



EUROPEAN UNION Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines

The European Union helps people of Zamboanga avoid dangers of unexploded mines



As part of its commitment to support the Peace Process in Mindanao, the European Union is funding a programme to teach evacuees of Zamboanga how to avoid risks presented by unexploded ordnance (UXO) and mines.

Eighteen local volunteers, including local NGO staff and students from the Western Mindanao State University, were trained by FSD Swiss (a humanitarian Mine Action NGO) on what UXO look like; where they might be found; the risks they pose; safe behaviours to adopt; unsafe behaviours to avoid; and who to call for assistance.

Training sessions for aid agencies and volunteers involved in relief efforts were also held. Risk education posters and billboards, based on the course and appropriate to the local situation, are used in the presentations and are prominently displayed in Evacuation Centres and around the city.

During the 'Train-the-Trainer' course, students learned how to design and deliver safety messages and materials, and the communication skills and strategies they needed to ensure timely and effective delivery of these messages.

UNHCR staff provided assistance in conducting the training, and in making initial contact with Camp Managers in the Evacuation Centres. The Zamboanga Police Bomb Disposal team also gave trainers an update on clearance operations in UXO-affected neighbourhoods and the types of UXO returnees might encounter. Close liaison between the trainers and the Zamboanga City Police Department ensures that, if returnees encounter UXO, they know who to call and that they can expect something to be done about the hazard.

The trainers now have a Facebook page, "MRE Zamboanga", (MRE is for "Mines and UXO Risk Education) on which they post pictures of their activities in the camps:
<https://www.facebook.com/#!/mre.zamboanga>

Scene Setting

In September 2013, weeks of intense fighting between Philippine security forces and a faction of the Mindanao National Liberation Front (MNLF) left parts of the city of Zamboanga littered with unexploded ordnances (UXO). Whilst a clear-up operation by the Philippine

Bomb Disposal teams has removed most of the UXO, hazardous items will continue to be uncovered as residents and repair teams return to the area, and rubble and debris is removed.

The European Union provided PHP 17 million in October 2013 to fund emergency supplies and assist in the management and provision of services at evacuation sites around Zamboanga.

FSD in the Philippines. The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland. FSD is currently active in eight countries worldwide.

In partnership with the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines (PCBL), FSD is conducting a humanitarian mine action project in Mindanao. Under this project, FSD carries out surveys in villages affected by unexploded ordnance (UXO) and, wherever possible, facilitates UXO clearance. FSD also provides mines and UXO risk education (MRE) for conflict-affected communities. This project is implemented in 26 municipalities in Maguindanao, Cotabato, Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur and benefits from Php 32 million grant from the European Union.

The project is funded by the European Union under its Instrument for Stability (IFS) programme, and is implemented under a signed agreement between the government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).