

Land mine education tailored for children

Theater latest tool in public awareness campaign

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Mimi Malek. The play, which kicked off Tuesday at Unesco Palace, is aimed at educating children on land mines in a recreational setting.

The play opened under the auspices of the President of the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped (LWAH), wife of Speaker Nabih Berri, Randa.

"Mine survivors from LWAH's Mine Survivors Club were involved in the preparation and production of the play ... they commented on the scenario, recorded texts and songs in their own voices, and some told the story of their injuries through a slide projection," said Malek.

"I believe children are the future of the world and it is our duty to provide them with a safe life ... and through this work, Lebanon reiterates with love and joy its forthcoming mission in restoring international peace," she added.

The play was organized in collaboration with several governmental institutions and international non-governmental ones, as well as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in addition to the Norwegian People's Aid and the World Rehabilitation Fund and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The play will be performed in different schools around the country starting with the regions most threatened by mines. It will be also recorded on a video tape and distributed to the schools.

"The NDO has been organizing awareness campaigns, training school teachers in mine risk areas and producing many MRE materials such as booklets, songs and video clips. The play is a very developed awareness method in this field and believed to be very

BEIRUT: Mine Risk Education (MRE) and field demining operations have contributed to the drop in the number of mine victims from 122 (including 13 deaths) in the year 2000, to only 13 (including one death) in the year 2004, according to the National Demining Office (NDO).

The latest in the series of MRE projects is a theatrical play, composed and directed by children's theater animator

effective in a fun and exciting way, which will reach children directly," said Colonel Takieldine al-Tannir, the head of the National Mine Risk Education Steering Committee at the NDO.

"The MRE has proven to be effective in fighting the dangers of mines. Some time ago a student in Tyre saw a strange object in a field next to his house, he immediately told his teacher who informed the army. It turned out to be a mine and the student's actions were a result of this education," he said.

Tannir said the NDO has removed 125,000 mine from all over Lebanon since 1990 with an estimated 425,000 mine remaining of which 330,000 are concentrated along the Lebanese-Israeli border.