

# Evaluation of GICHD Information Management Programme

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Final Report

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**8 June 2010**

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## Executive Summary

1. As one of a series of targeted evaluations of the work of GICHD, this evaluation looks at the Information Management (IM) Programme since the implementation of a new strategy in late 2008. Where the previous strategy focused on the development and dissemination of IMSMA software, the new strategy focuses on IMSMA as a decision support tool providing appropriate and effective support to mine action programmes. The principal objectives of the evaluation were: to assess the results achieved in the field by the GICHD IM Programme; to assess the current information management programme strategy in terms of its relevance to the mine action sector; and to further strengthen the Centre's internal coherence and coordination. The evaluation drew on data collected from clients and stakeholders through interviews, focus groups and an on-line survey.
2. There is broad agreement that there has been an improvement in the approach of the IM Section thanks to the appointment of the new Chief in 2008, and that support to IMSMA is better than it was in previous years. While mine action programmes now feel a greater sense of support from GICHD, the impacts have not yet caught up with the good intentions and the Section should increase its focus on client satisfaction. The IM Section previously measured success by the number of IMSMA rollouts, where a more effective measure would be the strengthened information management capability of mine action programmes. The IM Section should develop metrics not only for its own activities and outputs, but also for the outcomes of improved behaviour and performance of mine action programmes, including a possible results indicator around Article 5 and Article 7 reports (see Para 9 for detail).
3. The new management workplan commits the IM section to take a more active role in supporting information management rather than simply supporting IMSMA. However improving information management is not primarily a technology question but a capacity building question, and the IM Section's current capability is based primarily around supporting technology rather than building capacity. Achieving a shift in focus will require GICHD staff to acquire slightly different skill sets and mine action programmes to engage with information management issues, while ensuring that IMSMA support continues.
4. GICHD is nearly unique in the relief and development sectors as a non-profit organisation whose single largest project has been the development of a software product; and IMSMA is nearly unique in the relief and development community as a software product that has been developed for a specific process in a specific sector. While IMSMA NG is an improvement over IMSMA Legacy, improved relations with the IM Section do not mean that IMSMA itself is no longer problematic. There was strong agreement that IMSMA development should come to an end with Version 5, although the concepts of a basic preconfigured version IMSMA and continued development of IMSMA Mobile were both welcomed. There was also unanimous interest amongst mine action programmes to be involved in future IMSMA development to fix outstanding problems and ensure proper use to support operations. Respondents agreed that there is potential for IMSMA to be applied in other sectors, but GICHD must consider the range of costs that would be involved, both to itself and to potential new users."
5. In terms of existing support, direct contact with IMSMA users was considered most valuable, and increased frequency of field visits was a common request. Programmes are generally strongly positive about on-site support, except for those programmes that were not visited in 2009, which are quite negative; and they are generally positive about remote support, although not as strongly as for on-site support. Regional support remains an issue, but increased language support, regional integration and increased IMSMA user networking are

possible options. The most frequent support requirement was for more training, specifically in database administration and training for non-technical staff on how to make use of IMSMA in their work.

6. Relationships with four Implementing Partners (IPs) were formalized in 2009, and all four IPs, the national programmes receiving their support and the IM Section were positive about the arrangement, with some variation in the level of satisfaction. However current arrangements do not provide a reliable pool of advisors or ensures the quality of the work of IPs. GICHD should continue the IP initiative while clarifying what the arrangement will deliver to mine action programmes and working with IPs to ensure that they are able to deliver consistent quality of support, possibly increasing the level of supervision of IPs.
7. In some programmes the IMSMA database has been largely ignored due to the poor quality of the data, but increasingly programmes realise that they need to manage their data more effectively. As part of its information management support, the IM Section should continue to focus attention on data collection and quality assurance, as well as providing support to development of information policy instruments such as information management strategies. If IMSMA is to become a decision support tool at the national level, programme managers must work with their staff to provide clear expectations as to how it should support their decisions, while IMSMA staff must be more concerned with the satisfaction of other parts of the organisation regarding the service they provide. The IM Section can support these changes by a) addressing training to operations and management staff so that they become more demanding regarding the role of IMSMA and other information, and b) working with IMSMA staff to advocate for evidence-based decision-making, increased transparency and accountability to the authorities, and a service orientation throughout the organisation.
8. GICHD should lead by example and integrate information management to support its work. GICHD should have a coherent message that all staff can deliver regarding IMSMA, and should take advantage of the opportunity that IMSMA provides as a strategic entry point for discussions about how to improve decision-making within mine action programmes. Increased GICHD internal cooperation will both improve the quality of GICHD support to mine action programmes and the ability of mine action programmes to make good use of that support. GICHD management can build on current positive attitudes to support greater internal coordination, adopting a clear policy that GICHD units should actively co-operate and that assessment of workplans and progress reports will include this.
9. Information management is essential under the Ottawa Convention, and policy should also establish that all GICHD units are responsible (within their normal activities) to assist countries to fulfill Art. 5 and Art. 7 reporting requirements. Article 5 reporting is an exceptionally clear example of the need for and benefits of internal GICHD coordination, and the development of unambiguous classifications provides a logical focus for cooperation among the Operations Division, the IM Section and the ISU. Effective GICHD internal coordination around national progress reporting would result in a consistent message from GICHD units, and enhanced ability of mine action programmes to meet their reporting obligations and manage their programmes toward success. Such improvement in mine action programme reporting could also be a success indicator of overall GICHD support.

## Background to Evaluation

10. In late 2008, a new Chief was recruited for the ten year old IMSMA Section of the GICHD, and he brought a new strategy, reflected in a name change for the Section from “IMSMA” to “Information Management”. While the previous strategy had focused on the development of the IMSMA software and its dissemination to mine action programmes, the new strategy focused on service and support to on-going IMSMA installations together with migration to IMSMA NG. It included elimination of the dispersed regional staff who previously provided in-country technical support, replaced by formalized arrangements with Implementing Partners and increased use of remote assistance (remote desktop as well as email and telephone) to expand the extent and reach of technical support. Centrally, the new strategy focused on IMSMA as a decision support tool, bringing attention to the need for IMSMA to be adapted to provide appropriate and effective support to mine action programmes.
11. GICHD decided in 2009 to conduct an evaluation of its Information Management programme and the IM Section support to mine action programmes (see Annexes 1 and 2 for the TOR; Annex 3 provides a brief background note on information management). This is one of a series of focused evaluations, and has been conducted in parallel with a general evaluation of the Centre as a whole. The GICHD recruited two consultants to conduct the evaluation: one with a background in use of information systems particularly in humanitarian contexts (Paul Currión) and one with background in strategic and operational programme management (Charles Downs, team lead). The evaluation drew on data collected from clients and key stakeholders through interviews, focus groups and an on-line survey (see Annex 4 for the methodology followed and Annex 5 for the list of mine action programmes and organisations that provided input to the evaluation).
12. The principal objectives of the evaluation were established in the TOR as:
  - a. To assess the results achieved in the field by the GICHD Information Management programme;
  - b. To assess the current information management programme strategy in terms of its relevance to the mine action sector; and
  - c. To further strengthen the Centre’s internal coherence and coordination.
13. What it is: The evaluation focuses on implementation of the current IM Strategy, to consider its strengths, weaknesses and directions for development, potentially including outside of mine action. It is a forward looking exercise, seeking to strengthen the role and positive impact of the GICHD Information Management Section. Specifically, it seeks to determine:
  - a. How well is the IM Section working and what has it achieved under the current strategy?
  - b. What is the current feeling in the field regarding IMSMA and IM support from GICHD?
  - c. What is the feeling within GICHD regarding the role of the IM section?
  - d. What user requirements should be considered in development of IM Section support?
14. What it is not: While past experience is relevant to understand the current situation, this evaluation is not meant to be a backward looking review of 12 years of IMSMA development and support. Specifically it does not seek to assess:
  - a. How well has the IMSMA software been developed?
  - b. How well was support provided to IMSMA users in the past?
  - c. What have been the costs vs. benefits of IMSMA?

