LANDMINES AND CHILDREN:
THE AFGHAN CASE

Trip Report
Afghanistan and Pakistan
(17 April - 12 May 1994)

By Anne E. Nixon
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CONTENTS

Recommendations................................................................. i

I. Purpose................................................................. 1

II. Sources................................................................. 2

III. Study Rationale............................................................. 3

IV. Landmine Clearance Operations............................................ 3

A. Overview................................................................. 3

B. Brief Report on Meetings.................................................. 4

V. Mine Education Programming................................................ 5

A. Afghanistan Programs.................................................... 5

B. NGO Interest in Mine Education Programming.......................... 6

VI. Some Considerations in Planning Mine Education............... 8

A. Linking with Mine Clearance............................................ 8

B. The "Reality Factor".................................................... 9

C. Avoidance Programming: Saving Lives and the Environment........ 10

D. Landmine Programming Overlap with Community Development........ 11

VII. Mine Education and Repatriation.......................................... 12

A. Perceiving the Danger: The Mine Education Message............... 12

B. Evaluating the Danger: Specificity of the Message................... 13

C. Living in a Minefield: Continuing Mine Education.................. 13

D. Avoidance Programming: Need for Prioritization..................... 14
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Repatriation: Insecurity, Destruction of the Infrastructure, Environmental Degradation and Mines</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. The Obstacles</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. The Orientation of Humanitarian Work</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Mine Clearance: Focus on Repatriation or Rehabilitation?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Focus on Village-Level Rehabilitation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Focus on Repatriation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. A Way Forward</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>A Note on Humanitarian Agency Work in Mined Areas</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.</td>
<td>Known Landmine Casualty Risk Categories and Contributing Factors</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. High-Risk Categories</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Contributing Factor: Inadequate Information</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.</td>
<td>Victim Assistance</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Immediate Emergency Care, Evacuation and Treatment</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Follow-up Rehabilitation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII.</td>
<td>The Ripple Effect: Landmines, Victims, Family Unit Dislocation, Infrastructure Breakdown, Poverty and Disease</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Children and Families</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Children and the Community</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.</td>
<td>Child-Focussed Data Collection Needs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV.</td>
<td>The International Landmine Ban Campaign: A Role for SCF?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATIONS

Excerpted from the text of the trip report

1. The agency's interests and resources could best be applied in the areas of mine education (awareness and avoidance), victim assistance and advocacy, and linked to responsible mine eradication programs. (Page 4)

2. One NGO should be designated to pursue discussion with ACBAR on establishment of a landmine sub-committee and spearhead inter-agency coordination. Afghan NGO mine program implementors and UN MCP managers and technicians, representing the major funder and mine authority for Afghanistan, should be part of such an undertaking. (Page 7)

3. Fuel-efficient or low-tech solar cookers and, in towns with piped water, heaters, could be introduced to reduce stripping of the countryside for firewood. (Solar technology has already been introduced in Kabul in a very limited way.) Reducing demand for firewood would relieve pressure on the countryside and contribute to saving the lives of woodcutters and gatherers, often children, who must roam further and further afield to find it. It would also remove a source of income for some. (Page 10)

4. In the case of unorganized water collection, a hazardous occupation for girls in mined parts of the country, agencies might identify high-risk communities and formulate projects for delivering (clean) water to a central point or construct alternate routes to avoid mined paths. (Page 10)

5. Help (child) herders reach distant unmined pastures and alleviate localized land overuse and consequent environmental degradation by applying the concept of military minefield breaching to humanitarian purposes and standards. Work with demining surveyors to locate mine-free detours to pasture land or perhaps routes that only occasionally traverse limited bands of mines which could be literally blasted through by deminers. Routes that serve the greatest number of people, villages and nomadic groups would be the highest priority. Cost-effectiveness would be measured by the numbers of families whose herds would be transiting the path, the value of the herds and the human, economic and environmental costs of not providing access to needed rangeland. Considerable thought would have to be given to fencing material along the route. N.B. UN and Afghan deminers consider NGO rehabilitation projects a clearance priority. (Page 10)
6. In many developing societies livestock are held in large numbers because of low levels of production and care. However, widespread restrictions on movement due to extensive mining can no longer support traditional practices. Improved local breeds not requiring unmeetable and unsustainable inputs of water, feed and veterinary care, and new fodder production methods could be carefully introduced to overcome mine-induced grazing restrictions -- and reduce heavy casualties among child herders. (N.B. ICRC's Kabul Hospital records from 1988 to 1992 indicate that one quarter of all mine injuries were suffered by children under 14, most of whom were grazing livestock. Additionally, UN environmental experts have noted rapid degradation of rangelands closest to villages, which is linked to land pressure brought on by extensive minefields.)

7. Well-coordinated (but not merged) multi-dimensional landmine programming might be structured this way: One agency develops an awareness program, another adds a basic emergency first-aid component and a third follows behind with the development of specific and real-life community-based avoidance strategies. An ambitious program would bring in yet another agency to implement an outreach project for the disabled in line with the decentralized service recommended at the Montreux landmine conference by agencies working with the handicapped. All of these agencies would cooperate closely with mine survey and clearance teams and a central authority, whether UN or government.

8. NGOs could cooperate with mine awareness programmers by "piggy-backing" the mine message onto their own projects. Logical project choices would be in the fields of health and education but could include virtually any project undertaken and any medium, whether broadcasting audio or video tapes at schools, health centers and food distribution sites or distributing public education materials in the course of doing normal agency work. Special attention would be given to communicating the message to those working outside the village in dangerous occupations like herding. Material passed on to the BBC Pushto-language program could be expanded.

9. Mine awareness programmers could develop mini-training courses for local and regional political leaders, government employees and religious authorities as well as NGO field staff in order to extend the reach of mine education, repeat and reinforce the message and ensure that understanding of the multiple problems caused by mines is translated into the plans of decision-makers.
10. NGO project planners and implementing staff should initiate contacts with Afghan survey and demining staff and UN MCP personnel that will lead, first, to identification and improved assessment of specific landmine threats, and second, to careful planning of demining activities as a first step in responsible NGO rehabilitation projects.

11. In the course of providing first-aid information and supplies as part of a mine education program, instructors could help villagers work out evacuation procedures and provide proper stretchers.

12. An NGO small business credit program might investigate the feasibility of loaning money to village entrepreneurs in far-flung settlements for the purchase of rural (truck or jeep) taxis which could also be used as local ambulances to transport mine victims to hospital, amputees to rehabilitation centers, and serve other important community health needs, and be paid for delivering patients by receiving facilities.

13. NGOs planning preventive health care programs in remote communities could evaluate local emergency treatment capacity and coordinate with ICRC supply and training activities as appropriate and necessary.

14. In designing health programs NGOs could examine the degree to which landmine trauma needs drain and overwhelm local health care delivery and plan for that in the project mix in addition to or in the absence of other implementing health and medical organizations.

15. An NGO could administer an umbrella grant to help develop local NGOs serving the disabled. Sustainability is most desirable or, at least, close cooperation with the government to ensure incorporation of the program(s) into the appropriate ministry once the government re-establishes authority and has the means to continue the program. NGOs must not "off-load" rehab projects onto the government.

16. NGOs could support physical rehabilitation needs and expanded prosthetics production, especially for children; coordinate patient or technician transport needs with rehabilitation facilities; develop hiring policies which positively discriminate toward the handicapped; hire mine-injured people for mine education programs; and solicit applications from the disabled for small business credit and training programs. N.B. As elsewhere, the disabled should not be "ghettoized" by programs intended to help.
17. SCF could conduct research into the connections between extensive minefields and economic dislocation, food insecurity, poverty, malnutrition and disease, either conducting the research itself or providing in-country logistical support to other researchers. Results would aid the agency's own child and family-focused program and also provide another compelling argument in support of international efforts to introduce a ban on landmines.

