

UNICEF Kosovo Update

January 3, 2000

LANDMINE AWARENESS

There are an estimated 1 million landmines and unexploded ordinances (UXO) in Kosovo and near its borders. It has been estimated that landmines have claimed about 200 victims so far, mostly children. Landmine awareness campaigns and landmine education programs have shown promising results in reducing accidents and fatalities. November was the first month since the war ended that no fatalities were reported from landmines. Last July has been determined as the month when the most landmine accidents, 156, and fatalities, four, occurred.

UNICEF has distributed more than 1 million posters and leaflets warning of the dangers of landmines, UXO's, and booby-traps. Hundreds of thousands of other printed materials (comic books, teacher's guides, and parental guides) that promote landmine awareness have been distributed. Teachers are now integrating landmine/UXO awareness education into their lesson plans. Healthcare workers, community leaders, and others have also been trained.

Landmine/UXO education messages are the subject of UNICEF-sponsored television and radio spots that are being broadcast in Macedonia and Albania. Twelve billboards with landmine awareness posters have been placed at border crossings. Theatrical groups and refugee youth councils are also working to educate communities about the dangers of landmines/UXO. UNICEF is providing support to Albanian Youth Councils and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Balkan Sunflowers to educate returning refugees on the dangers of landmines.

A landmine awareness seminar is scheduled for early February to evaluate the situation of mine awareness programs for the coming year.