15. The consultants conducted an online survey of all mine action programmes to assess IMSMA functions, support and future development. The survey was sent to an email list of over 200 persons based on the GICHD contact list for the annual Meeting of National Directors and Advisors, the IM Section contact list, an IMSMA googlegroup and a few additional contacts provided by the consultants. The survey was closed after four weeks, on 23 April, with a total of 135 separate responses (see Annex 6 for summary) from 40 mine action programmes (summary in Annex 7). This is a very high rate of return, suggesting wide recognition of the importance of the GICHD role in support to IMSMA and an active interest in contributing to strengthen it.
  
16. In brief, the overall results providing the basis for evaluation of the IM programme support to mine action programmes:
  - There were 135 respondents, providing information for 40 countries (117 respondents) and 2 global categories (18 respondents) (Table 1).
  - Of those 40 programmes, 33 (82.5%) are national mine action programmes while 7 (17.5%) are UN mine action programmes (Table 2).
  - Legacy IMSMA is used by 12 mine action programmes and NG is used by 25 programmes 6 of which continued to use Legacy at the time of the survey; 3 programmes responded that they do not use IMSMA (Table 3).
  - The IM Section visited 21 of the programmes at least once in 2009, including 2 or more visits to 9 programmes, while 19 programmes were not visited at all (Table 4).
  - A total of 10 programmes reported support from Implementing Partners (Table 5).
  - Respondents included 49 people from Information Section, 33 from Operations and 46 from Management (Table 6).

## Assessment of IM Section Support to Mine Action Programmes

### Overall Assessment by Clients, Partners and Stakeholders

17. The GICHD IM Section operates in a complex environment with many different actors interested in its work. The most important organisations can be considered in three groups:
  - a. Clients – those who make direct use of IMSMA and GICHD information management support, principally the mine action programmes;
  - b. Stakeholders – organisations which have an interest in the success of the GICHD primarily in terms of its support to clients. This includes UN agencies and GICHD donors (particularly the Government of Switzerland); and
  - c. Partners – organisations with which GICHD jointly provides IMSMA and information management support to clients, principally its four Implementing Partners.
18. Focus group and individual meetings with members of all three groups at the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and UN Advisors in March 2010 produced several broad conclusions presented here, with details presented further below.
19. There is a widely shared agreement that there has been a “great improvement in the atmosphere and approach of the GICHD” thanks to the new Chief of the IM Section. There is now an “understanding of IMSMA as a tool to support programmes and not a goal in itself,” which has brought “an openness to admit mistakes”, “a willingness to listen to suggestions and take appropriate action”. This new attitude encouraged some people to be more willing to provide feedback to the evaluation, since they trust that it will be taken into consideration. Some programmes commented that they have already seen a shift of focus from IMSMA as a database and data entry issues to use of IMSMA to support planning and decision making. While most recognize IMSMA NG as an improvement over IMSMA Legacy, they cautioned that improved relations with the IM Section do not mean that IMSMA itself is no longer problematic.
20. Several people noted that in the past, IMSMA Section measured its success according to the number of IMSMA rollouts, even when the system was not being used effectively. They insisted that the IM Section should measure its success in terms of strengthened information management capability of mine action programmes. The IM Section's “immediate” clients are the IMSMA sections of mine action programmes, with the programmes themselves being clients in a broader sense. While good metrics for successful performance have yet to be established, the Information Management Section should increase its focus on client satisfaction and success. By taking the lead on this, the IM Section can help to encourage IMSMA sections to be concerned with the sense of satisfaction of their own programmes (particularly in operations).
21. Programmes have felt a greater sense of support from GICHD over the past year. However, they are usually in the dark about work being done on their requests, and thus unable to respond to their own clients when asked about progress on the resolution of issues that have been identified. The IM Section should keep mine action programmes better informed about the actions being taken in response to requests, as well as general developments in IM Section support.
22. Some respondents stated that IMSMA outputs were of little practical use because the data upon which they were based was neither reliable nor up-to-date. The IMSMA database was

largely ignored; no one cared about the quality of the data because no one used the data. However, as progress has been made, programmes realise that they need to continually update and manage their data to reflect progress on the ground in order to have a clear idea of the overall situation. As part of its information management support, the IM Section should continue to focus attention on data collection and quality assurance. Only if IMSMA data are of good quality will the reports generated from it be useful.

23. Information management is primarily a management issue. If IMSMA is to become a decision support tool then programme managers must work with all their staff to provide clear expectations as to how it should support their decisions. The IM Section can support this change, by increasing the effectiveness of IMSMA units and addressing training to operations and management staff so that they become more demanding regarding the role of IMSMA and other information in operational and strategic programme decision-making.
24. The support requirement most frequently identified by programmes was for more training. While this request included on-going training in basic use of IMSMA, many noted that training should be more inclusive in two senses. First, it should not focus solely on how to use the IMSMA database system, but on how to use it to “describe the problem well and guide decision-making.” Second, training should be more inclusive, showing operations and management staff what IMSMA can do for them.
25. Some mine action programmes have developed and continue to maintain their own management information systems. These systems were created before the introduction of IMSMA, and have grown with and adapted to the development of the specific requirements of their respective programmes. While they understand that IMSMA has improved considerably over the years, they recommend recognizing that each programme will have its own needs and require development of its own tailored information management system, rather than trying to design one that will work for all. The IM Section should continue to build working relationships with these programmes in order to incorporate the lessons they have learned into IMSMA implementation and information management support.
26. Some programmes felt that GICHD underestimates the cost of IMSMA conversion for mine action programmes. Conversion has significant resource costs, often including a cost in credibility when inevitable gaps in data processing occur during conversion, and when problems occur while recreating previous capabilities.
27. Staff of some larger programmes and HQ offices stated that IMSMA may not be necessary for smaller programmes facing a well-known and limited problem, which could be well served by a simpler database and mapping system. The IM Section should consider support to an IMSMA Lite or other alternative for such programmes. A standard IMSMA installation with more standard configuration, predesigned templates and requiring less tailoring – planned for testing in mid-2010, could be an appropriate solution.
28. There is a general sense that IMSMA development has been an unending process which should be brought to a conclusion with the current version. As a result the focus of the IM Section should be on the following activities: a) problem solving and bug fixing in IMSMA NG; b) continued technical support to IMSMA users, particularly focused on transition (from Legacy to NG) and close-out issues; c) increased emphasis on information management, including improving the quality of information in the system and educating interested parties how they can make use of the system. This last component should include development of a standard user guide for non-IMSMA staff, based on the best practice experience of mine action programmes.