18. Much important work could be done by SCF in mines monitoring in connection with poverty and famine monitoring work in progress, particularly in East Africa. Findings would assist efforts to target factors contributing to famine conditions, help direct the agency's child and family-focused field work and assist the advocacy efforts of others, thereby contributing to efforts to counter the epidemic-like growth of organized violence affecting children.

19. In my Geneva conference report I recommended that SCF sign on to the campaign and noted that, given the feelings engendered by landmines among the public and recent policy statements and financial commitments at the US government level, it would not be a decision that would require a careful weighing of the potential costs to the agency. SCF UK has developed a position on the matter, active field support of mine clearance and good public education documents which the agency could consult in the course of devising its own strategy and perhaps proposing one for the SC Alliance.

If after developing solid landmine programming in the field the agency decides that it is important to publicize its experiences, it could frame its campaign to make the most of what it does best: "This is what mines do to children. We see it every day, in Afghanistan, in Mozambique, in Angola, in Vietnam, in Bosnia." Of course, it would have to finish with, "It has to stop," and present a coherent response to the question of how. Linking up with the VVAF-led campaign is advised because they have been exploring the answers, the evidence and the arguments for years.
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TRIP REPORT
Afghanistan and Pakistan
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by Anne Nixon

I. PURPOSE

Increasingly alarmed and also constrained by the depredations of landmines in many of the countries where it works, Save the Children sent this writer on a short trip to Afghanistan to study the situation in the country believed to have one of the world's worst mine problems. Information and recommendations will contribute to the early stage of "projectizing" landmines within the agency as a whole. Some basic questions implicitly posed are:

* Why should SCF do landmine programming?

* If landmines are mangling and slaughtering children around the globe, can the agency not become involved?

* To what extent do landmine casualties drain community resources and affect SCF's ability to implement effective community-based programs?

* What are the effects of minefields on agrarian and pastoral societies? How do the conditions they create affect the incidence of child malnutrition and disease?

* Given the highly specialized nature of the work, how can the agency do landmine work in a meaningful way?

Beginning to address these questions was the central objective of this trip. The means to do this included observing landmine clearance operations, considering how minefields impede repatriation and reconstruction, assessing how mine clearance affects rates of return and socio-economic recovery, assembling categories of mine casualty risk and investigating how mine education alters casualty rates, with special attention to children. Other issues investigated include constraints on humanitarian work, victim assistance programs and child-focussed landmine data collection needs. Recommendations are presented for consideration of next steps.
II. SOURCES

This report is based on material obtained through

- Interviews
- Review of (part of) the landmine literature;
- Collection of Afghanistan-specific information;
- Study of the Afghan model of landmine eradication and education;
- Participation in the UN MCP mine awareness course;
- Attendance at the Second NGO Landmine Conference in Geneva.

I discussed landmine programming with persons from the UN mine clearance program, Afghan and European demining NGOs, numerous humanitarian and advocacy NGOs and the European Union. Specifically,

- UN Mine Clearance Programme officials, mine clearance experts and training and education specialists;
- Afghan NGO officials and staff carrying out landmine survey and clearance tasks (manual prodder teams, flail machine section and dog units);
- The European Union representative; the director of ACBAR, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief; and other NGO personnel including PAFO Director Gary Helseth;
- Participants at the Geneva conference.

A note on the use of this report’s recommendations:

Although presented in the context of Afghanistan, recommendations contained in this report are intended primarily for the agency’s consideration of concrete opportunities in landmine programming. Their applicability to Afghanistan can be better assessed by the PAFO Director, Deputy Director and other senior staff, all of whom have a far better understanding of conditions and needs in that country than I ever shall. Their usefulness to the PAFO program can only be evaluated by PAFO staff; while I discussed programming recommendations in a general way with director Gary Helseth, most of those presented here arose later in the course of preparing this document. And last, many of the recommendations could be considered by the NGO community in general, both in Afghanistan and anywhere else that landmines are a menace.

This trip was brief and the field is new: Errors in my understanding of positions and issues are probably inevitable.

Finally, rather than try to treat systematically any particular aspect of the landmine problem, I have presented what I understand to be major issues of relevance to SCF interests and touch briefly on each.
III. STUDY RATIONALE

As a child advocacy agency with extensive field programming in war-torn, post-war, recovering and developing societies, Save the Children confronts the problem of landmines in at least three ways: First, in its concern for the effects of conflict and violence on children; second, in the devastation of community structures and resources by the overwhelming destructive power of landmines; and third, in the impeded implementation of the agency’s child and family-focussed field projects. In order to begin looking at ways in which the agency should and could respond, they required this reconnaissance mission.

IV. LANDMINE CLEARANCE OPERATIONS

A. Overview

The physical removal of landmines is, along with a complete ban on production and use, the most important task in a whole spectrum of possible mine-related work. (N.B. For the purposes of this report it is not important to distinguish types of mines, booby traps, unexploded ordnance/UXOs, detonators and other explosive debris.)

Learning to live with landmines, which is the essence of any mine education work, is more a commentary on the absence of international will and resources, both financial and human, to eradicate mines. The need for mine education is also testimony to the excruciatingly slow pace of mine clearance. Even this is due to the overall paucity of resources; detection technology is at least 20 years behind mine design. Victim assistance, alone, is the sort of "band-aid" therapy which many humanitarian organizations specialize in, despite much talk of "root causes". In considering landmine programming it is important for relief and development humanitarian agencies to keep in mind that clearance and advocacy are the activities that actually target "root causes"; mine education and victim assistance are vital support services that can be undertaken by these humanitarian organizations within a comprehensive, multi-dimensional eradication program designed and operated in coordination with mine specialists.

Because of the centrality of clearance work but also because of scheduling and lack of time, I concentrated on the technical and operational aspects of mine removal during the trip and at the Geneva conference. Despite gaining only a very rudimentary knowledge of landmine technology and clearance methods, I believe that the perspective gained is valuable for formulating recommendations for SCF, even though I do not at all recommend that the agency take on clearance work. Instead,
Recommendation: The agency's interests and resources could best be applied in the areas of mine education (awareness and avoidance), victim assistance and advocacy, and linked to responsible mine eradication programs.

The departure point in any landmine education program design is technical information, or knowledge of where to obtain that information. Additionally, technicians must be part of any monitoring and evaluation process. Just as any responsible agency would employ qualified and experienced professionals to design and oversee a health or education project, so must it employ specialized and experienced technicians to develop and monitor a mine education program. The fact that the field is still in its infancy, developing principles, policies and procedures, makes experienced technical input at the outset all the more critical.

B. Brief Report on Meetings

1. PAFO Director Gary Helseth and I met first with Pakistan-based senior officials of the UN Mine Clearance Programme (MCP) for Afghanistan. Discussion centered on possibilities for NGO landmine programming with respect to SCF and the proposed new agency Terra Sancta. All expressed interest and support for NGO landmine programming as long as it is undertaken in close coordination with a central mine authority, for reasons discussed above and also because the nature of the work requires certain centralized tasks.

Advantages to greater NGO landmine programming are flexibility, rapid response, creativity, less bureaucracy, a more "grassroots" and community orientation, (often) superior programming and the influx of additional funds to landmine work. Programming should be designed for sustainability through development of indigenous capacity but linked to a central authority, whether host government or UN (mine clearance) authority for technical, training, recording, mapping, funding, monitoring and other purposes.

