

Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine-action programmes and operators, creates and disseminates knowledge, works to improve quality management and standards, and provides support to instruments of international law.

by Ian Mansfield [Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining]

Following the theme of quality for the Feature section in this edition of the *JMA*, the GICHD continues to work in all areas of the quality-management cycle. The most obvious is the development of the International Mine Action Standards, which are produced on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Service. The process involves writing new standards, reviewing existing standards, conducting training and hosting the IMAS Review Board. In addition, the GICHD is able to help countries adapt the IMAS to their own national standards by providing expert staff to guide national authorities through the process. This capability has recently been enhanced by the creation of a staff post, the National Mine Action Standards Officer, within the Centre of National Mine Action Standards.

New Guidebooks

In collaboration with UNICEF, the GICHD has recently completed a series of IMAS mine-risk education best-practice guidebooks.¹ These guidebooks address a wide range of issues, including coordinating MRE, disseminating public information, implementing projects, establishing community mine-action liaisons, and conducting MRE in emergencies. The primary aim of the books is to provide advice, tools and guidance to undertake MRE programmes compliant with the IMAS. They are also intended to provide a framework for a more predictable, systematic and integrated approach to mine-risk education. They will be useful to anyone engaged in planning, managing, funding or evaluating MRE programmes and projects.

New Studies

The GICHD is undertaking a major study, “Land Release and Risk Management Approaches,” which aims to examine the various processes used to release land (other than by full clearance) and advise on ways in which a risk-management approach can be applied to speed up this process. Several countries are being used as case studies to review current best practices and demonstrate methodologies applicable to the wider mine-action community. These studies include work with Cambodia on its recently introduced “Area Reduction Policy,” a risk-management model for unexploded ordnance in Laos and the development of a risk-matrix-based system for the opening of suspected mined roads in Sudan. The overall aim is to develop a system allowing national authorities and operators to effectively, yet methodically, reduce mine-suspected areas, leaving an audit trail that allows decisions that can be justified.

Finally, in cooperation with the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre, the GICHD is undertaking a “livelihood” study of communities in mine-affected areas that have been cleared. The survey will use a carefully balanced set of qualitative and quantitative survey tools (e.g., village profiles, focus-group discussions, timelines, wealth ranking, participatory mapping, cause-and-effect diagramming, livelihood kits, household-level interviews, etc.) to build a picture of the economic, social, infrastructural, natural and human impacts of demining within the specific and dynamic local setting of the community in question. While it will be possible to quantify the costs and

benefits of some impacts (e.g., improved access to grazing land), others—such as improved cohesion within the village, or greater confidence in future prospects—are subjective and complex judgments that are difficult to quantify. ♦

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