

Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD



The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) provides operational assistance to mine action programmes and operators, conducts research and provides support to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

by Ian Mansfield, Operations Director, GICHD

The GICHD has recently published a number of studies on a wide range of mine action topics. One report that has generated quite a deal of interest is *Mine Action Equipment: A Study of Global Operational Needs*. The aim of the study was to examine the effectiveness and suitability of existing equipment in the mine action sector, to analyze the shortfalls in capabilities and to propose a priority list of derived operational needs.

The study developed 12 indicative operating scenarios, such as woodlands, urban areas, paddy fields, routes and hillsides. It then went on to define in some detail a range of capability areas, or tasks, that make up the overall demining process. These tasks included hazardous area location, detection of the outer edge of minefields, close-in detection of the mine itself, personal protection and clearance verification. Information on all these scenarios came from field users, terrain analysis modeling and expert opinion from programme managers in the field.

After developing a computer model, the study's authors were able to classify three categories in which improvement in equipment capabilities would have very significant, significant or recognizable benefits. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the study found that improvements in capability for two tasks—locating the outer edge of a minefield and close-in detection of individual mines—would lead to very significant benefits (assessed as greater than 10 percent). For example, it is estimated that, on average, a deminer working in a paddy field currently spends over 60 percent of his/her time

investigating false alarms, such as metal fragments that cause the detector to sound off. If this time could be reduced by 50 percent, it would lead to a marked improvement in productivity. On the other hand, improved vegetation cutters would have no impact on productivity rates for demining in the desert. One interesting finding was that the density of mines in an area has very little impact on the rate of clearance. Time spent dealing with individual mines is insignificant in relation to other activities such as vegetation clearance or the investigation of false alarms.

While all this may seem apparent to many, gut feeling has now been replaced by measurement, and priority areas that will yield the greatest improvement have been identified. A major beneficiary of the study will be the research and development (R&D) sector, which will now have better information on which to base priorities on. Valuable terrain models have been developed, and a baseline has been created for more precisely establishing statements of operational needs. Details of the study are available on the GICHD website at www.gichd.ch, or hard copies can be ordered from the Centre (see contact information below).

Other News

The Review Board for the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) met at the GICHD on 31 January 2003. The meeting was chaired by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and was comprised of representatives from UN agencies, the GICHD, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), commercial companies, donors and mine-affected countries. The meeting

noted that the four mine detection dog (MDD) standards were recently endorsed by the United Nations, and reviewed the progress on the development of standards for contracting, mine risk education and management training. UNMAS plans to conduct a survey of users' views towards IMAS, and it was agreed that continued outreach and training with regard to the standards was required. To this end, the GICHD has established an MDD Standards Implementation Support Committee to help mine action programmes adopt the MDD IMAS as national standards. All the latest IMAS are available through the GICHD website or the UNMAS E-Mine website (www.mineaction.org). A new CD, *IMAS 2003*, will be issued in March 2003.

The 2003 version of the Mechanical Demining Equipment Catalogue has been completed, and it was distributed in early February 2003. The catalogue contains over 50 different machines in various categories, such as flails, tillers, multi-tools, vegetation cutters and mine-protected vehicles. The catalogue has a new format, with the performance data of comparable machines placed in a table for easy reference. Again, copies are available from the GICHD. ■

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