2. Our Afghan hosts were staff of the Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), the largest of the Afghan mine clearance NGOs. Despite pressures of work and certainly some occupational stress, they were very generous with their time. Discussion centered on operational and organizational details of a mine clearance operation (including manual prodding, flail machines and other technical inputs, safety measures and stand-by medical units) and the essential role of local community and political support and perceived political neutrality. We met also with staff of other Afghan NGOs; the Mine Dog Center (MDC) and the national survey group, Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA). A subsequent meeting with the director of ATC in Peshawar provided insight into the operational context; the
difficulties of working in an unstable environment, funding channels and past problems and a distillation of lessons learned in setting up a mine clearance program. The MCPA director’s attendance at the Geneva conference provided opportunity for more discussion of structure, technology, community backing, funding channels, relationships with the UN authority and lessons learned.

V. MINE EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

The history of mine education programming in Afghanistan is important in the event that SCF will be considering programming in the agency and in PAFO specifically. The three levels of program history that should be studied are the evolution of the UN awareness program; the discontinued foreign agency landmine programs, including the awareness project started by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the earliest landmine work undertaken by World Vision; and the nation-wide program run by the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR), which was spun off by IRC and, like the other Afghan demining NGOs, is under the UN MCP umbrella. There is strong interest among some foreign NGOs working in Afghanistan in developing landmine programs. All of these matters are covered briefly below.

A. Afghanistan Programs

1. The UN Mine Clearance Program

The UN mine authority has five years of experience in formulating a mine education campaign and is forthcoming in project reports and discussion about lessons learned. They are eager to share their experience with interested NGOs. In addition, as the coordinating body for all mine work in Afghanistan, the UN MCP has had the opportunity to monitor the progress of the Afghan mine awareness (and lately also clearance) agency, OMAR. MCP runs a three-hour mine awareness course for NGO workers in three languages (Dari, Pushto and English). Their institutional knowledge is immense and would be invaluable in the development of an NGO project, whether for Afghanistan or elsewhere. Because the program history and the subject matter are complex, a review would require more detailed treatment than is possible in this trip report.

2. OMAR and Foreign NGO Mine Education

Attempts to contact the director of OMAR were fruitless, first coinciding with the flurry of activity surrounding yet another UN political initiative and later overwhelmed by time pressure. Attempts to meet with staff in Afghanistan also were unsuccessful. This shortcoming is especially
unfortunate given the importance of the OMAR program to SCF interests. Nevertheless, information can easily be obtained from the UN MCP, which oversees OMAR’s work, or via PAFO. Institutional knowledge also can be obtained from IRC which originally hired the OMAR founder and director, Mr. Fazel Karim, and started up the awareness project some five years ago. The IRC field office in Peshawar still has on file the silk screens and other educational material used in their mine awareness campaign. World Vision staff responsible for implementation of the mine clearance program could be tracked down.

B. NGO Interest in Mine Education Programming in Afghanistan

I first surveyed the role of NGOs in landmine programming by searching the project codes and descriptions of the 100-150 foreign and Afghan NGOs listed in the ACBAR NGO Directory. Other than the seven Afghan landmine NGOs, not a single agency lists a mine-related program component. UN staff consulted confessed to disappointment that NGOs are not more active, although it was not clear whether the UN had attempted to involve them. Discussion with the director of ACBAR and a small number of NGO officials, including those attending the Geneva conference, revealed that (foreign) NGO interest in landmine (education) programming is very strong but short on ideas, resources and initiative. In a tiny minority of cases, NGOs are inactive and disinterested in landmine programming, apparently because overworked but also complacent that "it" is being "taken care of" by the UN and Afghan agencies.

With respect to the latter case -- inactive and disinterested NGOs -- discussion produced agreement that, first, mine education needs to be constantly repeated and reinforced by as many parties as possible, including foreign NGOs in their (e.g. health and education) community outreach projects, especially those using non-formal education techniques to reach women and children. Second, given the grave problem of mines in the country and their hindrance to humanitarian agency work, it is incumbent on NGOs periodically to investigate whether landmine programming opportunities are being properly assessed and to evaluate the quality and reach of current programs, including mine education. Third, it appears that opportunities to respond to needs through the collection of NGO data, which might indicate the real human and socio-economic costs of extensive mining in Afghanistan, have been lost through lack of coordination and initiative. The study being undertaken by VVAF should provide NGOs with another chance to look at the costs and target programs accordingly. There was agreement that much more could be done in the areas of landmine education and data collection.
The former case — agencies expressing strong interest but short on ideas, resources and initiative — provides opportunities for creative programming within the NGO community and in cooperation with the UN mine authorities and OMAR. Two upcoming "events" make new programming considerations timely and in the second case urgent as well. First, VVAF expects to release its study at the beginning of the coming year. The information contained in the Afghanistan section should reveal programming gaps or at least opportunities.

The second "event" refers to the concern that so far voluntary repatriation will at some point turn into a massive, catastrophic involuntary return of refugees. Or that voluntary movement will take place on an unmanageable scale, much larger than the movement of approximately 200,000 people over a period of one and a half years beginning in July 1990. Every wave of voluntary repatriation to date has been followed by a significant increase in landmine casualties, thereby highlighting the need for stepped-up mine education in anticipation of encouraging internal changes. In the event of largely unforeseeable external developments such as the as yet hypothetical expulsion of the three million refugees living in Iran, all humanitarian work including mine education programming would be overwhelmed. Landmine casualties could reach unimaginable levels. Mounting pressure in Iran, which so far has manifested itself in the destruction of refugee identity cards and other measures, is being closely monitored by the UNHCR. GH has more accurate information.

The interest displayed in exploration of landmine programming by the director of ACBAR was especially encouraging. It was, "When can someone start coordinating an NGO subcommittee?" Careful work would have to be done to prevent degeneration into unfocussed discussion, irrelevance, inter-agency rivalry and eventual dispersal of the group. Certainly inter-agency coordination can be unrewarding and useless unless carefully defined, solidly field-focussed and very well managed with well-chaired meetings. A key point for organizers of inter-agency work is that although landmine programming is urgent and should be a priority, everyone is overcommitted, under-funded, very busy and probably overworked.

Recommendation: One NGO should be designated to pursue discussion with ACBAR on establishment of a landmine subcommittee and spearhead inter-agency coordination. Afghan NGO mine program implementors and UN MCP managers and technicians, representing the major funder and mine authority for Afghanistan, should be part of such an undertaking.
VI. SOME CONSIDERATIONS IN PLANNING MINE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Any public education program requires understanding of cultural values and behavior and patterns of social and economic life, as well as the time and effort required to develop and test curricula and materials. Landmine education programming requires additional considerations.

A. Linking with Mine Clearance

Because mine education undertaken alone does not deal with root causes it engenders strong feelings -- the nature of landmines takes the tenor of debate far beyond mere opinion -- from many in the demining community. They insist that education be undertaken solely in coordination with, not instead of mine clearance. To carry out mine awareness programming in the absence of eradication would represent a "cynical acceptance", in the words of one prominent demining expert, of the lack of international will to allocate the necessary funds.

Such statements may be directed at those who suggest, for example, that it is unrealistic to think Afghanistan will ever be cleared of mines and that demining of the designated priority area is a fantasy given lack of money and the painfully slow rate of clearance to date. This view was put forward by program evaluators Col. Brian Florence and Professor James Freedman, who stated in their 1991 report that in the absence of massive funds required for eradication, mines should be treated as a major constraint that Afghans must live with and mine avoidance strategies accordingly integrated into village-level rehabilitation:

Mine awareness training expertise should be deployed by the planning cell at demining headquarters to design and administer particular training programmes tailored to the needs of individual villages or groups of villages. This training programme should provide a village strategy for avoiding mines and fencing mined areas. This village-level programme of mine awareness should incorporate the patterns of movement of women and children in grazing, fuel and water gathering activities in an attempt to establish alternative routes or alternative means of satisfying basic needs.

