.3.2 Education and training**

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The term “education and training” in MRE refers to all educational and training activities that seek to reduce the risk of injury from mines and other ERW by raising awareness of the threat to individuals and communities, and by promoting behavioural change.

Education and training is a two-way process, which involves the imparting and acquisition of knowledge, attitude and practice through teaching and learning. It is therefore more targeted to those at risk, using more specific messages and strategies, than is typically the case with public information dissemination.

Education and training activities may be conducted in formal and non-formal environments. For example, this may include teacher-to-child education in schools, parent-to-children and children-to-parent education in the home, child-to-child education, peer-to-peer education in work and recreational environments, landmine safety training for humanitarian aid workers, and the incorporation of landmine safety messages in regular occupational health and safety practices.

Education and training is addressed in detail in *Best Practice Guidebook 5* of this Series.

### **1.3.3 Community mine action liaison**

Community mine action liaison refers to the exchange of information between affected or at-risk communities *and* between national authorities, mine action organisations and relief and development actors on the presence of mines, ERW, and of their potential risk. It is considered by the IMAS to be a “strategic principle of mine action” and is widely regarded as the key to more effective MRE projects and programmes.

### The IMAS definition of community liaison\*

Community mine action liaison refers to “liaison with mine/ERW affected communities to exchange information on the presence and impact of mines and UXO, to create a reporting link with the mine action programme and develop risk reduction strategies. Community mine action liaison aims to ensure community needs and priorities are central to the planning, implementation and monitoring of mine action operations.”

“Note: Community liaison is based on an exchange of information and involves communities in the decision making process, (before, during and after demining), in order to establish priorities for mine action. In this way mine action programmes aim to be inclusive, community focused and ensure the maximum involvement of all sections of the community. This involvement includes joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects.”

“Note: Community liaison also works with communities to develop specific interim safety strategies promoting individual and community behavioural change. This is designed to reduce the impact of mines/UXO on individuals and communities until such time as the threat is removed.”

\* IMAS 04.10, Second Edition, 1 January 2003 (as amended on 1 December 2004), 3.38.

Community mine action liaison enables, for example, communities to be informed when a demining activity is planned to take place, the nature and duration of the task, and the exact locations of areas that have been marked or cleared. It also enables communities to inform local authorities and mine action organisations on the location, extent and impact of contaminated areas. This information can greatly assist the planning of follow-on mine action activities such as technical survey, marking and clearance, and if necessary the provision of assistance to landmine survivors.

Community mine action liaison creates a vital reporting link to the programme planning staff, and enables the development of appropriate and localised risk reduction strategies. Community mine action liaison aims to ensure that mine action projects address community needs and priorities.

Community mine action liaison should be carried out by all organisations conducting mine action operations. These may be MRE-specific organisations, or MRE individuals and/or multi-disciplinary teams within a mine action organisation.

Community mine action liaison with the affected populations may start far in advance of demining activities and may help the development of a capacity at the community level to assess the risk, manage the information and develop local risk reduction strategies. This may assist communities to gather the necessary information, lobby the relevant stakeholders and advocate for mine action and other assistance intervention.

The role of MRE in mine action – notably through effective community liaison – is discussed further in Section 2. Community mine action liaison as a whole is addressed in detail in *Best Practice Guidebook 6* of this Series.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> IMAS 04.10, Second Edition, 1 January 2003 (as amended on 1 December 2004), 3.157.

<sup>2</sup> Typically, mine risk education seeks to protect only civilians; it is therefore not responsible for providing information to soldiers on how to minimise the risks to themselves.

<sup>3</sup> Article 2, Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

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## 2. The role of mine risk education in mine action

Effective MRE can play a significant role in mine action, by virtue of the information it collects at community level and the relationship it can build with affected communities. Let us look at some of the practical contributions that MRE can make to other mine action activities.

### 2.1 MRE support for demining

Demining includes survey, marking and clearance of landmines and other ERW. MRE, especially through community liaison work, can contribute to each of these three activities, as well as develop community capacity for management of risk.

In terms of survey, MRE teams can, based on information supplied by the community:

- ◆ Locate affected areas;
- ◆ Identify types of ordnance present;
- ◆ Understand how mines and other ERW are affecting the lives and well-being of the community; and
- ◆ Help to generate community lists of priorities for clearance or marking.

