

Intersessional Meetings of Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Side Event: Upholding the Oslo Action Plan in Times of COVID-19 – A Discussion on Risk Education

Wednesday, 1 July 2020, at 13:00-14:45 (GMT +2) live in Virtual Format

SUMMARY

a. Background

Last November (2019), States Parties committed to investing in effective risk education as a primary means of protecting communities from the threat of explosive ordnance ([actions 28-32 in the Oslo Action Plan](#) – OAP). This Side Event provided an open forum for national authorities and partners *to share their experiences and challenges implementing their risk education programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also ensuring do no harm.*

This **Side Event** was co-organised by [Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group](#) (EORE AG) and [ASEAN¹ Regional Mine Action Center](#) (ARMAC), during the **Intersessional Meetings of Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC)**, which were held in virtual format from 30 June to 1 July 2020. It was attended by 75 participants including States Parties of the APMBC, States not Party and other observers of the Intersessional Meetings, representing 25 countries and 34 authorities/organisations in total.

This event built on global lessons learned through recent COVID-19-focused webinars organised by the EORE AG ([in April](#)), ARMAC ([in May](#)) and Mine Action and Child Protection Areas of Responsibility together with the Global Education and Protection Clusters ([in June](#)).

b. Remarks and Presentations

The side event featured remarks and presentations² from five speakers:

1. **Ms. Dwi Prameswari**, Senior Officer (ARMAC), introduced the Side Event and provided an overview of the array of consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on EORE programmes globally and, in particular, in the ASEAN region. She also reminded participants of the six main actions related to risk education in the OAP, which States Parties have committed to uphold.
2. **Flt. Lt. Chotiboon Anukulvanich**, Interpreter/Coordinator of Special Affairs Division, Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC), detailed TMAC's experience of drawing on a longstanding, nationwide network of Village Health Volunteers (VHV) to ensure continued risk education in at-risk areas without imposing additional burdens. This especially ties in with action #28 in the OAP to integrate mine risk education activities with wider humanitarian, development, protection and education efforts.
3. **Mr. Khaled Gebreil Alwadawi**, Head of Mine Risk Education Department, Libyan Mine Action Centre (LIBMAC), described efforts made by LibMAC and partners to deliver EORE during the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the development of posters and stickers with combined COVID-19 and EORE key messages and the scaling up of remote EORE delivery modalities like social media, radio, TV and billboards. The dual challenge of dealing with both COVID-19 and sustained conflict was also mentioned.
4. **Mr. Dara Seng**, Deputy Director of Public Relation Department, Cambodia Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), highlighted CMAA's work to encourage all risk education operators to integrate COVID-19 messages in EORE sessions and to train risk education staff on COVID-19 safety procedures and protocols.
5. **Mr. Hugues Laurence**, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF and Co-Chair of the EORE AG, outlined three main scenarios that EORE practitioners are facing: safely maintaining EORE,

¹ ASEAN stands for **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**

² Handout of all presentations, as well as video of the side event, will be uploaded and shared publicly

integrating EORE and COVID-19 RE, and in some cases replacing EORE with COVID-19 RE. He then described several tools available to support partners in these efforts, including an international [community of practice](#) with over 400 members, the aforementioned previous webinars, an [EORE/COVID-19 Resource Library](#) and a 15-page [guidance](#) in the form of questions and answers from the EORE AG.

c. Q&A

Questions raised during the side event via chat box with responses were identified, as follows:

1. When will the evaluation that CMAA has commissioned be complete? And can the evaluation be shared?

The MRE evaluation report will be completed by the end of 2020 and will be shared publicly.

2. When will the study conducted by Geneva International Centre on Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) on remote EORE delivery and monitoring be released?

