IMAS Mine Risk Education
Best Practice Guidebook 4

PUBLIC INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

International
mine action standards

United Nations

IMAS

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Geneva, November 2005

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Foreword

Over the last few years the mine action community has taken major steps towards professionalising its mine risk education (MRE) projects and programmes. A central element in that process has been the development of international standards for MRE by UNICEF, within the framework of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), maintained by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). In October 2003, UNICEF completed seven MRE standards, which were formally adopted as IMAS in June 2004.

The MRE component of the IMAS outlines minimum standards for the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of MRE programmes and projects. The IMAS are largely prescriptive, advising operators, mine action centres, national authorities and donors on ***what*** is necessary for the development and implementation of effective MRE programmes. They do not, however, guide stakeholders on ***how*** they might adapt their programmes and projects to be more compliant with the standards.

To facilitate the implementation of the MRE standards in the field, UNICEF entered into a partnership with the Geneva International Centre for International Demining (GICHD) to develop this series of *Best Practice Guidebooks* to provide more practical advice on how to implement the MRE standards. A total of 12 Guidebooks have been developed, using expertise from a variety of different people, countries and contexts. The Guidebooks address a wide range of areas covered by the MRE IMAS, including:

- How to support the coordination of MRE and the dissemination of public information;
- How to implement risk education and training projects;
- How to undertake community mine action liaison; and
- What elements should be considered to implement effective MRE projects in emergencies.

The primary aim of these Guidebooks is to provide practical advice, tools and guidance to undertake MRE programmes that are compliant with IMAS. They are

also meant to provide a framework for a more predictable, systematic and integrated approach to risk education, and are intended for use by anyone engaged in planning, managing or evaluating mine risk education programmes and projects, such as government ministries, mine action centres, United Nations agencies and bodies, and local and international organisations. Donors may also find them useful in assessing proposals for mine risk education projects and programmes.

But while the Guidebooks seek to provide practical advice for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects, they remain general in nature and will need to be adapted to each new situation in its specific cultural and political context. UNICEF and the GICHD hope that they will prove a useful tool in making mine risk education more effective and efficient.

In addition to being distributed in hard copy, the *Best Practice Guidebooks* can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet at *www.mineactionstandards.org* as well as the GICHD website *www.gichd.ch* and the UNICEF website *www.unicef.org*.

Introduction

Introduction to the Series

According to the IMAS, the term "mine risk education" refers to "*activities which seek to reduce the risk of injury from mines and ERW by raising awareness and promoting behavioural change, including public information dissemination, education and training, and community mine action liaison*."[1] MRE is one of the five components of mine action. The others are: ***demining*** (i.e. mine and explosive remnants of war [ERW] survey, mapping, marking and clearance); ***victim assistance***, including rehabilitation and reintegration; ***advocacy*** against the use of anti-personnel landmines; and ***stockpile destruction***.[2]

The first two editions of the IMAS — in 1997 and 2000 — did not include MRE-specific standards and guides. In 2000, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the focal point for mine-related activities within the UN system, requested UNICEF to develop international standards for MRE. UNMAS is the office within the UN Secretariat responsible for the development and maintenance of international mine action standards. UNICEF is the primary actor within the UN in undertaking mine risk education.

In October 2003, UNICEF completed a set of seven MRE standards, which were formally adopted as IMAS in June 2004. The seven standards are as follows:

- ***IMAS 07.11: Guide for the management of mine risk education***;
- ***IMAS 07.31: Accreditation of mine risk education organisations and operations***;
- ***IMAS 07.41: Monitoring of mine risk education programmes and projects***;
- ***IMAS 08.50: Data collection and needs assessment for mine risk education***;
- ***IMAS 12.10: Planning for mine risk education programmes and projects***;
- ***IMAS 12.20: Implementation of mine risk education programmes and projects;*** and

- *IMAS 14.20: Evaluation of mine risk education programmes and projects*.

To facilitate the implementation of the MRE standards in the field, in 2004 UNICEF contracted the Geneva International Centre for International Demining to develop a series of best practice guidebooks for MRE programmes and projects.[3] The following 12 *Best Practice Guidebooks* have been developed:

- *1: An Introduction to Mine Risk Education*;
- *2: Data Collection and Needs Assessment*;
- *3: Planning*;
- *4: Public Information Dissemination*;
- *5: Education and Training*;
- *6: Community Mine Action Liaison*;
- *7: Monitoring*;
- *8: Evaluation*;
- *9: Emergency Mine Risk Education*;
- *10: Coordination;*
- *11: The Collected IMAS on Mine Risk Education*; and
- *12: Glossary of Terms and Resources*.

The *Best Practice Guidebooks* seek to address the particular needs of MRE as an integral part of mine action. Each Guidebook is intended to serve as a stand-alone document, although some include cross-references to other Guidebooks or to other sources.

Introduction to Guidebook 4

This Guidebook, number 4 of the Series, provides guidance on how to conduct public information dissemination in MRE projects and programmes within the context of a broader communication strategy.

Public information dissemination as part of MRE refers primarily to the provision of information to at-risk individuals and communities to reduce their risk of injury from mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW). It seeks to raise their awareness of the dangers and to promote safe behaviour. It is primarily a one-way form of communication transmitted through mass media, which may provide relevant information and advice in a cost-effective and timely manner.

Public information dissemination projects may be "stand-alone" MRE projects that are implemented independently, and often in advance of other mine action activities. In an emergency situation,[4] due to time constraints and lack of accurate data, public information dissemination is often the most practical means of communicating safety information to reduce risk. Equally it may form part of a more comprehensive risk reduction strategy within a mine action programme, supporting community-based MRE, demining or advocacy activities.

In many MRE projects and programmes there has been a heavy reliance on posters and pamphlets. These media do not generally have a long lifespan, are typically text-dependent (and therefore inappropriate in low-literacy areas or where there are many languages) and may not easily be understood across cultures. Several

radio programmes have been used to "reach" areas where radio reception is poor. Written materials have been distributed to people who have little or no literacy skills, or who speak a different language or dialect. And many video and television programmes can only be accessed by populations in major urban centres — who are unaffected by mines and other ERW.