## Assessment of IM Section direct support

29. General assessment – support to IMSMA. There is broad agreement that current support to IMSMA is “better” than it was in previous years, and UN programmes are convinced that it is now “a lot better” (Table 7<sup>1</sup>). Both Legacy and NG programmes consider current support to be better than in previous years (Table 8). Credit for this improvement, demonstrated first of all in a service orientation characterised by a willingness to listen and respond, is attributed to the change in the IM Section management. Nonetheless, neither national nor UN programmes give current support strong approval; and both are equally split between those who provide a positive assessment of current support and those who do not (Table 9). Legacy programmes generally assess current support negatively, while NG programmes assess current support as “good” (Table 10), with a similar division between programmes that were not visited at all and those that were (Table 11), suggesting that programmes using Legacy or not visited feel slightly left behind by NG deployment. Together these facts suggest that there is an atmosphere of improvement and good will, but that results have not yet caught up with the good intentions.
30. Assessment of GICHD on-site support. Programmes are generally strongly positive about on-site support, except for those programmes that were not visited in 2009, which are quite negative (Table 12). The three Staff groups provided a more mixed review of on-site support, with the most positive (Table 13). There is a generalized request for more frequent on-site assistance, noting that it is easier to explain issues face-to-face. Twelve of the 40 programmes responding to the survey stated that they had neither been visited nor had e-contact with the IM Section during 2009. Several programmes mentioned that they had not been visited for longer than a year, and that they would like to be visited regularly (annually), even if there is not a problem requiring treatment – it is always useful to refresh and improve the way work is done. Interestingly, while the overall level of satisfaction among both national and UN programmes is solid, roughly 25% of national programmes were dissatisfied, while there were no dissatisfied UN programmes (Table 14). This may reflect greater success at reaching the targeted group of UN programmes, facilitated by greater ease of communication. NG programmes have a higher overall level of satisfaction, with a wider range of programme situations (Table 15).
31. Assessment of GICHD remote support. Programmes are generally positive about remote support, although not as strongly as for on-site support (Table 16), while a couple of programmes indicated that remote support does not work at all and they require on-site training and support instead. Generally, staff were modestly positive (Table 17). Programmes that were not visited in 2009 were only slightly positive about remote support (Table 18). This suggests that support can be very effective for simpler problems, but there is still a need for regular visits to establish way personal contact and greater knowledge of GICHD staff about the specific issues for a given programme. All UN programmes reported they are satisfied with remote support, while national programmes were almost evenly split between those which are satisfied and dissatisfied (Table 19). The overall satisfaction level is slightly higher than for on-site support, and it is highest among UN programmes and those visited by the IM Section once during the year (Table 20).

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<sup>1</sup> Questions requesting response on a five-point scale have been scored as follows: “very negative” = -3; “negative” = -1; “neutral” = 0; “good” = +1; and “very good” = +3. These weights were applied to the number of cases providing each response, resulting in a “rating” that could range from -3 to +3. Consistent with the forward looking approach of the evaluation, to improve service to mine action programmes, the evaluators consider “neutral” to be a negative response and that the minimal acceptable target rating should be “1.00.”

32. Current technical support demand, provision and the remaining gap. While in nearly all areas mine action programme demand for technical support is greater than that supplied by the IM Section, there are some areas where the difference between demand and supply is small (particularly those topics related to setting up and using NG), and others where the gap is much greater (Table 21). While some of these areas related directly to IMSMA, most of those with the greatest disparity are related to broader support to information management, including:
- a. Conducting quality assurance on data (difference in excess of 100%)
  - b. Managing add-ons (difference in excess of 100%)
  - c. Defining strategic information flows (difference in excess of 100%)
  - d. Recovering lost data (difference in excess of 100%)
  - e. Fixing IMSMA bugs
  - f. Using IMSMA Mobile
  - g. Synchronizing and exchanging data
  - h. Updating and editing base maps
  - i. Cleaning up data
  - j. Adding customised fields
33. While in general fewer programmes receive each type of support than request it, there is a notable difference between national and UN programmes. National programmes received significantly less support than they requested in virtually every area, while UN programmes almost always received as much or more support than they requested (Table 22), despite the fact that there is a somewhat higher rate of visits to national than to UN programmes (Table 23). Furthermore, programmes with IMSMA Legacy received much lower response to their support requests than did programmes with NG – less than one third of the Legacy requests were met, whereas NG programmes often received support without having requested it (Table 24). Perhaps once technical support in a given topic is recognized as significant, it is provided more quickly to NG and UN programmes even without a specific request, than it is to national and Legacy programmes that do request it. This may also reflect the current policy of focusing attention on and anticipating problems of NG and larger programmes. GICHD should ensure greater consistency in the responses provided to all programmes.
34. In terms of existing support, direct contact with IMSMA users was considered the most valuable, and an increased frequency of field visits was a common request. Recent increase in staffing levels makes this more feasible. Respondents suggested that more attention be paid to meeting with operations and senior management staff in the course of field visits in order to improve the integration of IMSMA into management structures.
35. Requirements for future information management support. The questionnaire identified 23 areas for possible future information management support (Table 25). They were all judged to be important and endorsed by about 85% of programmes; only one received less than 80% endorsement – “prioritization of communities” – while several received over 90% endorsement (see list below). It should be noted that these highly prioritized topics are generally about making use of IMSMA rather than about IMSMA operation – that is, they concern information management rather than software management. Furthermore, these topics are pushed to high priority due to strong interest of national programmes to have such support:
- a. Progress reporting for demining tasks
  - b. Analysis of work processes and information flows