As per the EORE AG workplan, the GICHD is currently finalising a review of new technologies and methodologies for EORE in challenging contexts. The study looks at existing and promising practices from the sector and beyond to address challenges related to the delivery of risk education for IEDs, in urban complex environments and in hard to reach areas. The final review is expected to be published in August and will be shared at that time.

d. Breakout Discussion

Further knowledge sharing was stimulated through breakout groups and plenary discussions. Key discussions from the side event are highlighted as follows:

1. MAG South Sudan's EORE operations are suspended due to COVID-19, and EORE is delivered through **radio broadcast**. EORE and COVID-19 risk education have not been integrated in South Sudan; however, the South Sudan Mine Action Authority is planning to allow operators to deliver EORE with social distancing (up to 6 people per session).
2. ICRC Myanmar presented their broad approach towards integrating EORE into mine action in general. Meanwhile, TMAC highlighted targeted approaches towards EORE.
3. Over the last couple years, Iraq has been slowly entering recovery stage. HI mentioned that the integration of EORE and risk management in Iraq is conducted through focal points and community safety networks (informal groups of 5-7 people to develop safety plan). The integration of EORE and mine clearance supports in short-term non-technical survey (NTS) format. **Media campaigns** are conducted and translated in three languages in Iraq. In the context of the pandemic, safety measures have been included in SOPs and disseminated to the community through WhatsApp – with support from local authorities. The SOPs will be verified by UNMAS and the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action (DMA).
4. Prior to the pandemic, MAG Iraq implemented a **Facebook EORE Pilot** as an innovative way of complementing existing EORE with consideration for reaching communities that are inaccessible due to cultural, financial, geographical or other restrictions. Based on assessment and evaluation, engagement among youth was significant, and they benefitted from the project significantly. In accordance to OAP #28, integration of EORE with wider efforts are done with other NGOs working in the development sector, e.g. risk education is provided to reconstructed areas, and integration with victim assistance is also made.
5. **On information gathering and reporting:** MAG Iraq is conducting an ongoing rapid risk assessment (exposure to EO in current situation) specially for returnees, in addition to MAG **reporting hotlines** that have been maintained. Interesting here is that MAG maintained phone contact with local leaders, authorities, key informants and CFPs, and is planning a whole **new strategy to activate the role of CFPs** in disseminating EORE key messages even in the absence of MAG.
6. Other EORE activities implemented in Iraq include SMS campaign, vehicles with loudspeaker (yet to be confirmed by NAMA), distribution of posters to health centres/gas cylinder trucks, and **UNHCR Help Platform** (Key safety messages and reporting information to be included on online information platform for refugees in Iraq, we still need approval for this from NAMA).

7. ICRC is using **online platforms** (e.g. WhatsApp, TikTok, etc) in the Middle East region in face of the current situation.
8. The GICHD, as part of the EORE AG annual workplan and in response to a need identified by the sector, has developed a concept note for an introductory e-learning course on EORE Essentials. The proposed course would draw on the GICHD's experience designing the Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in Mine Action e-learning and would support remote capacity development on EORE.
9. Some adjustments have been made to EORE delivery in countries such as Myanmar, Iraq, and Viet Nam. Moreover, there are also innovative tools and approaches that were developed and implemented before COVID-19 yet have high applicability, such as **EORE interactive games** (developed by CRS Viet Nam, the presentation is available [here](#) – folder 4) used for parents and children and integrated with home/school education particularly during this crisis. It is important for the stakeholders to also refer to **Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)**, as a set of tools beyond EORE, to measure impacts/effects of EORE activity, particularly in emergency context, e.g. COVID-19.
10. One participant collaborating with organizations such as DFID and ICRC raised a point on 'forced change'. The pandemic 'forced' us to change our modus operandi, i.e. invest more on digital approaches or traditional media (radio/TV), provide real time M&E, integrate EORE with other sectors (RCCE, health, WASH, etc.). Will this change continue in the long term?
11. Based on UNMAS Humanitarian Action Plan Meeting with Global Protection and Education Clusters – which was working together on integration of EORE, in the case of Somalia, EORE is context specific (OAP #29), not only **targeting those who are most at-risk**. In term of prioritisation, there are various challenges/barriers to reach those at-risk. Community **focal points** have helped in linking operators with communities (in term of capacity building), although face-to-face interactions have necessarily had to be limited during the pandemic.
12. Identifying that it could be very useful to build capacity of development partners (outside mine action sectors) to deliver EORE and COVID-19 risk education in the near future. Currently, TMAC has worked with Village Health Volunteers (VHV), and this can be good for communities of practice (to engage with partners and enable them in short frameworks).
13. In the case of Nigeria, remote and online work in regard of EORE deliveries have been conducted a lot more in the form of a learning programme.
14. UNICEF (Ukraine) shared the integration of EORE with education through an **"edutainment"** approach taken in the **"Superheroes Against Mines"** campaign that targets teens in an engaging way. The campaign has digital components in addition to face-to-face. Thus, parts of the programme are able to continue in spite of current face-to-face restrictions.
15. In Ukraine, EORE in the time of COVID-19 is also delivered through producing a **"mythbusters"** series regarding EO that has recorded over two million views. This is done through partnership with video bloggers in the non-government-controlled areas.
16. UNICEF and HALO are working together to create a **"virtual reality"** programme targeted at children.
17. ICRC Colombia shared the use of WhatsApp as a way of delivering non-face-to-face messaging related to COVID-19.
18. HALO in Afghanistan, Libya, and Yemen programmes have all overtly expressed an interest to improve their EORE messaging and delivery; collaboration opportunities are deemed possible.
19. DFID highlighted – in relation to OAP #29 on context specific EORE – (i) the need of the EORE sector to further adopt **Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC)** approaches, as applied for instance by UNMAS in Afghanistan; (ii) the importance of findings ways to measure behaviour change, beyond outreach and knowledge; and (iii) a great interest in resources related to RCCE. Two planned reviews by the GICHD on behalf of the EORE AG on new technologies and methodologies for EORE in challenging contexts and on EORE impact assessment will help to address the first and second points, respectively. In terms of RCCE, UNICEF introduced a full package on indicators and metrics released in June, applicable to EORE and available [here](#) (folder 9).