This Guidebook is therefore based on the principle that creative communication will enhance not only the effectiveness of MRE but also of mine action as a whole.

Layout of the Guidebook

Section 1 of the Guidebook discusses what is meant by communication, and reviews the ways in which we communicate.

Section 2 discusses the role of public information dissemination within a communication strategy for MRE, and for mine action as a whole.

Section 3 describes a process for developing a communication strategy for an MRE project or programme plan.

Section 4 reviews MRE message design.

Section 5 looks at the mix of communication channels that help to get your messages across.

Section 6 reviews briefly programmatic responsibilities for communication.

A glossary of abbreviations and acronyms, the IMAS definition of key terms, and a selected bibliography and list of resources for all the *Best Practice Guidebooks* in the Series can be found in *Best Practice Guidebook 12*.

Endnotes

[1] IMAS 04.10, Second Edition, 1 January 2003 (as amended on 1 December 2004), 3.157.
[2] *Ibid.*, 3.147.
[3] For the purpose of the IMAS and these Guidebooks, a project is defined as an activity, or series of connected activities, with an agreed objective. A project will normally have a finite duration and a plan of work. An MRE programme is defined as a series of related MRE projects in a given country or area.
[4] See *Best Practice Guidebook 9* for general advice on how to conduct MRE in an emergency situation.

1. What is communication?

Communication is the process of sharing information and meaning. It can be used to inform people of the dangers of mines and other ERW, to demonstrate safe behaviour and to teach mine-safe[1] skills. It can be used to encourage safe behaviour and to create support for mine-safe behaviour among communities and leaders. It can also be used to create social and legal environments that support MRE.

1.1 How do we communicate?

There are many different ways to communicate, and effective MRE programmes need to use a variety of communication processes, media and techniques. The ways in which they are used and the messages and meanings they convey can differ with culture and context. The processes can include reading and writing but also discussion, questions and answers, sitting in front of the television or learning in a classroom. The techniques include using the voice, facial expressions, and movement.

Media are the different channels we use for communication. They can be seen in four major categories as set out below: "person-to-person" or "interpersonal" communication, small media, traditional media and the mass media. Public information dissemination, as defined by the IMAS, covers the mass media and small media.

1.1.1 Person-to-person or interpersonal communication

This involves direct, face-to-face contact and allows questions and answers and clarification of meaning. It helps to ensure mutual understanding. Interpersonal communication includes conversation between friends or family, and discussions with health professionals, community health workers, religious and community leaders, traditional health practitioners, women's and youth organisations, school teachers, trade union leaders, development workers, government officials, parents and children, including child-to-child communication.

1.1.2 Traditional media

Traditional media are performance arts that are used to illustrate and convey information in an entertaining way. Live performances can provide special opportunities for interaction between performers and audience. They include drama, traditional forms of theatre, puppet shows, street theatre, storytelling, songs and dance. Traditional media are often artistic methods of communication passed down from generation to generation.

1.1.3 Small media

The small media are often tools used to support larger communication initiatives or to illustrate interpersonal communication. They include posters, cassettes, leaflets, brochures, slide sets, video, flipcharts, flash cards, T-shirts, badges and loudspeakers.

1.1.4 Mass media

The mass media provide indirect, one-way communication and include community, national and international radio and television as well as newspapers, magazines, comic books, cinema or other situations where a large number of people can be reached with information without personal contact.

Endnote

[1]Mine-safe was a term originally used by the organisation CIET, to refer to safe behaviour among the civilian population faced with a mine or ERW threat. The acronym CIET comes from the name of the research centre in Mexico where the organization began in 1985: *Centro de Investigación de Enfermedades Tropicales* (Tropical Disease Research Centre). When CIET registered in February 1994 as a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in New York, the name became "Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies", reflecting the broader application of epidemiological methods to research areas beyond the health field. More recently, in South Africa and Europe, CIET has come to stand for "Community Information, Empowerment and Transparency".

2. The role of public information dissemination in a communication strategy

Effective MRE involves communication among and between different individuals and different groups, or "audiences". To achieve mine-safe behaviour it is important not only to inform and educate communities on safe behaviour but also to provide an environment that supports this behaviour. This could include having legislation that supports mine-safe behaviour or local/national political support.

2.1 Who should MRE target?

An effective MRE programme will usually have more than one communication audiences. It is important that these audiences are clearly defined.

- The first and most important audience usually includes members of communities who are at risk from mines or ERW.
- The second audience can be school teachers or local leaders who will encourage community members to engage in mine-safe behaviour.
- The third audience may be politicians, or the mass media, who can promote changes in policy or legislation to support mine safety.

2.2 The process of adopting new behaviour

As our aim is to encourage the adoption of mine-safe behaviour, it is important to understand why and how people change what they do.

A large body of behavioural research shows that we react in a particular way to accepting and adopting new behaviour. As a rule, we do not suddenly begin to do something we have never done before: we learn and weigh the benefits of doing it or not doing it; we look around to see if anyone else is doing it — and if our friends and community accept the new behaviour. If it seems socially acceptable, valuable and practical, we learn the skills to undertake the new behaviour and we may apply it to our own lives. We then evaluate whether it is worthwhile to

continue. From our experience we may reject the new behaviour, or we may encourage others to follow our example.

The focus of an MRE communication strategy therefore should be to:

- Provide the information, assurance and encouragement that is needed to encourage mine-safe behaviour;
- Identify and promote model mine-safe behaviour;
- Teach the skills that are needed and ensure people can use these new skills;
- Provide a social environment that supports mine-safe behaviour;
- Provide ongoing encouragement to continue with mine-safe behaviour; and
- Encourage people to pass the information and new skills on to others.

For the people your project wants to reach, you will need to explore:

- The messages that are most useful and practical to them;
- The people they most trust;
- The communication channels they prefer; and
- The ways they would most like to be involved in MRE activities.

In general, the most effective way we learn new behaviour is from other people, either directly through personal contact or indirectly through the media. Both can be used to demonstrate people "like us" practising mine-safe behaviour and to stimulate discussion among families, friends and communities.