In terms of marking, MRE teams can:

- ◆ Learn about local warning signs;
- ◆ Encourage respect for minefield marking and fencing; and
- ◆ Help to generate community lists of priorities for marking (including suitable materials that will reduce the risk of removal, theft or destruction).

In terms of clearance, MRE teams can:

- ◆ Advise the community of the arrival of demining teams;
- ◆ Inform the community about safety procedures during clearance operations;
- ◆ Inform community members about areas that have been cleared and those that remain hazardous, including markings of cleared and uncleared areas;

- ◆ Facilitate handover of land, including confidence-building measures to show the community that cleared land is actually clear; and
- ◆ Follow-up, by returning to communities weeks or months after clearance to ensure that land is being used, and used appropriately, by the intended beneficiaries.

## 2.2 MRE support for victim assistance

Victim assistance includes minefield rescue, first aid, surgery, physical rehabilitation (physiotherapy and prosthetics for amputees), psychosocial rehabilitation, and social reintegration of the survivors of explosions of landmines and other ERW.

MRE has a particular role to play in facilitating the provision of assistance to amputees, many of which are the victims of anti-personnel mines. However, their duty to try to assist amputees applies more generally, whether the amputation was caused by mines or ERW or any other cause (e.g. gunshot wound, snakebite, car accident or diabetes). To do otherwise would be to discriminate between victims, something that is ethically not acceptable.

In particular, MRE teams can:

- ◆ Identify national and local capacities for victim assistance, and under what conditions assistance is available;
- ◆ Identify amputees in need of assistance during their work in communities;
- ◆ Liaise with physical rehabilitation centres to ensure assistance is provided;
- ◆ If necessary, facilitate transport of the amputee and family member to and from the centre for treatment; and
- ◆ Consider employing survivors in their project.

## 2.3 MRE support for stockpile destruction

Similar to the actions they can undertake in favour of demining, MRE teams can support the process of destruction of weapons caches (i.e. not just of anti-personnel mines), AXO and explosive ordnance retained by civilians in their homes.

This is both a process of information collection and of advocacy: information collection to find out where weapons are stored or held, and advocacy to persuade families or local military forces to accept that they be safely destroyed.

## 2.4 MRE support for advocacy

MRE can play an important role in building political will in concerned countries in favour of mine action. National and local ownership of the management of mine action is the only long-term, sustainable approach to dealing with the impact of mines and other ERW – and represents one of the fundamental underpinnings of the IMAS. This can be done through lobbying ministries and the parliament, as well as generating public interest in and support for, mine action through seminars and good communication through the mass media.

In addition, MRE projects should always consider including a national or regional advocacy element in their work. This can be advocacy in favour of

banning anti-personnel mines, in the 50 or so countries that have not yet joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. It can also be advocacy in favour of Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which regulates ERW, and allocates responsibilities for dealing with them.



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### 3. A brief history of mine risk education

Mine risk education, or mine awareness as it was originally called, began as a modern humanitarian and development discipline in Afghanistan at the end of the 1980s. The discipline developed from recognition that ERW and mine clearance, while being the ultimate solution to a community's mine problem, was also slow, expensive and at times simply not possible for reasons of access, ongoing conflict, or lack of political will or funding.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, it was quickly understood that a number of interventions could be undertaken to reduce a community's exposure to the threat in the short to medium term. These centred on disseminating information among affected communities to increase knowledge of the dangers of mines (and, to a lesser extent, UXO), their typical locations, and providing suggestions on how to minimise exposure to risk.

Most activity and key learning about how MRE should be undertaken emerged from the experience of a few key countries (most prominently, Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, northern Iraq and Mozambique) – often with very different mine threats.

Initially, approaches tended to be one-way and largely non-participatory, using a variety of “small media”, such as posters, leaflets, billboards and T-shirts. As mine action has matured and learned from other relief and development sectors, changes have been instituted to reflect improved practice regarding prioritisation, coordination, communication and ownership of activities.

A trend of the last few years, certainly among the more established organisations, has been an evolution of MRE activities from a narrow educational function towards one of community liaison – to develop information-gathering capacity, to share information with key mine action stakeholders, and to assist in developing a community's sense of ownership of mine action.

Such a community liaison approach appears to be the way forward for MRE. It is a reflection that education in the traditional sense has often overlooked many of these approaches and has not linked well with clearance organisations –

particularly with regard to prioritisation and sharing the data gathered from communities. However, still too many programmes continue to undertake inappropriate “traditional” programmes of questionable value and impact.

