Landmine Awareness Card Deck

MIT Humanitarian Demining Course
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Introduction

People living in non-mined countries are generally not aware of the extent of the problems generated by landmines. While most people understand that a landmine will maim, or even kill, its victim, most are not aware of the economic and social problems associated with landmines, including loss of livelihood for victims - and loss of a provider for the victims' families, denial of farm land and grazing land to users because of the presence of mines, and denial of a home to return to for refugees, whose homes are often mined when they are away. Also, most people know very little about demining - what difficulties are involved, why manual demining is preferred over machines, what the cost of clearing an acre of land might be.

A deck of cards, along with a simple activity, was designed to address this problem. The game will help increase landmine awareness, and also aid in fund raising efforts. Specifically, it was designed for social fundraising events such as the Night of 1000 Dinners campaign, in which dinner parties are held to raise funds for demining (the organizers for this group expressed interest in having a card game that could be played at their events).

Design

The card deck and activity are meant to give an introduction to landmine issues - they do not go into great depth or attempt to encompass every problem. The limited information given in the cards is chosen both to address the major problems associated with landmines and to interest users and make them want to learn more.

The deck is made up of card pairs. Each pair of cards, when looked at together, gives one "idea" about landmine issues. For example, one card might show a picture of a toy rocket on the front, and another might show a picture of the blu 97 submunition, which looks not unlike a toy rocket, and, like the rocket, attracts children. Together, (with the assistance of text on each card, along with the pictures), the card pair would provide the idea that the blu 97 submunition is a major problem for children, because they think it is a toy, play with it, and are injured.

The general idea of any activity involving the deck would be to match up the pairs, and in doing so to provide one simple, but important, concept related to landmine issues. After this is done, further activities can be done to learn more ideas or create a more coherent educational story, but this is not necessary.

One possible scenario of play can take place during the early, mingling phase of a social fundraising event like Night of 1000 Dinners. The cards can be handed out at the door or distributed to guests when a certain number of people have arrived. Each person is then instructed to find the match for his/her card. This activity should fit well into a dinner or similar scenario because it is a relatively short activity and helps in "breaking the ice" if guests do not know each other - it is a good social game as well as an educational activity.

Any further complexity of the activity depends on the situation - the host can decide how involved the game should be. It could simply end when pairs are found, or, once the pairs are found, each couple could take turns describing their "idea" to the group. Possibly all of the pairs together could form some kind of coherent story or narrative relating to landmine issues. The play of the game is really up to the host running the activity - many ways of pairing up cards and possibly continuing play are possible.

One issue is that the host needs to know which cards match each other, so that the

cards can be passed out appropriately (i.e., no one will be left without a match). It is likely that it will be pretty obvious, because of similarities between pictures, which cards are matches, but another method for the host to find the matches might be needed.

Testing

Unfortunately, the card-matching card game and card deck have not been tested in a realistic situation. People told about the idea and method of play of the game, and shown various pairs of cards, were generally positive. However, no one has actually played the full game, and it has not been tested in an actual social or fund-raising context.

Previous game concepts and cards have been tested, and a lot of feedback has been collected. Some of the most useful comments/observations were:

- Even though the activity may not take a long time itself, it can (and should) inspire a conversation about landmines and landmines issues. In all of the game trials done, the game took less than 10 minutes to complete, but the conversation about landmine issues following went on for an hour or more. For these situations, it is useful if there is an "expert" in the crowd who can answer questions and provide useful information.

- No one wants to play a game if there is no hope of winning/no one wants to play a game if it is all luck, there should be some skill involved. In the original version of the game, which was a role-playing game in which the player was "walking" in a mined area, the goal was difficult to reach, and winning was mostly luck - a coin flip determined if you were injured by a mine or not. Most people did not enjoy this version.

- If there are words/text on the card that are not necessary for game play, the words will probably not be read. When people are playing the game, they are goal-oriented towards getting the game played, the words are a distraction. Several people said they were "too busy" playing the game to read the cards while playing, but were interested to go back and read when the game was finished. Others just thought there were too many words.

- Some of the facts mentioned on the first version of the cards were so unpleasant that some people did not believe them - they thought they had just been made up for shock value and were not actually true. (For example, one showed a family whose yard was mined, some people could not believe that people would live in a home, knowing that mines were in the yard). Be careful of creating disbelief, or making people think you are exaggerating.

