

# MAIC Survivor Assistance Projects

New projects under way at the Mine Action Information Center are described here, including a best-practices guidebook on casualty data, survivor-assistance training and a catalog of adaptive technologies.

by Lois Carter Fay and Dr. Suzanne Fiederlein  
[ Mine Action Information Center ]

Most of our Journal of Mine Action readers know the MAIC at James Madison University as an information clearinghouse, complete with a robust Web site, training programs and various publishing ventures including this journal. And our newest products are no exception.

Recently, the Mine Action Information Center was chosen to work on three survivor-assistance projects:

1. Casualty-data best-practices guidebook
2. Survivor-assistance training
3. Adaptive Technology Catalog

All three projects being conducted at the request of the U.S. Department of State Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. The survivor-assistance training is being conducted under the leadership of The Polus Center for Social and Economic Development.

## Casualty-data “Guidebook” Project

Many in the mine-action/unexploded-ordnance community have trouble effectively gathering, managing and interpreting casualty data, although some mine-affected countries have created good casualty-data systems and planning procedures. In our research, we have found that while there is a significant amount of casualty data collected by various entities around the world, it is often not effectively used to inform the decision-making and planning processes in mine action. It is the use of the data that is really driving this guidebook, which will be published in September 2007.

Some countries and programs are challenged to effectively collect needed landmine/UXO casualty data; others collect the data and then seem to do little with it. Many programs collect and use landmine/UXO “accident” data to inform their mine-risk education and clearance projects. For instance, if the data shows that there has been one or more casualties in a particular location, the country’s mine-action authority will assume there is a pocket of landmines or unexploded ordnance located there and consequently choose to mark and clear the area. More recently, with the increased focus on developing mine-victim assistance plans, national authorities are more interested in obtaining additional information about accident survivors in order to plan and deliver rehabilitative services. The guidebook will research what is actually being done in selected mine-affected countries and assess their effectiveness, drawing conclusions regarding which approaches should be considered “best” practices.

The guidebook will be comprised of lessons learned and identified “best practices,” instructive, detailed case studies, and a set of recommendations to guide planners, which will be short and broadly applicable to most situations.

## Survivor-assistance Training

In a recent survey conducted by the MAIC (as a follow-up to the Senior Managers Courses we have presented for the United Nations Development Programme), more than half of the mine-action centers responded that landmine survivor assistance was a “top” or “high”

**Method & Approach**

**Interviews**

- Non-directive – have a conversation
- Meet in home or workplace
- Understand both past and present ambitions & interests
- Use local people

Sample instructional materials from the Economic Reintegration Training Workshop.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE POLUS CENTER

priority, yet an even greater number reported that “no one [in their mine-action center/agency] had received any training” in survivor assistance. Consequently, the MAIC and The Polus Center for Social and Economic Development are working together to create a series of training workshops for national mine-action and survivor-assistance staff to aid them in developing and implementing programs that effectively meet the needs of landmine survivors and other people with disabilities in their countries.

The Polus Center assists people with disabilities in developing countries to become valued members within their communities. Its programs emphasize community-based rehabilitation, self-advocacy and community inclusion. It has extensive experience in working with local partners to create and implement projects to assist people with disabilities, particularly landmine survivors, in several countries. The Polus Center takes a social approach to landmine survivor assistance. It is focused on developing sustainable, person-centered projects for full social integration of landmine survivors.

Polus began working internationally in 1997 in Nicaragua and later expanded to Ethiopia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico. These collaborative efforts have resulted in two community-based prosthetic outreach projects, an accessibility project, a disabilities leadership center, a regional wheelchair-manufacturing project, and a series of capacity-building mini-grants to local organizations and individuals. The Polus Center uses a locally based, holistic approach to ensure that project beneficiaries are the ones driving services forward, and broad support is created in the community where they live.

The MAIC staff and JMU’s faculty consist of subject-matter experts in survivor assistance, mine action and management; we are also experienced in developing and delivering curricula for a variety of constituencies, including program planners and project implementers, such as those for whom this survivor-assistance training program is designed.

These workshops will provide tools to understand and apply current best practices and integrate a social approach into planning and programs. Workshops can be delivered individually (one day each) or as a series spread over five days.

### Adaptive Technology Catalog

The project goals for the Adaptive Technology Catalog are to assist communities and nations recovering from conflicts in providing economic security for individuals who have become disabled by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. We will do this by finding and compiling into a catalog a variety of tools to help survivors get back to work and gain independence.

The Catalog was researched with the help of the Canadian firm, Project Assistance, and will be published in September 2007. It will incorporate low-cost, low-technology products that can either be used directly off-the-shelf or can be easily modified by local vendors. It focuses primarily on the agricultural and mechanical sectors, and is designed to help landmine/ERW survivors become gainfully employed using simple, inexpensive technology. There are also several products related to kitchen work, computers, personal hygiene or grooming and transportation. Most of the tools are under US\$500; a few are about \$1,500. With about 800 tools listed, organized by tool function—auto, agriculture, construction, kitchen, mobility, recreation, etc.—there are ideas for overcoming many disabilities. Two of the supplying company owners are active and accomplished upper-extremity amputees themselves.

It is expected that the Adaptive Technology Catalog will be an excellent resource for survivor-assistance personnel, governments and organizations planning rehabilitation projects, donors and physical trauma survivors.

There are many benefits to a catalog of this type, including that it:

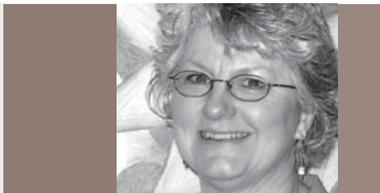
- Allows people to get back to work
- Gives donors something specific to fund
- Creates survivor independence

The Mine Action Information Center staff enjoys providing useful, needed products to the mine-action community as well as partnering with like-minded organizations to develop and deliver the projects. For more information about any of these projects, please contact Dr. Suzanne Fiederlein at [fiedersl@jmu.edu](mailto:fiedersl@jmu.edu) or Lois Carter Fay at [editormaic@gmail.com](mailto:editormaic@gmail.com).

*The Adaptive Technology Catalog project was inspired by Purdue University's Breaking New Ground Resource Center Agricultural Project, which was developed to help farm accident victims from the United States. For more information about this resource, visit: <http://snipurl.com/1bu1a>*



The Adaptive Technology Catalog will be available as a DVD/CD or PDF in September 2007.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF MAIC



**Ms. Lois Carter Fay** joined the Journal of Mine Action as Editor-in-Chief in 2005 and more recently has also served as Project Manager of the Adaptive Technology Catalog project. Her project management, writing, publishing and editing skills have been a solid addition to the MAIC's staff. Lois is an accredited public relations professional (APR) and holds a B.A. in psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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