### 3.1 The role of NGOs

As with much of mine action, mine awareness was pioneered in the 1990s by a small number of NGOs, most of whom developed programmes in parallel to mine and ERW clearance. Among the NGOs involved, Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), Handicap International (HI, both Belgium and France) and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) were the most prominent innovators in this sector.

Of the three main NGOs, MAG pursued the most integrated model, eventually seeking to incorporate MRE and clearance within the same team. Key countries which provided important learning opportunities and thus were crucial to the development of what became MAG’s community liaison approach were Angola (1993), Cambodia (1992), northern Iraq (1992) and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) (1994). These countries, the first in which MAG undertook clearance and MRE activities, provided the opportunity to develop solutions to overcome programming limitations.

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Over time, MAG learned that many of the constraints to efficient programming (limited information on the scale and scope of particular threats, poor prioritisation, lack of clarity as to the objective to be achieved in demining a particular area, duplication of visits to particular communities, and inefficient use of often scarce transport resources) were eliminated or reduced by providing their mine awareness teams with a wider brief – to encompass data gathering and ongoing communication with key community representatives. In Angola, this learning process was supported by reorganising large clearance teams into smaller multi-skilled mobile teams, which incorporated a community liaison element.

NPA’s mine awareness programming began in Cambodia and Mozambique in 1993 and Angola in 1994. Today, NPA does relatively little MRE in its work, although the organisation is conducting an integrated clearance programme in Croatia designed explicitly to include mechanisms for promoting community involvement, communication and ownership issues.

HI has tended to run separate clearance and MRE programmes – either MRE programmes stand alone in a country where demining is not being undertaken, or parallel programmes are implemented within the same country programme (for example, in Mozambique).

HI began including community liaison teams (CLTs) in its demining programmes from 1996, viewing the work of these teams as a sub-activity of MRE in the larger sense – making the link between demining activities, the community and any externally implemented MRE. CLTs gather information useful for the demining units, inform the community about demining activities and conduct limited mine risk education in communities near to the demining activity. HI has been responsible for much impressive programming – including developing training and programme management tools, applied as appropriate both to CLT operations and to its more traditional MRE educational activities.

Save the Children has played an important role in MRE at various times, in particular through promoting and using the child-to-child approach to MRE

developed by the Child-to-Child Trust in London. Ministries of Education have been critical partners in school-focused risk education for children. Many local NGOs have also implemented MRE projects across affected countries.

For most of the 1990s, and in common with many aid organisations, communication and sharing of best practice between practitioners did not occur either efficiently or systematically. In part this simply reflects the circumstances of small, overstretched NGOs where time and resources have been at a premium, where communication from conflict affected countries is difficult, and where budget and time is lacking for the publication and dissemination of “lessons learned” publications. The result is that emphasis tended to focus on that day’s problems rather than on reflection and external communication – “fire fighting” rather than sharing policies and procedures.

## 3.2 The work of the International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) first became involved in MRE in the mid-1990s, within the context of its broader efforts to alleviate the suffering caused by war. Field staff, particularly doctors, who were finding themselves treating increasing numbers of mine victims, had been encouraging the organisation’s headquarters to consider possible preventive measures for several years. While most of the ICRC’s efforts to stem the “epidemic of mine injuries” were directed towards campaigning for a ban on anti-personnel mines, some within the organisation had also recognised the need to undertake mine awareness in affected countries.

The first full-scale ICRC mine and ERW programme was launched in spring 1996 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. Since then, the ICRC has conducted programmes directly, or through national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, in some 20 countries or regions. Initially programmes tended to concentrate on information collection and dissemination, sometimes including statistics on the number of landmine victims. Over time, ICRC has come to regard this aspect of its work as key to planning and implementing more community-based activities that address the specific reasons for risk taking. Thus, posters and other one-way “small” media have been replaced by more community engagement in the process.

## 3.3 The involvement of the military

During the last decade, international military contingents (and sometimes police units) have also engaged in mine awareness presentations in several countries and territories, including Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Kosovo and Iraq. In addition, members of national military units have undertaken MRE in Lebanon, Nicaragua and Thailand among others.

Most agencies recognise that the involvement of the military or police in MRE is undertaken for the best of intentions. Perhaps the argument can be made that in certain countries the military, whether national forces or international peacekeeping contingents, are respected authority figures, particularly to adolescent boys.