Manufacture

The card deck should be relatively easy to manufacture, once the design of the cards is established, by a local printing company. The cost may be relatively high if traditional printing is used because each card is different, but this may not be an issue if the number of different cards is small enough or the total number of decks made is large enough. Also, companies that print cards using computer printers rather than traditional printing presses do not have the added cost associated with setting up many different designs.
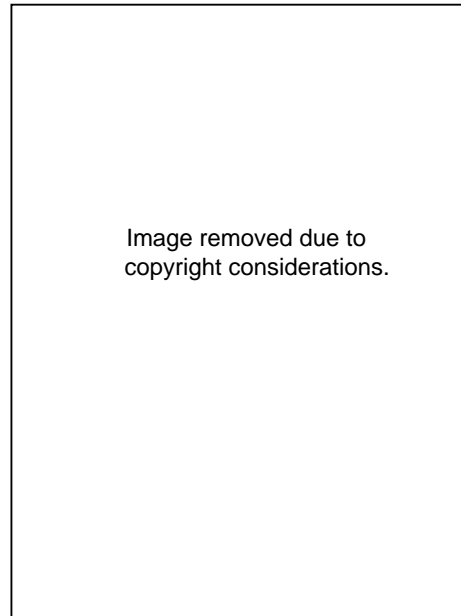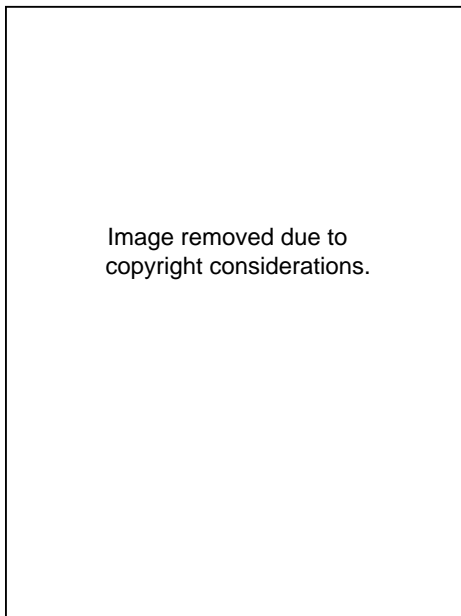
Future work

If more or different card pairs than those provided in Appendix A are desired, more cards should be designed, to make a complete deck. 16-20 cards seems like a reasonable size for a deck, at least initially. Larger events can use several decks if necessary.

Only minimal effort has been put into the graphic design of the cards so far. A graphic designer should be consulted on the card design and possibly also the card images (current images were taken from websites, there may or may not be legal issues involved with using these pictures if they are to be sold, probably the original photographers should at least be contacted if new images aren't found). Once a whole deck has been designed, several copies should be made and distributed for evaluation and testing.

Appendix A – Cards

The text underneath each card is intended to appear on the back of that card. Pairs are next to each other.

Warning: not all facts are very well backed up. These are suggestions for the kinds of facts that should go on the cards – most numbers were found on webpages, and are not necessarily totally accurate. US population information is from the US census website, Afghanistan mine density information is from the Journal of Mine Action, "Global Focus on Landmines in Afghanistan," by Joe Lokey. The 75% of Cambodians live on subsistence farming quote is from the CIA world factbook, the 40% of rice fields are mined number came from a website I can't find right now.... The numbers about bleeding to death and getting to a clinic I mostly just made up, based on vastly different numbers that can be found on the web. The statistic for number of blu bomblets dropped on Cambodia is from this webpage: http://www.rawa.org/cluster2.htm. Numbers about Mozambique are from the Mozambique Mine Action Programme Annual Report for 2003.

