ITEP/JMU Database of International Experiences: Supporting the Test and Evaluation Community

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The database, in its current version, provides a list of experiences. The experience can be positive or negative but should meet the following criteria:

- It should be significant in that it has real or assumed impact on the T&E operation.
- It should be valid in that it is factually and technically correct.
- It should be applicable in that it identifies a specific process or decision that reduces or limits the potential for failure and mishap, or reinforces a positive result.
- It should be understandable for a skilled person not necessarily intimately familiar with the subject matter (adapted from the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration definition of knowledge). The experience may be generic or equipment-specific and can be submitted by any individual or organization. However, a core set of experiences is extracted from publicly available resources (T&E reports on humanitarian demining equipment) and from T&E activities undertaken under the umbrella of the International Test and Evaluation Program for Humanitarian Demining Equipment.

The intention is that all experiences entered in the database will be periodically reviewed by an international panel of experts from the ITEP network and other organizations performing activities related to T&E, e.g., the United Nations or the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). During this process, the relevance of the experiences to T&E standards, technical notes and/or methodologies will be assessed.

An entry could become one of the following four things:

1. An item added to an ITEP T&E methodology

The experience is seen as an important new and a new way of carrying out tests. A spin-off of this could be a request for further research to be carried out back to back with other tests to document the effects. This further research could ultimately be executed in the form of a collaborative project under the ITEP umbrella.

2. An item added to the Lessons Learned/Experiences database: The experience is judged to have a significant impact on the testing method and is preferably backed up by at least two other experiences. An existing test methodology may be changed or updated to take into account this experience.

3. An item circulated to the User Community

The experience has an impact on the individual's current or future testing equipment/systems. It should be passed on to the User Community, for instance through a Technical Note for Mine Action (TNMA) issued by the GICHD.

4. Dismissed: The experience does not fall into one of the above categories. It may be dismissed with reason stated.

In its initial stage, the database will mainly include "experiences." After review, the database will be expanded with "lessons learned," referred to as a set of experiences. These lessons learned can then further be incorporated into standards and similar documents wherever relevant.

Table 1: Two examples of testing and evaluation experiences extracted from ITEP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Generic Considerations to T&amp;E</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Supporting Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Test site layout and facilities</td>
<td>Experience/Advice</td>
<td>Test design, environmental data records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience/Advice</td>
<td>Test design, environmental data records</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Posted by ITEP Secretariat (ITEP) on 21/04/2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementation

The database consists of two main categories: Generic Considerations and Equipment-Specific Considerations. Each main category has subcategories to explore the experiences in detail and to guide the user to add relevant experiences. Each subcategory can be browsed by clicking on the corresponding individual cell or by executing a detailed search. The user can add an experience to a subcategory by clicking on the corresponding individual cell or on "Add Experience." Table 1 includes two examples extracted from the database in order to illustrate the type of information provided by DITEC.
JAIPUR
Brings Renewed Hope to Landmine Victims in Kabul

Foot Camp

Faribo, a 23-year-old girl and resident of Kabul, Afghanistan, lost both of her legs in a landmine explosion. After the accident, she felt like a burden to her family. Through an advertisement on television, Faribo heard about the Jaipur Foot Camp and decided to see what it had to offer her. At the camp, she received a light and comfortable prosthesis. Faribo testifies that it has given a new meaning to her life.

It is experiences like this that invite Help Handicapped International (HHI) to organize camps in various parts of the world for the free fitness of Jaipur, an Indian prostheses. These prosthesis have proved to be durable, versatile and cost-efficient.

Background

HHI has focused its work in the strife-torn areas of Kenya, Burundi, Sudan and recently, Afghanistan. The number of landmine amputees in these areas is overwhelming, and concerted relief efforts are limited due to shortages of funding, impassable geographical terrain and inadequate security considerations.

