

TURNING MINEFIELDS



INTO PLAYING FIELDS

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SAFE GROUND QUARTERLY CHAMPIONS NEWSLETTER

EDITION 3, DECEMBER 2019

Safe Ground was launched in April 2019 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. António Guterres. Safe Ground is a global advocacy and fundraising campaign led and coordinated by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) through the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action with the support of an informal, voluntary group of Champions, comprised of governments, civil society organizations, sports federations, private sector companies, and individual athletes. This quarterly newsletter is written to keep Champions of Safe Ground informed.

CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM SAFE GROUNDS PROJECTS UPDATE

The Safe Ground campaign in Cambodia will soon launch in a small village in Battambang province, one of the most densely mine contaminated regions in the country. The Stueng Toch Kroam primary school has been selected as the launching site for the campaign due to its importance for the wider community. The primary school was built on land that was cleared of landmines by the Royal Government of Cambodia with support from UNDP.

Today, the school and its playing field are an integral part of the community, bringing together various community and school level football teams to play and practice. Most recently, UNDP provided additional support to the school to assist in levelling the uneven playing field, building a spectator's shelter, and providing goal posts and other necessary sporting equipment. Alongside the community and the Royal Government, UNDP will launch the Safe Ground Football pitch at Stueng Toch.

The Safe Ground Initiative in Cambodia is part of the Clearing for Results Phase III: Mine Action for Human Development Project. The project is nationally implemented by the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, through UNDP and with additional support from Australia, Switzerland, and Canada. Since the project's inception, it has cleared a total of 241km² (2006- 2019) for community use and livelihood development. Clearing for Results Phase IV has been approved and will be implemented in 2020 until 2025, with continued focus on supporting the national authority to integrate land clearance activities, victim assistance, mine risk education and gender mainstreaming in mine action efforts and broader national and international frameworks.

Vietnam UNDP made a Safe Ground risk education video for young people. The short film, which was broadcast on television, was highlighted at the beginning of the United Nations side-event at the Fourth Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention in Oslo. Participants at the Review Conference saw first-hand how Safe Ground is practically used to warn of the risks that too many children face when they go out to play.

SAFE GROUND CHAMPIONS MEETING 2020

The 2020 Safe Ground Champions meeting will take place on 2 April between 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. in the United Nations Secretariat.

SOMALIA

In Somalia UNMAS cleared the outskirts of Heral town in Galmudug Federal State. The area was contaminated with explosive, following years of fighting, which included unexploded ordnance and ammunition. This contamination limited the movement of the residents. The clearance operation took more than 8 months and area of 8.2 Sq. Meters (0.82Sq km) was designated safe. Recovered explosives were destroyed or removed. When the project was completed, UNMAS, in coordination with the Somali Explosive Authority, organized a football match on the ground. Teams representing different neighborhoods in the town came together on the cleared site and helped setup a football pitch. UNMAS provided footballs, nets, air pumps, whistle, flags, uniforms for players and referees, flags, medals and trophies. Another Safe Ground was inaugurated.

GLOBAL ADVOCATE SUPPORTS PROJECTS IN 2019

Money raised by the United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards, Mr. Daniel Craig, was used for Safe Ground and mine action related projects in Burkina Faso, Colombia, Cyprus, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia in 2019.



GILES DULEY AND MARCO GROB EXHIBITION SYMPOSIUM 2 APRIL 2019

To commemorate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action at the United Nations Headquarters, a week of activities are planned between 30 March – 4 April 2020.

Among other events will be a photo exhibition with the works of Giles Duley, photographer, storyteller and CEO of the Legacy of War Foundation, and Emmy winner Marco Grob. The exhibition will be opened with a Symposium with the two artists who have documented the devastation caused by landmines around the world. Duley and Grob will describe their work and the stories of the photographs that will be displayed at the Visitor's Centre of the General Assembly in April and May.

STATE OF PALESTINE SAFE GROUND

UNMAS, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF and the Palestinian Federation of Football continue to work on two projects in the State of Palestine. One is an international friendly to be staged in a stadium in the West Bank, which will bring attention to the needs of those disabled. The second is the building of a sports facility on a former minefield.

OSLO ACTION PLAN FOURTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE OTTAWA TREATY

The Four Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was held in Oslo, Norway from the 25 – 29 November. The need for increased funding and advocacy for victim/survivor assistance was a priority for the organizers, and the Safe Ground campaign was promoted in the Plenary, in side events and in the hallways.

The Oslo Action Plan strongly endorsed the “full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society, based on respect for human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination”. And called on State Parties to take efforts “to ensure the social and economic inclusion of mine victims through access to education, capacity-building, and the removal of physical, social, cultural, political, attitudinal and communication barriers in a gender-sensitive and age-appropriate manner”.

Among other statements, the delegation from Belgium stated: “Belgium acknowledges the interaction between mine action and humanitarian and development actions. Mine action allows for the safe return of refugees and the resumption of economic activities. Houses should be cleared of booby traps. Minefields should be turned into playing fields. Families should have access to safe ground.”