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ERITREAN ADMINISTRATIVE ZONES (ZOBAS)
(zones shown without islands)
BACKGROUND

Eritrea is the second youngest sovereign state in Africa (after South Sudan), having achieved formal independence in 1993. It is divided into six zobas, or administrative zones, as shown in the figure on the previous page. Although no recent census data are available, the country’s population is estimated at 3.6 million as of 2005, with an annual population growth rate of 2.7%. Two-thirds of the Eritrean population lives in rural and semi-rural areas, and agriculture and pastoralism are the main sources of livelihood for 80% of the population. Eritrea suffers from periodic droughts, resulting in food shortages that impact an estimated two-thirds of the population, according to the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, prepared by the Government of Eritrea in 2004. These food shortages are made worse by the fact that large areas of agricultural and grazing land are unsafe to use due to the presence of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

Eritrea’s landmine problem can be traced back to the Second World War and continued to worsen over the course of a 30-year independence struggle and the 1998-2000 border war with Ethiopia. All three conflicts left several areas of the country affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war. To this day, landmine explosions continue to result in casualties, despite the efforts of the Government of Eritrea, with the assistance of the international community, to mitigate the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war on the Eritrean population. According to Eritrea’s Millennium Development Goals Report of 2005, the state of “no peace, no war” with Ethiopia, which interferes with demining activities, is one of the main factors adversely impacting the overall economic and humanitarian situation in the country.

The following map illustrates the distribution of landmine-impacted communities throughout the country.

The Government of Eritrea, with the generous support of international organizations, currently co-ordinates a number of mine action initiatives aimed at minimizing the casualties caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war.
Many of these initiatives are aimed at protecting children, who account for a large number of landmine casualties due to their youth and inexperience, by educating them on the dangers of landmines and the importance of safety practices.

The following sections contain descriptions of several of the Government of Eritrea’s mine action initiatives, with accompanying photographs. The aim of this document is to provide information and create awareness for the donor community as well as government partners. In addition, this document will create an understanding of MRE in the Eritrean context.
EXAMPLES OF LANDMINES ENCOUNTERED IN ERITREA

UNMACC, Shilalo, Eritrea 2005. MRE Briefing for UNMEE (United Nation Mission between Eritrea & Ethiopia)
EXAMPLES OF LANDMINES ENCOUNTERED IN ERITREA

Since mine laying in Eritrea took place over an extended period of time, Eritreans are threatened by a wide variety of mines and explosive remnants of war. The following photographs provide examples of some of the landmines and explosive remnants of war encountered in Eritrea.

The following photograph shows a set of example mines used for mine risk education activities. It is designed to reflect the range of mine types that one might encounter in Eritrea, although it clearly cannot provide examples of all mine varieties.
Negasi Gebremeskel, EDA(Eritrean Demining Authority) Asmara, 2010. ToT Training for Ministry of Education School Teachers
ERITREAN DEMINING AUTHORITY

The Eritrean Demining Authority co-ordinates all mine action efforts in Eritrea, and oversees actions by both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations. With support from the United Nations Children’s Fund since 2001, the Authority has expanded mine awareness initiatives throughout the country through the Mine Risk Education Project. The Project is one such initiative that involves 10 community-based teams and 100 community-based volunteers. The Eritrean Demining Authority also works with the Ministry of Education to organise school-based interventions and the Ministry of Information, which utilises its broadcasting capabilities to disseminate mine risk educational messages through the mass media. The Eritrean Demining Authority works with zoba and sub-zoba administrators, who act as important facilitators in the process of delivering mine risk education and mine action resources to war-affected communities.

Demining Activities
While the complete removal of all landmines and explosive remnants of war would be the ideal way forward, the magnitude of the problem and the lack of sufficient resources means that this will take many years. Nevertheless, the Government of Eritrea and its’ development partners, through the Eritrean Demining Authority, are making progress. Actions including the identification of mined areas using identification equipment and sniffer dogs, demarcating mined areas and fencing as possible, public education, and protocols for demining during construction projects.
Mine Presence Indicators

The clear marking of hazardous areas with mine presence indicators helps to avoid mine-related casualties. These mine presence indicators generally take the form of configurations of rocks or painted signs with skull and crossbones imagery. Until demining activities can completely remove the threat of landmines, these presence indicators are an important measure to minimise the damage done by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The following photographs are examples of mine presence indicators.