- c. Data reconciliation
  - d. Development of information management strategy
  - e. Data sharing with other sectors
  - f. Quality management of operations
  - g. Quality management of data
  - h. Development of information management SOP
36. The most common request – across a range of questions – was for more training and workshops, in some cases specifying the importance of training of trainers. The two areas that were mentioned most frequently were database administration and training for non-technical (operations and management) staff on how to make use of IMSMA in their work.
37. Regional support remains an issue. The regional advisor posts are still missed by some (particularly in Latin America and the Middle East), but, in their absence, increased language support, regional integration and increased IMSMA user networking are possible alternatives. A number of respondents cited the electronic remote support that they received as being especially valuable; for this group, increased peer contact among IMSMA users (as opposed to increased contact between IMSMA users and GICHD/IPs) via the web could be a successful low-cost strategy that could be considered a supplement to the Implementing Partner arrangement.
38. Programmes work better with materials in their own language. It is important that GICHD make an effort to provide materials in the local language especially for languages that are used in multiple countries. Programmes in Latin America requested that IMSMA screens, manuals and help files be translated into Spanish. GICHD has sought to respond to the language issue for Francophone countries, and it would be valuable to do so for Spanish and Arabic speaking countries as well. While this may be less important for the staff working most directly with GICHD, having materials in the local language is essential for the operational level staff in IMSMA, operations and other units. The IM Section could develop a regional partner structure for technical support in the local language, and facilitate the formation of working groups to provide an agreed translation of key documents.
39. Considering the impact of on-site visits on the balance between support requested and received, those programmes which were visited more than once in the course of the year were most satisfied with the response to their requests and those visited once were satisfied (Table 26). Responses indicate that in most cases the programmes visited a single time received each particular type of support even if they did not request it. This may reflect the benefit of mission planning in which a single mission is designed to cover the broad range of topics which the IM Section knows are being raised in the field. Those programmes that were not visited made requests for training at the same rate as the others, but received less support. Legacy programmes expressed the strongest interest in further support in most areas identified, but received the fewest responses (Table 27). Those who were visited multiple times indicated that they received less than requested in most categories, which may reflect a focus on migration to NG and resolution of single problems. When the IM Section expects to conduct multiple missions to the same country, the missions should be planned to cover the full range of required topics.
40. Programmes that were visited a single time during the year tended to state a lower need for further support in specific areas than did either those which were not visited at all or were visited more than once (Table 28). This may reflect their greater capacity to use the system (and thus their less frequent visits). Their lowest levels of interest are in topics related to prioritization and external reporting. Programmes supported by NPA tended to have the least interest in support in areas of prioritization and form customisation (Table 29). On the

other hand, there is strong agreement among programmes supported by iMMAP and NPA (although less so with MSB) regarding the importance of support to develop an information management national standard, SOP, and information management strategy.

41. Range of reports from system. The types of reports regularly generated from IMSMA reflect the stakeholder environment of each programme (Table 30). In general, the main user of reports in all programmes is “operations”, followed by “management.” UN programmes tend to report more to donors; national programmes, while reporting to donors, also report at a higher rate to ministries, MRE and VA NGOs. While all programmes report on their compliance with the Ottawa Convention, roughly 40% of national programmes report they rely on IMSMA for the data in those reports, while only one UN programme does so.
42. The IM Section should ensure that there is a range of standard internal and external stakeholder reports available in IMSMA NG and that mine action programmes are aware of this. Reports could be identified and prepared by a working group comprised of staff from different mine action programmes, and should cover at least:
  - a. Operational progress report
  - b. Overall status of operational progress
  - c. Error and inconsistency reports (for database QC)
  - d. Task background reports for field QA teams
  - e. Article 5 and Article 7 reports
  - f. Donor reports
  - g. Others to be specified
43. Information Standards and Policy. Somewhat under half of mine action programmes have an information management SOP, national standard and/or strategy (Table 31). Nearly all of those that do not have one or another state their intent to develop it. Three-fourths of programmes visited one time during the year have adopted each of these documents, whereas only about one-third of the programmes not visited at all have them (Table 32). The programmes visited most frequently do not have an information management strategy (they may be the most aware of what the IM Section has in mind when it discusses IM strategy) and only one-third of them have an information management SOP.
44. Notwithstanding the responses described above, it is not clear that there is a shared understanding of what constitutes information Strategies, SOPs or Standards amongst mine action programmes. While SOPs are commonly understood within the Mine Action community, the substance of IM SOPs was not clear from the survey response. Reportedly “information management strategies” are most often closer to an IMSMA SOP than to a comprehensive strategy for information management in support of overall programme management. However these responses, together with the technical support needs identified above, indicate that this is an appropriate time for the IM Section to provide support to development of information policy instruments in mine action programmes.

## **Assessment of Implementing Partner support**

45. GICHD has cooperated with related technical organisations in the implementation of IMSMA since the first deployment of IMSMA in Kosovo, particularly with what were at that time the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA, now MSB) and VVAF (now iMMAP). This has usually taken the form of training staff which were then deployed through those organisations. In 2009 the new Chief of the IM Section formalized that arrangement through Implementing Partner MOUs with four organisations (MSB, iMMAP, NPA and HDTIC) spelling out: their willingness to provide advisors when required; GICHD willingness to train personnel for that

purpose; partner right to use the proprietary software of IMSMA to support mine action programmes; and GICHD support to those staff. This was expected to provide a pool of trained advisors for deployment when required. It was also expected to increase coordination among the supporting organisations, thus reducing potential friction and duplication of effort. A group of eight advisors were trained in April 2009 and several were deployed immediately thereafter to Georgia, Ethiopia and South East Asia, while one remained at NPA headquarters. The evaluation team discussed the experience to date with iMMAP, MSB/SRSA, NPA and HDTC.

46. The four Implementing Partners all deployed personnel under the agreement during 2009 and were unanimously positive about the arrangement. There were some significant differences in their perspectives:
- a. MSB/SRSA considers itself a resource available to support GICHD wherever it may be required (with slight limitations due to Swedish foreign policy). The training and deployments provide its personnel with practical training and field experience, which serves well MSB as an emergency response agency. In some cases the MSB advisors are known simply as “Swedish in-kind” advisors, not identified as either MSB/SRSA or GICHD.
  - b. iMMAP applied its expertise and training effectively in support of the new established mine action programme in Georgia, for which it had a general support contract, and continued support to Colombia and Iraq. iMMAP entered into the agreement with hope of providing dedicated regional support for IMSMA, conditional on obtaining funding for this purpose. This provided good support to IMSMA for Georgia, but is less flexible than the approach of MSB in terms of supporting GICHD where it may need support.
  - c. NPA has applied its expertise and training as part of a broader policy of support to strengthen national authorities, in particular in countries where it has an MOU for information management support, which currently includes Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and South Sudan. One person was trained last year for the SE Asia region and a second one will be trained this year.
  - d. HDTC provides support to mine action programmes in response to requests received through US military channels. In South America this is primarily military-to-military, while in other parts of the world it is often military-to-civilian cooperation. HDTC provides IMSMA user training, hardware support and has been conducting experiments with use of handheld devices as part of the IMSMA package; it is not structured to provide long term resident advisors. HDTC also receive a continuing flow of support requests related to problems with IMSMA Legacy. They would like to be more involved as a training partner, which could either increase overall training resources available or allow GICHD to focus more on support while relying on HDTC for training of one to three weeks duration.
  - e. The Implementing Partners have little contact with each other, since each deals with GICHD on a bilateral basis. None thought that this was a problem, although they all expressed interest to have more contact. The IM Section should consider holding a regular (annual) meeting with its partners, and should consider whether periodic updates from the Implementing Partners regarding their work and the situation they encounter in the field would be useful.
47. In general, there were positive but varied levels of satisfaction regarding support provided by the Implementing Partners, with the most negative assessments being “neutral”. Management staff were the most positive (Table 33). iMMAP and NPA provide the majority of Implementing Partner support to national programmes and MSB works primarily with UN programmes (Table 34). Two-thirds of the iMMAP and half of NPA supported programmes were not visited by the IM Section during 2009, whereas a majority of the MSB supported

programmes were visited during that period (Table 35). The majority of Legacy programmes providing any assessment of Implementing Partners are mildly negative (“neutral”) in the context of this evaluation, while the NG programmes were quite positive about Implementing Partner support (Table 36).

