

# Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

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Volume 16  
Issue 2 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 12

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July 2012

## Handicap International

CISR JOURNAL

*Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)*

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### Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2012) "Handicap International," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 16 : Iss. 2 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol16/iss2/12>

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## Handicap International

Handicap International is an independent organization working with local partners to improve the lives of persons with disabilities who became disabled as a result of poverty or conflict. HI develops and supports programs for physical, social and economic rehabilitation, and promotes the rights of PWDs. Founded in 1982 by two French doctors, HI originally provided aid to Cambodian refugees in Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. It has assisted millions of PWDs in more than 63 countries and consists of eight national associations operating in Belgium,

Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>1</sup> According to HI, 10 percent of the world's population is disabled, and 80 percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries affected by conflict and poverty.<sup>2</sup> HI is active in landmine education and works closely with local authorities in areas affected by explosive remnants of war to clear landmines and address the needs of landmine, cluster munitions and other ERW survivors.<sup>1</sup>



HI works diligently to assist those who are disabled from landmines and ERW through rehabilitative programs that promote reintegration into society, as well as programs that advocate and educate the public about disability rights.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, HI helped fund the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and both organizations were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 after supporting the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and Their Destruction (also known as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMB). HI is a founding member of the Cluster Munitions Coalition, supporting member of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and a founder and coordinator of the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor. As a result of its efforts in rehabilitation and reconstruction for landmine victims, HI is a prominent organization within the landmine community on landmine and cluster-bomb issues.<sup>4</sup>

### VA, Mine Clearance and MRE in Libya

HI addresses landmine and cluster-bomb issues through victim assistance, mine clearance and mine-risk education in more than 300 projects worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Following the uprising that began 17 February 2011 between insurgents and the former Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi, foreign citizens, mostly from Tunisia and Egypt, fled Libya. During the

conflict, the area was contaminated with landmines. HI immediately began assisting injured and displaced refugees by providing logistical support, in addition to orthopedic and trauma services, at two Tunisian hospitals that were overwhelmed with patients from Libya. In mid-March, HI also performed a risk evaluation for mines and ERW in Libya. Following the evaluation, HI implemented a risk-education program to deal with the emergency and delivered it to an additional 2,000 displaced persons in 23 camps in Benghazi, Libya. As the majority of these internally displaced people were children, HI collaborated with UNICEF for support in these educational efforts. In addition to Benghazi, 75 people worked with HI in Ajdabiya and Misrata in northern Libya to provide MRE. HI spread its message via radio, word of mouth in mosques and road billboards that informed civilians of the ERW presence and dangers.<sup>6</sup> HI's work in Libya and support of the disabled are examples of its ongoing humanitarian work.

### Recurrent Efforts

In 2011, HI was awarded the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize, chosen out of approximately 200 nominated organizations. "People with disabilities are the most vulnerable in society, and Handicap International has transformed the way the world deals with this underserved group. Handicap International expanded from helping landmine victims to assisting those disabled from disease, injury, war or natural disasters, and millions of lives have been restored due to the work of this organization," says Judy M. Miller, vice president of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.<sup>7</sup>

After 30 years of service, HI continues to advocate for the rights of PWDs. From 28 November to 2 December 2011, HI and other nongovernmental organizations gathered in Cambodia for the Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.<sup>8</sup> By participating in the meeting and through its coordination of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Bombs, HI continues advocating for PWDs.<sup>4</sup>



Handicap International BAC operator working in a banana plantation in the village of Borj El Shamali, Lebanon.  
Photos courtesy of Handicap International.

~ Meghan Wallace, CISR Staff

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### Endnotes

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