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Ian Mansfield
GICHD

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Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD



The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining 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

During the past 12 months there has been an increase in the general activities of the Centre, the publication of a number of significant studies, and some changes to key staff.

By way of a brief review, the GICHD was established in 1998 and it has three primary functions, all designed to support mine action: operational assistance; research work; and support for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. This assistance is provided to the mine action efforts of national mine programmes and field operators, as well as the international community and the United Nations.

The Centre currently consists of 26 permanent staff members, including a total of five individuals seconded by various governments. Funding for the Centre comes from the Swiss government, and a number of other donors.

Operational Support and Assistance

The Centre is well known for the development of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). Further installations of IMSMA have been carried out and it has now been provided to 28 different field programmes around the world. Version 3.0 of IMSMA is currently being field tested, and it is planned for issue to the field in early 2003. This version will offer enhancements to the database system, and it includes Mine Risk Education data fields.

Work on the next set of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) is well under way, to complement the first 23 standards endorsed by the UN in 2001. The next 15 standards will cover areas such as the use of mine detecting dogs, test and evaluation, contracting procedures, and management training. The IMAS outreach programme has continued with workshops in North America, Europe, the Trans-Caucasus and Asia.

The Centre has continued to provide both general and specialized support to the field, by providing short-term operational and technical expertise for mine action programmes in countries such as Angola, Cambodia, Somalia and Yemen. In addition, the Centre has undertaken a number of evaluation missions on behalf of various parties. This is an area which is set to expand with the forthcoming appointment of an evaluation specialist in the near future.

Research & Publications

One of the primary aims of the Centre is to contribute to the formulation and development of improved procedures, practices and technologies in mine action. This research, to support mine action, aims particularly to improve the safety of demining and the cost-effectiveness of mine action programmes in the field. A number of studies have recently been published including:

The Socio-economic "Operational Handbook," which was developed from the socio-economic study. An outreach programme is now being planned by UNDP.

Communication in Mine Awareness Programmes and the handbook *Improving Communication in Mine Awareness Programmes* to provide informal, practical advice on how practitioners can improve communication in mine risk education programmes.

Mine Action Equipment: Study of Global Operational Needs, was requested by UNMAS and reviews equipment needs of mine action agencies. The study also identifies a priority list of global operational needs that could benefit from improved equipment, processes and procedures.

Designer Dogs: Improving the Quality of Mine Detection Dogs, identifies and discusses the essential and optional characteristics of mine detection dogs, and identifies an alternative breed for development and training as a mine detection dog—the Swedish Drever.

The study *Explosive Remnants of War—A Threat Analysis* assesses the threat in post-conflict environments of explosive ordnance in order to develop a methodology that can identify objectively the risk to the community from generic ammunition groups.

In addition there are a number of on-going projects, including studies into the use of the military in mine action, mechanical equipment, the development of local mine action organizations, and guidelines for legislation and national management structures. All studies are available by contacting the GICHD, or by visiting the GICHD web site (<http://www.gichd.ch/publications/index.htm>).

Implementation Support Unit

The Third Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention mandated the GICHD to form an Implementation Support Unit (ISU); this became operational in January 2002. The purpose of the ISU is to support the activities of States Parties in the Convention especially: the work of the Co-ordinating Committees and the Inter-Sessional Work Programme; advice and support to the President of the Meeting of States Parties; assistance to States Parties and States not Parties on the work of the Convention. In addition, the ISU has commenced work to establish a documentation centre on the Convention and its implementation. The Head of the Implementation Support Unit is Kerry Brinkert who can be contacted by email at k.brinkert@gichd.ch. ■

Contact Information

Ian Mansfield, Operations Director
GICHD
Avenue de la Paix 7bis
CH-1211 Geneva Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 906 1674
Fax: +41 22 906 1690
E-mail: i.mansfield@gichd.ch
Website: www.gichd.ch