48. One programme reported strong positive cooperation with FGM, the developer of the IMSMA NG software, whom they considered to be a “partner” just like GICHD. While the cooperation has proven extremely useful, the characterisation ignores FGM’s role as contractor, paid for the valuable support provided. GICHD should consider whether to establish a channel for direct relations between mine action programmes and FGM, which would require negotiation of a contractual framework for work orders and payment.
49. After one year of experience with this arrangement it has become apparent that the training and initial deployment does not necessarily create a trained pool of people to be drawn on at will. According to the organisations concerned, of the eight people trained in Spring 2009, three were deployed to the field and the others were integrated into the HQ of the respective organizations; none are readily available for further deployment in the near future. The IM Section has recognized this limitation and plans to conduct a new training for staff identified by the five organisations in Winter 2010.
50. Furthermore, while the MOU refers to provision of “information management support”, the actual training and work of the IP advisors focuses almost exclusively on IMSMA support, unless an individual happens to have a broader perspective and background. The IM Section should address the principles of information management support and client service in its training. If this is to become a significant part of the function, there may be a need to seek candidates with slightly different profiles.
51. Both the GICHD and Implementing Partners are pleased with their cooperation; Implementing Partners note that the arrangement has also facilitated their working relationships with their own donors. However, the current arrangement neither provides a reliably available pool of on-call advisors nor ensures continuing support to or quality of the work of the partners themselves. Furthermore, some of the IP expressed concern that the IM Section is under-staffed for the level of support that mine action programmes require and that the Section would like to provide. There may be some confusion about the role of the four organisations as Implementing Partners, including crediting (or blaming) them for actions when they are present in a country but not within the framework of an Implementing Partner agreement with GICHD, and GICHD may wish to make clear to the countries concerned when it is calling on the IP arrangement. GICHD should continue with the Implementing Partner initiative but clarify with all stakeholders exactly what the arrangement is intended to deliver to mine action programmes, and work with IPs to ensure that they are able to deliver this minimum offering in addition to any other areas of expertise that they feel they contribute. If GICHD wishes to keep its role clear and maintain consistent quality of advisory support, it should increase the level of supervision of the Implementing Partners. GICHD should discuss these empirical results and institutional impressions with the Implementing Partners.

## Comparative assessment of IMSMA NG and IMSMA Legacy

52. IMSMA is nearly unique in the relief and development community as a software product that has been developed for a specific process in a specific sector, rather than as a generic decision support tool. Other sectors have tried to develop and implement software to address specific issues, but these have failed to become as widely-used. IMSMA has achieved this position because it has been promoted over other alternatives by the UN since its introduction into the Kosovo MACC, with strong funding support from the Government of Switzerland and others – a factor which has been missing from other efforts. An additional key success factor – one which goes largely unnoticed by IMSMA users – is that demining has a relatively coherent and consistent workflow which lends itself to the enterprise approach that IMSMA originally took. It is an imperfect tool, but one which most programmes have long since accepted, particularly as it has adapted over time.
53. IMSMA Legacy was designed in part to enforce workflow across organisations which might otherwise struggle to develop it themselves. By deliberately limiting options during its setup, Legacy made it easier for mine action programmes to focus on developing processes which supported IMSMA – but it also masked the absence of adequate information management processes to support actual operations. IMSMA NG effectively removed those limits, and its greater flexibility has been accompanied by increased awareness of basic problems in information management relating to that workflow.
54. Approximately 25% of programmes now using IMSMA NG continue to use Legacy as well (Table 37). While the rate is roughly one-fifth for countries visited 0 or 1 times, it is nearly 50% for those visited multiple times (Table 38). The high rate probably reflects the current transition period for many countries, and the figure would likely be much lower one year later. On the other hand, some programmes are using the Legacy system to maintain old databases or to provide support to some of their partners in the country. GICHD should consider how to support archive functions without continued reliance on operating Legacy as part of its global plans.
55. There is very strong agreement among those who have used both IMSMA Legacy and IMSMA NG that the latter is a significant improvement over the former (Table 39). This view is held even more strongly by those who are beyond the transition phase and have been able to discard Legacy. IMSMA NG is more than an upgrade of Legacy; it is essentially a different system, not just in terms of technology but also in terms of the intention behind it. The increased flexibility it offers maintains the core capabilities satisfied by Legacy but allows mine action programmes to shape it more easily to their business functions, avoiding the prescriptive approach taken by Legacy. However, some felt that IMSMA NG is more open than it needs to be, and should have more set defaults, providing all programmes with a start-up framework and allowing those who wish to modify to do so when ready.
56. There were conflicting responses around IMSMA GIS capability. Some reported the NG GIS functionality was easier to use, while others felt it was harder; some appreciated the flexibility of NG, others thought it created potential data management problems; some stated that the GIS was much better for their purposes, while others complained that it still didn't do what they want. While it is hard to draw specific conclusions from this, it confirms that GIS support remains in need of particularly close IM Section attention.

## **Future Development of IM Section support**

### **User involvement in IMSMA development**

57. The survey found nearly unanimous interest amongst mine action programmes to be involved in future IMSMA development (Table 40), together with strong agreement that IMSMA development should be finalized. These are not necessarily contradictory positions. There is agreement that the current version of IMSMA should be the final one, with continuing support for such improvements as may be needed for it to work well. Nearly all programmes wish to be involved in IMSMA development even though over 50% of programmes are satisfied with their ability to influence IMSMA development, with a satisfaction rate as high as 80% for programmes visited once during the year, and the negative as high as 44% for those who were not visited at all during the year (Table 41). Based on the comments provided, in most cases this is an interest to ensure development of useful features and solution of problems, rather than to become software developers.
58. Respondents that expressed an opinion tended to emphasise that simply listening to end users was the main way for the IM Section to increase user involvement. An active users group could be encouraged by periodic focus group consultations, updates on in-process and planned developments of system capabilities, meetings with end users to identify their information needs and to ensure that the system outputs are meeting those needs, and outreach to operations and programme managers on how IMSMA can support their work. It is worth noting that some respondents questioned the ability of the GICHD IM Section staff to provide extensive support without first developing the mine action knowledge and practical understanding of the IM Section staff themselves.