2.3 Background to a communication strategy

It is important that your communication strategy is based on the communication processes, techniques and channels that are most appropriate for specific audiences. But **there is no universally effective communication strategy:** different communication processes and channels will reach different age and gender groups depending on the social, economic, political and geographical context and will have a different impact on achieving mine-safe behaviour. What works in one place may not work in another.

Each communication strategy should be based on careful research and developed specifically for each region, ethnic or social group. It should mix different processes and communication channels and repeat messages over time.

The strategy should focus on encouraging mine-safe behaviour that is appropriate to the specific situation and people's existing knowledge. The behaviour being communicated must be feasible. There is no point in promoting behaviour that is not possible for economic, political, social or religious reasons.

The most successful efforts to achieve mine-safe (or any other) behaviour use a variety of interpersonal, mass media and traditional media channels. These include individuals who practice mine-safe behaviour, local influential people and community leaders, radio and television networks, community training programmes and — most important of all — those that encourage communities to participate in planning, implementing, monitoring and improving their own interventions.

Although interpersonal communication channels have often been used in programmes, MRE practitioners have tended to prefer using trained instructors

paid by the programme, or “media products”, such as T-shirts or posters. On the other hand, **valuable local radio and local television have been underused**.

3. How to develop a communication strategy for MRE

Mine risk education, like any communication programme, has six major stages:

- Needs analysis and research for strategy selection;
- Developing messages and materials and testing;
- Selection of communication channels;
- Implementation;
- Evaluating effectiveness; and
- Feedback.

Communication strategies should therefore be based on a general understanding of how to bring about behavioural change together with a detailed understanding of the local context.

3.1 Establish what is needed

The first step in a communication strategy is to be sure of your communication objective, e.g.:

- Is it to provide awareness of the danger of mines and ERW?
- Is it to encourage mine-safe behaviour among those who are already aware of the danger of mines?
- Is it to encourage mine-safe behaviour among a group of people who are particularly at risk?

For example, in a refugee camp, refugees may be totally unaware of a mine and ERW threat. The first step in MRE with them is therefore to raise awareness of the dangers. In other situations, however, most people, except young children, are likely to be aware of the dangers.

Increased knowledge and awareness about the danger of mines and ERW and safe behaviour do not necessarily translate into mine-safe behaviour. The dangers of hard drugs, drink-driving, smoking and obesity, for instance, are generally known but are ignored by many.

Therefore you should **maintain your focus on changing behaviour**.

3.2 Identify the primary target group

Having set your communication objective, you then need to identify the most important target groups you wish to reach, normally those groups who are most at risk of a mine or ERW accident — and why.

Think this through carefully. **Don't assume, as many MRE programmes do, that children and women are always the most at risk. In many situations, men are the majority of landmine and ERW victims.**

Similarly, there is a common presumption that potential victims are unaware of the mine/ERW threat. Research shows that this is often not the case. It is essential to understand the reasons, both explicit and implicit, for risk-taking — and any obstacles to safe behaviour.

Risk-takers are broadly put into five categories:

- The **Unaware** (the person doesn't know about the danger of mines or ERW);
- The **Uninformed** (the person knows about mines but doesn't know about safe behaviour);
- The **Misinformed** (the person wrongly believes he knows about mine-safe behaviour or is given incorrect information by others);
- The **Reckless** (the person knows about mine-safe behaviour but ignores it); and
- The **Forced** (the person has no option but to intentionally adopt unsafe behaviour).

Having identified what is needed and by whom, you now need some essential information to start programming your communication activities.

3.3 Gather the information you need

As elsewhere, planning a communication strategy requires good information, a thorough analysis of the situation and development of a plan that is practical in terms of local involvement, time and resources.

Before you undertake or commission research be very clear about the information you require and the answers you need. Good research is essential to your programme but it can be a waste of a lot of time and money if it is not designed with precision and with very clear aims.

For a large research exercise it is advisable to commission professional researchers to design and undertake it. But if you know precisely what information you want, there are a variety of straightforward and inexpensive methods available — but they do require adequate planning and time.

Always be aware when designing research that it has to be analysed — and this is time-consuming. Keep your list of research questions short and to the point. And always ensure that social information is collected by age and gender.

Here are the major questions you need to answer. (Some of this information you may already have, but, if not, we also suggest the best methods to use, which are described in the following section.)

(*For more information, refer to Guidebook 2: Data Collection and Needs Assessment and Guidebook 6: Community Liaison*.)

3.3.1 What and where is the problem?

Keep an open mind. Don't concentrate on mines if the real threat is from unexploded submunitions, shells or grenades. Find out what is actually killing and injuring civilians.

➢ *Research method to use: quantitative survey/rapid appraisal.*

3.3.2 Who is at risk?

Establish who is being killed or injured and why. You need to know the age, gender, and occupation of the victims and what they were doing at the time of the accident. Was the accident the result of lack of knowledge of mines, lack of information of mine-safe behaviour, recklessness or lack of options? As mentioned earlier, there are often misconceptions about who is at greatest risk of mine or ERW accidents.

➢ *Research method to use: district survey.*

3.3.3 Who are the major target audiences?

When you have established who is at greatest risk, you will be able to identify your primary target audiences. You should also get information on other audiences (secondary or tertiary audiences), who would support and help motivate and encourage mine-safe behaviour among your target audience.

➢ *Research method to use: qualitative research/rapid appraisal.*

3.3.4 What are the characteristics of the target audiences?

You will need to find out by age group and gender:

- What knowledge they have of mines, ERW and mine-safe behaviour?
- What is their behaviour with regard to mines and ERW?
- What misconceptions do they have about mine/ERW threats?
- What positive attitudes do they have that could be built on?
- What are the barriers to mine-safe behaviour?
- How important is mine-safe behaviour within the community?
- What are the major occupations of the target audiences?
- What are the major sources of credible information?
- What are their media habits — e.g. do they listen to the radio, if so, which channel and at what times?
- Do they read? If so, what?
- What are the education levels of the target audiences?
- What are the major social or work groupings to which the target audiences belong?

