

RE statement

In 2007, Landmine Monitor recorded risk education (RE) activities in 61 countries, a slight decrease from 63 in 2006. Forty two were States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty and 19 were not. RE activities also took place in six areas not internationally recognised as states. In 2008, Landmine Monitor has adopted the term 'risk education', and no longer uses the term 'mine risk education' as it implies that explosive remnants of war are excluded, which frequently should be the focus of RE programs.

Landmine Monitor found that in only 23 countries and four areas was RE "adequate", meaning that the programs were capable of providing appropriate RE for at-risk groups in known mine/ERW affected localities and were able to respond to emergency situations. However, in the majority of states, 38, as well as two areas RE was found to be "inadequate", meaning that appropriate RE was not sufficient to match the scale of the threat or did not have the geographic coverage necessary.

Where RE works well, methodologies have been adapted to better fit the needs of at-risk communities. This means going beyond the dissemination of simple awareness messages, with heavy dependence on print media (which are one of least effective ways of effecting behaviour change), to the engagement of communities in the development of risk reduction strategies, and more accurately targeting the needs of at risk groups to address behaviour change. Examples include Angola, where a 'solution based methodology' is being implemented, whereby close liaison between NGOs and communities helps to develop strategies to cope with the presence of mines and UXO. Effective community liaison provides an exchange of information with clearance operators on the mine/ERW threat and the needs of survivors, their families and communities, as well as advocacy on their behalf. In Lao PDR a shift was made from the information and education model to a more focused communication approach. An example of this is a MAG project working with scrap metal collectors and dealers to manage risk.

However, not all programs are being conducted to the standards expected today, and lessons are being relearned again and again. Donors often fund RE programs implemented by both NGOs and commercial companies without ensuring that they possess the appropriate expertise and knowledge. All too often, RE good practices are failing to be applied to both new programs and long-established programs. These include: assessment of needs based on good data collection, targeting messages not only to the at-risk group but to those who can positively influence behaviour, developing appropriate communication tools and methodologies, and monitoring and evaluation. To help address this, in 2008 an international MRE Advisory Group was established to provide advice and guidance to different mine action operators and stakeholders. The International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) for RE are currently under revision, and new resources for RE managers and practitioners have been produced, including a UNICEF emergency MRE guide and training materials to accompany the best practice guides to the IMAS.

Landmine Monitor reported in 2008 that although individual RE projects and programs have been evaluated, no agency or operator has yet sought to conduct a broader assessment of the effectiveness of RE. Although measuring the impact of risk reduction and behaviour change programs is extremely difficult, a greater effort must be made to evaluate the effectiveness of the sector. The absence of good quality data to provide an understanding of the need for risk education

and to measure its effectiveness was highlighted by ICBL last year at the ISC and, regrettably, little progress can be reported this year.

However, although impact assessment has been lacking in the sector, donors should still be aware that in many countries there is some evidence that RE plays an important role in reducing risk and it should be part of an integrated mine action strategy.

For RE to be most effective, the following should be a priority:

- Wide dissemination to the field of best practice resources. Development of RE national standards.
- Efforts to develop capacity should be enhanced at three levels: implementation level, operator management level and coordination level.
- Improvement in data collection and management both to understand the needs for RE and to measure its effectiveness
- Develop realistic and meaningful indicators at a national level so that effectiveness and impact can be assessed directly or indirectly
- Funding of programs and projects that seek out and employ best practices, to effect behaviour change and reduce risk
- Priority should be given to supporting countries where RE is inadequate and risk factors are high