

CAMBODIA CONFERENCE: *Ownership*

Wendy Winch of DFAIT's Mine Action Team recently returned from a tour of Cambodia. Here she reports on the International Forum on Demining and Victim Assistance.

Cambodian landmine survivor attends mine awareness training session.

From October 26-28, Phnom Penh played host to a Forum, entitled "Towards Zero Victims based on Ownership and Partnership". The objective was to facilitate cooperation among mine affected countries, and to assist these countries in building their capacity to manage mine action.

The 250 participants shared their practical experiences in mine action management, such as training, record keeping, mechanical assistance, and quality assurance. The challenges of victim assistance – emergency care, the availability of prosthetics and psycho-social rehabilitation – were also discussed. Representatives from some of the world's most mine-affected states, such as Angola, Bosnia, Nicaragua, Mozambique and Croatia, made this a very grounded discussion.

One of the most original aspects of this conference was a field trip to CMAC's training

CIDA



and Partnership

centre. Delegates were given a glimpse of the rigorous training process deminers must complete before joining a mine clearance platoon. We were shown a range of tools used to mark minefields and dispose of mines; how CMAC makes use of dogs in marking mine fields; and the new technologies testing facility.

The learning at CMAC is very concrete: During a mine awareness presentation to a group of children, specialized unexploded ordnance units detonated a bomb – a reminder to all of the extreme danger of this line of work. ●

John Rodsted

Casualty rates drop in Cambodia

In 1991 over 400 people were injured or killed by landmines each month in Cambodia. The Cambodia Mine Action Centre (CMAC) has focused on identifying and mapping minefields to lessen the threat to civilian populations. Mine awareness programs are also a priority, especially those targeting children. With intensive mine awareness activities, casualty figures have dropped to 200 per month in 1998.

CMAC was established in 1993 with a

mission "to achieve a state within Cambodia where people can go about their lives free from the threat of mines and unexploded

Casualty figures have been cut by half since 1991

ordnance so that reconstruction and development activities can take place in a safe environment." ●