➢ *Research methods to use: Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices (KAP) survey (see 3.4.1), focus group discussion, workshops, participatory rural appraisal.*

3.3.5 What media are available?

If it is practical to use the media, mass or traditional, you need to know who listens to or watches what and when. You also need to learn about the target audience's preferences for programming style and treatment. This can vary substantially between women, men and youth, and will often reflect where they live (in the city or in rural areas), their level of education and economic situation.

So, if you intend to use radio or TV, bear in mind differences between women's and men's listening/viewing patterns. For example, if you want your messages to reach women, don't schedule your communication for early morning or early evening: these times might be prime listening time for men but women are likely to be busy preparing meals. Vary your scheduling to reach the maximum number of your specific target audiences.

Radio has often been an underused resource in MRE, especially local radio. But a radio programme is only going to have an impact if people hear it. So if you are thinking about using radio, devote some time (and possibly money) to collecting information on:

- Radio ownership, including access to radios among the target audience;
- Listenership: information by age, gender, social, ethnicity and income;
- Listening patterns: what are the target audiences preferred programmes, programme formats and times of listening, by age, gender, social, ethnic group and income?;
- Transmission: number and type of stations on air, frequencies, time of transmission, languages used and coverage;
- Press freedom: independent stations may be more credible to the target audiences.

Also identify any forms of traditional media operating in your target area. Local drama groups or puppets can be an effective means of communicating MRE information and of modelling mine-safe behaviour.

➢ *Research methods to use: media listenership and coverage survey.*

3.3.6 Information on existing campaigns

Look at what others have done — not just in MRE campaigns, but also in other similar initiatives, such as HIV/AIDS awareness.

3.4 How to collect the information you need

There are no hard and fast rules for research — social science, development workers and the media have developed many techniques and approaches. Below are a few possibilities that have proved appropriate to public health campaigns. Remember, you don't have to do the research yourself — universities, market researchers, health workers and the media can all do research for you. This could be a logical task for the mine action centre (MAC) to coordinate, with your input.

Research is generally divided into quantitative methods (some form of survey) and qualitative methods (where views and perceptions are recorded). It is not necessarily an either/or — both techniques can be used effectively.

3.4.1 Quantitative methods

KAP Survey

A Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices (KAP) survey is a standard tool in designing health promotion interventions, and with minimal adaptation to include research into media and other communication channels can be used as a central planning tool for an MRE programme. A KAP survey is based on a questionnaire which includes multiple-choice questions, closed-end questions (yes/no replies) and a limited range of open-ended questions. It is administered to a statistically representative sample of the target audience.

In addition to providing statistically-representative findings, a KAP survey establishes a baseline that can be used for monitoring and evaluation. But a KAP survey provides limited contextual information, is often time-consuming and can be expensive. It requires statistical analysis and it can be difficult to obtain statistically representative samples in areas of conflict where there is little baseline information. Costs can, however, be minimised by using existing research and secondary documentation where possible, and perhaps adding questions to an existing household survey. (*See Guidebook 2: Data Collection and Needs Assessment for a sample KAP survey.*)

Media coverage surveys

It is likely that there are media coverage surveys available. Most mass media organisations have some indication of their listenership, viewership or readership and geographic coverage — which they require for legal and advertising purposes.

3.4.2 Qualitative methods

Partly due to the disadvantages of quantitative methods, health interventions often use qualitative methods. As such research gathers information about feelings and impressions from a relatively small number of respondents, the data cannot usually be quantified in numerical terms — therefore caution should be exercised in making generalisations from the results.

The main advantage of qualitative methods is that they generate a dialogue with participants, letting you know what people really feel. They are also useful for designing survey instruments. The drawbacks are that they require good skills to carry them out, can be lengthy to prepare and analyse, and it can be difficult to interpret qualitative information.

Focus group discussions

In a focus group discussion (FGD), a moderator or facilitator guides a number of small groups (six to 10 people) who each share similar characteristics (age, sex, level of education, rural, urban, etc.) through a discussion of a selected topic allowing them to talk freely and spontaneously. The major questions to be discussed

should be determined before the FGD takes place and the facilitator should be asked to note the major results of discussion immediately after the FGD. This assists with analysis. (*See Guidebook 2 for sample FGD guides for local adaptation.*)

Discussions with key informants

In addition to the obvious need to meet with other mine action actors and key government officials, you should spend time with community leaders, health workers and alternative medical practitioners in the community, such as shaman and other traditional healers, for they may have valuable contributions to make. You will also be able to solicit their approval and support for your proposed MRE initiatives, which may ultimately prove critical to their success.

Workshops

A workshop to bring the media and your MRE colleagues together can generate significant information. The media will be helped to understand the issues and areas of political and programmatic sensitivity. Your colleagues will have the opportunity to build bridges with the media, to understand how journalists and broadcasters work, and to learn about opportunities they can exploit. Workshops may also improve coordination within MRE in particular and mine action in general.

Secondary sources review

Even in a post-conflict context, there are almost certainly relevant studies by aid, development or human rights organisations, local or external academics, media organisations, or United Nations bodies that will answer some of your questions.

3.5 Analysing the information

Most raw data remains just that — raw, stored and forgotten. Analysis of data is a specialised field. The validity and usefulness of the analysis, the time it will take and the type of results you achieve will depend heavily on the survey design and research methodology. For example, if you did not include questions about age, gender, occupation, or education levels in your research design, you will be unable to analyse or disaggregate your data by these variables. A reasonable range of variables provides richer and more useful information and allows for specific patterns of information or behaviour to emerge. But too many variables can result in an unmanageable mess.

When you begin the analysis, look for patterns in the results. For example, an emerging pattern might be that a high proportion of those engaging in risky behaviour are 14 to 17-year-old boys, or that village people of all ages and both sexes believe that school teachers are the most important source of MRE information. Patterns usually become apparent fairly quickly. If the pattern persists within a specific community, you may not have to analyse all the questions or all the questionnaires from that community. Similar patterns may persist across a district or region — or you may find that quite different situations exist among different communities.

Quantitative surveys are quicker and easier to analyse than qualitative ones but provide limited information about behaviour, beliefs and motivation for action.

In analysing information from focus group discussions or workshops use the facilitator’s notes that list the major issues and responses. This provides you with a structure for analysis. Participatory rural appraisal and rapid/rural appraisal methods also allow for quick and relatively easy analysis.