Meseret Habte, UNMACC Gash Barka, Eritrea 2004. Putting up Warning Signs for Mines & ERW’s. The red part of the stone indicates the unsafe part of the road, while the white direction on the stone indicates the safe road or demined barricade.
TRAINING

The Ministry of Education provides mine risk education training to schoolteachers and other social workers. Training takes place in a group setting, as illustrated in the following pictures, and is often referred to as training of trainers. This is because, after receiving instructional training, these mine risk education focal persons are expected to train community members at the school and village level on mine safety.

The photographs document training activities in which groups as diverse as the National Union of Eritrean Women, Asmara police, and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students receive important information on landmines and safety practices.
TRAINING
MINE RISK EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS
Mine Risk Education in Schools

The Mine Risk Education Project aims to reduce causalities associated with landmines and explosive remnants of war. The focus is on high-risk communities throughout the country, including the border area between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Project seeks to achieve the aim of causality reduction through a comprehensive, well-integrated and multi-faceted educational approach. This targets Eritreans both in schools – through the formal inclusion of mine risk education as a part of the curriculum – and in their communities, educating them on the dangers of landmines. The following photographs show the programme in action in Eritrean schools.
2010 UNICEF, Eritrean Demining Authority, Ministry of Education, and Italian Cooperation joint field trip to Zoba Debub. Launching of School Bell Project
SCHOOL BELL SUBSTITUTION

Because communities throughout Eritrea often lack the resources to provide bells for their schools and camps, some have taken to crafting makeshift bells out of whatever metals they have at hand. This has resulted in the use of explosive remnants of war as bells in schools and camps where many children are present, sometimes with tragic consequences. For example, at Shilalo Elementary School in Zoba Gash Barka, the school was using an explosive remnant as a school bell. After use for some time, the bell was used and exploded, killing a teacher and a student, and injuring a second student.

To reduce the risk of such practices, the Eritrean Demining Authority and Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF, provided bells to schools and internally displaced persons camps in Zoba Debub, an administrative region of Eritrea that borders Ethiopia.
Mine risk education is also delivered through village assemblies to ensure coverage of all community members. This includes children and other community members who do not receive mine risk education through the school system.

Community members are shown signs that indicate the presence of landmines, what actions to take upon encountering such indicators, and general safety practices relating to landmines.

The following photographs document such mine risk education activities in villages throughout Eritrea.
MINE RISK EDUCATION IN VILLAGES

Meseret Habte UNMACC, Zoba Debub 2006. MRE for School Children
2007 EDA Mine Awareness Day, Asmara, Eritrea
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION

As one would expect, from a country as severely affected by landmines as Eritrea, the country observes the United Nations’ International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action every year on the fourth of April. The following photographs document some of the demonstrations, assemblies, and educational activities that commonly take place on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.
ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

EDA Zoba Debub 2007. Mine Awareness Day
ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES
Among the various activities that take place during the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action are demonstrations by the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, which illustrates the impact of mine casualties in an interactive and compelling way.

The photographs to the left depict one such demonstration, in which members act out the consequences of tampering with landmines in order to stress the importance of following the safety procedures put forth during mine risk education activities.

Mine Risk Education Board Games
Educational board games are also among the activities that community members take part in during the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The following photographs show Eritrean children playing one such board game and learning important mine safety facts.

Michael Gezai UNMACC, Haiqota, Eritrea 2005. MRE Board Game Activity
FIELD VISITS

CRC Zoba Anseba, 2010. MRE Field Trip
FIELD VISITS

Government officials and administrators make field visits to communities throughout Eritrea, allowing them to gain a better understanding of the country’s situation in terms of mine action and awareness. The following photographs were taken during visits to villages and internally displaced persons camps.

Joint field visits with international organizations are another way in which the Government of Eritrea promotes understanding and co-operation in addressing the issue of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. By conducting field visits, international organizations are able to witness firsthand the nature and extent of the problem posed by landmines, as well as to formulate strategies to improve the safety of Eritreans in co-ordination with the Government of Eritrea. The following photographs document one such field visit conducted by UNICEF, Cooperazione Italiana allo Sviluppo (an Italian aid agency), the Eritrean Demining Authority, and the Ministry of Education in Zoba Debub.

EDA Zoba Debub, 2010. MRE for School Children

Tedla Ghebrehiwet UNICEF Zoba Anseba, 2010. MRE Field Trip