What your audience needs to know in an emergency: Life-saving information

Topic-by-topic guide to core humanitarian issues

BBC MEDIA ACTION

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH MEDIA
AROUND THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

These guides are for media professionals working to help audiences affected by humanitarian crises. They give a brief overview of common humanitarian issues in emergencies. They will help you:

- Understand what kinds of problems your audiences are likely to be facing in emergencies

- Work alongside relief experts to provide audiences with accurate, relevant and life-saving information

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDES

These guides contain information on core humanitarian topics. They are intended to serve as a starting point to help you identify the kinds of issues to address in your programmes and questions to ask relief experts. To help you identify which topics to prioritise, you should speak with local humanitarian specialists. If possible, speak with your audiences as well to find out what they need to know.

When using the guides remember to:

- Consider the local situation, culture and context to make sure the information is relevant

- Consider the specific needs of different audiences (for example, men, women, the most vulnerable people)

- Check for consistency with other sources of information being provided

- Consult qualified local specialists to check the validity and relevance of humanitarian information

- Use the guides in conjunction with BBC Media Action's Lifeline Production Manual, which contains guidelines on how to do effective programming in crises

GETTY

MINE ACTION

MINE ACTION

What is mine action?[1]

Mine action addresses problems of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), which includes unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO). Mine action works on five key areas: clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) includes bombs, mortars, grenades, missiles or other devices that fail to detonate as designed but remain dangerous.

Abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) includes ammunition that has been stored, hidden or left behind by a party to an armed conflict.

Why is it important?

Landmines and ERW can cause injury or death. It can be very difficult for people to avoid landmines and ERW, especially when emergency situations force people to leave their homes and move into, or through unknown areas where they are more vulnerable to dangerous areas. Landmines and ERW can also stop people accessing their land and sources of income.

GETTY

[1]Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (2014,p. 14);
United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

How can media and communication help?

Knowing the risks of landmines and ERW can help people avoid injury and death. You can help people identify landmines and ERW and learn how to stay out of harm's way. You can share information about the risks in the local area, how to recognise them and ways to stay safe around them.

Remember each emergency is different. Ask local humanitarian mine action experts to advise on what information to prioritise and the best advice to share with your audience in the local context.

GETTY

What information can I share with audiences?

Your audiences may need answers to the following questions to help them take practical steps to stay safe. Get advice from local humanitarian mine action specialists. Remember that there are different groups in the community with different needs. Find out which groups in the community are the most vulnerable (for example, children, pregnant women, elderly people etc.) and what advice to give them.

Pre-test your communication with audiences – misunderstood information can kill.

What information can I share with audiences?

What are the risks from landmines and ERW?

Landmines and ERW can seriously injure or kill. Those who are injured risk being excluded from the community and could need ongoing specialist support.

What can people do to stay safe from those risks?

What are the local risks of landmines and ERW in their area?

- Where are the affected areas? *Note:* in some ongoing conflicts, information on location of mines can be considered highly sensitive military information, so check with humanitarian specialists about exactly what information is safe for you to divulge

- What types of devices are present? What do they look like, and how can people recognise different types? (Such as anti-tank mines, cluster bombs, grenades etc.). Avoid giving your audience technical specifications but give enough information so they are aware of the different types they may find locally

What are the local warning signs?

- How do demining agencies mark dangerous areas? For example with a skull and crossbones sign in red and white, the word "MINE" or "EXPLOSIVES" written in English and/or the local language, rope/tape coloured yellow, red or blue[2]

- How do local communities mark dangerous areas? For example with small piles or circles of rocks, rocks laid across the path, a clump of grass that has been tied in the middle[3]

- Are there other clues that there might be landmines or ERW in an area? For example, are there any signs of fighting, dead animals or unusual objects?[4]

> ### Example information if there are landmines in the area.
>
> There may be landmines near you. These are explosive devices that can kill or severely hurt you. Normally you cannot see them because they are often hidden underground, so you have to take care. Following a few simple rules can save your life.
>
> Stay on a well-used path. Stay away from overgrown areas, military bases and equipment. Report any mines you see to a responsible person or authority.

How can people stay safe in areas with landmines and/or ERW?