It is useful where qualitative methods have been used, in particular FGDs, to go back to the respondents with the major results and check them.

At the very least get some peer review of your own analysis. You may be able to persuade local academics or people in other agencies to help you.

Now it’s time to design your message(s).

4. Designing MRE messages

4.1 Basic principles

When you have identified the major problem(s) you want to address, your target audiences, and what specific information they require, the next step is to design the messages.

Message development involves decision-making in three main areas:

- Determining message concepts that will bring about the desired behaviour change;
- Selecting the communication approach; and
- Choosing the message appeal or tone.

The golden rule for every campaign is that there must be a positive message — people need to feel that they can take action and that by taking action they can improve their own and their families' lives.

Messages to be communicated depend on target audiences, the behaviour to be promoted and the factors likely to influence target audiences to adopt the desired behaviour. You will probably have to refer constantly to your research results to ensure that the messages are culturally and socially appropriate.

Good messages should do the following:

- Reinforce positive factors;
- Address misunderstandings and areas of deficient knowledge;
- Address attitudes;
- Give the benefits of behaviour being promoted;
- Urge specific action;
- State where to find the services being promoted;
- State where to find help, if needed; and
- Address barriers to action.

A few key messages are included in the Annex to this Guidebook. But don't just cut and paste — you need to adapt the messages to your particular context!

4.2 Creating the message

There are yards of textbooks about how to write for the media, how to write advertising copy, how to persuade people, how to reach non-literate audiences and even on "project support communication".

But, quite simply, your biggest decision in this area is whether to write the messages yourself (or within the office) or whether you look for outside help. Unless you are blessed with an editorially gifted staff member, you should probably look for professional help. Writing for mass communication is a different skill to writing your monthly report.

And don't be put off by this word "writing". Even if your message will be delivered in pictures or sound, the basis of any good communication activity is a good script.

The important qualities of good writing for communication are these:

- It uses simple, everyday words and ideas, and it is concise (big words, long sentences and complicated structures only confuse audiences);
- It uses terms "normal" human beings can understand (don't say "*25 per cent of the population*" when you can say "*one in four people*");
- It is attractive, "catchy": creating interest is a very important part of communication;
- It is relevant; and
- It is culturally aware.

The required talent of a good writer in this field is to produce a proficient first draft — which can then be improved, checked, altered and tested. Use your own judgement by all means, but don't be afraid to ask for the judgement of others. And be particularly aware of messages that are intended to reach people of other cultures. What may be normal, effective or polite to you and your friends may be offensive to people outside your culture.

4.3 Pre-testing messages and materials

One of the most common mistakes is to not pre-test ideas and channels to be used — or to test only in the office corridor and not among the people for whom they are intended. This can result in messages that are meaningless, or potentially culturally offensive, or in producing materials that many of the target group cannot access. For example, written brochures are of little value to the illiterate, and TV spots have little effect if the target audience has no electricity.

Pre-testing must be done among the target audience. If the target audience is young male farmers of a specific ethnic group, pre-testing must be undertaken among these people — not among young male farmers of an ethnic group living closer to your office.

Pre-testing means trying out ideas, messages and pilot programmes with a representative sample of the target audiences and colleagues, ***before*** they are finalised.

Pre-testing can be done at various levels of sophistication with different costs. It does not have to take long.

4.3.1 Why pre-test?

You must pre-test to find out whether messages have been conveyed the way they were intended and whether the audience like them and understand them or not. This saves time and money by identifying and solving problems at an early stage — and helps to involve local people in the process and alert them to it.

Remember: the purpose of pre-testing is to ensure that messages and materials will be effective — and, if necessary, to improve them, not simply to rubber-stamp them and avoid further work.

Also remember: while it is important to share the messages with colleagues and counterparts to ensure technical accuracy, what they think or understand from the messages is likely to be very different from that of your target audiences. Be prepared for situations where your colleagues dislike your messages or find the materials unattractive yet your target audiences find them easy to understand, credible and appropriate: and vice versa.

4.3.2 What do you need to find out?

Pre-testing aims to ensure that messages or materials are:

- Understandable;
- Socially acceptable;
- Relevant;
- Attractive; and
- Persuasive.

4.3.3 How do you pre-test?

Bearing in mind that the target audiences are the ultimate judges of your messages, the process for pre-testing is to:

- Start by consulting local colleagues in your own organisation to check technical information;
- Discuss messages and show proposed materials to experts in other MRE or mine action bodies;
- If the message or material has been prepared by a man, get a woman's view — and vice versa;
- If changes are necessary, make them and then pre-test the idea/message/material with your target audience, for example, by using a FGD format or group or individual interviews. If the primary audience is young men in rural villages, test the messages with a sample of these young men. If a secondary audience is mothers and/or school teachers, test these messages directly with them.
- If necessary, make changes based on the target audience's responses and go through the process again.

With your messages well tested, you can now start choosing the channels to use — the "media mix".

For one approach to pre-testing see the table *Media and materials pre-testing methods* overleaf.

Media and materials pre-testing methods			
Method	**Purpose**	**When to use**	**Resources required**
Focus group interviews	Obtain in-depth information re: beliefs, perceptions, language, interests and concerns.	Test concepts, issues, audio-visual or printed materials and logos/other artwork. Use to discuss concepts before materials development.	Discussion outline; trained moderator; list of respondents; meeting room; tape or video recorder (for audio-visual materials).
Group testing	Test materials with many respondents at once.	Pre-test audio or audio-visual materials.	List of respondents; questionnaire; large meeting room; audio-visual equipment.
Self-administered questionnaires	Obtain individual reactions to draft materials (posted/ personally delivered).	Print or audio-visual materials.	List of respondents; draft materials; questionnaire; postage; tape or video recorder (to view audio-visual materials).
Individual interviews (phone or in person)	Probe individual's responses, beliefs; discuss range of issues.	Develop hypotheses, messages, motivational strategies; discuss sensitive issues or complex materials.	List of respondents; discussion Primer/ questionnaire; trained interviewer; telephone or quiet room; tape recorder.
Intercept interviews	Obtain more quantitative information about materials, messages.	Concepts, messages, beliefs, printed, audio-visual materials.	Structured questionnaire; trained interviewers; access to shopping centre, school or other location; room or other place to interview; tape recorder or digital camera.

