

# Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

---

Volume 15  
Issue 2 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 12

---

July 2011

## Victim Assistance and Inclusive Livelihoods

Wanda M. Jaime  
*Handicap International*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal>



Part of the [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

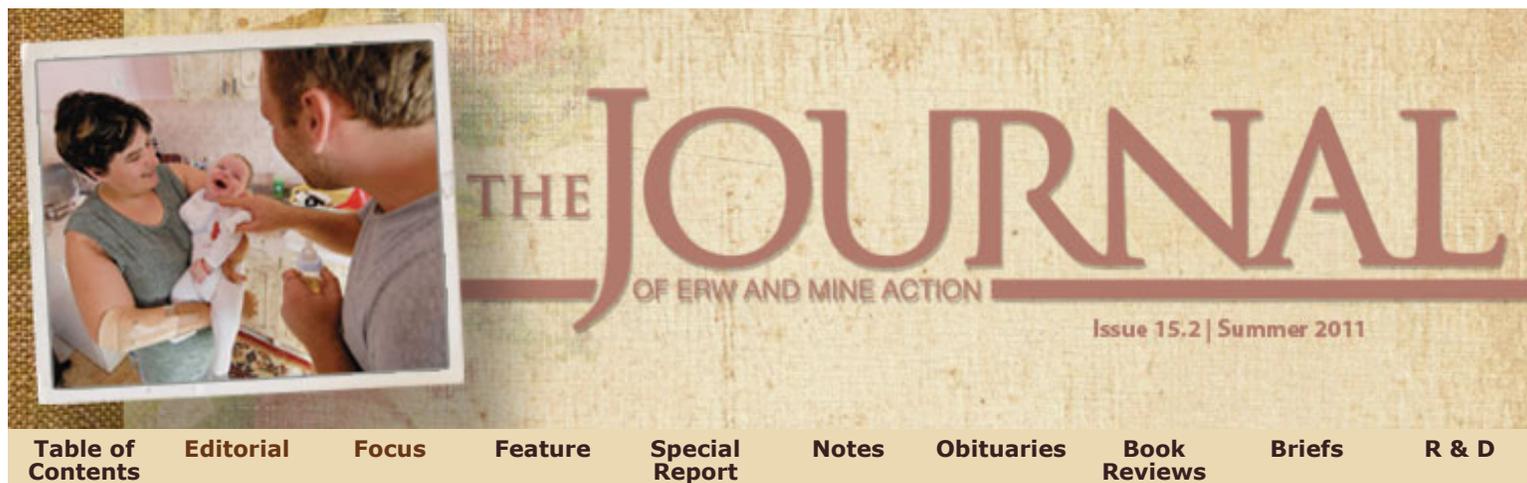
---

### Recommended Citation

Jaime, Wanda M. (2011) "Victim Assistance and Inclusive Livelihoods," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol15/iss2/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [dc\\_admin@jmu.edu](mailto:dc_admin@jmu.edu).



## Victim Assistance and Inclusive Livelihoods

by Wanda Muñoz Jaime [ Handicap International ]

*Handicap International first started its operations in the Thai-Cambodia border refugee camps in 1982. At that time, the organization's main focus was physical rehabilitation. However, over the years, HI has adopted a more comprehensive approach that can be exemplified by a livelihoods project specifically targeting Cambodia's victims of mines/explosive remnants of war. This article explores the links between the international victim-assistance legal and policy framework and field practice through the experience of the Towards Sustainable Income Generating Activities for Landmine/ERW Victims project.*

The first phase of the Towards Sustainable Income Generating Activities for Landmine/ERW Victims (TIGA) project was carried out in Battambang province, Cambodia between 2008 and 2010. Battambang province had the highest number of mine/ERW accidents in 2008, accounting for 32 percent of all Cambodia casualties.<sup>1</sup> The TIGA project's main goal was reducing the social exclusion and poverty of mine/ERW victims and other persons with disabilities, and to improve local stakeholder capacities to understand and meet their needs. The European Union funded the project's first phase with joint implementation by Handicap International and its local partner *Operations Enfants du Cambodge*.



Leap Kit (right) improved his animal raising skills and accessed a microfinance institution to improve his business. In addition to an increase in income, a major change in his life is the accessible toilet in the back of the picture.

*All photos courtesy of the author.*

### A Comprehensive Methodology That Mobilizes Local Resources

While focusing on livelihoods, the TIGA project mobilized other necessary services to improve mine/ERW victims' overall quality of life using a comprehensive approach.<sup>2</sup> The project provided support by enabling access to healthcare and rehabilitation, as well as improving hygiene and sanitation at a household level.<sup>2,3</sup> It also provided support for mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities to start, or to further develop, an income-generating activity. This support included vocational and business-management training,<sup>4</sup> and information about how to access microfinance institutions. The project also provided professional toolkits (such as sewing machines and raw materials) for people with no other means to acquire start-up capital.