In light of the nearly 300,000 amputees---mostly landmine and war victims---an advance HHI team went to Kabul in August 2003 to explore the possibility of conducting a Jaipur Foot Camp there. Discussions were held and officials promised whatever assistance was possible for the war-affected city. It was decided that a one-month camp would be conducted at the orthopedic center inside Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital in Kabul. Although the technicians at this center were inexperienced in Jaipur foot technology, they could provide valuable assistance to the team from India, as well as act as internees.

The team working at the camp in Kabul was comprised of a project coordinator, a counselor and experienced technicians. Medical instruments and raw materials were flown into Kabul from India in October 2003.

In order to notify survivors in the area about the camp, the following steps were taken:
• Banners were hung at strategic places in Kabul, especially at the entrances into Kabul from the provinces.
• Pamphlets were placed at various locations within the city,

by Mahendra G. Mehta, Help Handicapped International

on many calls and bases in Kabul as well as distributed through young people who normally sell newspapers at traffic junctions in Kabul.

Announcements were made on the local radio and television.

• Journalists from three local newspapers---Besa, Hinao and Kabul Times---were invited to and carried the activities of the camp prominently in their newspapers.

• An FM channel---Radio Sada Araz---also covered the event.

• Kabul television featured the activity in their weekly "Health" program.

• HHI staff went to some health centers around Kabul and requested they send their handicapped patients for free fitting of the prosthesis.

This multi-media coverage helped to mobilize beneficiaries and over 400 limbs were fitted at the camp within a one-month time period.

The camp was a unique experience both for HHI as well as the amputees. Indic-Afghanistan relations have always been warm, so the HHI team was well-received, and they built a rapport with the local officials, beneficiaries and the technicians.

Conclusion

The experiences related by some of the amputees were heart-wrenching. The joy of being able to walk again within a few hours of entering the Jaipur Foot Camp was a sight worth seeing. Dr. Najib, a practicing medical doctor in Paghman (about 40 km from Kabul) came to the camp on a Friday when his clinic was closed. Being a landmine amputee himself, he understood the plight of the hundreds of thousands of his countrymen waiting for prostheses. He said, "I am really grateful to this team from India carrying out such humanitarian work."

The concerned ministries of the government of Afghanistan were also very cooperative and requested that HHI organize more camps, especially in the provinces where humanitarian activity has been very limited. After the severe Afghanis winter, HHI plans to conduct additional camps in Gharmi, Khair, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduske provinces.

* Photo c/o the author.

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As mentioned in the introduction, during the analysis of the reports, valuable information was also encountered that is related to technical and operational deployment of the equipment. For instance, the report "Severe Duty Vegetation Shredder Technical Testing of Capability by the U.S. Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate (NVESD), online at http://www.hindiaint.org/journal/pakul/clearance/arc_text_report.asp" mentions the fact that fence wire tangled up in the rotating machinery and inflicted considerable damage/distortions during the testing. This finding could also have implications for the operational use of this type of equipment, not only in fenced minefields but also in dense vegetation where tree-like plants can have the same effect. Hours may be needed for the machinery to become operational again. Important feedback from the reader could be an indication that similar information would be worthy of being included in DITEC.

Final Remarks

Care should be taken when using the term "lessons learned."]

In general, the process followed for compiling a "lesson learned" is quite complex and consists of an information-gathering and processing chain spread over a considerable time period. For instance, the Swedish EOD and Demining Centre (SWEDEC) lessons learned project includes several phases such as the collection of an "experience report" using a standard form, which is then analysed and commented on in an "extended experience report." This stage is followed by validation of the information (i.e., is it happen several times? Is it useful for another organisation?..), which leads to the implementation phase and the compilation of the "lessons learned report." A similar process is being applied by the Department of Energy (DOE) Corporate Lessons Learned Collection database, for example. However, this is not the approach followed at present by the JMU MASC lessons learned database and is, in our opinion, at the moment in time not necessary, mainly due to the given nature of the database.

Both the JMU MASC database and DITEC are currently being evaluated by an international team of "experts." No final results are available yet, but preliminary results of the assessment indicate that an important percentage of the DITEC experiences have been classified as relevant to the TIE process.

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