



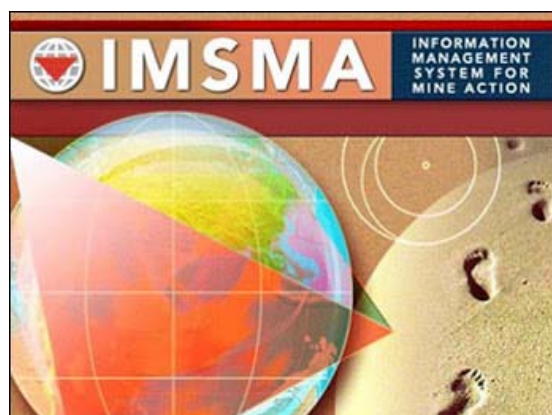
GICHD INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME – CHANGES

The Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) is both a core product of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and a fundamental part of many the mine action programmes around the world. Daniel Eriksson took over as Programme Manager for Information Management on 1 December 2008. Together with the GICHD management team, it was agreed that changes to IMSMA should be made to enhance the support that information management can provide to national mine action centres and others mine action partners. These changes include:

- a more generic approach toward information management,
- an improved communication with the mine action community,
- the strengthening of the implementation partner programme,
- the development of the IMSMA software,
- the reorientation of the IMSMA distribution policy.

An initial decision was made to change the section name, previously called the IMSMA section, to Information Management. This new name stresses the wider approach that this section has in supporting its partners. The IMSMA software is an useful tool for information management activities. However, it is important to define a clear strategy to maximise benefit . The information management team not only provides the IMSMA software, but also offers support on how best to respond to the challenges of information management.

The interaction with IMSMA’s users was a second element which needed change. The best way to improve a product or service is to take into account the feedback of its users. We decided to launch the IMSMA user’s network -as an open Google Group that will be used to discuss the IMSMA software development, the distribution policy or any other specific issues related to information management. Everyone is welcome to join this forum which is not moderated¹. The regular IMSMA support channel will continue to exist for routine support. Ms Aurora Chen, the Information Management Outreach Officer, has the responsibility of improving communication with IMSMA stakeholders².



¹ To access the forum, click [here](#)

² To contact the Information Management section for support, email imsma@gichd.org

To increase the support services available to mine action programmes using IMSMA, a closer collaboration with organisations already active in providing information management services in the field will be developed. These organisations will be referred to as implementing partners. Key staff from their organisations will receive expert-level training in IMSMA during spring 2009. These individuals will support MAP using the new IMSMA.

The most recent release of IMSMA has been consolidated by the software developers over the last six months³, including a considerable increase in functionality for system output such as:

- An easier exports process which supports formats such as MS Excel
- An access to the backend database with ODBC for add-on development
- The possibility of developing custom output reports by using iReport; a very powerful tool similar to the reporting tool of MS Access
- The compatibility of the ODBC connectivity with OpenOffice, which further reduces the need for licensed software in order to run IMSMA.

The open source approach has enabled us to develop a product that is lower cost and less dependent on the sometimes erratic updates and new versions of Microsoft products. Microsoft Vista has been a challenge, but IMSMA is now compatible with it⁴. In addition, the GICHD information management section will be able to provide the IMSMA community with two additional software releases in 2009. These releases will further enhance an already solid release of the version 5 of the product.

The distribution policy for IMSMA is under re-evaluation, and it is crucial that future IMSMA installations are coordinated and based on sound information management planning. The use of license keys that prevents the unauthorized installations of IMSMA will remain to ensure that the foundation of the mission area information management remains intact for national authorities and operators. This policy does not mean that the use of IMSMA is limited to national authorities. It does mean that, at the minimum, core information has to be shared between those that operate IMSMA installations and that IMSMA should not be used in isolation⁵.

With these various changes, the GICHD information management team hopes that IMSMA will better contribute to the key aims of the Centre and the mine action community.

For further information, please contact Daniel Eriksson, Programme Manager for Information Management, at d.eriksson@gichd.org.

³ The software development is sub-contracted to FGM under the guidance and close control of GICHD

⁴ Not all languages have been tested and the 64-bit edition is not supported.

⁵ This refers mainly to the use of a common gazetteer.