MRE organisations have, however, expressed concern that flawed methodology can, and often does, undermine the message being delivered. For example, situations in which military MRE instructors touch or hold mines during presentations are numerous, and there is also concern that soldiers in full uniform – often armed – do not represent the best role model for impressionable children. Presentations are often one-off deliveries of information with little capacity to establish an ongoing link with that community – or use the contact to develop further intelligence as to the location and impact of mines or ERW on that population.

### 3.4 UNICEF and the UN

UNICEF began its involvement in MRE in El Salvador and Somalia in 1993, and is now supporting or planning mine action activities in 34 countries/regions. The primary motivation for UNICEF to undertake MRE in the early 1990s stemmed from the need to protect children in post-conflict situations and the threat that mines and ERW posed to civilians, especially to safe repatriation. Early UNICEF MRE projects were often undertaken in refugee camps and linked with activities supported by UNHCR and NGOs. Such projects focused on the provision of basic warning messages, informing communities about the nature of mines and ERW, the threats they posed and basic messages to help avoid the risk. Since that time, more sophisticated projects have been developed that include awareness raising, education and training, and community liaison. Such programmes were principally developed in high-risk countries, where UNICEF had a longer term and more developed mine action programme.

Following the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, mine action was included in UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, and landmine activities were institutionalised in the Office of Emergency Programmes, where it sits to this day. UNICEF's role in MRE was recognised throughout the UN system with the release of the UN Mine Action Policy in 1998, which designated UNICEF as the focal point in the UN system for MRE. The document also outlined UNICEF responsibilities with regard to advocacy and victim assistance programmes.

In 2005, the Policy was updated and includes important reflections related to UN reform and the primacy of the UN Country Team in determining which agency might be allocated "focal point" status or "lead agency" responsibility in any given context. While these new arrangements may have implications in determining the lead agency for MRE at the country office level and can lead to other UN agencies taking a lead in MRE, globally UNICEF's commitment to supporting MRE remains strong.

In 2002, UNICEF and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) established a Mine Risk Education Working Group (MREWG), co-convened by both organisations, and made up of NGOs and agencies engaged in MRE. It aims to bring together MRE practitioners to better coordinate activities, share lessons learned, identify field support needs and develop strategies to meet these. The MREWG was involved with the development of the MRE components of the IMAS.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNMAS also have mandates that impact directly on MRE. UNDP has responsibility for addressing socio-economic consequences of landmine and ERW contamination, as well as for developing and supporting national and local capacity to tackle the impact of mines and ERW in the long term. UNMAS was formed in October 1997 to serve as the UN focal point for mine action. At the global level, it is responsible for coordinating all aspects of mine action within the UN system. At the field level, it is responsible for providing mine action assistance in the context of humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations. As such, the role of UNMAS includes MRE, although recognising that UNICEF has a primary role in the implementation and development of MRE programmes and projects.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> This section is largely adapted from the chapter by Andy Wheatley, "Mine Awareness and Mine Risk Education", in *Mine Action: Lessons and Challenges*, GICHD, Geneva, 2005.



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## 4. The project cycle

The project cycle for MRE consists of five activities:

- ◆ Data collection and needs assessment (see Guidebook 2);
- ◆ Planning MRE projects and programmes (see Guidebook 3);
- ◆ Implementation (see Guidebooks 4, 5, 6 & 9);
- ◆ Monitoring (see Guidebook 7); and
- ◆ Evaluation (see Guidebook 9).

### 4.1 Needs assessment and data collection

The purpose of collecting data and conducting a needs assessment is to identify, analyse and prioritise the local mine and ERW risks, to assess the capacities and vulnerabilities of the communities, and to evaluate the options for conducting MRE. A needs assessment will provide sufficient information necessary to make informed decisions on the objectives, scope and form of the resulting MRE project.

There are five key questions that the needs assessment should seek to answer:

- ◆ **Who** among the civilian population is at risk from mines and ERW? (e.g. children or adults, males or females, farmers or shepherds?);
- ◆ **Where** are they at risk? (e.g. which geographical region, on which type of land or area?);
- ◆ **What** is the explosive danger they are facing? (e.g. anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines, cluster bomblets, grenades, mortar or artillery shells?);
- ◆ **Why** are they at risk? (e.g. what is the reason for their taking risks – are they unaware, uninformed, misinformed, reckless or forced, and what livelihoods put them at most danger?); and
- ◆ **How** can we best help? (e.g. what resources are available in the community, the MRE project, other mine action actors, or the relief and development sectors?).