### **Measures to strengthen IMSMA and IM Section support**

#### **Specific measures to strengthen IMSMA capabilities and IM Section Support**

59. Survey respondents identified several areas in which they would like to see strengthened capabilities in IMSMA and increased support from the IM Section. These measures focus particularly on workflow, GIS, reporting, data import/export, information analysis and software management (see Annex 8).
60. While the need for development of IM Section staff capability was highlighted by some, survey respondents identified a number of more specific measures that the Section can take to improve support with existing staff, including: capacity development, analysis and reporting, and data management (see Annex 9). In addition, existing procedures for receiving, tracking and responding to requests for support should be made more systematic to ensure effective management of requests.

#### **Development of metrics of success for IM Section and IMSMA support**

61. Despite the service orientation at the core of their strategy, the IM Section has metrics for its own activities but does not have metrics to measure their success. Basic metrics for measuring the success of the IM Section can be developed for each of the IM Section lines of activity referred below. The IM Section should develop metrics not only for its own activities and outputs, but also for the outcomes of improved behaviour and performance of mine action programmes, including a possible over-arching results indicator of increased presentation of acceptable Article 5 and Article 7 reports.

Activity	Example metrics
Capacity development in information management through training and workshops	# of trainings, workshops held Participant feedback on trainings, workshops <b>Improved rating of IM Section support</b> <b>Specified improvements in individual and programme performance following training</b>
Identification and dissemination of best practices through research	# of research publications # of downloads of research publications <b># of programmes adopting best practices</b> <b># of programmes developing/reviewing information management strategy</b> <b>Specified improvements in practice in targeted programmes</b>
Onsite expert information management support	# of programmes receiving site visits Participant feedback on site visits <b>Increased use of IMSMA by operational and management staff</b> <b>Improved rating of IM Section on-site support</b> <b>Specified improvements in IMSMA use and management following visits</b>
Development and maintenance of tools and platforms to ease information management	# of tools, platforms developed <b>Specified improvements in integrating tools into decision-making</b>
Overall strengthening mine action programme capacity to manage information for successful end to the landmine problem	<b># of programmes with up-to-date policy and procedure frameworks (NMAS, SOP, Strategy)</b> <b># of programmes routinely presenting acceptable Article 5 and Article 7 reports</b>

### Need for IM Section strategy for closure of mine action projects.

62. One critical aspect of IM Section support that has not been sufficiently addressed is how to support closing out of mine action programmes, since even after the conclusion of mine action programmes the mine action database will continue to be relevant for land use planning and environmental management. Many programmes are unlikely to plan for long term data management to maintain a clear and accurate historical record of mine clearance (particularly after the office responsible for managing these activities is closed) and this should be addressed by GICHD as an essential part of the life cycle of support services.
63. The current process centers on finding a “home” for the database (e.g. national geographic institute) and providing support to Legacy version of IMSMA. However, as more years go by and more programmes close it will make less sense for GICHD to maintain the capacity to provide technical support and training for multiple versions of IMSMA, nor for it to update systems and staff who only occasionally use an IMSMA database. Options to consider could include: (a) handing over a stripped-down version of data with fewer attributes which can then be managed as one more component of a general national dataset and for which the relevant authority upgrade their own database and mapping systems; and (b) hosting of full active or archival national database in the to-be-developed “Server for ERW Information Systems” (SERWIS). The IM Section should develop a range of options that do not require perpetual dependency on the GICHD for mine action programmes to consider during their close-out period, together with the support to implement those options successfully.

## Development of the Server for ERW Information Systems (SERWIS)

64. The idea of the SERWIS project to house mine action data bases from around the world encounters both interest and skepticism. For cases in which national programmes voluntarily choose to participate, the SERWIS project would provide three options: (1) the hosting of aggregated and obfuscated data for global analysis and public access; (2) the hosting of complete IMSMA dataset for Internet access using username and password; and (3) the archiving of IMSMA data for closed mine action programmes. UN agency staff expressed interest to have such a data centre; some mine action programmes have no problem with the concept, while others are concerned about security of the data and do not wish unrestrained public access to their full dataset. Development of the SERWIS project should include joint coordination between national programmes and GICHD, providing for national sign-off regarding their own data; a Governing Board with majority membership of national programmes could be considered. The SERWIS project would require agreement on standard definitions for data reporting (compliant with IMAS 05.0) in order to convince all parties to report in the same way. Data which is not reported according to the agreed standards should not be included. Other data could be hosted for archival purposes, should the national programme wish such a backup.

## Technology trends that may affect IMSMA development

65. There is an ongoing shift in software from PC-based products (e.g. Microsoft Office) to web-based services (e.g. Google Docs) through “cloud computing”. The need for adequate internet access makes this problematic for many countries in which mine action programmes operate, but GICHD must plan on the basis that internet access will improve globally. The proposed SERWIS repository for mine-related data would place GICHD ahead of the curve in this area.

66. Mobile phone technology is becoming the main route for internet access in developing countries. Development of IMSMA Mobile is a step in the right direction, but there will be increasing demand for mobile applications that support mine action goals – for example, SMS reporting of mine incidents by the public via tools such as FrontlineSMS – which do not necessarily require IMSMA itself but that IMSMA must be able to work with.

67. There have been major changes in the way in which spatial data are managed and viewed. For the public, Google Earth made satellite imagery accessible while Google Maps made it possible to build shareable maps. Other web-based mapping tools have followed, including open source approaches such as Open Street Map (recently used in the Haiti earthquake response) which provide the basic data visualisation characterising most GIS use in relief and development. Spatial data analysis remains the preserve of traditional GIS such as that found in IMSMA, but GICHD should review how spatial data are managed and shared in IMSMA.

68. There is a tendency towards increased openness.

- a. GICHD is nearly open source since the only proprietary component is the ArcGIS software, which is the reason that IMSMA users require a hardware key (through ESRI, the company which owns the software). Making IMSMA fully open source would potentially expand the developer community, release clients from a binding relationship with GICHD and facilitate adoption of IMSMA by organisations outside the mine action sector. With development of IMSMA finished this would be a way in which GICHD could ensure that its investment in IMSMA leaves a legacy lasting beyond its own mission.
- b. Open APIs which allow applications to exchange data more easily are also increasingly important. Two aspects are key – technical standards that enable (for example) data to

be exported from IMSMA to spreadsheets, and domain standards which ensure that mine action operators collect data in a way that makes it possible to compare and combine that data. One obstacle to IMSMA entering other sectors is that there are relatively few examples of data standards in those sectors, but the mine action community should continue to lead in this area by promoting standards such as Mine Action XML schema and the Humanitarian Demining Symbol Set.

