THE LEGACY OF WAR: AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF CLUSTER WEAPON AND LAND MINE ACCIDENTS IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE, VIETNAM

Tran Kim Phung[1], Le Viet[2,3] and Hans Husum[4]

[1]Quang Tri Provincial Health Department, [2]Quang Tri Preventive Medicine Center, Quang Tri Provincial Health Department, Dong Ha, Vietnam; [3]Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Tromsoe; [4]Tromsoe Mine Victim Resource Center, University Hospital North Norway, Tromsoe, Norway

Abstract. The study examines the epidemiology of cluster weapon and land mine accidents in Quang Tri Province since the end of the Vietnam War. The province is located just south of the demarcation line and was the province most affected during the war. In 2009, a cross sectional household study was conducted in all nine districts of the province. During the study period of 1975-2009, 7,030 persons in the study area were exposed to unexploded ordnances (UXO) or land mine accidents, or 1.1% of the provincial population. There were 2,620 fatalities and 4,410 accident survivors. The study documents that the main problem is cluster weapons and other unexploded ordnances; only 4.3% of casualties were caused by land mines. The legacy of the war affects poor people the most; the accident rate was highest among villagers living in mountainous areas, ethnic minorities, and low-income families. The most common activities leading to the accidents were farming (38.6%), collecting scrap metal (11.2%), and herding of cattle (8.3%). The study documents that the people of the Quang Tri Province until this day have suffered heavily due to the legacy of war. Mine risk education programs should account for the epidemiological findings when future accident prevention programs are designed to target high-risk areas and activities.

Keywords: cluster weapons, land mine accidents, Vietnam

Correspondence: Hans Husum, TMC, PO Box 80, University Hospital North Norway, N-9038 Tromsoe, Norway.
E-mail: husumhans@gmail.com