Adapted from *Making Health Communication Programs Work*, US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, 2003. For further information refer to *www.cancer.gov/pinkbook/page6*.

5. Selecting the right communication channels

You need to choose the communication channel(s) that will be most appropriate for the audience or audiences you want to reach. How and what you communicate will depend on your audience's specific situation ("profile"), the knowledge they already have, the communication channels they have access to and the sources of information they trust and consider important.

In selecting the appropriate media or channel ensure that the people you want to reach:

- Have access to it;
- Understand it easily;
- Trust it;
- Believe it;

. . . and that the medium is appropriate for the message.

You should also be aware that repeating your messages is essential to effective communication, which is an organic, ***human*** (therefore imperfect) process. People can easily miss just one "spreadshot" message, even if it is carried in all media available. If you doubt this, just consider how modern advertising works: strong, simple messages repeated as often as their budget can afford.

But you must also adapt your messages as your programme progresses. Don't push one message to the point where it bores people. Plan your messages to support your programme cycle: you will often have to start with "emergency" messages but then develop them into messages covering "what to do in a minefield", about marking, surveying and clearing, about restoring agriculture in the communities, about caring and rehabilitation services, about political and economic attention to the mine-affected.

You will obviously need to monitor your communication activities and use feedback to adapt them and keep them relevant to overall objectives. But this is exactly what programme managers are expected to do with other programme components. As with mine clearance and victim assistance operations, communication in MRE is not magic: it just needs effort, resources and management.

5.1 Pros and cons of means of public information dissemination

Here are some guidelines on the pros and cons of media typically used for public information dissemination.

5.1.1 Mass media

Accessing the mass media is discussed in greater detail below, but here are a few basic principles on using the different components of the mass media.

Broadcasting

If you're going to use radio or TV to communicate MRE messages, remember these general rules:

- Keep it short and concise — don't confuse your audience with too much information;
- Use simple, straightforward language;
- Offer specific, practical advice;
- Organise the information clearly and logically; and
- Repeat the information.

If resources are limited, bear in mind it is much more likely that people will hear a few short spots rather than one 30- or 60-minute discussion programme on landmines and/or ERW. You may be able to get airtime for free; if not, consider providing equipment for a local radio or TV station to build their capacity.

There are many possible formats for radio/TV programming for MRE. Here are just a few:

Spots: 30 seconds to 2 minutes

Use a dialogue or interview to carry one simple message, tightly packed with a music jingle. Have the announcer reinforce the message at the end.

Mini-dramas: 1 minute to 3 minutes

Have one main message and one secondary one in a scripted sketch for two or three characters. Be entertaining and don't include too much information.

Interviews: 2 to 5minutes

Be clear about the messages you want to convey — there should be a maximum of two or three key messages and the journalist should repeat them at the end.

If you are to be interviewed on TV:

- Look at the camera or interviewer.
- Keep still: don't wobble about.
- Don't joke.
- Don't wear checked clothes, prefer blue shirts.
- Make a 3, 4 or 5-point list of what you want to get over. And make sure you do.

Soap opera: Topical health and social issues can be inserted into soap operas, which can have very wide appeal. Your job is not to write the script but to brief the scriptwriters about the issues and the type of behaviour your programme wishes to promote.

Radio: Radio may be the forgotten medium in most MRE programmes. Yet it

reaches a wider audience than any other medium: there are an estimated 94 radios per 1,000 people in the least developed countries — 10 times the number of televisions or copies of daily newspapers available. Since landmines and UXO (though not necessarily AXO — abandoned ordnance) tend to be found in rural communities, some of which are remote, make sure you fully check radio's reach.

Radio builds on oral traditions and programmes are cheap, quick and easy to make. Radio listening is often a group activity, which encourages discussion of educational issues after the broadcast. This is an important stage in the process of behaviour change.

On the other hand, radio is not usually appropriate for teaching practical skills, nor is it appropriate in some cultures for sensitive messages. Some MRE messages need to be discussed and demonstrated. And some more sensitive issues might be best communicated using traditional media. To a large extent, this is a matter of common sense.

But **information that is given by visiting MRE teams, teachers in schools or in community workshops should be regularly reinforced by local radio, television or other media.**

Newspapers/magazines: Newspapers tend to reach more educated, elitist audiences in many developing countries. This may not seem the quickest way, compared with radio or TV, to reach a mass audience. But newspapers and magazines do have the advantages of being more permanent, carrying more information and often being more authoritative than other media. Writing and issuing a straightforward press release remains the most effective — and economic — tool for mass communication. And the other branches of the mass media tend to feed on what they have read in the press.

Newspapers and magazines can also be used to reach key groups — for example, by carrying materials which teachers can use in their classrooms, or suggestions for discussions by development workers in the field. And don't forget to look for specialised publications that may easily reach your key audiences, the military, educators, government officials, doctors and nurses, farmers.

The Internet: We should also recognise the Internet as a valuable medium of communication, both for reaching people by email and for broader casting of information from a website. Again, the basic rules of good communication apply: be brief, be clear, don't get too complicated, and keep it up to date. There's a wealth of MRE information on the Web: a good communication programme will exploit this, not only for your target audiences but also for ongoing education of programme staff and your partner organisations.

5.1.2 "Small media"

The strengths of small media are that they provide accurate, standardised information in a handy and re-usable form that can be used as visual aids in workshops, discussions and teaching. They attract attention and may be distributed to areas where the mass media do not reach. Most commonly, however, small media are used in isolation from other MRE activities and as a result have little meaning or impact with target audiences.

Posters may look good, but ... you need to be aware that it is the least effective medium of communication for development, particularly among the poor and those who have limited literacy skills. Research clearly shows that posters, brochures and flipcharts have limited use and are seldom cost-effective or durable. They are expensive to produce and to distribute, have a short lifespan, and training is necessary for effective design and production. Training is also usually needed in how to use them effectively.