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This is a population density map of the US. The average population density in the US is about 80 people per square mile.
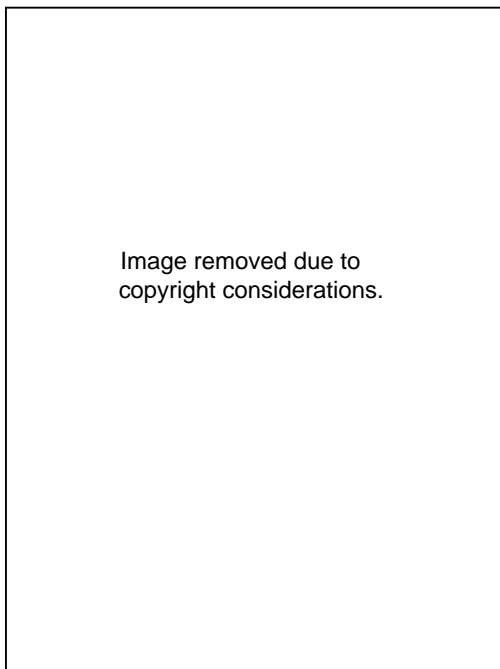
This is a landmine density map of Afghanistan. The average landmine density in Afghanistan is about 30 landmines per square mile.
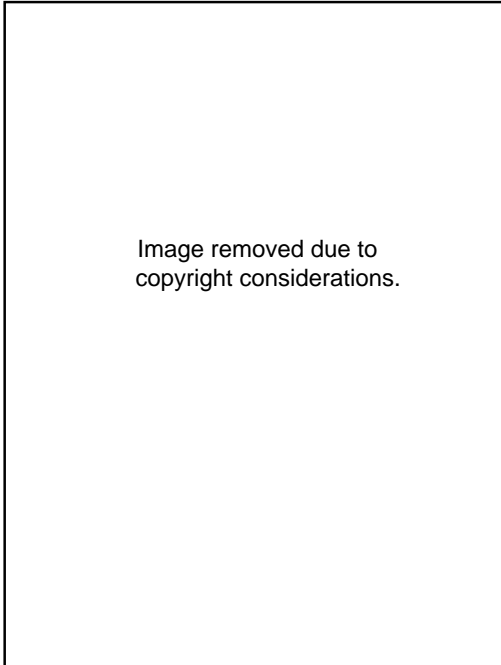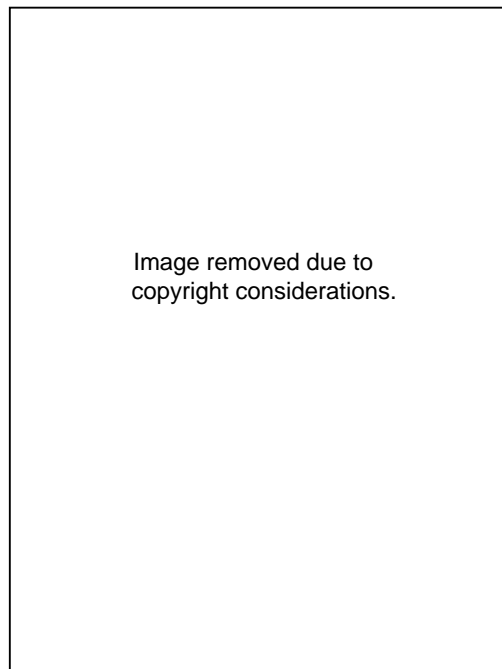
**The skull and crossbones is the standard mine warning sign, world-wide.**
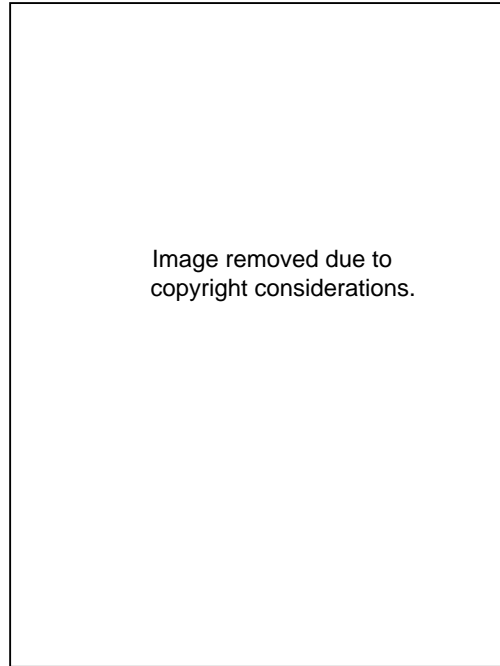
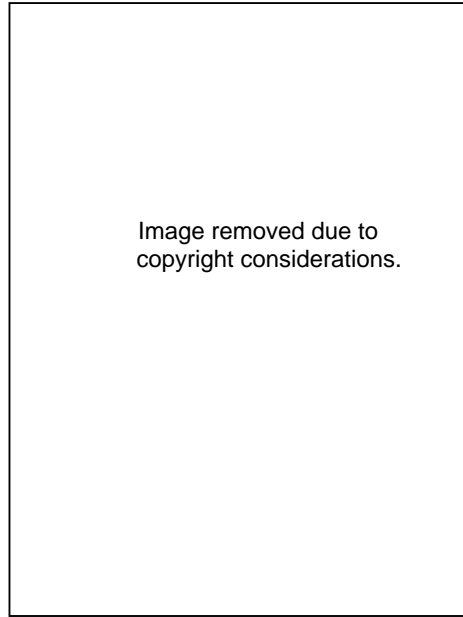**The skull and crossbones is considered a good luck symbol in Cambodia.**

Large numbers of people are displaced during conflict. When the fighting is over, they attempt to return to their homes and farms.