- What should people do if they are in an area with landmines or ERW? Give audiences some simple guidelines on how to stay safe (for example, stay on well-used paths, do not pick up suspicious objects)

- What should people do if they find a landmine or ERW? Give audiences simple instructions such as stop, stand still and shout for help

Which groups in the community are most affected and why?

Children are often the most vulnerable. They can pick up landmines and ERW without knowing the danger, either through curiosity or being unable to recognise or read the warning signs. Find out from local experts where the landmines/ERW are. Are they in areas that the community use? For example, people may have to use landmine areas to gather resources (such as water, firewood, scrap metal). If yes, where are the alternative, safe places they can gather resources?

Where can people get help?

- Who are the local demining organisations/ authorities? Suspected landmines or ERW should be reported to them

- Who can provide support so communities can avoid using dangerous areas? For example, organisations that can help support communities with alternative livelihoods or water/firewood sources

- How can they contact support groups? Do people have means to contact them? (For example, phones, credit etc.)

> ### Example information if there are unexploded devices like bombs.
>
> Unexploded bombs may be lying in the fields around your homes. You may not recognise them as dangerous, some of them look like children's toys! Beware - children may be tempted to play with metallic or military objects or an unattended bag that they don't know anything about. Unexploded bombs are small but extremely powerful and can kill many people. NEVER touch them, pick them up or kick them. If you see something on the ground and you do not know what it is, do not touch it. Encourage children to play in safe areas.

[2] UNMAS (2015). Landmines, Explosive Remnants of War and IED Safety Handbook, 3rd edn. p.39.

[3] Ibid. p.41.

[4] Ibid. p.42.

[5] Ibid. p.66; UNICEF (2008, p.18).

[6] Child-to-Child (2005, p.9); United Nations (2001, p.37).

[7] Office for the Special Representative for the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (n.d.).

The information in this document is based on the following sources:

Resources

Mine Action Information Center (2004). **The Landmine Action Smart Book.** Includes a mine risk education chapter that also covers victim motivations and education challenges. Available from: https://www.jmu.edu/cisr/_pages/research/smartbook.pdf

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (2001). **Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Definitions.** Includes definitions of technical terms and of different kinds of ERW. Available from: http://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/GICHD-resources/rec-documents/UXO_Definitions_Paper.pdf

United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Landmine and ERW Safety Training Resources. A web page allowing access to online safety training courses, a mine risk education application and handbook. Available at: http://www.mineaction.org/resources/training

International Mine Action Standards (2005). **Emergency Mine Risk Education.** An overview of setting up, running and evaluating mine risk education programmes in emergencies. Available from: http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/08/IMAS-Mine-Risk-Education.pdf

Mine Advisory Group International (2013). **Keeping fleeing Syrians safe from mines and UXO.** Video public service announcement (English version) that gives good verbal and non-verbal messages about landmine and ERW dangers. Available from: http://www.maginternational.org/mag/en/our-impact/news/keeping-fleeing-syrians-safe-from-landmines-and-uxo-/

Further reading

Child-to-Child (2005). **Mine Risk Education (booklet).** Available from: http://www.childtochild.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Child_to_Child-Mine_Risk_Education.pdf

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (2014). A Guide to Mine Action, 5th edn. Available from: http://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/GICHD-resources/rec-documents/Guide-to-mine-action-2014.pdf

Office for the Special Representative for the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (n.d.). Landmines, cluster munitions, and unexploded ordnances (web page). Available from: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/landmines-cluster-munitions-and-unexploded-ordonances/

UNICEF (2008). **Emergency Mine Risk Education Toolkit.** Available from: http://www.unicef.org/protection/Emergency_MRE_Toolkit_-_Final_Handbook.pdf

United Nations (2001). **Landmine and UXO Safety.** Available from: http://www.navedu.navy.mi.th/stg/databasestory/data/laukniyom/workjob/bigcountry-workjob/UN-Publications/071-un_landmine_and_uxo_safety_training_module_version%202.pdf

UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service)(2015). **Landmines, Explosive Remnants of War and IED Safety Handbook, 3rd edn.** Available from: http://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/publications/Handbook_English.pdf

UNMAS (2016). **Issues: mine action entails more than removing landmines from the ground (web page).** Available from: www.mineaction.org/issues