This is a good summary of one component of a well-planned and comprehensive awareness and avoidance program. However, undertaken in the absence of eradication it would likely elicit very unfavorable reactions and probably anger not only from within the demining community but also from the local population, as has happened in some countries. Residents would assert that they "know all about" mines, despite surveys showing the contrary, and that the money wasted on education should be applied to clearance. That is an understandable, even reasonable if technically inaccurate response.

Ideally, village-based awareness and avoidance strategies would be undertaken with eradication work even when clearance is not yet underway locally. More serious problems might arise if local residents learned that despite eradication work elsewhere, there were no plans to clear their area. In the absence of any clearance program at all, there might be substantial resistance to education programming locally and from national authorities.

Some village-based mine clearance solutions have been proposed and tried but to date fail to meet what most experts would consider to be minimum standards of effective humanitarian mine clearance (e.g. guarantees that 99.9% clearance has been achieved and results communicated to a central mapping authority), operational problems (e.g. training, supply of equipment and explosive material, disposal of mines and UXOs) and also ethical problems (e.g. ensuring that mines are not collected and re-laid or sold, the responsibilities of the agency in the event of deminer injury and death). Village-based demining is not impossible and in some circumstances may be pursued, but there are obstacles to responsible programming.

B. The "Reality Factor"

Another dimension that must be incorporated into any programming plans is the "Reality Factor". To some extent, and if done very well then to a great extent, mine awareness can reduce casualties. But no amount of "education" is going to prevent people who live in mined areas from going about the business of trying to survive and therefore risking injury and death from mines. A combination of awareness and avoidance education will teach them to recognize the warning signs and clues of mines and minefields, raise levels of alertness and understanding of the consequences and thereby lower reckless and careless behavior, provide information and training on ways to get out of a minefield and, when the inevitable occurs as it will for generations to come, retrieve valuable livestock and rescue, evacuate and transport family members and fellow villagers and know how to increase survival chances by providing basic emergency first-aid.
A locally-designed avoidance component will provide villagers with realistic alternatives to hazardous practices, focusing on occupations and members of the population, including children, most at risk.

C. Avoidance Programming: Saving Lives and the Environment

Avoidance programming could make a significant contribution to the problem of mines and also to the related problem of local resource depletion and destruction, both of which will increasingly make life in the countryside unviable. Although I am not familiar with patterns of life and work in Afghanistan, I offer a few suggestions which may be applicable in some form:

Recommendation:

1. Fuel-efficient or low-tech solar cookers and, in towns with piped water, heaters, could be introduced to reduce stripping of the countryside for firewood. (Solar technology has already been introduced in Kabul in a very limited way). Reducing demand for firewood would relieve pressure on the countryside and contribute to saving the lives of woodcutters and gatherers, often children, who must roam further and further afield to find it. It would also remove a source of income for some.

2. In the case of unorganized water collection, a hazardous occupation for girls in mined parts of the country, agencies might identify high-risk communities and formulate projects for delivering (clean) water to a central point or construct alternate routes to avoid mined paths.

3. Help (child) herders reach distant unmined pastures and alleviate localized land overuse and consequent environmental degradation by applying the concept of military minefield breaching to humanitarian purposes and standards. Work with demining surveyors to locate mine-free detours to pasture land or perhaps routes that only occasionally traverse limited bands of mines which could be literally blasted through by deminers. Routes that serve the greatest number of people, villages and nomadic groups would be the highest priority. Cost-effectiveness would be measured by the numbers of families whose herds would be transiting the path, the value of the herds and the human, economic and environmental costs of not providing access to needed rangeland. Considerable thought would have to be given to fencing material along the route. N.B. UN and Afghan deminers consider NGO rehabilitation projects a clearance priority.
4. In many developing societies livestock are held in large numbers because of low levels of production and care. However, widespread restrictions on movement due to extensive mining can no longer support traditional practices. Improved local breeds not requiring unmeetable and unsustainable inputs of water, feed and veterinary care, and new fodder production methods could be carefully introduced to overcome mine-induced grazing restrictions and reduce heavy casualties among child herders. (N.B. ICRC's Kabul Hospital records from 1988 to 1992 indicate that one quarter of all mine injuries were suffered by children under 14, most of whom were grazing livestock. Additionally, UN environmental experts have noted rapid degradation of rangelands closest to villages, which is linked to land pressure brought on by extensive minefields.)

D. Landmine Programming Overlap with Community Development

A realistic and comprehensive mine awareness and avoidance strategy will necessarily overlap with the kind of community development programming that SCF has long advocated and implemented. Because mine education is in itself a complex task it is advisable for agencies to cooperate in the delivery of multi-dimensional landmine programming:

Recommendation: Well-coordinated (but not merged) multi-dimensional landmine programming might be structured this way: One agency develops an awareness program, another adds a basic emergency first-aid component and a third follows behind with the development of specific and real-life community-based avoidance strategies. An ambitious program would bring in yet another agency to implement an outreach project for the disabled in line with the decentralized service recommended at the Montreux landmine conference by agencies working with the handicapped. All of these agencies would cooperate closely with mine survey and clearance teams and a central authority, whether UN or government.

Afghanistan already has a well-respected nation-wide mine awareness program, but it lacks the services suggested above and may also suffer from the effects of operating in a closed system. The feedback produced through working in coordination with other agencies in a broad community-based process undoubtedly would help that agency further refine its program.

In addition to or, alternatively, short of participating in the broad-based effort described above, NGOs could cooperate more loosely in the following manner:
Recommendation:

1. NGOs could cooperate with mine awareness programmers by "piggy-backing" the mine message onto their own projects. Logical project choices would be in the fields of health and education but could include virtually any project undertaken and any medium, whether broadcasting audio or video tapes at schools, health centers and food distribution sites or distributing public education materials in the course of doing normal agency work. Special attention would be given to communicating the message to those working outside the village in dangerous occupations like herding. Material passed on to the BBC Pushto-language program could be expanded.

2. Mine awareness programmers could develop mini-training courses for local and regional political leaders, government employees and religious authorities as well as NGO field staff in order to extend the reach of mine education, repeat and reinforce the message and ensure that understanding of the multiple problems caused by mines is translated into the plans of decision-makers.

VII. MINE EDUCATION AND REPATRIATION

The effect of landmines on repatriation is complex and has evolved into an important controversy, not necessarily well-studied, concerning clearance prioritization and allocations.

A. Perceiving the Danger: The Mine Education Message

Mine education seeks to impress upon people the dangers inherent in resettling in mined areas. Some or many but not all refugees cite landmines as one reason for not returning. Some refugees are returning to heavily mined areas, others to minimally mined land. Some have been exposed to and absorbed mine education, others not. Unfortunately, these factors do not necessarily sort out in a straightforward manner.

It seems reasonable to hypothesize that, unrelated to the objective problem of mines in a particular area, the lower the level of mine awareness, the less the refugee or displaced population perceives the risk and may attempt to return in the absence of other problems (see below). Those people with a high motivation to return but a low perception of risk and landmine knowledge who are returning to mined areas clearly are most in danger, as subsequent hospital records attest: ICRC reported that 77% of the mine-injured in their Peshawar hospital were returnee refugees. Therefore the answer to the question, Do landmines impede
repatriation?, might be that, taking into consideration all the other factors, it depends on how "landmine educated" the population is.

