

NEWSFLASH

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION

Asmara, Eritrea

Today, 8 April 2010 the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance to Mine Action was commemorated at Expo Compound in Asmara. The observance of the day was spearheaded by the Eritrean Demining Authority in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners. Eritrea is one of 24 countries in the world that are badly affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) as a result of the 30 year liberation war as well as the border war of 1998-2000. Records indicate that one in five people in Eritrea is affected by mines and ERWs. According to the 2004 Landmine Impact Survey, over 650,000 people in Eritrea live in landmine-impacted communities. Out of 4,176 communities in the six zobas, 481 communities contain 914 suspected hazard areas. About 60 per cent of the mine casualties are children, and the majority of the accidents are due to tampering and playing. In 2009 alone, 38 incidents were reported by Mine Risk Education teams, of which 29 were children.

Speaking at today's event, the Office in Charge for UNICERF Eritrea, Dr Ikem Chiejine spoke of the impact of the mine risk education program conducted by UNICEF and the EDA. "Since the MRE program was initiated in the year 2000, majority of the war-affected communities have benefited resulting in a drastic decrease of incidents of mines and explosive remnants of war", he said.



Dr Ikem Chiejine, Officer in Charge, UNICEF.

The key achievements of the mine risk education include a 2008 KAP survey that strengthened the MRE program significantly; more than 1.3 million

people of various age groups and gender been reached by the community-based MRE activities; Large numbers of ERWs have been collected and demolished; and 600 bells made of ERWs were recently replaced with safe school bells in war affected schools saving hundreds of lives. An injury surveillance system is being implemented to collect and document cases of injuries from mines and ERWs to facilitate assistance of these victims.



Children added colour to the event. They made a call for a mine free world.

Partnerships: Partners in the MRE programme are the EDA, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare, Italian Cooperation, UNICEF and UNDP. Dr Ikem acknowledged and thanked the Italian Cooperation for their funding support to UNICEF, "without which UNICEF will be unable to support its partner the EDA", he said.



Left, Giacomo Giovanni, Officer in Charge for Italian Cooperation, the main donor. With Gbemi Akinboyo, Chief of Child Protection responsible for MRE interventions and Ikem Chiejine.

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