

ICBL-MAC Statement - Risk Education

Thank you Kendahl and thank you chair. At home in Lebanon, I have been heavily involved in explosive ordnance risk education since 2017 as I am a certified youth activist. I am a key staff person following up on all field operations related to risk education and youth empowerment all over Lebanon.

It is not surprising that one of the main pillars of mine action is raising awareness to reduce the number of casualties by teaching about the dangers of explosive devices, and safe and appropriate behaviour, especially in vulnerable countries such as mine that have suffered from many successive wars and which have witnessed many battles where each time the damage increased and accumulated, and the type of contamination diversified from landmines to cluster bombs to explosive devices. This required updating the awareness material used to cover all types of contamination and to identify the appropriate safe behavior when being in a contaminated area. Risk education must evolve and adapt.

Risk education is more than just don't touch, report. It needs to know why people may take risks and be tailored to the local context. In my country economic pressures have led to people collecting scrap metal to make ends meet despite the danger. Risk education programs have to take that into account and be engaging and interactive. For me MRE can mean mine risk education but it also means Motivation, Reinforcement and Execution which are keys to engaging risk education programming. For example, we use puppet shows and small films to get people to pay attention.

We know what best practice is when it comes to risk education. Mine risk education interventions that are both accessible, adapted to the audience in terms of gender, age, disability, language and other diversity factors; and consistent with the situation on the ground. Varying the tools used for education and awareness based on the target audience.

As someone who has grown up with the internet I see the importance of thinking of new ways to reach young people using social media. Online risk education can be done remotely to reach civilians living in conflict where it may be too dangerous to send in person teams. For example this year saw Ukrainian mine action staff creating and sharing risk education messages from bomb shelters.

This is an area that many of the Mine Action Fellows work in but we do not often see our work reflected in the reports submitted by states parties. Risk education should be reported on.

The past 25 years has taught us that risk education can save lives as we wait for clearance to be completed. It is an investment in the future.

Thank you.