B. Evaluating the Danger: Specificity of the Message

A related question pertaining to the content of mine awareness programming is the degree of specificity: Are the results of the national mine survey organization made available to refugees and displaced persons? Are mine clearance priority areas and schedules made available? Do people know that their particular village or region is heavily mined or minimally mined, and where? Or that clearance is scheduled but not until next year? Or in two to three years, inshallah? Clearly there is much informal information relayed among refugees: Does it include this level of information and, critically, how accurate is their information? Is mine education ever conducted from a locational perspective (e.g. convening meetings of camp residents originally from a certain province or district and reporting and discussing all available information)? Is there a policy with respect to making available this level of information to the population, or is it generally considered "not necessary" or even counter-productive?

Mine education should become immensely more effective the more it conveys information that is specific and can be acted on. People generally do not organize their lives on the basis of abstractions.

C. Living in a Minefield: Continuing Mine Education

We witnessed how former refugees stand and wait behind clearance teams working on their farmland and in and around their houses. Within hours of the announcement that an area is clear farmers are preparing their fields and the family is moving back into the house. The proximity of minefields to houses and fields is striking and underlines the need for stepped-up and continuing mine awareness. When people literally live amongst mines, when minefields are the front, back and side "yards", as it were, a process of familiarization, or normalization occurs. Sheep stray and must be chased, farmers take a careless step off the narrow path between the planted field and the mined field, returnee adults are busy and cannot continuously supervise children's movements, children play and dart into minefields or can no longer resist picking up that interesting thing over there and anyway everyone does it and all the other boys have mine and detonator collections. Decreased vigilance is a high risk category for mine explosion incidents.
D. Avoidance Programming: Need for Prioritization

Although my travel in Afghanistan was limited to the area around Jalalabad, life there appears to be less difficult than in more remote parts of the country where water is scarce, grazing land is distant, the nearby hillsides have been picked clean and stripped of wood and the town, with shops selling seed, other inputs and food, is many days away by foot. In such places there is more extensive land use, in stark contrast to the irrigated and more intensively-farmed land around Jalalabad, where minefields are reasonably well-known and are a high priority for clearance. For remotely settled people forced to roam ever-larger tracts in search of water, wood and grassland, however, the risk of triggering a mine explosion is great. Only a small percentage of the country has been surveyed and slated for clearance; these priority areas do not include the distant hills and valleys just described. Seventeen districts have not been surveyed at all due primarily to security problems.

Clearance prioritization is not only understandable but essential in real terms; mine avoidance similarly needs to prioritize, especially to take into account the specific and urgent needs of specific populations, such as those living in non-priority clearance areas. This may become increasingly important as more refugees try to return to the country’s many far-flung settlements. In such cases especially, mine education cannot focus only on mine awareness -- identification of mines, signs of a minefield, and so forth. It also must incorporate mine avoidance information: People may know an area is mined but they may need to traverse it nevertheless. Mine avoidance is more labor-intensive from a programmer’s point of view, and complicated, requiring creativity and a good understanding of rural life in the design of very specific solutions to everyday problems.

VIII. REPATRIATION: INSECURITY, DESTRUCTION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND MINES

Landmines are a very real obstacle to the return of refugees but there are other, often overriding factors as well.

A. The Obstacles

The first and foremost obstacle to repatriation is the local security situation. Obviously, if there is still active fighting very few people will attempt to return, although some farmers might try to come and go to water crops or orchards, prepare fields or harvest crops. Second, in addition to very real security impediments -- political, purely criminal and more typically a blend of the two --
there are social and economic rehabilitation obstacles, particularly for the rural population. Many Afghan refugees are unwilling to return or are at least ambivalent about going back to ruined villages lacking any social and economic infrastructure, knowing that they will have to survive on what they can carry in by mule or perhaps load on an old pick-up truck. Returnees run a high risk of being continuously victimized by RPG-armed bandits, exploitative landlords and corrupt military commanders and local political leaders.

According to a 1992 government report, "Most refugees in both countries cite the continuation of the war as the main reason they do not wish to return. Other related obstacles are the lack of law and order, the presence of mines, and the destruction or deterioration of the agricultural infrastructure, the lack of shelter, food stocks, health care facilities and schools, ruined roads and the general disruption of the rural economy." The report continues, "The return of thousands more Afghans will place increasing strains on these already scarce resources. In addition, questions of resumption of rights to land left by refugees years ago and reintegration of returnees into current Afghan society pose major challenges for the future."


Increasing strains on the environment relate directly to land pressure created by minefields. Intensive grazing of nearby rangelands and overcutting of shrubs and bushes near villages have caused severe erosion and desertification. Mined canals have dramatically reduced arable land. Much damage has already been inflicted by a long war, but the sources of unrelenting environmental degradation which threaten village viability and, for the Kuchi, the nomadic way of life, can be tackled by a program that incorporates mine eradication and avoidance, village rehabilitation and sound environmental management.
B. The Orientation of Humanitarian Work

Humanitarian agencies establishing program plans and priorities for both refugees and villagers must take into account the multiple problems posed by extensive mining of the country. Refugee agencies, with their clear interests and mandate, must coordinate closely with landmine programmers not only to ensure success but to avert disaster. Relief and development NGOs should incorporate the orientations and plans of refugee and landmine agencies into the design of their programs, identify points of continuity and overlap and assist in a well-planned, concerted recovery effort.

Landmine programming agencies developing an orientation for their work will have to address a number of issues, including these: Should mine education be undertaken only as one element of a comprehensive program of mine eradication, or will awareness and avoidance strategies need to be developed as a way of living with mines that may never be cleared? Should clearance be linked to refugee return or village rehabilitation? How important are these distinctions to program design, process and outcome? How much of the decision is donor agency-driven, as opposed to a rational application of funds and human effort to actual patterns of repatriation and resettlement? To what extent should mine clearance be undertaken in preparation for eventual refugee return regardless of current rates? What are the likely consequences of not doing so?
IX. MINE CLEARANCE: FOCUS ON REPATRIATION OR REHABILITATION?

Clearance work operated originally on the premise that eradication is a necessary and possibly sufficient condition for repatriation. An examination of 1991 UNHCR data indicated, however, no relationship between mine eradication and repatriation to these cleared areas. Meanwhile, refugee surveys revealed that anticipated repatriation following the Soviet army withdrawal was hindered by numerous difficulties, described above. Eradication work was found, therefore, not to be a sufficient condition and it was not long before some began to question whether eradication, as opposed to spot clearance (this distinction is too often overlooked in the argument), was even a necessary condition for repatriation and recovery. The failure to comprehend all the variables involved in repatriation, considered in the context of the hugely expensive task of eradication and so far totally inadequate level of funding, called for a more "rational" approach. Henceforth mine programming should be re-directed away from trying to engineer repatriation, toward the people who presently live on their land, helping them in the arduous process of rehabilitation and recovery.

A. Focus on Village-Level Rehabilitation

Florence and Freedman recommend that demining agencies change their orientation from repatriation to rehabilitation and economic development of existing villages. Pointing to the 1991 UNHCR data, they conclude that the program's orientation toward repatriation is misguided. Instead, a project mix of mine eradication and education should focus on people, not land:

Focusing on the specific needs of existing villages, instead of on mines and potential habitation areas, leads to developing a demining strategy which solves the problems that mines pose to specific people in specific villages.... Focusing on repatriation harnesses demining to a limited and inappropriate objective. The programme should instead begin to see its mandate as part of a plan of restoration and economic development at the village level within Afghanistan.

