

A message from the director

Our thoughts are with those in Syria and Turkey following the catastrophic earthquakes, and with those in Ukraine who continue to face the devastating impacts of war. We also recognize that many other people continue to live with daily challenges caused by the presence of explosive remnants of war.

Whether we are sending aid or pivoting our work to help civilians affected by both natural and man-made disasters, creating sustainable programs that support peacebuilding and development goals through our humanitarian mine action (HMA) and conventional weapons destruction (CWD) work grows in importance. This triple nexus within our sector, “has matured from the technical parlance of donor agencies’ policy papers to a widely recognized concept among aid workers,” as noted by Markus Schindler (Foundation Suisse de Déminage, FSD) in his article, “Mine Action and the Triple Nexus.”

With this in mind, this issue of *The Journal* focuses on sustainable programming in the HMA/CWD sector, reflecting on programs that integrate development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding efforts and, as noted by Josh Ridley (The HALO Trust), present “tangible example(s) of mine action making a direct contribution to stabilization and peacebuilding efforts at local and national levels.”

- Mark Wilkinson, PhD, Albert Schevey, and Ahmed Al Zubaidi, PhD, reflect on DanishChurchAid’s (DCA) integrated programming approach, merging DCA’s peacebuilding efforts, advocacy initiatives, and development and humanitarian work to bridge the gap between practice and policy, and to support sustainability and long-term capacity building across their global operations.
- In “Safer Stockpiles: Developing Regional PSSM Instructor Cadres,” authors David Häfner and Joseph Farha (Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies) outline the approaches of African regional organizations to develop physical security and stockpile management expert and instructor rosters based on a train-the-trainer program. Minimizing the reliance on outside expertise, these programs create baseline best practices and a cadre of instructors able to design and deliver training across the African continent.
- In his article, “When a Safety Measure Becomes a Risk Accelerant,” Lieutenant Colonel Geir P. Novik (Norwegian Defence Research Establishment) notes that when dealing with explosive remnants of war, the priority must be on safe recovery and disposal while making every effort to contain potentially negative environmental and civilian impacts. Novik concludes that the priority should not be on determining whether to use low- or high-order disposal techniques but rather on determining the safest and most environmentally friendly option on a case-by-case basis given “proper risk-mitigating actions.”
- Josh Ridley discusses HALO’s operations in Yemen in his article, “Mine Action in Support of Yemen’s Peace Process,” reflecting on their operations and peacebuilding efforts to deliver a comprehensive mine action program that has facilitated the re-opening of roads in Ta’iz, a city affected by widespread explosive hazard contamination.
- Salomé Valencia Aguirre, MD, Angela de Santis, PhD, Sandra Salas-Quijano, MA, and Sebastián Tovar Jaramillo from Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD) and Liliana Duica, PhD’s (consultant) article reflects on the progress made by the mine action sector in Colombia toward gender equity and diversity, finding progress in policies and data disaggregation, and the need to reflect these advances in both recruitment processes and ground operations.
- Sean Sutton’s (MAG) photo essay “The Road Ahead: Clearance Toward Sustainability in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” tells the stories of civilians living in areas heavily contaminated with explosives following the Yugoslav wars, and MAG’s ground operations to clear land so that it may be returned to productive use.
- REYLANT Global’s Drew Prater uses case studies from Afghanistan and Iraq to relay the importance of the IMAS for standardization of training for explosive ordnance disposal and improvised explosive device disposal operators, whether for civilians, NGOs, or military personnel.
- And we have a unique article from research students and professors at Binghamton University, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and Villanova University on “Inspiring the Next Generation of Humanitarian Mine Action Researchers.” The authors reflect on how HMA is an under-researched field and emphasize the importance of engaging with students in undergraduate education: “Early engagement, active guidance, and mentorship of such students by mid-career and experienced HMA scholars and practitioners could dramatically reduce the learning curve associated with entry into the HMA sector and allow for fruitful long-term collaboration between academic institutions, private industry, and leading NGOs operating across the different facets of HMA.”

As I reflect on the articles in this issue, I am struck by the expertise and dedication of every individual working in the HMA/CWD sector—from undergraduate researchers to EOD experts to policy advocates—as we all work toward the common goals of making the world safe from explosives while ensuring the local sustainability of our programs for the betterment of civilians living in conflict and post-conflict environments.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Fiederlein, PhD