Systematic data collection and analysis are key to the effective implementation of all mine action activities. Data collected for MRE needs assessment should ideally

be collected and analysed in conjunction with other mine action implementing organisations, the Mine Action Centre (MAC) and the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA).

Data collected should be regularly updated to see whether the mine and ERW risk has changed.

## 4.2 Planning

There are two main types of planning for MRE projects and programmes: strategic planning and operational planning. Strategic planning seeks to identify an overarching strategy to respond to the identified needs of at-risk communities. This will include goals, subsidiary objectives and activities to achieve those objectives. Once identified, the implementation of the activities becomes the subject of an operational plan.

Where possible, the strategic planning of an MRE programme should be conducted as part of the overall planning process for mine action. At the level of the mine-affected community, the planning of MRE should be conducted jointly, or in close conjunction, with the planning of other mine action activities (in particular demining) in order to reduce the risk of injury from mines and other ERW. At the community level, planning may be conducted with affected communities themselves.

The purpose of the operational planning phase of a specific MRE project is to identify the most effective ways to address the needs. The plan should define the overall objectives, establish a plan of activities and tasks aimed at achieving these objectives, determine suitable measures of success, and establish systems for monitoring and evaluation.

The planning phase will also include preparatory activities such as:

- ◆ Identifying local capacities;
- ◆ Mobilising resources;
- ◆ Developing appropriate capabilities;
- ◆ Recruiting and training suitable staff; and
- ◆ Developing and field-testing MRE methods and tools.

The planning phase should:

- ◆ Involve all stakeholders;
- ◆ Ensure that the project is in accordance with the national mine action strategy; and
- ◆ Support wider humanitarian and development strategies where they exist.

In addition, the project, objectives, activities and responsibilities should be consistent with the needs and expectations of all those involved in the MRE project.

Planning should not be a one-off activity but a process that is repeated on a regular basis incorporating the results of project and programme monitoring and evaluations. Of course, it is important to note that as the local context and circumstances change, so the MRE programme and individual projects must change and adapt. In the immediate aftermath of conflict, MRE will focus on saving lives and limbs. But as the country moves through the transition from a complex emergency to stability, reconstruction and traditional development, educational activities and community mine action liaison will normally take on an ever-growing importance.

## 4.3 Implementation

The success of an MRE project depends on the proper application of the MRE tools and methods as planned, the ability to refine and adjust the tools and methods in response to changing needs, and the timely reporting of progress and lessons learned.

For MRE projects of limited scope and duration, the implementation phase may be relatively short. However, for larger projects with several stages of varying duration, the implementation may be complex and difficult to manage. It may involve transferring management responsibilities from international staff to local employees, funding arrangements may change, and the operating environment may improve from one of open conflict or humanitarian emergency to a more stable one focusing on development, requiring a change of the MRE tools and methods used to communicate with at-risk populations.

As already mentioned, MRE projects may be broadly categorised into three separate but mutually reinforcing activities: public information dissemination, education and training, and community mine action liaison. In an emergency, MRE projects are likely to focus on the first of these, i.e. public information dissemination, through the mass media and other appropriate communication channels.

### 4.3.1 Communication channels

MRE attempts to promote the adoption of safer behaviour by at-risk groups. One of the key tools in seeking to achieve this objective is a clear communication strategy. Communication is the process of sharing information and understanding. It is used to inform people of the dangers of mines and ERW and to demonstrate safe behaviour. MRE also uses it to create support for mine-safe behaviour among communities and leaders.

There are many different ways to communicate, and effective MRE programmes need to use a variety of communication channels and techniques. The ways in which they are used and the messages and meanings they convey can differ with culture and context.

Communication channels can be divided into four major categories:

- ◆ Person-to-person or interpersonal communication;
- ◆ Small media;
- ◆ Traditional media; and
- ◆ Mass media.

#### Person-to-person or interpersonal communication

This involves direct, face-to-face contact and allows questions and answers and clarification of meaning. It helps to ensure mutual understanding. Interpersonal communication includes conversation between friends or family, discussions with health professionals, community health workers, religious and community leaders, traditional health practitioners, women's and youth organisations, school teachers, trade union leaders, development workers, government officials, parents and child-to-child communication.