Manual demining is too expensive and complex to be the backbone of a demining programme....[D]emining [is] only one of a variety of strategies required for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

...[T]hinking of demining as a village-level development programme.... means evaluating the needs of one village or cluster of villages at a time, assessing these needs and carefully designing a programme of mine eradication and education that will yield the best
results, given the village circumstances. If this is accepted, it means that for each village, a composite of services could be provided. Manual demining will be used only where it is most urgently required. If deemed appropriate, the use of dog mine-detecting teams may be deployed. Mine awareness programmes should be developed for each village that would include education, strategies for mine avoidance, ways of working around the presence of mines. Areas might be fenced off, roads detoured. Alternative sources of fuel might be provided if the women and children cannot venture to gather wood. Alternative water sources might be found which avoid the risk of mine explosions. But this requires effective gathering of information and the effective coordination of the demining programme resources (op.cit., pp. 14,20,23,30,42).

B. Focus on Repatriation

Another view is put forward by Rae McGrath, director of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and former head of the UN demining program for Afghanistan. He rejects any proposed solution falling short of the goal of eradication -- not spot clearance and living with mines indefinitely or forever -- as cynical acquiescence to the apathy of the international community. In support of a continued focus on repatriation efforts he cites a survey showing that,

\[\text{[R]efugee farmers tend to come from areas worse-affected by war than those farmers who remained in Afghanistan. Unquestionably areas which have been subject to high levels of military activity will have been the target for greater concentrations of landmines, a fact amply upheld by this survey, the same land to which, based on the above indicators, many refugee farmers and their families will be returning.}\]

The obvious corollary being that the landmine issue cannot be separated from that of repatriation. Further, no planned or encouraged repatriation to a given area or areas can be considered without expert pre-survey to evaluate the mines threat and, where necessary, the completion of an eradication operation in those areas prior to repatriation. This must become a matter of joint UNOCA/UNHCR policy in co-ordination with the specialist demining agencies without delay.

The present mine-awareness initiative should continue but its value should not be over-emphasized, it is a useful sector of the overall Demining Programme but has its limitations in one stark fact displayed by this survey - that most communities have, at least, a reasonable knowledge of the mines in their locality but the daily demands of rural life, the need to perform
tasks essential to existence - planting, grazing, repairing canals, collecting firewood, simply walking - expose even the most aware of Afghans to an unacceptable risk.


Supporters of continued concentration on repatriation argue, in effect, that there is no equivalence in the two situations. The people who left their land to become refugees did so because there was much greater military activity in their area and therefore landmines were laid in far greater numbers. Those people who remained in their villages were, generally, living in areas subjected to lower levels of military activity and, by extension, lower levels of mine-laying. To propose that eradication efforts be re-directed to the latter is to misapprehend the mine problem in Afghanistan and overlook the potential for catastrophe should repatriation, whether voluntary or forced, be precipitated by internal or external events. Although there may at present be a weak connection between mine eradication and refugee movement, the prospect of millions of Afghans -- the largest refugee population in the world -- suddenly returning to heavily mined areas is a horrifying one. Mine clearance, accordingly, must literally prepare the ground for refugees' return, whenever that will be.

There is no equivalence, either, in the nature of the obstacles to refugee return. Many concerns presently uppermost in people's minds are essentially transient: For example, political and security conditions could change sufficiently and sufficiently quickly to encourage rapid refugee return. Minefields, on the other hand, simply do not go away.

Eradication today is expensive. So is maintenance of refugee camps. And so is the alternative -- the risk of monstrous slaughter on a colossal scale tomorrow. Money that could have been spent earlier on "root causes" would then have to be applied to "band-aid" therapy with no end in sight.

This debate is not academic. The stakes are potentially high, involving the commitment of the international donor community to a previously indisputable idea and the prospect of much more bloodshed and many more mangled bodies if funders make a wrong decision based on incorrect analysis.
C. A Way Forward

I have tried to represent both views but am disadvantaged by being so new to the field that I am unable to comment on the outcome since they were aired in 1991. This can be easily remedied by access to more of the recent landmine literature and, of course, by direct query. It is not important to resolve these questions for the purposes of this trip report, however, because the posing of such questions will always be relevant to programming. The sometimes competing needs of refugees and residents will always require investigation and monitoring to determine orientation, priorities and goals. Complications could arise at other points, though. For example, donor priorities might conflict with objective, documented fact, or political pressure be exerted one way or another (as happened among certain Peshawar-based political and military leaders).

The urgency of the problem in Afghanistan -- the deaths, the maiming, the refugees languishing in camps, the threat of unmanageable waves of voluntary or involuntary repatriation -- does not allow for slow, methodical study to resolve the controversy. Fortunately choices do not necessarily have to be made, though the processes may require adjustments. Any studies required, especially comparative investigation, can be undertaken alongside project planning and implementation. Assuming that narrow donor priorities and political considerations do not absolutely prevent it or at least can be circumvented with other funds and negotiations with leadership, eradication can move ahead on both fronts: on village-level rehabilitation and in coordination with carefully planned repatriation efforts. Mine education, another controversial element, can be undertaken in coordination with eradication work as a way of helping villagers live with mines until clearance work, which will require continued massive international financial support, can be completed, even if a generation later.

X. A NOTE ON HUMANITARIAN AGENCY WORK IN MINED AREAS

Humanitarian programming is unquestionably affected by landmines at all levels of the decision and planning process, from the reluctance of staff to travel into the field and the choices they make about how to gather critical information and supervise projects, all the way up to the reconstruction plans being drawn up in government, UN and NGO offices. One might ask what proportion of aid funds is presently going to village reconstruction. The answer is probably not a lot, one reason being fear of landmines and uncertainty about how to plan, implement and supervise projects in such a dangerous environment. (Other more immediate threats include general insecurity and well-placed fear of robbery and murder on the road.)
This combination of threats conceivably could lead to ill-informed project plans and poorly supervised projects in mined areas or, in the interest of maintaining accountability, programming in mine-free areas which exacerbates the concentration of population and resources, encourages lop-sided economic activity and contributes to infrastructure overload and environmental destruction.

Recommendation: NGO project planners and implementing staff should initiate contacts with Afghan survey and demining staff and UN MCP personnel that will lead, first, to identification and improved assessment of specific landmine threats, and second, to careful planning of demining activities as a first step in responsible NGO rehabilitation projects.

Neither step, of course, addresses other formidable security problems which will be solved only by the consolidation and exercise of political authority.

XI. KNOWN LANDMINE CASUALTY RISK CATEGORIES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

 Civilians are not equally likely to be the victims of a mine explosion. The likelihood varies according to occupation and season but also according to a range of potentially modifiable factors.

A. High-Risk Categories

Most of the risk categories described below are common to all people living in mined areas (which may also be littered with UXOs, detonators and other explosive debris); some risk factors are specific to Afghanistan. They include:

1. Newly returned refugees who are unfamiliar with mines or the locally known location of minefields or do not perceive the danger of mines;

2. Occupational risks such as herding, farming, gathering firewood, carrying water, scavenging for scrap metal, cleaning karezes and canals, repairing houses in some provinces, travelling on foot and by vehicle, and collecting and re-laying mines to protect private property including woodpiles;

3. Seasonal risks for young girls gathering firewood in the fall and winter, for boys taking livestock to new pasture in the spring, for farmers planting and harvesting; for all members of the population living in places where there is winter snowfall, and for everyone in summer;
4. Exigencies of a merciless rural life: plant and risk stepping on a mine, or starve; gather firewood or freeze;

5. Absent or ineffective mine education (including substance of material and frequency of message);

6. Diminished vigilance over time, especially in the absence of continued mine awareness programming;

7. Diminished perception of the danger of mines in inverse relation to the degree to which mines are a common feature of life (collected and stored in the house and re-laid by adults, used as flower pots, souvenirs, collectors' items and toys, including go-cart wheels, and for games);

8. Over-confidence or utterly misplaced confidence in knowledge of the area, of mines and minefields;

9. In addition to all the above factors which apply to children as well as to adults, an additional risk arises specifically from children’s characteristics and behavior: play, curiosity (especially new returnee children unsupervised by busy adults), undeveloped sense of risk, danger and consequence, lower retention of mine awareness programs or parents’ warnings;

10. Small stature: Children cannot see mines and trip wires over tall grass, rocks or walls. (In addition, the ratio of death to injury is significantly higher for children because their vital organs are comparatively unprotected and closer to the blast and their bodies are less able to withstand blood loss.)

