

Statement by the ICBL MRE Sub-Working Group to the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, Geneva, 19 September 2002

This statement was prepared with the help of about 20 ICBL MRE practitioners from all around the world.

Jody Williams said on Monday: “We are not here to create institutions, we are here to respond to the needs of human beings affected by landmines.” MRE can and should be this vital link between human beings, from mine-affected communities and the mine action community as a whole. By putting mine-affected communities at the very centre of its work, MRE is there to constantly remind us what we are here for: people affected by landmines.

A few weeks ago, along the India-Pakistan border, a 10-year old girl called Jamali and two of her friends found what they thought was a treasure, in a field, not far from the village where they had been invited to take part in a feast. The treasure was a circular box. The kids then removed the screws of the box and pulled out a plastic pipe from which a liquid came out (this was the explosive). Then, an adult turned up and they had to abandon the operation.

This story took place in India, but It could have happened in Angola, in Nepal or in any other mine-affected country. This story tells us fundamental things about MRE:

- MRE must take place within the community. MRE does not happen in air-conditioned offices. It happens on the ground, on a daily basis, and needs to be developed by and within the community itself, with the support of practitioners.
- For many years, MRE practitioners gave a lot of attention to teaching technical aspects (how mines look, how they work...). Today, instead, MRE looks at reducing the risk by helping communities to better use and broadcast mine-related information. In addition, MRE has a key role to ensure that community needs are really placed at the very centre of mine action programs.

The LM gives us a very good example of that. According to LM 2002, new MRE programs were developed in ten countries: Cambodia, Colombia, Iraq, FYR Macedonia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Vietnam. Most of these new programs follow a community-based approach, relying on existing structures rather than building bureaucracies...

Another important finding of the LM relates to the need for more MRE. Angola, Burma, Chad, Georgia, India, Iran, Nepal, and Somalia, as well as Palestine, are places where the humanitarian impact of landmines and UXO remained at an alarming level. The communities' needs in these countries should be addressed as soon as possible. A number of very interesting MRE programs are being developed by ICBL country campaigns all around the world, but they require sustained funding in order to have a real impact on the daily lives of mine-affected communities. In

addition to responding to the communities needs, these programs also bring landmine issues forward in countries where the MBT is still not in force.

Another finding of LMR 2002 relates to the growing quality of MRE programs, 3 trends were particular visible in this period:

- standardization of MRE
- integration, with other mine action activities
- evaluation and review of programs, in at least in 13 countries and areas.

So, in general, the news as far as the progress of MRE is concerned is good. However, two concerns remain:

- funding: most of mine action funding goes to mine clearance, a larger portion of mine action funding should be allocated to MRE;
- response to the needs of mine-affected communities: MRE provides a unique opportunity to place communities'needs at the very centre of mine action. This needs to be considered both in the planning and in the allocation of resources.

Thank you.