Addressing social and economic needs contributes to improving overall quality of life in a comprehensive manner. The following testimony by Leap Kit, a mine survivor, underscores this point:

"Through the TIGA project, I followed a training to improve my pig- and chicken-raising activities; I obtained a wheelchair and now have an accessible toilet. The two major changes in my life are one, I have increased my income and have successfully managed to access a savings and credit group,

and two, I can go to the toilet safely and easily. Before, I had to struggle to get to the fields myself, and it was very difficult for me, particularly in the rainy season.”

Local agricultural offices, the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth, and the Department of Women Affairs contributed to the identification, selection, training, and follow-up of mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities. Service providers also joined the project by offering healthcare, rehabilitation, training and microfinance services to some participants.

HI’s role focused on:

- Building the capacities of OEC to provide social and business support in cases where it was impossible for existing services to respond to these needs
- Facilitating linkages between service providers, mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities
- Strengthening the capacities of local authorities and services to include mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities in their work

**Linking field practice to legislation and national-action plans.** The TIGA project is in line with Cambodia’s *Law on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and contributed to the priorities set by the *National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities, including Landmine/ERW Survivors (2009–2011)*. In particular, TIGA helped achieve the following objective: “At least 500 landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities, including at least 250 women, have accessed grants and/or microfinance schemes provided by both private and NGO [nongovernmental] organizations to improve their socio-economic situation, by December 2011.”<sup>5</sup>

**Addressing social and economic needs contributes to improving overall quality of life in a comprehensive manner**

**Comprehensive understanding of the term “victim.”** While focusing on survivors, the TIGA project also worked with those in affected communities and the families of those killed by mines/ERW. Since the initial design of the project, the term **mine/ERW victim** was used in accordance with the common understanding of the term “victim,” as used in the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (also known as the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMBC) context.<sup>6</sup> Since 2009, Article 2 of the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*, which is applicable to those states that have ratified it, has contained this three-tiered definition of “victim”.<sup>7</sup> Currently, Cambodia and Thailand are not signatories to the CCM. However following the recent intercessional meetings, held in Geneva from 27–30 June 2011, both countries expressed their intention to begin the process to formally accede to the CCM.<sup>8</sup>

**Human-rights principles.** The TIGA project was based on the human-rights principles that are now well-established in the victim-assistance legal and policy framework, and in accordance with the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>9</sup>

Respecting the principle of nondiscrimination between persons with impairments<sup>10</sup> from different causes, the TIGA project included mine/ERW victims as well as other persons with disabilities. The project incorporated age and gender differences by including families of children with disabilities and taking into consideration the different roles of men and women.<sup>2</sup>

The principles of self-determination and empowering each person to make their own informed decisions were also at the core of the TIGA project’s methodology. The project tried to incorporate flexibility that allowed for a tailored response to each person’s needs, even within the constraints of a short-term project with limited resources.

## Results

Five-hundred sixty mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities participated in the TIGA project, of which 70 percent were mine/ERW victims, 30 percent were other persons with disabilities and their families, and 49 percent were women. In terms of impact:<sup>11</sup>

- 75 percent increased their income (almost fourfold on average)
- 87 percent improved their quality of life (major changes included an increase in household budget and community participation)

- Food insecurity decreased for all participants in the project<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with recommendations of the *Cartagena Action Plan*, forums related to victim assistance, disability and livelihoods are disseminating the good practices identified by the project.<sup>2</sup>

## Key Considerations When Applying a Victim-assistance Approach to Field Projects

Several recommendations came out of this project. The key considerations are elaborated below.



With help from the TIGA project team, Ean Sokheng has become an excellent tailor.

**Identifying mine/ERW survivors and the families of those killed by mines/ERW.** Identifying mine survivors was a challenge to a certain extent, because the information required to locate them was not easily accessible. Identifying the family members of those killed by mines/ERW was another challenge, as efforts to locate them were insufficient. In addition to working with the relevant mine-action stakeholders, the TIGA project team relied on information provided by village chiefs, the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth, commune chiefs and community members. Below is one example of how this worked in practice:

**Working in affected communities.** While working in mine/ERW-affected communities, there were reports of cleared land being seized, as well as reports of people renting out potentially hazardous plots of land as a way of checking if they were safe.<sup>12,13</sup> The TIGA project did not aim to respond to such challenges directly, but such issues raise the question of what a

comprehensive response to assist affected communities should incorporate, in addition to mine action.