### Small media

The small media are often tools that are used to support larger communication initiatives or to illustrate interpersonal communication. They include posters, cassettes, leaflets, brochures, slide sets, video, flip charts, flash cards, T-shirts, badges and the use of loudspeakers.

### Traditional media

Traditional media are performance arts that are used to illustrate and convey information in an entertaining way. Live performances can provide special opportunities for interaction between performers and audience. They include drama, traditional forms of theatre, puppet shows, street theatre, storytelling, songs and dance. Traditional media are often artistic methods of communication passed down from generation to generation.

### Mass media

The mass media typically provide indirect, one-way communication and include community, national and international radio and television as well as newspapers, magazines, comic books, cinema or other situations where a large number of people can be reached with information without personal contact, such as pop music.

## 4.4 Monitoring

Monitoring – tracking progress in a programme or project – is an essential part of the MRE project cycle. Together with accreditation and evaluation, monitoring provides stakeholders with the necessary confidence that MRE projects are achieving the agreed goals and objectives in an appropriate, timely and affordable manner. Monitoring is an ongoing process, conducted throughout implementation to provide feedback and information on the application, suitability and effectiveness of MRE tools and methods.

Monitoring will normally involve an assessment of the MRE organisation's capabilities (people, procedures, tools and methods) and how these capabilities are being applied. External monitoring should be used to complement the MRE organisation's own internal quality management system. External monitoring should verify the MRE organisation's quality assurance procedures and internal quality control inspections – but it should never replace the organisation's responsibility for ensuring the proper application, suitability and effectiveness of its chosen MRE tools and methods.

Monitoring should not be limited to measuring and reporting on the achievement of set objectives, but should trigger a review process to reflect changing MRE needs and/or local circumstances.

## 4.5 Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic effort to measure the *impact* of a programme, or its effectiveness. An evaluation may also look at other defined (and agreed) criteria, such as relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of activities in the light of the

specified objectives. According to UNICEF, an evaluation “*should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of project partners and donors*”.

For MRE, evaluation aims to measure the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and practices among the target communities, assess the impact and use of specific tools and methods, and make recommendations for changes to these tools and methods. In practice, the evaluation of MRE is usually difficult to achieve as it may not be possible to identify the connections between the cause (i.e. the MRE intervention), and the effect (i.e. behavioural change).

Having a baseline of knowledge and attitudes to mines and ERW is a valuable tool in ensuring that evaluations can be carried out successfully, but the key is for a project or programme to have clear, meaningful objectives. A widely used approach to setting objectives in particular, and to planning projects in general, is the logical framework (or logframe). The logframe is explained in *Best Practice Guidebook 3* of this Series.

Evaluation is usually conducted upon completion of a project but may also be conducted at specific intervals throughout the life of the project to assess its actual impact and justify its continuation.



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## 5. Guiding principles for projects and programmes

### 5.1 The guiding principles for mine action

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The IMAS as a whole are shaped by five guiding principles, namely:

- ◆ That national governments shall be empowered to apply national standards to national programmes;
- ◆ That standards should protect those most at risk;
- ◆ That national capacity should be developed to draft, maintain and apply appropriate standards for mine action;
- ◆ That mine action should be consistent with other international norms and standards; and
- ◆ That mine action should comply with international conventions and treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

### 5.2 The guiding principles for MRE

In addition, the IMAS on MRE lays down eight guiding principles for MRE projects and programmes:

- ◆ That all stakeholders should be involved throughout the programme or project;
- ◆ That coordination requirements should be respected;
- ◆ That projects and programmes should be integrated;
- ◆ That communities should be empowered to be active participants in mine risk education;
- ◆ That good information management and exchange should be at the centre of projects and programmes;
- ◆ That projects and programmes should ensure effective targeting of those most at-risk in the community;

- ♦ That they should use appropriate educational tools and methods; and
  - ♦ That appropriate training should be provided throughout the programme.
- These are now considered in turn in more detail.

### **5.2.1 Stakeholder involvement**

Mine-affected communities are the primary stakeholders in mine action and must be acknowledged as such. Other stakeholders are mine action organisations, governments and public institutions, aid agencies and community groups.

Stakeholder participation is necessary at each stage of the project cycle, to ensure that:

- a) The needs of mine-affected communities and groups are addressed;
- b) National and local economic and development priorities are taken into account; and
- c) Mine action supports and enables humanitarian and development activities.