Residential and agricultural areas are often mined during conflict, as defensive positions and to deny use of the land to others.

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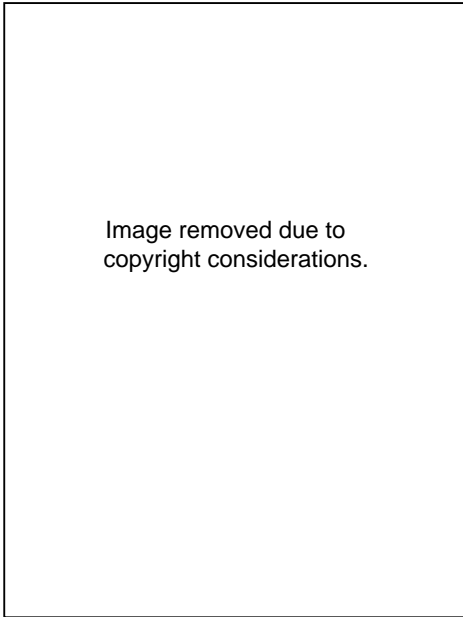
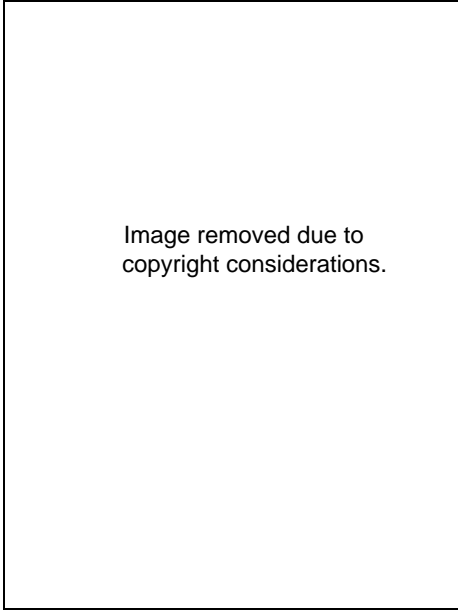**About 75 % of Cambodia's population is supported by subsistence farming. Rice is a main crop.**

About 40% of Cambodia's rice fields are mined. Farmers either abandon the land or often attempt to use it anyway.