Having clear guidelines on this topic would be just as useful as having a clear framework for survivor assistance. State Parties and relevant stakeholders now have a well-defined and shared understanding of what survivor assistance encompasses: six main sectors of work, implementation principles, links to other disability and development frameworks, and stakeholders' responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> This type of detailed framework is also required to ensure a common approach to assisting communities. One example of HI's field experience on this issue is the Linking Mine Action and Development project in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>14</sup>

**Differences.** Is there a difference between working with mine/ERW survivors and working with other persons with disabilities? Nondiscrimination between mine/ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities is an accepted principle within the APMBC context and one that is now embedded in the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*.<sup>7,15</sup> Does field experience, however, indicate that there should be a different approach to working with mine/ERW survivors than with other persons with disabilities?

Mine/ERW survivors usually need specialized medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, particularly if they have multiple impairments (e.g., physical, visual, hearing, mental, etc.). Families also have to cope with shock and often with an immediate loss of income and resources. As debt increases, quality of life plunges and food shortages occur. In this context, children often drop out of school and some may engage in labor.<sup>2</sup>

Mine/ERW survivors who were TIGA participants confirmed that this situation is similar to that of others who experience a sudden impairment, such as victims of traumatic incidents (resulting from conflict, unsafe labor, road accidents, etc.). For many, the main obstacles they face are not the result of a physical or sensory impairment itself (or of the origin of such impairment), but rather the result of the subsequent external barriers and exclusion they face on a daily basis. Thus, in addition to working toward improving each person's capacities, it is fundamental to

Ean Sokheng's father passed away when she was 10-years old as a result of a mine accident. Since she did not appear in any mine/ERW victim lists or references, the TIGA team did not initially recognize her. Sokheng had to work as a day laborer in the fields to survive. Her brother, a person with disability himself who also participated in the TIGA project, referred her to the project. Sokheng pursued a sewing apprenticeship and received a sewing machine and business training. She is now a successful tailor in Ratanak Model, Cambodia.

systematically address issues such as social discrimination and lack of accessibility that often remain the main obstacles to full participation in society.<sup>16,2</sup>

The following account illustrates how social discrimination rather than the impairment itself became the main obstacle in a disabled person's life:

Yim Samon had learned carpentry skills before a mine took his right hand. Once recovered, he decided to use his carpentry skills to make a living and adapted his tools so they could be tied to his arm. However, his neighbors did not use his services. Therefore, he supplemented his revenue (and that of his growing family) by farming. Despite the challenges, Samon continued working in carpentry and became more competitive after receiving business training through the TIGA project. At the same time, awareness activities on the rights and capacities of persons with disabilities were launched. After a while, the community acknowledged the quality of Samon's work and his honesty, and he is now a respected carpenter.

From HI's field experience, projects targeting mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities should respond to the specific needs and priorities of each individual on the basis of their current situation and obstacles, not on the basis of the origin of the impairment—mine/ERW or other reasons—and the principle of nondiscrimination should be applied to survivor assistance.

## Looking Forward

---

The TIGA project's next phase began in March 2011. In addition to continuing its current work, the project will:

- Support HI's partner, OEC, to take full ownership of the activities related to individual socioeconomic support
- Strengthen the capacities of persons with disabilities to ensure their equal participation in local development and policy-making
- Provide technical support and coaching for vocational training centers and microfinance institutions to become inclusive by reducing physical and attitudinal barriers

HI has come a long way from its rehabilitation work in 1982. It now promotes a comprehensive approach that achieves a greater impact on the quality of life of mine/ERW victims and persons with disabilities. The TIGA project offers an example of a sustainable and efficient way to improve quality of life: supporting individuals to increase their well-being through social support and income-generating activities, while simultaneously increasing active participation in wider local-development initiatives.

HI will continue working with its partners to achieve one of the main objectives of the APMBBC and the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*: to make a sustainable and measurable change in the lives of mine/ERW victims. ↗

*Acknowledgement: The author would like to thank Handicap International Cambodia-Thailand for its contributions.*

## Biography

---



**Wanda Muñoz** has worked with Handicap International for five years and is currently HI's Livelihoods Technical Advisor for Asia programs, based in Bangkok. Prior to her current position, she carried out field missions to support the development of victim-assistance action plans in Colombia and Chad, and held the position of HI's Victim Assistance Advisor for three years. Before joining HI, she worked on fair trade, livelihoods and indigenous people's rights projects in countries including Cambodia, Mexico and the Philippines. A Mexican citizen, Wanda holds a dual Master of International Affairs and Development/Microfinance from Sciences Po Paris and Columbia University in New York.