B. Contributing Factor: Inadequate Information

Inadequate information on many levels is a critical factor in mine incident risk, victim survival and efforts to combat the menace of mines. Levels include:

1. Inadequate data on the circumstances in which people trigger mine explosions and factors contributing to survival during evacuation and treatment, data which would help target high-priority clearance projects and develop more sophisticated education curricula;
2. Inadequate mine awareness curriculum: The nation-wide course does not include advice on evacuation, rescue and basic emergency first-aid techniques, including treatment of bleeding and tourniquet use, with the result that people die or are maimed unnecessarily (the parent who is blown up trying to rescue the dying child, the rescuer who applies a wire tourniquet or who does not know to loosen a tourniquet every 15-20 minutes, with the result that amputation is required for the tourniquet trauma, not for the original mine injury);

3. Inadequate knowledge among medical practitioners, including information on and training in proper amputation surgery and control of infection; also inadequate medical supplies to treat victims;

4. Inadequate knowledge among community and religious leaders, schoolteachers, local, regional and national government staff and officials and others -- knowledge which would contribute to an appropriately high level of concern about the hazards of mines and their threat to national recovery, and would be reflected in official actions, decisions and plans;

5. Inadequate knowledge among international humanitarian workers about the multiple problems of mines, from the number of victims to socio-economic structural effects -- knowledge which would lead to re-focussed programs;

6. Lack of knowledge of all aspects of landmines within the international community -- knowledge which would serve to mobilize funds to meet eradication and victim needs and lead to a complete ban on landmines.

XII. VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Landmine injury needs to be understood as a public health disaster, sapping medical resources in countries least able to cope and cutting a devastating swath through rural areas among the rural poor, challenging barely trained medical staff waiting in bare rooms to deal with a highly complex and expensive medical emergency on a regular basis. And if there is no bare-shelved dispensary and broken-down pick-up available, challenging largely uneducated farmers and herdsmen to control bleeding of severed limbs and shredded bodies and to carry out the victims on their backs by fireman's lift, on improvised stretcher or strapped to a mule. For three hours, twelve hours, two days or longer. The person moaning in agony and bleeding to death on your back may be your child, your wife, your father.
A. Immediate Emergency Care, Evacuation and Treatment

In addition to the condition of the victim and the distance to medical help, there are at least three factors subject to modification by human agency which determine the survival rate of landmine casualties: local knowledge of basic rescue and first-aid techniques; established evacuation procedures and rapid transport; and availability of adequately trained and supplied medical staff at the treating facility.

1. Knowledge of basic first-aid and evacuation procedures can be more important than the time it takes to reach qualified medical aid. ICRC officials determined that victims reaching their Peshawar hospital from great distances had better survival rates than victims comparatively closer if the former were from areas where mine blasts are common, had established evacuation procedures and were in the care of rescuers who possessed information on how to stop bleeding, including use of the tourniquet as a last resort. First-aid could and should -- it must be integrated into a mine education program;

2. Although many factors contribute to a victim’s chances of survival, transport is a significant one; in some areas of the country 80% of mine victims die before arriving in hospital. Survival rates improve dramatically in those places where the ICRC pays taxi fees or bonuses for landmine casualties delivered to their hospital. In Afghanistan victim transport will continue to be a problem although alleviated by the increasing number of private vehicles. There is room for NGO investigation of this troubling deficiency:

Recommendation:

a. In the course of providing first-aid information and supplies as part of a mine education program, instructors could help villagers work out evacuation procedures and provide proper stretchers;

b. An NGO small business credit program might investigate the feasibility of loaning money to village entrepreneurs in far-flung settlements for the purchase of rural (truck or jeep) taxis which could also be used as local ambulances to transport mine victims to hospital, amputees to rehabilitation centers, and serve other important community health needs, and be paid for delivering patients by receiving facilities.
3. The capacity of treating facilities to deal with major trauma could be immensely improved by NGO support of ICRC, UN or other efforts to supply medical facilities (blood, surgical implements, antibiotics, anesthesia, x-ray film) and upgrade staff training in mine casualty treatment and surgery, especially amputation, a difficult and time-consuming series of operations, no two amputations being alike. The Working Group of Medical Professionals at the 1993 Montreux landmine conference called for help in gathering "reliable information on deficiencies and needs of these [local health] facilities." In support of this,

Recommendation:

a. NGOs planning preventive health care programs in remote communities could evaluate local emergency treatment capacity and coordinate with ICRC supply and training activities as appropriate and necessary;

b. In designing health programs NGOs could examine the degree to which landmine trauma needs drain and overwhelm local health care delivery and plan for that in the project mix in addition to or in the absence of other implementing health and medical organizations.

B. Follow-up Rehabilitation

For the child who survives long enough to reach the treating facility, which just may have on hand the surgical implements, blood, anesthesia, antibiotics, x-ray film and trained staff needed, and who gets through the initial multiple operations alive and successfully fights off gangrene, the agony is not over. An ICRC surgeon writes,

Children, who often panic at the sight of an injection needle, must submit to the scalpel time and time again. And as the child ages, the bone of the amputation stump will grow more than the surrounding skin and soft tissues. Many children who have lost a limb to a landmine will have to undergo re-amputation after several years, sometimes repeatedly, quite simply because they are children and there is a differential growth rate between their bones and the overlying musculature and skin.

The mutilated child is a burden to family and society, especially in countries where there are no provisions for rehabilitation and where the availability of even simple artificial limbs may seem a miraculous accomplishment at times....It is often easier to announce a death than a mutilation, above all when dealing with a child. [Giannou, Dr. Chris, "The Medical Impact of Land-Mines on Children, UNICEF Working Paper, pp. 3-4.]
The ICRC runs three prosthetics workshops (in Kabul, Mazar I Sharif and Herat); the Sandy Call Afghanistan Appeal (SGAA) has two workshops (in Badakhsan province and Peshawar); GTZ (Germany) has one technician training center in Peshawar; Handicap International operates one prosthetics, reeducation and training unit in Quetta and manages or supervises four prosthetics workshops in south and southeast Afghanistan; and there is one public prosthetics center in Mashad, Iran. ACBAR-Peshawar coordinates a task force on the disabled.

I visited SGAA in Peshawar, which provides rehabilitation and (lower limb) prostheses, including the Jaipur Foot. I lack information on the degree to which other mine-related disabilities, including blindness and severe mutilation, as well as limb replacement needs are being met for the country as a whole and for children in particular. The ICRC reports that a child of ten will need at least 25 prostheses over a lifetime at a cost of $125 per prosthesis for a total of $3,125. The estimated average cost for treatment and rehabilitation of one mine victim is $5,000; the cost for the 4,000 people maimed by mines in Afghanistan each year comes to $20 million. At agency and public facilities there is a very long waiting list for artificial limbs and inadequate attention to long-term physical therapy due to overwhelming pressures. Decentralized facilities with outreach capacity do not exist.