Although experience shows that the bulk of small media production remains in store rooms and is never distributed, managers are often seduced by the "ease" of production and the possibility to control ("plan") the communication. Too often they are used to illustrate that the programme is "doing something".

If you must use them, posters, brochures and flipcharts must have a specific purpose and be carefully integrated into communication activities. They may be designed to support a key message and to provide an ongoing reminder of that message. Or they may be designed to promote easier understanding of messages during interpersonal communication.

As the cost of developing flipcharts and other visual aids can be high, there is a tendency to develop a prototype that is used for a number of ethnic groups and situations. These need to be adapted to local situations if they are to be effective.

5.2 Accessing the mass media

Try to achieve a good range of messages so that you have messages and materials for all available media. Good communication is not rocket science: you just need to get organised and learn to deal with the "messengers".

Mass media have the ability to reach many people quickly with messages that can be frequently repeated. Some forms of mass media do not require the ability to read, of obvious importance in rural developing communities where literacy rates are low.

Access to mass media may be limited in certain, especially rural, areas. This includes radio, since receivers generally require batteries, although clockwork radios are produced by many companies and conversion kits for conventional radios are being developed to make them solar-powered.

It can also be difficult to tailor mass media programmes to special groups and to obtain group feedback. There may be language barriers or issues of bias to overcome, especially if national mass media are employed. But there are many "gateways" into the media, and most of them are hungry for story and programme ideas. These can be exploited by your communication programme.

Mass media are indirect or one-way channels of communication, with no opportunity to ask for immediate clarification on anything that has not been understood. But there are ways to make the mass media more interactive.

You can encourage a dialogue between the medium and the listener/reader/viewer, through, for example:

- Competitions (with the prize perhaps an MRE T-shirt or school bag and stationery);
- Radio phone-in programmes (though this, of course, needs access to phones);

- Newspaper letters;
- Community radio (access tends to be relatively easy, and the station can be close to the concerns of the listeners; airtime may also be free).

5.2.1 Working with journalists

Development workers, usually working within bureaucratic structures, often have to be encouraged (and authorised!) to deal with the media. But it is not an impossible task, once you get organised.

Journalists are there to report news — and landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) are undoubtedly news. You should consider the journalist as your potential friend and ally. And, as media personnel tend to be strong networkers (they are all watching what the others are doing), if you tap into the right journalist your messages will be communicated more widely and effectively than you could possibly do through your own programme initiatives.

Busy journalists have deadlines. But if they think you have something they could use, they will find the time. This requires that you put yourself into the position of the journalist (and the public) and prepare your approach accordingly.

There are four general principles to working with the media, which apply to giving interviews as much as they do to drafting press releases:

- Be interesting!
- Be relevant!
- Be concise!
- Be as honest as you can!

Even if a radio or TV station is perceived as a government mouthpiece, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that we systematically underestimate the ability of viewers/listeners to know what is valuable information and what is propaganda. Just try to avoid placing blame for the presence of mines and ERW and concentrate of giving practical information.

5.2.2 News aspects to the mine problem

To keep journalists interested, you can't just repeat the same thing again and again. But there are so many interesting aspects to the mine problem that you should have no trouble in keeping the media engaged. **Remember: clear thinking is not expensive, nor is imaginative programming.** These are just a few aspects of the mine problem that you can use to interest the media:

- The type of mine/ERW threat and the areas affected;
- The social, economic and environmental costs of mines;
- How mines are cleared;
- The work of the mine action centre and/or national mine action authority;
- Rehabilitation and reintegration techniques and availability;
- Safe behaviour and the need to report discoveries of mines or ERW;
- International law on landmines and ERW and (with care) government policy;
- What it feels like to be a mine amputee;
- The number of killed or injured due to mines;

- The global problem of mines and ERW and predicted future trends;
- A National Landmine Day.

You should try to assemble a straightforward "core " information kit for use as a general information tool. This can be used for briefings, visitors and donors, but also to inform the media. Possible items for the kit include:

- A general description of what your programme is trying to do and why. (The overview or summary of your programme document is a good place to start.) If the material is longer than two or three pages (800–900 words) break it up into two or three separate stories.
- Summary statistics and brief descriptions of what your programme has achieved.
- A note on how the project or programme is managed, who your major partners are — and how it is funded.
- Half a dozen photographs, graphics or maps — to show demining teams at work in your country, the types of ordnance to watch out for, maps of where you are working — and a headshot photo of the programme director and/or other key programme personnel.
- Addresses, phone and email contacts for people who can be contacted in the programme for further information.
- Any good recent media clippings about your project or programme.

Remember, the media strive to communicate in informal and human terms — because it works better than long chunks of impersonal or highly technical jargon. That's why they talk about stories. That's why they want quotations and pictures — to put a human face on the news. So try to put your material in informal, human terms: say who is saying what to whom, give people's names and titles — and use the language you use when you're talking to friends or colleagues. Be human!

And let them know — beforehand — when you may have interesting visitors to your programme. Invite the media to join the visit if you can, or at least arrange a media interview with them.

5.2.3 Overcoming the fear of communicating with the news media

There are a number of fears about communicating with the news media. Is the media going to get its facts wrong? Will it give the wrong information about safe behaviour? Will the media sensationalise the issue, shocking people and creating panic? Will publicity bring the organisation into conflict with the government? Will it create mistrust of mine amputees, depicting them as thieves and beggars? These are always risks, but they can be minimised by a programme that gives clear and concise information, spends time with journalists briefing them on the issue (maybe in a workshop, as discussed above), and ensuring support for mine action by the government.

But even if the media does get its facts right, there is a further danger that the listener or viewer will interpret a radio or TV programme in a way that was not intended. It is not possible to eliminate this risk, although unintended hidden messages can often be avoided by showing a draft script to other people and pre-testing, including, if possible, with mine or ERW survivors.

The golden rule is: don't be afraid of the media. If you spend time with them, you will almost invariably find that they are on your side. And a friendly journalist is a powerful ally.

There is no communication without risk, but we can all do a lot to keep those risks to a minimum.