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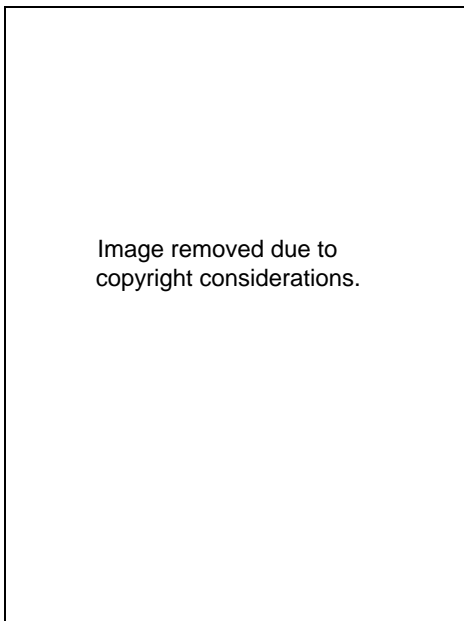
Landmines usually cause very traumatic injuries, such as loss of limbs, that bleed profusely and are highly prone to infection. It can take less than an hour for a mine victim to bleed to death.
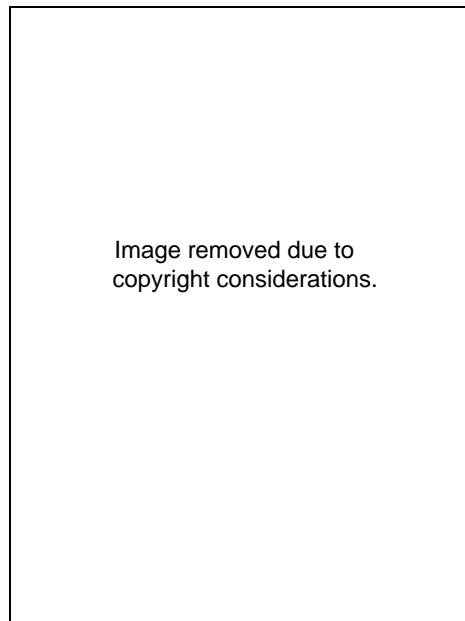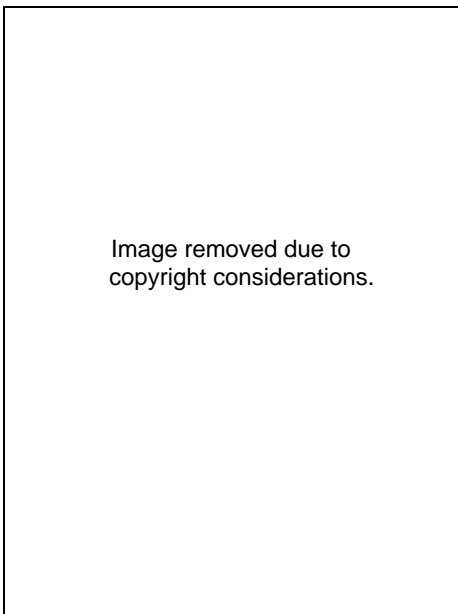
Most mined countries have poor health systems and clinics are rare and poorly stocked. Vehicles to act as ambulances are also difficult to find. In rural areas, it can take several days to reach the nearest clinic.

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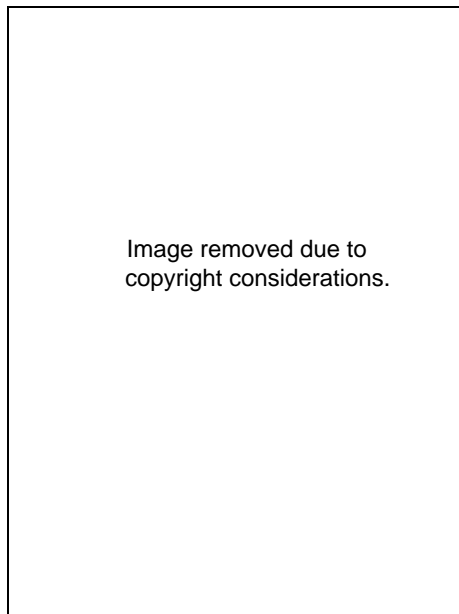Image removed due to copyright considerations.

Wells are very important resources in most countries. Not only are they an important social gathering place, they are often the only local source of water. The well makes living in the area possible.
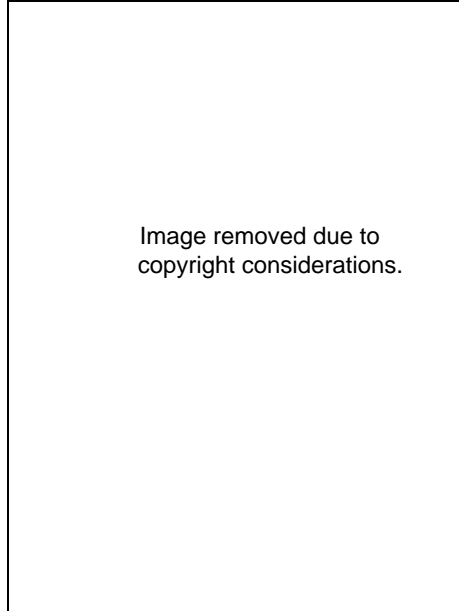
Wells are frequently mined during fighting because of their strategic importance – if the use of the well is denied to an enemy, the enemy has no water source. After the fighting is over, the landmines remain.