### **5.2.2 Coordination**

MRE should be well coordinated, both between and within projects. Effective coordination enables consistency of pedagogical content, optimises the use of resources, and minimises any duplication of effort.

### **5.2.3 Integration**

MRE activities should be fully integrated with other mine action, relief and development activities.

### **5.2.4 Community participation and empowerment**

The primary stakeholders in MRE are the members of the affected communities. Accordingly, the goal of empowering communities through their active participation should shape MRE projects throughout the project cycle.

### **5.2.5 Information management**

The effective management of MRE projects requires accurate, appropriate and timely information.<sup>1</sup> There are many sources of information at local, national and international level and the resulting collated information is needed by a wide range of individuals involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of MRE projects.

National mine action authorities and MRE organisations should establish and maintain effective management information systems. The UN's preferred system for the management of mine action information, the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) has been developed to provide the facility to collect, collate and distribute relevant information at field and headquarters levels in a timely manner. IMSMA is available to all mine action programmes.

### **5.2.6 *Appropriate targeting***

MRE programmes and projects should be context specific and respect the different needs and priorities and the different local cultural values and norms of the affected communities.

### **5.2.7 *Education***

The development of appropriate and effective educational methodologies with appropriate content is an essential part of any MRE project throughout its cycle.

### **5.2.8 *Training***

A major management responsibility of the MRE organisation during the planning and preparation phase is the recruiting and training of staff. This responsibility continues throughout the implementation phase, in particular if responsibilities are transferred from international to national staff.

## **Endnote**

<sup>1</sup> Guidance on information needs, information management and the application of information systems to mine action programmes, including MRE projects, is given in IMAS 05.10.



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## 6. National coordination of mine risk education

Coordination is of course a major concern in MRE, as it is in any relief or development programme. This issue is addressed in detail in *Best Practice Guidebook 10* of this Series.

### 6.1 The role of the national mine action authority

The setting of mine action policy and strategy, including for MRE, is the task of the NMAA, if one exists. The NMAA, which is typically an interministerial body, is responsible for adopting national standards for all mine action.

The NMAA will also be responsible for accreditation of MRE organisations. There are two types of accreditation: organisational accreditation and operational accreditation. These are discussed briefly in Section 6.1.1. They are also reviewed in detail in *Best Practice Guidebook 10*.

#### 6.1.1 Accreditation of MRE operators

**Organisational** accreditation is the procedure by which a MRE organisation is formally recognised as competent and able to plan and manage MRE activities safely, effectively and efficiently. Accreditation will be given to the in-country headquarters of an organisation for a finite duration.

**Operational** accreditation is the procedure by which a MRE organisation is formally recognised as competent and able to carry out specific MRE activities. The organisation will receive accreditation for each operational capability required to carry out a particular activity such as community mine action liaison or public information dissemination. The awarding of operational accreditation assumes that the capability will not change beyond the original scope or intention for which it was accredited.

## 6.2 The role of the mine action centre

Operational coordination is the task of the national MAC and any regional offices. This includes responsibility for the following, which will directly or indirectly affect MRE projects and the MRE programme as a whole:

- ◆ Information management;
- ◆ Priority setting and task selection;
- ◆ Overseeing the implementation of national mine action standards;
- ◆ Adopting, if desired, a national curriculum for MRE messages;<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Accreditation of MRE operators;
- ◆ Monitoring of MRE activities;
- ◆ Resource mobilisation for mine action; and
- ◆ Oversight – at least, if not the direct provision – of training and capacity development in MRE and other mine action.

The MAC may also provide landmine and ERW safety briefings for programme and project staff working in a mine-affected country or region.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> As part of the MAC's responsibilities, it may be useful to draw together a set of common curriculum points for programmes and projects. These can add value to quality assurance and help to ensure the maintenance and implementation of effective national standards.

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## 7. Concluding remarks

In conclusion to this Guidebook, MRE projects and programmes need to be well-targeted, integrated, innovative, and flexible. Good MRE exploits opportunities in the media to get its messages across, while supporting communities in their efforts to manage the risks that mines and ERW inflict upon them.

Good MRE adapts to changing circumstances, while continuing to reach the people that need information and support. It addresses the risk-taking behaviour prevalent in the communities while effectively supporting broader mine action, and relief and development activities.

In short, we need to make sure we're not only doing a *good* job, we're also doing the *right* job. This is what complying with the IMAS is really all about.





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