### **Finalization of IMSMA development**

69. GICHD should publicly reaffirm that IMSMA development for mine action will now come to an end in the formal sense that Version 5 is the final version. Any future upgrades should be focused on fixing bugs and streamlining or ensuring functions required by clients for effective information management support to programme management. However the concepts of a basic version of IMSMA with preset configuration and continued development of IMSMA Mobile have merit. GICHD could consider IMSMA as a platform – a range of products with an underlying concept rather than a single product. This view of IMSMA would also facilitate outreach to organisations outside the mine action sector, emphasising the flexibility of the system rather than its attachment to specific mine clearance processes. New users would then perceive IMSMA as a platform to be customised to their processes rather than feeling that their processes had to be adapted to fit into IMSMA.
70. Even if NG does not become fully open source (since the GIS capability is based on proprietary software), it may be possible to borrow some of the community-based approaches that characterise open source development to increase end user involvement in the development process. These approaches already address some of the issues mentioned above – tracking bug fixes through public tools, for example – and can encourage a sense of ownership of the process even with users that do not have a technical background. If successful, this would take some of the pressure off IMSMA as the sole provider of support services and possibly point in the direction of longer-term support for IMSMA if and when GICHD involvement come to an end.

### **The role of GICHD in strengthening Information Management**

71. In the context of this evaluation, the information management approach is relevant both to mine action programmes and to GICHD itself. While some programme staff still understand “information management” to be equivalent to “IMSMA management” (the processes required to ensure that IMSMA receives data and produces reports), there is a growing understanding of information management as a broader issue requiring more involvement by managers across the organisation.
72. A management information system consists of people, processes and technology. In the context of mine action, GICHD provides technology in the form of IMSMA, but it is up to mine action programmes to recruit their own staff and develop their own processes to make the system successful. Improving information management is not primarily a technology question but a capacity building question; however the IM Section's current capability is based primarily around supporting technology rather than building capacity.
73. The 2010 GICHD Workplan commits the GICHD IM section to take a more active role in supporting information management rather than simply supporting IMSMA. This will shift the emphasis away from focusing on the software and toward the service that IMSMA can provide to mine action programmes. This change is being welcomed by mine action programmes, but achieving the shift requires GICHD staff to acquire slightly different skill

sets and mine action programmes to engage with information management issues, while ensuring that IMSMA support continues.

74. Capacity at Geneva level is necessarily defined by the availability of resources and the limits of mandate, so the IM section must manage expectations carefully while expanding its support to others. This applies as well to efforts to strengthen information management at national level, where IM Section counterparts are principally IMSMA staff within mine action programmes. In those programmes, “information management” is likely to be seen as the responsibility of the IMSMA or database section, even though these staff are unlikely to possess the authority or the knowledge to take the lead on improving IM across the organisation. However IMSMA section staff play a critical role in the data management phase of information management, and with the right guidance they may be able to develop this role to support their entire organisation. Initially this can be done by making sure that good practices are in place for data collection, processing and dissemination, but this can be extended into working with operations staff to develop data collection forms that are appropriate for the field, and with management to deliver reports that meet the information needs of other business units for internal use and distribution to external stakeholders. The IM Section can best support this through working with IMSMA staff to advocate for evidence-based decision-making, increased transparency and accountability to national and international authorities, and a service orientation throughout the organisation.
75. The IM Section focus on IMSMA as an information management support tool brings attention to the need for IMSMA to effectively support programme management, and for IMSMA staff to be concerned with the satisfaction of other parts of the organisation regarding the service they provide. The IM Section support to information management involves attention to:
- a. Work with mine action programmes to assess work processes and information flow
  - b. Focus on IMSMA as support tool, and the IMSMA section as support unit
  - c. Focus on provision of information for management decisions
  - d. Collection of data required for operational and management functions
  - e. Quality assurance of the data collected and entered into the system
  - f. Focus on provision of reports to meet needs of internal and external stakeholders

## **IM Section relations with other GICHD units**

76. GICHD should lead by example, showing how the Centre integrates information management to support its work. Like any other organisation, GICHD has its own information management requirements; like any other organisation, previous experience and current structure strongly influence how those requirements are met.
77. From the perspective of mine action programmes GICHD has three distinct faces represented by different units: support to IMSMA (IM Section), to Ottawa Convention compliance (ISU) and to programme strategy and operations (Operations Division).<sup>2</sup> The IM Section and ISU are each small teams with clear focus and structure, which together interact regularly with the majority of mine action programmes, while the Operations Division is a more amorphous collection of semi-autonomous individuals and project-based activities. For most mine action programmes, the bulk of their interaction with the GICHD is with the IM Section regarding IMSMA; to another significant group it is the ISU related to their Ottawa Convention reporting.

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<sup>2</sup> While the IM Section is actually one of five sections within the GICHD Operations Division, because this evaluation is focused on the IM Section, it is discussed as if it were a separate part of the organization.

78. Each unit deals with a distinct counterpart in national programmes (database unit, programme management and operations) and they have different degrees of internal coherence. Individual personalities and working styles have had a disproportionately large impact on internal relations. It is possible and desirable for the IM Section and the ISU to directly coordinate their activities, whereas cooperation of the IM Section with other units of the Operations Division must be developed with individual people and their projects.
79. For a decade the IM Section focused on the development, dissemination and support of IMSMA software for mine action programmes, with success measured by the number of programmes adopting the software. Staff on mission from other GICHD units were sometimes berated over issues with IMSMA which they were neither equipped nor interested to deal with. As far as the evaluators could determine GICHD staff in the Operations Division and the ISU are unable to use IMSMA nor have they any interest in doing so; furthermore, there is no evident reason why they should want to learn how to use it. Nevertheless GICHD should be prepared with a coherent message that all staff can deliver regarding IMSMA, and they should take advantage of the opportunity that IMSMA provides as a strategic entry point for discussions about how to improve decision-making within national programmes.
80. Other GICHD units recognize that the current Chief of the IM Section has brought a new focus on information management, while remaining concerned with the development and support of IMSMA. All respondents compared the current IM Section management direction favourably to that in previous years, and found that they enjoyed a more constructive working relationship with the IM Section staff. The information management focus has added the dual concern that IMSMA produce information required by the national programmes and that all the information produced is of use to the national programme. This is an important shift in focus from “product” (the IMSMA software itself, based on the belief that it will be inherently beneficial to programmes) to “service” (ensuring that the technology is responsive to client programme needs).
81. Information management is essential under the Ottawa Convention, for which states need clear criteria to classify which land is pending further hazard mitigation activity and which land is “done”. Currently reports provided to the ISU indicate that ambiguous classifications are far more common. While graduated classification may be appropriate for operational planning and progress tracking, it needs to be mapped to an unambiguous classification for the purpose of Ottawa Convention reporting. Technical advice provided by the land release team has sometimes contradicted ISU advice, causing confusion among mine action programme staff.
- a. The development of unambiguous classifications provides a logical focus for cooperation among the Operations Division, the IM Section and the ISU, beginning with a joint project to map Ottawa Convention reporting language to IMSMA data and reports.
  - b. The IM Section and ISU should establish appropriate metrics for measuring progress in information management focused on the reporting process itself, of which quality reports are the key output. This requires a closer working relationship both with the ISU and with national programmes, and would not be primarily concerned with IMSMA as a software tool. A results indicator for information management support could be the proportion of programmes able to routinely provide acceptable Art. 5 and Art. 7 reports.
82. The evaluation team identified four main obstacles to cooperation among GICHD sections: (a) past attitudes of staff; (b) country priorities and planning; (c) workload; and (d) absence of clear focus by GICHD senior management that such cooperation is fully expected.

