

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 17
Issue 3 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 8

October 2013

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Recommended Citation

Desantis, Angela and Eriksson, Daniel (2013) "The New IMSMA and Victim Assistance," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 17 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol17/iss3/8>

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The New IMSMA and Victim Assistance

by Angela De Santis and Daniel Eriksson [GICHD]

A new update to the Information Management System for Mine Action will include a victim assistance module, which will facilitate the monitoring and tracking of the access of victims to their rights and the accountability of the assistance process.

Anti-personnel mines are designed to maim victims. Consequently, mine injuries often require more medical resources than other war-related injuries.¹ The international legal framework pertaining to victim assistance has evolved considerably since the adoption in 1997 of the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMBBC) which is the first treaty containing a provision on victim assistance.²

In 2006, the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) obliged States Parties to ensure the full realization of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of all persons with disabilities.³ If applied to assistance for mine/explosive remnants of war (ERW) victims, the CRPD's rights-based approach expands traditionally understood victim assistance far beyond medical care and rehabilitation, while consequently increasing the number of actors involved (medical, economic, social institutions and gender specialists, among others).⁴

Despite efforts made by affected states to strengthen their assistance programs, whether for all disabled persons or more specifically mine/ERW victims, preliminary findings from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) suggest that the lack of measurable and comparable information about victim assistance limits effective implementation. In most cases, the main obstacles are technological in nature due to the absence of a comprehensive management system for information storage and processing, or structural, resulting from a lack of effective communication and coordination among major actors at different levels nationwide. Therefore, GICHD aims to provide solutions for both obstacles through improvement of its Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA).

User-driven IMSMA Evolution

IMSMA provides states with decision-support tools for the coordination and management of their mine action programs. IMSMA software evolution is iterative to best meet the expressed needs of the mine action community.

Due to an urgent need for an information-management system for landmine and ERW victim assistance, Colombia adapted IMSMA^{NG} version 5.08.04. This adaption served as the starting point for expanding the use of IMSMA^{NG} beyond mine action. The development of new victim-centric information-management capabilities in IMSMA^{NG} version 6.0 will facilitate the inclusion of iterative needs assessments and the assistance services provided. The module will be fully integrated into IMSMA and automatically installed with the new version of the software. GICHD will provide the support for upgrading to version 6.0. After the official release of IMSMA^{NG} version 6.0 by the end of 2013, the victim assistance module will be tested at both national and provincial levels in Colombia in November 2013.

Data Entry Form
Reconciliation
Comments

IMSMA Assistance Form IMSMA v.6.0

Form ID

Assistance ID

Assistance Name

Direct Beneficiaries Indirect Beneficiaries

Needs Assessment Done By

Name
Org ID

Assistance Decided By

Name
Org ID

Assistance Given By

Name
Org ID

Assistance Paid By

Name
Org ID

Assistance Given At

Name

Priority None Low Medium High Not specified

Status Planned Ongoing Completed Suspended Aborted

Cost

Currency AUD - Australia Dollars JPY - Japan, Yen USD - US Dollars

Date of Information

Day
Month
Year

Assistance

Parent Name	Classification	Status	Start Date	End Date	Quantity
Prosthetics	Foot Right	Ongoing	2013/07/29 ...	2013/07/29...	1
Continue health care services	Traumatology	Completed	2013/08/01 ...	2013/08/09...	1
First aid	Trauma care	Completed	2013/07/29 ...	2013/07/29...	1

Approve
Reject

Save
Submit
Cancel

Figure 1: Example of a victim assistance form in IMSMA^{NG} version 6.0.
All graphics courtesy of GICHD.

This new IMSMA capability provides a flexible solution to existing technical and structural limitations. The victim assistance module can be customized according to specific national structures and user needs in order to connect all relevant actors involved in victim registration, needs collection, assistance and monitoring. Assistance is not limited to only landmine and ERW victims (direct beneficiaries) but also includes indirect beneficiaries such as family and community members. In addition, the model can be expanded to include all persons with disabilities. As a result, relevant actors may include mine action authorities, health- and social-related institutions, international organizations, etc. Each mine action program can define, case by case, the level of implementation of the IMSMA module and the interaction between the involved organizations.

Due to the wide range of possible implementation scenarios, this evolution also presents several technical challenges related mainly to

- **High-data volume.** The number of victims (and/or persons with disabilities) recorded in individual countries can range from tens of thousands to millions, which is significantly more than the average number of hazards traditionally tracked with IMSMA.
- **Highly-decentralized setup.** Based on the results of needs assessments, victim assistance would likely be implemented following a bottom-up approach involving several users. This will dramatically increase the level of decentralization. Estimates indicate that the number of IMSMA installations will increase from 2,000 in 2013 to 6,000 in 2015.