Even before the war the incidence of disability was very high due to disease, congenital deformities, complications after illness, and so on. The government reports that 1.5 million people are disabled, or one in every seven, and a recent study revealed that ten percent of villagers are disabled in some way. Surveys carried out in three provinces suggest that 20% of the disabled are landmine and UXO victims; extrapolated for the country as a whole, there may be as many as 400,000 landmine-disabled: "This high incidence of disabled among refugees as well as the population within Afghanistan raises very real questions about the capacity of Afghan society to absorb such numbers. Prior to the war, orphans, widows and the disabled were automatically cared for by communities and the extended families. The numbers of orphans, widows and the disabled now far exceed the absorptive capacity of Afghan society."

A detailed description of needs is available in the literature and from specialized agencies like Handicap International and the ICRC. Additionally, the National Association for Disabled Afghans (NADA), established in 1990, could be supported with technical training and aid.
staffed public hospitals, all contribute to the human and financial burdens imposed on the least prepared of the world's populations to confront such a depleting experience. Not only is the hospitalised child a diversion of resources, he or she can no longer contribute to the family's welfare, and those relatives involved with the child's care are also rendered non-productive. The effects are widespread, and the costs of one injured child stretch far across the social spectrum.

This is a perverse irony of the logic behind the use of anti-personnel landmines by the military. Anti-personnel mines are made to maim, not kill. Killing one combatant effectively removes him from the battlefield; injuring, maiming one combatant removes not only the victim himself, but one or two others who must help evacuate him to the rear lines....

Transferred to a civilian setting, this logic disrupts, dislocates and destroys the basic building block of agrarian and pastoral societies: maiming one member of the family unit removes several from productive life (Ibid., p.5).

In the event of the death or disabling of adult members of the family or the interruption of adult employment by war, responsibility may fall to the children. They may be forced not only to drop out of school, if there is one, but to take on or increase their work load or extend the range of their activity in landmine-hazardous occupations like herding, wood gathering and scrap metal scavenging.

B. Children and the Community

The indirect consequences of war are often more lethal to more children than the actual violence of war, and landmines can be seen to play a unique role in prolonging and deepening war conditions. More research is necessary to understand the connections between minefields and the poverty they engender through economic disruption, food insecurity, water shortage and displacement. These conditions give way, in turn, to malnutrition and disease, both diseases of poverty and other epidemics caused by the breakdown of immunization and sanitation programs in a war and post-war situation. Damage is compounded by the over-loading, destruction or diversion of medical and health resources.
Recommendation: SCF could conduct research into the connections between extensive minefields and economic dislocation, food insecurity, poverty, malnutrition and disease, either conducting the research itself or providing in-country logistical support to other researchers. Results would aid the agency's own child and family-focused program and also provide another compelling argument in support of international efforts to introduce a ban on landmines.

XIV. CHILD-FOCUSSED DATA COLLECTION NEEDS

The state of landmine data collection is so poor that it is not even known how many people are killed and injured each year, much less how and where the incidents occurred or how many landmines are in the ground and where. The wider issues -- the implications for health care and medical facilities, the socio-economic effects on families and communities and whole societies -- are only now starting to be investigated in a preliminary way by the VVAF-led landmine steering committee.

Little solid information on the status of children in mined areas is available. UNICEF consultant Jo Boyden notes that the topic, usually treated as an aspect of children affected by organized violence, tends toward anecdotal material in support of human rights work, when what is needed for monitoring and program development is systematic, analytical research.

Potentially useful sources of information include medical and health facilities, demining organizations, NGOs and social science investigators. Potentially useful individual informants on the effects of landmines on children include community leaders, local administrative officers, health workers, teachers and, of course, children. Boyden notes that "effective monitoring will, however, require a prior step - the raising of awareness among aid and social welfare workers, government officials and others of the hazards of mines to civilians, particularly children, and the importance of maintaining good records...."


Boyden lists the many practical obstacles to monitoring the effects of landmines on children and also the opportunities in and feasibility of monitoring. Elements of the monitoring process of interest to SCF include detailing the casualties and monitoring mine-induced poverty and famine. Boyden notes "a growing body of expertise in the field of poverty and famine monitoring and early warning systems in areas of natural disaster especially....A broad range of
monitoring methods have been developed, from high-tech, high-cost ones...to more modest systems, such as rapid rural appraisal, nutritional surveillance and the monitoring of transactions of household assets and of food and commodity prices in markets....Mines monitoring is an important interim step in preventing casualties and economic and social devastation, as well as facilitating demining operations" (Ibid., pp.21-22).

Recommendation: Much important work could be done by SCF in mines monitoring in connection with poverty and famine monitoring work in progress, particularly in East Africa. Findings would assist efforts to target factors contributing to famine conditions, help direct the agency's child and family-focussed field work and assist the advocacy efforts of others, thereby contributing to efforts to counter the epidemic-like growth of organized violence affecting children.

XV. THE INTERNATIONAL LANDMINE BAN CAMPAIGN: A ROLE FOR SCF?

Recommendation: In my Geneva conference report I recommended that SCF sign on to the campaign and noted that, given the feelings engendered by landmines among the public and recent policy statements and financial commitments at the US government level, it would not be a decision that would require a careful weighing of the potential costs to the agency. SCF UK has developed a position on the matter, active field support of mine clearance and good public education documents which the agency could consult in the course of devising its own strategy and perhaps proposing one for the SC Alliance.

If after developing solid landmine programming in the field the agency decides that it is important to publicize its experiences, it could frame its campaign to make the most of what it does best: "This is what mines do to children. We see it every day, in Afghanistan, in Mozambique, in Angola, in Vietnam, in Bosnia." Of course, it would have to finish with, "It has to stop," and present a coherent response to the question of how. Linking up with the VVAF-led campaign is advised because they have been exploring the answers, the evidence and the arguments for years.
ITINERARY

Amman

17-20 April: in Jordan c/o JFO to apply for Pakistan visa

Islamabad

21 April : Reviewed landmine literature
24 April : GH returns from Nepal regional conference
           GH briefing
25 April : Lt. Col. Ian Mansfield, Programme Manager, Mine
           Clearance Programme, UN Office for the
           Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to
           Afghanistan (UNOCHA MCP)
           Dorota Multanowska, UNHCR
26 April : Major Ian Bullpitt, Regional Manager
           (Peshawar), UNOCHA MCP

Peshawar

27 April : Sandy Gall Afghanistan Appeal (SGAA)
           Abdul Wajid Adil, Research Coordinator, socio-
           economic survey on landmines, Vietnam Veterans
           of America (VVAF)
28 April : Charles MacFadden, Executive Director, Agency
           Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)
           John Dixon, Director, International Rescue
           Committee (IRC)
           Mine Awareness Course (3 hours), UNOCHA MCP
           Willie Demeyer, EU Coordinator

Jalalabad

2 May : Dr. Wali and Haji, Project Leaders, Projects 3
        and 1, Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC)
        Staff, Flail machine project
        Staff, Mine Dog Center (MDC)
3 May : Staff, ATC
        Staff, MDC
Staff, Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA)

4 May : Staff, ATC
Travel by car back to Peshawar

Peshawar
5 May : Col. Kafayatullah Eblagh, Director, ATC
Maj. Ian Bullpitt and
Noel Spencer, Mine Training Coordinator

Islamabad-Karachi
7 May : Depart for Karachi
8 May : Travel to Geneva

Geneva
9-11 May : Second NGO Landmine Conference
12 May : Depart for Cyprus