

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MINE RISK EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

Man-made emergencies arising from war and political unrest exact a heavy toll on Ethiopia. There is extensive landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination in the country as a result of the 1998-2000 war with Eritrea, as well as border disputes with Somalia and Sudan, dating back to the 1930s. Many of the mines and minefields are near populated areas and inflict casualties on both people and livestock. Mines pose dangers to the resident population, internally displaced persons, and humanitarian relief efforts.

During this last conflict with Eritrea, 1998-2000, a total of 315,936 persons were displaced in the Tigray region, and 33,000 in the Afar region, and it is estimated that as many as one million landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present along the 1,000 kilometres of border extending from Humera to Bure.

Norwegian People's Aid is presently conducting a Landmine Impact Survey for the Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO). The results of which are due in March 2004. Preliminary results are showing that the Somali region is severely impacted by the presence of mines. Handicap International worked up to 2001, with refugees in the Somali region however did not work with the local populace.

UNICEF EMERGENCY RESPONSE

To address the landmine problem, UNICEF has been supporting Mine Risk Education activities in Tigray since 1999. Implementation is carried out through an indigenous NGO, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (RaDO) and in close co-operation with regional and community-level counterparts.

The same project structure is now established and operating in Afar region. It was also facilitated by UNICEF through RaDO and commenced in August 2001.

In addition, UNICEF is working towards building the capacity of the Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO) and is presently working with EMAO to address their shortfalls in training. EMAO field staff has received training from the UNICEF project Officer in basic MRE and community liaison and are now deployed to the field to work alongside the mine clearance teams. Community Liaison is a vital link of communication between the

community and the mine clearance team. Other training needs will be addressed in the New Year.

Due to the return of people to the Zalanbesa region and the commencement of reconstruction of building in this war torn town, EMAO mine clearance teams have completed battle area clearance (surface area clearance) of the town. EMAO and RaDO have also increased their dissemination of MRE to the building contractors and community in the Zalanbesa area to be aware of possibility of suspicious objects (mines/UXO) been found when digging and building.

DONOR RESPONSE

MRE project in Ethiopia remains entirely dependent on supplementary funding and is not supported by the regular long term UNICEF budget neither included in the Joint Humanitarian Appeal. For the implementation of the MRE project \$US 627,924 was available from OR in 2003. The donations were received from the United States Department of State, Governments of Italy, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Netherlands, French and United Kingdom National Committees for UNICEF, and United Nations Voluntary Fund.

CONSTRAINTS

The major constraints encountered during the implementation of the MRE project and still facing the project are (i) lack of funding available for support costs; (ii) transportation for the Community Liaison Officers as the area they are expected to cover is a vast and difficult terrain and (iii) no funding available for implementation of MRE in Somali Region.

THE WAY FORWARD

The MRE project plans are to continue implementing the phase out strategy (handing over of the RaDO MRE project to the regional governments) and to continue to build the capacity of the EMAO department through the implementation of the work plan developed by UNICEF and EMAO. UNICEF is in 2004, planning to conduct external evaluation of the RaDO handover process and to complete MRE feasibility study and needs assessment of the Somali region to look at the possibility of undertaking MRE activities in the mine-affected areas of this region.