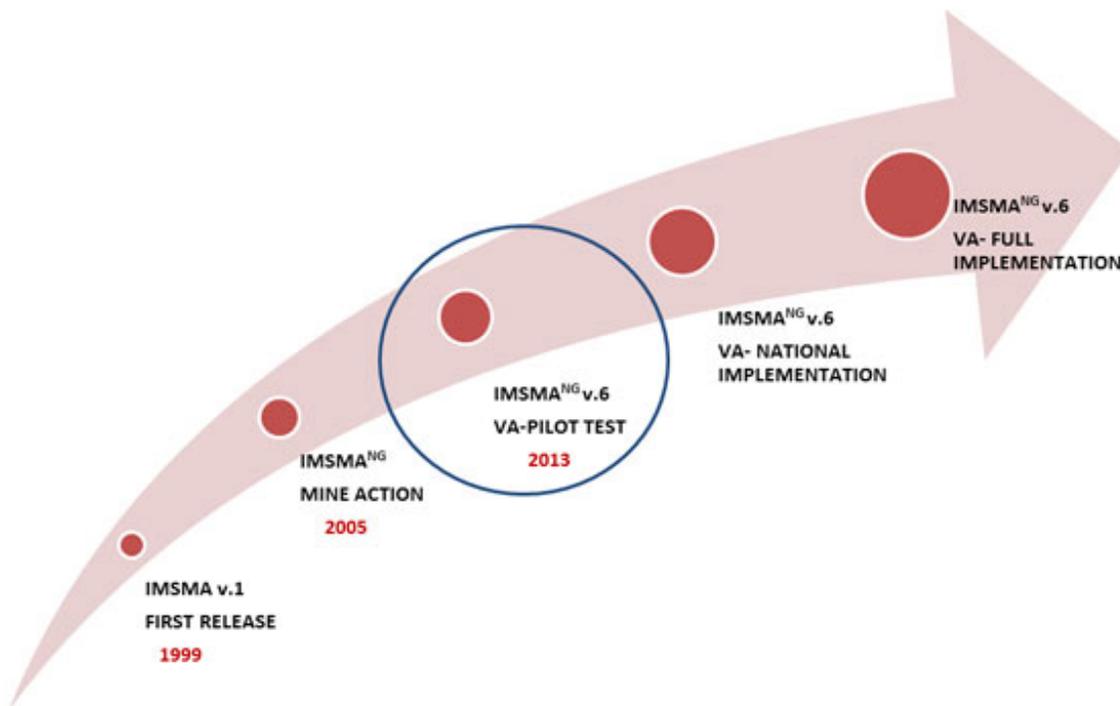


Figure 2: Stages of IMSMA evolution toward a full integration and implementation of the victim assistance information-management capabilities. The blue circle marks the current stage of this process.

Expanding IMSMA software to include a victim assistance module will last nine months, from March to December 2013, taking into account the results of user needs assessments GICHD conducted in Colombia and Vietnam, with additional input from relevant international stakeholders such as Handicap International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan and the United Nations Development Programme in Lebanon.

User Needs in Victim Assistance Information Management

Victims of conflict include directly affected individuals as well as their relatives, dependents and community. Therefore, according to our assessment, the assistance provided to different types of victims should account for the following

three main concerns:

- The identification of the victims and the assessment of their needs
- Indicators for tracking and evaluating the results of victim assistance
- A clear definition of the methodology used in providing assistance to victims

Colombia and Vietnam were selected as case studies for the project. Both countries feature different causes of injuries, numbers of victims, approaches to victim assistance and experience in assistance provision. Their contrasting circumstances will provide a comprehensive understanding of a full range of scenarios for the new IMSMA module to address.

Colombia has the highest number of landmine victims per year and maintains a strong governmental policy regarding victims. In June 2011 Colombia passed the Victims and Land Restitution Law, which provides rights to comprehensive reparation, truth and justice for victims of conflict.⁵ To coordinate the national system of victim support, Colombia created the Victim Assistance Unit under the *Departamento para la Prosperidad Social* (Department of Social Prosperity or DPS). Its main role entails

- Acting as the secretariat for *El Comité Ejecutivo para la Atención y Reparación a las Víctimas* (The Executive Committee for the Support and Reparation of Victims)
- Coordinating victim services among the various governmental agencies
- Managing funds for victim reparations and resources for land restitution
- Monitoring victim services provided by local authorities and regional nongovernmental organizations
- Reviewing victim declaration facts for the purpose of granting legal victim status