20. In Libya, Free Field Foundation has an **EO hotline** that saw a spike of calls (over 700) in the first few weeks after they launched a massive joint EORE/COVID-19 Risk Education campaign. The correlation between the new intense campaign and the spike of calls reveals how a campaign can lead to behavior change including behavior that lead to the safe removal of EO. This type of correlation can and should be monitored and analysed. Meanwhile, Cambodia, in a context of crisis, emphasised the importance of using a good theory of change and prioritisation mechanisms in its response.
21. OAP is a roadmap which can be beneficial not only for States Parties, but also States not Party and other partners. Promoting and implementing these measurable action points will support in the achievement of 2025 goal. In the forthcoming 5-year Lausanne Action Plan (LAP) on Cluster Munitions, risk education will probably have also for the first time a dedicated section and action points.
22. It was suggested a similar meeting be conducted on monthly basis to see how other countries are coping with challenges and whether the measures are applicable for local realities and contexts. Such meetings could include breakout groups to discuss more concrete topics like evaluation of results from EORE activities.

e. References

The followings are key references that may be useful:

- o Oslo Action Plan (as adopted at the final plenary meeting on 29 November 2019) <https://www.osloreviewconference.org/fileadmin/APMBC-RC4/Fourth-Review-Conference/Oslo-action-plan-en.pdf>
- o International Mine Risk Education Working Group <https://dgroups.org/groups/imrewg>
- o [EORE/COVID-19 Resource Library](#) (available [here](#))
- o The Q&A from EORE AG's Webinar on 1 April 2020 (available [here](#))
- o Key Discussion from ARMAC's Webinar on 19 May 2020 (available [here](#))
- o Webinar organised by Mine Action and Child Protection Areas of Responsibility together with the Global Education and Protection Clusters' on 11 June 2020 (presentation – available [here](#), and recording – available [here](#)).
- o Mines Advisory Group, (2020) Humanitarian Mine Action and COVID-19: An Operational Feasibility Study (available [here](#))
- o Report of Internet-based Rapid Assessment of Social Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on PwDs and UXO Survivors <https://bit.ly/COVID19impactPwDs>
- o ASEAN Regional Mine Action (ARMAC) (2020) Integrated Approaches to EORE in ASEAN Member States <https://aseanmineaction.org/resources/publications/>
- o WHO, (2020) Considerations for public health and social measures in the workplace in the context of COVID-19, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>