April 2011

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Modifying IMSMA Training: The Mine Action Information Management Qualification Scheme

The Mine Action Information Management Qualification Scheme (MIQ) is a new training tool for the Information Management System for Mine Action. It was created in response to the Next Generation version of IMSMA, the newest version of the system. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining eliminated the rigid and unnecessary parts of the training system in order to make MIQ more user-friendly. The MIQ scheme is currently being incorporated into several countries’ information-management programs, but it still needs input as it is being refined and implemented.

by Aurora Martinez and Daniel Eriksson | GICHD |

To help users navigate their way through the IMSMA system, the GICHD also offered a training program. As IMSMA has undergone revisions, the training program had to evolve as well. The newest information-management system version, IMSMA–Next Generation (IMSMANG), has sparked the development of a re-structured training system, the MIQ, which the GICHD launched in August 2010.

Built on experience gained during IMSMA–Legacy deployment and users’ feedback, the MIQ scheme aims to make mine-action information-management training more effective. Standardizing the core information-management roles of mine-action programs using IMSMA–Legacy can help achieve this (See Figure 1).

Revising the Past Training System

The past training system’s learning objectives were based on step-by-step instructions on IMSMA’s standardized technical features. Users were taught how to create IMSMA reports by filling out the standardized IMSMA forms and following the defined workflow’s steps and related business rules. In IMSMA Legacy, IMSMA’s older version, the workflow and its related forms were fixed. For instance, “Survey Level 1” was the first workflow process. This process could result in one or more “mined areas,” which were forms to contain information on hazardous areas with the lowest confidence level.

For a number of years this training method proved effective for IMSMA Legacy systems. However, IMSMA Legacy did not fit the information-management needs of its users. The organizations using IMSMA Legacy were often forced to adapt their activities to IMSMA because of the program’s rigid workflows and forms. IMSMA–Legacy was designed to be more flexible. It addressed these shortcomings and enabled the mine-action programs to define their own workflow and forms upon software installation. In addition, IMSMA–Legacy includes functionality for the system administrators to define standard statistical reports that users can easily retrieve. Examples include progress reports, victim statistics and project tasking statistics.

However, all of this customization put a new form of responsibility on the mine-action programs. In the past, organizations used the rigid workflows and forms available to simply do what IMSMA told them to do. Advanced mine-action programs developed add-ons to work around the IMSMA Legacy limitations. Now, because the system no longer inhibits flexibility and functionality, organizations are responsible for making a comprehensive plan that aligns their information management with their overall strategic aims and objectives. This new responsibility requires the redesign of IMSMA training.

IMSMANG Information-Management Procedures

Training efforts have had to address a wide range of mine-action information-management activities that must take place whether IMSMA is used or not. To produce a good-quality report, such as a transparency report according to the Ottawa Treaty, the data-collection forms and workflows leading up to the quantitative data production for the report need to be planned in advance.

While MIQ training still focuses on IMSMA–Legacy use, information-management practices taught in this training can also be partly applied to the information-management design of any information system. In comparison with other proprietary software, IMSMA has the benefit of combined technologies, a ready-to-use mine-action framework, the compatibility with other proprietary software for additional data analysis, and best of all, it is free of charge.
Teaching the Right Skills to the Right Person

During the IMSMA[50] deployment, it became obvious that all users could not be trained in all information-management elements. Consequently, a new approach was adopted, focusing on what the users need to know, thereby not burdening them with unnecessary information on technical features. For instance, end users in an operations department do not need to know how to apply advanced customization features; administrators will have that knowledge.

The information manager plays the key role in information management for mine-action programs. This manager is responsible for planning how the program gathers and manages information, continuously ensuring it is in line with the program’s overall strategy. For most programs, the information manager is also the system administrator. The system administrator makes adjustments to information systems, like IMSMA, to ensure that forms and reports reflect the organization’s needs as defined by the information manager in discussion with senior management. The system administrator also performs maintenance tasks like backups and user account management.

Though not yet a widespread practice, roles and procedures for information management should be documented in a national mine-action standard. This standard should include a comprehensive set of workflows, definitions, forms and reports. A comprehensive standard should start with information-needs analysis for a mine-action program’s information-management role. For national staff, the training levels are divided into two groups: users (three sub-levels) and administrators (three sub-levels).

The GICHID website’s event calendar will have complete details. All 2011 centralized courses will be conducted in English. 9

![Diagram](http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol15/iss1/10)