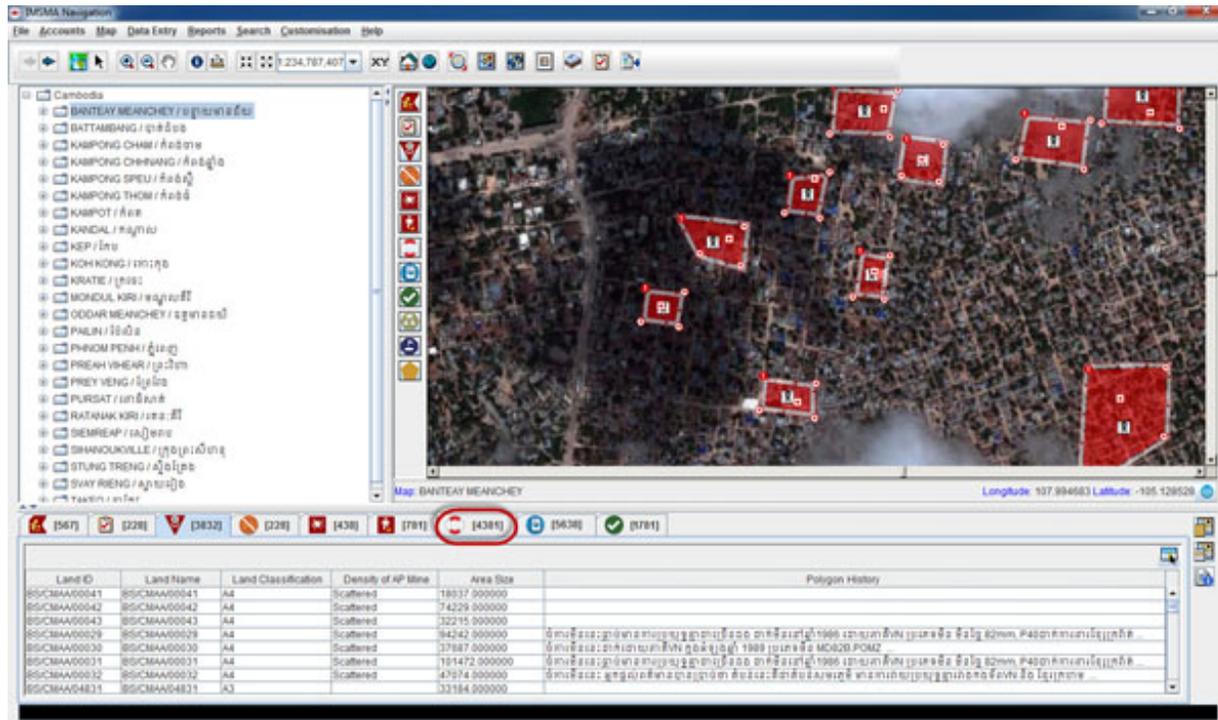


Figure 3: Sample view of the IMSMA^{NG} version 6.0 with the new victim assistance tab highlighted in red. The data displayed are not real and have been created ad hoc for this example.

In contrast, Vietnam is highly contaminated by unexploded ordnance, and the exact number of victims is unknown. Vietnam is still in the process of defining a public policy to provide victim assistance. On 7 June 2010 the Vietnamese government passed the Law on Persons with Disabilities to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (including disabled landmine/ERW survivors) and has passed legislation that addresses the implementation of the 2010 law.⁶ However, the enforcement of these laws is ongoing.

The Colombian Victims and Land Restitution Law and the Vietnamese Decision No. 1008/QD-LDTBXH, passed 8 August 2012, require the creation of an information-management system to regulate, coordinate and provide assistance to victims in Colombia and to persons with disabilities in Vietnam.⁷ According to this legal framework, the main

objectives of the information-management system are to

- Facilitate accountability for assistance processes, the impact on victims' or disabled persons' lives and the best use of resources
- Integrate existing victim or disabled persons registers at different levels (from local to national) that are owned by several national actors (ministries, national institutions, international organizations) and field organizations (local and regional authorities, hospitals, etc.)
- Institutionalize and regulate the information flow horizontally and vertically
- Track the assistance provided by each actor to each victim or disabled person
- Standardize data collection

Conclusion

The new IMSMA^{NG} capability will provide appropriate information management in victim assistance leading to

- Understanding national impact and needs
- Understanding victim assistance, which can support a decision-making process that leads to a comprehensive strategy for including victims in the society
- Monitoring and tracking of victims' access to available services
- Structuring of the victim assistance process

With victim assistance statistics, the ability to compare different users and countries and the consequent possibility to share best practices could support the development of a global strategy for victim assistance, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided.

Finally, the coordinated use of a single victim assistance information-management system will facilitate the full transition of victim assistance programs from national mine action programs to health institutions. This will help to prevent data loss and to ensure consistency and continuity after the completion of all other mine action activities, when only victim assistance services are needed. 

Biographies



Angela De Santis joined GICHD's management-consulting division in May 2013. She provides information-management capacity development to mine action programs and acts as the focal point for management expertise in victim assistance. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science from University of Parma (Italy) and a doctorate in remote sensing, geographic information systems and cartography from University of Alcalá (Spain). Prior to joining GICHD, she worked in aerospace, defense and academic institutions.



Daniel Eriksson joined GICHD in December 2008. He heads the management-consulting division, which provides research and capacity development on the management of mine action programs with a particular emphasis on quality management and information management. He holds a doctorate in disaster management from Coventry University (U.K.)

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Endnotes

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6. Since 2010, Vietnam has passed the Decree on Stipulating in Detail and Guiding the Implementation of Some Articles of Law on Persons with Disabilities and Circular No. 37/2012/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BYT-BTC-BGDĐT approving the Project to Help Disabled People the Period 2012–2020.
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ISSN 2154-1485

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