

Statement by the ICBL Mine Risk Education Sub-Working Group
Sixth Meeting of States Parties
Zagreb, 30 November 2005

At the beginning of this week, Jody Williams wondered whether it was useful to come to yet another meeting. When you worked in the field for some time, this is a question that you keep asking yourself. What is this week's meeting going to achieve? What added value is it going to bring to communities that – while I speak - are struggling to cope with landmines, cluster bombs and other unexploded ordnance?

If you look at the *Landmine Monitor Report 2005*, you are going to find a few answers to these questions. I am going to look briefly at progress and challenges in mine risk education (or MRE). As you know, the Nairobi Action Plan (in particular Action #20) describes MRE, together with clearance and marking, as a part of the process aimed at reducing the risks to populations. In addition, the Action Plan (Action #21) calls for MRE to be integrated "into education systems and broader relief and development activities."

In a number of key mine-affected countries, MRE has continued to evolve from the dissemination of mass-media messages toward a process that is mainly community-based and that seeks to develop tailor-made solutions for individual mine-impacted communities. This is particularly the case in 2 States Parties: Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cambodia, as well as in one non-signatory: Sri Lanka.

Globally, the total number of direct recipients of MRE dropped from 8.4 million in 2003 to 6.2 million in 2004, but MRE operators increasingly stress that the number of people "reached" is less important than the quality and impact of MRE.

In 2004 and 2005, an increasing number of MRE programs have established links with survey, marking and clearance, and worked within the framework of the official school curricula. By doing so, we believe that both the effectiveness and a certain degree of sustainability of MRE programs were achieved. But more efforts are needed.

A particularly encouraging development has been the increased promotion of MRE through schools: during this reporting period, *new* programs training large numbers of teachers and/or the integration of MRE into school curricula were recorded in 10 countries, including 8 States Parties: Albania, Angola, Chad, DR Congo, Jordan, Mauritania, Tajikistan and Thailand; as well as 2 non-signatories: Azerbaijan and Iraq. In addition, existing programs continued in another 14 countries.

Landmine Monitor recorded evaluations and surveys about Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices (known as KAP surveys) in 6 countries, including 4 States Parties: Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia and Ethiopia; as well as 2 non-signatories: Laos and Sri Lanka. This is a decrease in comparison to last year's report where evaluations and KAP surveys were recorded in 10 countries.

In conclusion, we can say that there are at least three challenges ahead for MRE: a first challenge is the development of a closer integration with other mine action activities in countries where MRE is still a stand-alone activity. A second challenge relates to better measuring the impact of MRE. Last but not least, a third challenge for MRE practitioners is how to respond to the deliberate handling of landmines and other UXO by individuals that poverty leads to take risks in support of their livelihoods.

Thank you.