5.2.4 Being a good communicator

Being a good communicator requires special skills. Some skills can be learned but some cannot. Some people are just naturally better communicators or better teachers than others — but we can all do it!

Some basic pointers to communicating well are:

- Listen to what other people have to say — it is often surprising.
- Speak the language they understand and feel comfortable with — don't use unusual vocabulary or allusions.
- Use a tone of voice that is friendly and appropriate to the culture — in some cultures, for instance, it is rude or confronting to speak loudly.
- Create a friendly environment where everyone feels equal and everyone has a chance to speak.
- Encourage discussion rather than give a lecture.
- Give women an opportunity to take part in discussions or learn new behaviour.
- If appropriate to the culture, sit on the floor or the ground or at a table, don't stand while others sit.
- Be mindful of people's status in the community.
- If you are using flipcharts or posters or modelling safe behaviour make sure everyone can see and hear and explain each point carefully.
- Repeat your information in different ways.
- If you are not a confident communicator make sure you have illustrations and supporting materials to help.
- As with any other communication channel, keep it relatively short, don't try to cram in too much information, don't talk for too long. Repeat the important facts.

The key is to be creative. And remember: local facilitators or instructors need to be highly motivated — and monitored — if they are to carry out MRE effectively over the longer term.

6. Responsibilities for public information dissemination

This last section of the Guidebook looks at the role of different actors in assuming responsibilities for public information dissemination.

MRE project and programme managers have direct responsibility for ensuring that all aspects of internal and external communication are reflected in the overall strategy. This requires priority attention and an adequate budget from the beginning (although not necessarily a full-time communication expert). The project manager also has overall responsibility for advocacy with political and religious leaders and for maintaining regular contact with them and the mass media.

Managers of MRE functions must understand that their responsibility for communications is just as important — and direct — as their responsibilities for operations, finance and personnel.

Mine action centres (MACs) should, at the very least, ensure that messages and communication approaches are coordinated, both within the centre and among other organisations working in MRE or mine clearance. MACs can also carry out, or commission, nationwide needs assessments for MRE. If the MAC has its own communication expertise, it should use it for the benefit of all actors engaged in MRE. Like the programme manager, the MAC should be in constant dialogue with national and local government, and the mine action and development actors in country.

But an effective MRE programme is not solely the responsibility of the programme manager or the MAC. For real impact, government, local leaders, the community and the media should also be involved and encouraged to take responsibility for activities with which they feel comfortable.

Governments: as HIV/AIDS and other health promotion programmes have shown, governments and their officials play an important role in successful behavioural change. If the government is not both enthusiastic and involved, local communities will notice and act accordingly.

Local leaders: local government, religious and community leaders can support mine-safe behaviour by promoting it within the community and by establishing

local policies or regulations. MACs should establish good working relationships with local leaders and include them in discussions, planning and support for their MRE activities.

Communities: local communities should play the most important role in MRE. People need to be involved from the beginning and supported to promote a mine-safe environment. Discussions about the programme with community groups, school teachers and community leaders, and the inclusion of community ideas and needs, will help encourage community involvement. Regular motivation from the programme is important to maintain support and education.

The **mass media** can be vital allies in promoting MRE. They can help advocate with government leaders for appropriate mine policy and legislation, provide information on what other countries are doing, and ensure a regular flow of MRE information to communities. The mass media are often looking for news stories or short interviews. A programme should make special efforts to engage in regular discussions with key media personnel, ensure they have toured programme sites, and are kept fully informed of programme activities.

Regular short news items keep MRE in the public consciousness. For no, or almost no charge, the mass media can provide regular support for the programme. **Landmines and other explosive remnants of war are news!**

Annex.
Core messages for public information dissemination

With the important proviso that all messages must be adapted to the specific situation, the following issues should be covered in any mine/ERW risk education programme.

a) Be aware of the threat.
b) Know how to protect yourself and others.

Do not spend much time on the identification of landmines and ERW since dozens of different types of landmines and ERW may be found in any one area.

Core messages

- **Ask local people about the safest paths and safe areas.** ***(This is probably the most important and effective MRE message)***
- Respect mine warning signs and never remove them.
- Mines and ERW come in many different shapes, sizes, and colours.
- Mines can be made of wood, metal or plastic.
- Mines and ERW are usually difficult to see. They may be buried, hidden in tall grass, camouflaged among trees, floating on water or lying under water.
- Above-ground mines are often hidden next to paths, in high grass or bushes, or behind trees.
- Some above-ground mines are set off by pulling or cutting a tripwire.
- ERW comes in various shapes, sizes, and colours.
- ERW is commonly more powerful than mines and can kill over a wider area.
- Never touch ERW! It can kill.
- ERW is extremely unstable and can be detonated by the slightest touch. Just because it doesn't go off the first time you touch it doesn't mean it's safe.

- Fuzes are dangerous and can blow off your hand. They can be large or small.
- Do not touch any object unless you are absolutely sure it is safe. It may be booby-trapped.
- Booby-traps are lures to trick people into detonating an explosive. Almost anything can be made into a booby-trap.
- Mines and ERW can kill or cause severe injuries. If you step on a mine, you will lose your foot and sometimes your whole leg.
- Mine or ERW injuries affect not only the injured individuals but also their families and communities.
- Look out for warning signs and clues which may indicate that an area is mined.
- Throwing a mine/ERW can cause it to detonate.
- Kicking or hitting a mine or ERW can cause it to detonate.
- Warn others not to touch mines.
- Prevent others from entering mined areas.
- Do not go anywhere near a tripwire, as the surrounding area may also be mined.
- Do not attempt to collect ERW for scrap metal.
- Travel by day whenever possible.
- If you are unsure whether a road or path is safe, do not use it, but seek a safer route.
- Be especially careful near abandoned military outposts, checkpoints, and trenches or ditches.
- Be especially careful near bridges and riverbanks.
- If there is no warning sign, do not assume that the area is safe.
- Look out warning clues:
  - injured or dead animals;
  - a partly exposed mine;
  - an intact or broken tripwire;
  - signs of fighting, such as bomb craters, shrapnel or bullet casings;
  - no sign of recent foot traffic.
- If you do not see any warning clues, do not assume that the area is safe.

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