Wanda Muñoz Jaime

Livelihoods Technical Advisor for Asia program  
 Handicap International  
 Headquarters: 14 av Berthelot  
 69007 Lyon / France  
 Tel: +66 (0) 849 18 17 61 (mobile)  
 +33 (0) 4 78 69 79 79 (Lyon office)  
 E-mail: talivelihoodasia(at)thailand-hi.org  
 Website: <http://www.handicap-international.fr/en/index.html?cHash=dff5803894>

## Endnotes

1. Cambodia. *Landmine Monitor Report 2008*. New York: Campaign to Ban Landmines. [http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?act=submit&pqs\\_year=2009&pqs\\_type=lm&pqs\\_report=cambodia&pqs\\_section=](http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?act=submit&pqs_year=2009&pqs_type=lm&pqs_report=cambodia&pqs_section=). Accessed 9 June 2011.
2. *Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014: Ending the Suffering Caused by Anti-Personnel Mines*, 11 December 2009. <http://www.cartagenasummit.org/fileadmin/pdf/review-conference-2nd/2RC-ActionPlanFINAL-UNOFFICIAL-11Dec2009.pdf>. Accessed 14 July 2011.
3. *How to Build an Accessible Environment in Developing Countries*. Manual #1 – Introduction & Accessibility Standards, 2008. Handicap International. [http://www.handicap-international.fr/fileadmin/documents/publications/Manual1\\_light.pdf](http://www.handicap-international.fr/fileadmin/documents/publications/Manual1_light.pdf). Accessed 9 June 2011.
4. *Replicating Success: A Manual to Alleviate Poverty through Peer Training*. International Labor Organization, 2009. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_120312.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_120312.pdf). Accessed 9 June 2011.
5. *National Plan of Action on Persons with Disabilities, including Landmine/ERW Survivors 2008-2011*. Cambodia: Part 5: Economic Reintegration (page 31). <http://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/pdf/mbc/MSP/9MSP/day4/9MSP-Item12d-27Nov2008-Cambodia-NationalPlan.pdf>. Accessed 9 June 2011.
6. *A Guide to Understanding Victim Assistance in the Context of the AP Mine Ban Convention*, 2008. [http://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/pdf/victim\\_assistance/VA-GuidetoUnderstanding-Nov2008-en.pdf](http://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/pdf/victim_assistance/VA-GuidetoUnderstanding-Nov2008-en.pdf). Accessed 10 June 2011.
7. Diplomatic Conference for the Adoption of a Convention on Cluster Munitions, Dublin 19–30 May 2008. <http://bit.ly/eL2ubN>. Accessed 10 June 2011.
8. "Landmark Conference on Convention Ends with Hope for Future Progress." *Cluster Munition Coalition*, 1 July 2011. <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3274>. Accessed 7 July 2011.
9. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations Enable. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=259>. Accessed 10 June 2011.
10. The terms **impairment** and **disability** are used in this article in accordance with the concepts of the CRPD Preamble (e): "Recognizing that disability is an evolving concept and that **disability** results from the interaction between **persons with impairments** and **attitudinal and environmental barriers** that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (block letters highlighted by the author). UN Enable. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Preamble. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=260>. Accessed 10 June 2011.
11. Davis, Kirsten. *TIGA project Quality of Life Assessment*, 2010. HI Cambodia internal document available upon request as well as HI project monitoring tools.
12. Baseline information indicated that out of 560 households, 14 percent faced an average of three months of food insecurity per year. End-of-project data indicates all persons participating in the project improved their food security, including the most vulnerable.
13. Muñoz, Wanda, Ulrike Last and Teng Kimsean. *Good Practices from the project Towards Sustainable Income Generating Activities for Mine Victim and Other Persons with Disabilities in Cambodia*. Handicap International Federation. <http://bit.ly/geZ4VL>. Accessed 10 June 2011.
14. Carrier, Michael and Dr. John Powell. "Mine Action Development Funding in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, 14.3 (Fall 2010). <http://maic.jmu.edu/cisr/journal/14.3/feature/carrier/carrier.htm>. Accessed 10 June 2011.
15. "109 States On Board The Convention on Cluster Munitions". *Cluster Munition Coalition*. <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/treatystatus/>. Accessed 7 July 2011.
16. Department for International Development. *Disability, poverty and development*. February 2000 (page 11). [http://www.dochas.ie/Pages/Resources/documents/dfid\\_disability.pdf](http://www.dochas.ie/Pages/Resources/documents/dfid_disability.pdf). Accessed 10 June 2011.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)



*The Journal of ERW & Mine Action* is sponsored by:



© 2011 All rights reserved. *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at James Madison University, MSC 4902 Harrisonburg, VA / USA 22807 | Email: [cisr@jmu.edu](mailto:cisr@jmu.edu)

If cited properly, short sections (a sentence or two) can be used without permission. Written *Journal of ERW and Mine Action* approval is required, however, before longer sections of content published in *The Journal* may be used by another source or publication. ISSN 2154-1485\_

[Past Issues](#) \* [CISR Home](#) \* [Subscribe](#)