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Children in Cambodia have very few toys, most play with what they can find in the local area. A brightly colored toy rocket, with a parachute, like this one, would be very popular, and much more exciting than local toys.
(this was the best picture I could find – obviously not the best…)

Over 100 million blu 97 submunitions were dropped on Cambodia. It is estimated that 8-12% of them failed to go off and are laying exposed on the ground. They are bright yellow and have a parachute for being air-dropped.
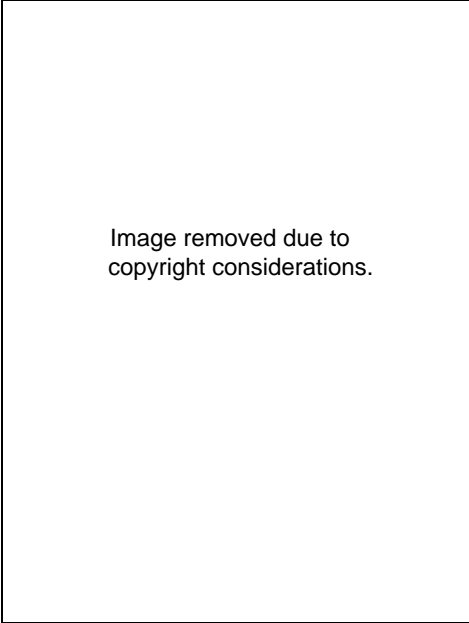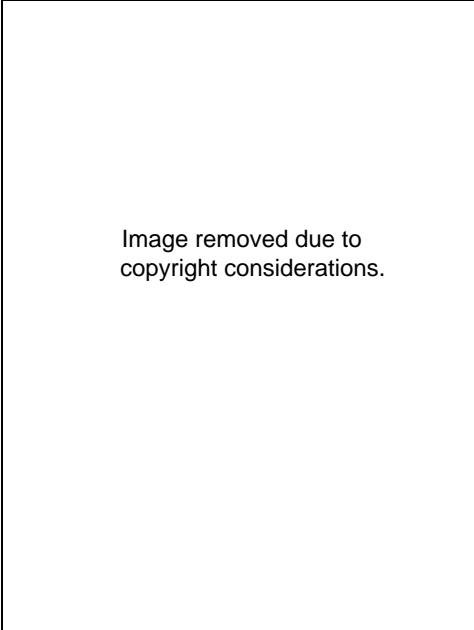
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In 2003, deminers cleared about 7 million square meters of land in Mozambique, allowing about 50,000 people to resettle there and regain access to local natural resources.

In 2004, about 360 square kilometers of agricultural land remain to be cleared of landmine threat in Mozambique.

Appendix B - other activities

1. A much more complex game could be made, probably a board game, in which players would have to make decisions and interact with a mined environment in the same way that people in mined areas would. One possible scenario for such a game would be a "village" scenario, in which every player has a role in the village, (farmer, etc.) and together the group is trying to survive, make money, demine, etc. Players would have skills, could perhaps learn new skills, there could be "chance" cards, etc. This would be a very complex game possibly along the lines of other civilization-building games like Settlers of Cataan or Puerto Rico, except with landmines. One alternative to each player being a single person in the village would be for each player to be the head of a village, or some other group, and thus be able to control more resources and get more done (the other version could possibly go very slowly). This would also be good because then stepping on a landmine would not eliminate a given player from the game - the game could give a good idea of how many people are injured or killed by landmines without actually killing off any of the players.

It is unclear what the value of such a game would be in terms of fundraising, unless it were successful enough that people would actually pay to buy it. It would increase awareness about landmine issues among players, and might be a good educational tool for adults and older students (high school, college).

If a realistic enough game is created, a suggestion has been made (by the deminer Bob Keeley) to use such a game as an educational tool for demining supervisors and others who are involved in demining but may not have a good idea about what is going on in the daily lives of deminers and others living in mined areas.

2. Post cards - Several people thought that the cards for an early version of the game, which looked like postcards, with information on the back, would be effective on their own. Similar to the pairs of cards described above, these postcards would provide a small amount of information about a single landmine related issue, and also list a website where more information could be found. These would be easy to distribute, and most likely not very expensive to print. (One issue here is - what would the website be where more information would be found? Would there be a designated agency that would receive donations?). The key with these cards would be to have an intriguing image, that would make people want to read the back, and then an interesting story that would make people want to learn more.

3. Various other games. Suggestions during testing sessions included: "Mine-opoly" - just like Monopoly except some of the properties are mined. Maybe paying for demining costs the same as a hotel, or something. A computer version of the role-playing game described in #1. A very sneaky and guilt-inducing game: you play a game (online) in which you are in the army, for example, or for some other reason have the need or the opportunity to plant landmines. Several months later, you get an e-mail that says "one person stepped on a landmine in the minefield you planted, they had an above-the-knee amputation." Etc. This would continue for a while, until you went back and demined your field.

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