

Supporting mine victims and mine affected areas

In South of Lebanon, socio-economic development continues to be negatively affected by mines and UXOs; casualty figures increased dramatically immediately after the 2006 conflict. Despite a significant reduction of new victims since then, recently affected areas are still in need of mine risk education and socio economic projects to rehabilitate mine-affected areas and assist mine victims. In this context, the UNDP socio- economic programme for South Lebanon, in partnership with the Lebanese Mine Action Center (LMAC), targets mine victims and cleared areas with trainings and projects.



The lists of mine victims post 2006 July war as well as mine affected areas provided by the LMAC were reassessed through questionnaires, one to one interviews and focus groups to identify potential trainees, training topics as well as villages to be targeted with projects. Villages with the highest percentage of mines/sqm and

mine victims were prioritized and will be supported by socio economic projects. The main objective of the focus groups was to assess the immediate needs of the mine victims and recommend possible remedies that are likely to alleviate their suffering and integrate them in the community.

The importance of targeting this strata of society was evident during the focus groups where each candidate was invited to share his experience and express his needs: *"nobody is helping us"* insisted the attendees grateful for UNDP/LMAC's attention, while still suspicious: *"many organization came to us to take information and later disappeared"*. Most of the victims were injured while

farming or leading their cattle and their economic situation is not enviable. However, the profile of the victims varied widely in terms of degree of injury, health conditions, age, level of education, occupation and income status, as well as in terms of personal challenges. Thus, the workshops confirmed the importance of treating the mine victims on a case by a case basis, as there no homogenous groups. The needs can be summarized as follows:

- Vocational training in the field of:
Computer IT, Plumbing & Electrical works, cellular phone repairing, Secretariat
- Securing job opportunities
- Support to those who are already self-employed in order for them to expand their business through training in business management
- Support to those looking for self-employment through training in business creation and entrepreneurship



Simultaneously, the focus groups highlighted the common needs per region; tried to find links with existing cooperatives and youth groups supported by UNDP; as well as brought up the need for access to loans of victims.

On the other hand, the focus group had the effect of a group therapy where victims realized that others suffered from the same problems. It was an opportunity to talk in a safe environment about their distress and many recognized inside the LMAC center the mines that wounded them. General Roy fares finally concluded that priority should be given to children victims and encourage them to pursue their education; the General immediately took action and found a private funding for a child who could not afford going to school.