- a. Staff in all three units referred to the lack of interest of the other units to cooperate, and their own perception of favoured status for the “others.” All agreed that there is an increased interest in cooperation driven by GICHD management and much greater openness to such cooperation on the part of the Chief of the IM Section, and that there had been across the board progress on this.
  - b. Annual priorities are set by each unit for the countries where they will work, and only by chance do their respective priorities overlap. ISU priorities are driven by country reporting obligations under the Ottawa Convention, with particular attention to the Article 5 reporting deadlines. While the first Article 5 deadline year had 14 countries submitting reports, the current number is 3 to 5 per year. Some countries do not have other GICHD activity, while other countries with significant GICHD support are not signatories of the Ottawa Convention. IM Section priorities have been driven by a combination of IMSMA rollout and demanding/cooperative programme staff. The Operations Division priorities are largely driven by individual mine action programme and donor interest in certain projects. When by chance their priorities coincide, there has rarely been coordination of activities or missions, to the occasional embarrassment of GICHD staff on mission who may find themselves challenged regarding issues of other units (particularly regarding IMSMA). Over the past six months there has been an effort to make better known to each other what those priorities are, with an opening to possible coordination at least of missions.
  - c. Staff in all units, but particularly in the Operations Division, feel over-stretched to fulfill their workplans. To the extent that cooperation implies missions or support to countries that are not on their priority list, all staff feel this to be a cost without benefit.
  - d. Staff in all units indicated that until recently there GICHD senior management never prioritized internal programmatic cooperation. This was often included as an element in annual work planning and section heads were left largely on their own to set priorities without any structure or management effort to bring them together.
83. Increased GICHD internal cooperation will both improve the quality of GICHD support to mine action programmes and the ability of mine action programmes to make good use of that support. Increased coordination of activities will support greater consistency in the message provided by the GICHD, resulting in increased effectiveness due to the convergence of efforts. Several examples illustrate this:
- a. Various Operations Division projects have implications for information necessary to track implementation and measure results – e.g., land release; linking mine action and development. Cooperation at the GICHD level would make it possible to develop model indicators, and for the IM Section then to support IMSMA sections to generate appropriate indicators in concert with the Operations Division support to the mine action programme operations section, as has been done recently regarding information management for land release.
  - b. Article 5 reporting is an exceptionally clear example of the need for and benefits of internal GICHD coordination. Treaty obligations create a clear incentive to national governments to invest in strengthening processes (particularly information management) as well as a specific goal to work towards, yet the ISU finds that many countries have difficulty answering the basic questions required. Widespread difficulty in responding to these questions suggests the need for the IM Section to include the development of the relevant reports as a standard aspect of IMSMA support, not waiting until Article 5 reports come due; for the Operations Division staff to focus on the indicators in task reporting that can be properly aggregated to provide Art. 5 national reports; and for ISU staff to understand specific types of information being produced in each country and how that matches the Art. 5 requirements. There is an early warning stage with Art. 7 progress reports, which should improve with the added investment at

the time of the Art. 5 extension requests. Effective GICHD internal coordination around national progress reporting would result in a consistent message from GICHD units, and enhanced ability of mine action programmes to meet their reporting obligations and manage their programmes toward success. Such improvement in mine action programme reporting could also be a success indicator of overall GICHD support.

84. While GICHD staff are aware that IM does not equal IMSMA, they remain unsure what this means to them in practice and as a result are unsure what the IM Section has to offer them. However, the IM section could offer a variety of support functions to other sections and act as a substructure within GICHD to encourage greater organisational coherence. Specific examples of cooperation are suggested below in the Recommendations section.
85. GICHD management can build on current positive attitudes to support greater internal coordination, adopting a clear policy that GICHD units should actively co-operate and that assessment of workplans and progress reports will include this. Policy should also establish that all GICHD units are responsible (within their normal activities) to assist countries to fulfill Art. 5 and Art. 7 reporting requirements – or to provide equivalent reports on national progress even for countries which are not state parties to the Ottawa Convention – since provision of quality reports is a strong indicator of effective management of the mine action programme and of GICHD support in general.

### **Promotion of IMSMA for use outside mine action**

86. The evaluators were asked to advise whether GICHD should consider promotion of IMSMA for use outside the mine action sector, reflecting the sense that IMSMA may have greater potential than so far realised. IMSMA has a large market share in mine action with little prospect for growth, and – while GICHD has no commercial interest in further growth – a large sum has been invested in the development of the software, and GICHD is right to ask whether that investment might return value not just to the mine action community but to other actors. A comprehensive analysis is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but a preliminary review has been carried out based on the professional experience of the evaluation team, survey responses and interviews.
87. The survey found that roughly 90% of those that expressed an opinion were positive that other organisations or sectors could benefit from IMSMA use, although a nearly equal number had no opinion (Table 42). The highest rate of endorsement is among programmes which were visited twice or more during the year – they are no more satisfied with the software as a whole, but they see its potential for others (Table 43), while two thirds of the programmes not visited during the year expressed no opinion. Management staff were the most positive, followed by IMSMA staff (majority in both cases), with the Operations Division staff having only a minority in favour of this potential development (Table 44). Organisational support concerns were the basis for the main objections of those who expressed specific doubts about the use of IMSMA in other sectors.
88. Respondents suggested many potential users for IMSMA, including: NGOs and UN organisations involved in relief and development field projects; government ministries responsible for economic, community, and infrastructure development, as well as security and private actors. However, in many cases respondents were identifying organisations as potential users of IMSMA data, not necessarily as a potential market for IMSMA software.
89. Respondents also suggested several potential sectors in which IMSMA might be used (see Chart A), but the costs of customisation needs to be borne in mind when approaching any organisation operating in those sectors. IMSMA uses a particular terminology which is built

on particular categories – e.g. hazard, accident, victim and so on. It is relatively easy to adjust terminology, but the underlying categories are less flexible and more difficult to alter. For example:

- a. Managing environmental hazards is a particularly relevant suggestion, mentioned in the survey and supported by the experience of the evaluators. This domain has a similar set of categories and similar terminology to that described above; it also has a similar workflow in terms of identifying a problem, tracking activities and inputs, monitoring progress and establishing when a solution has been reached – all with spatial elements.
  - b. By contrast, a less promising suggestion from survey respondents was IMSMA for IDP and refugee camp management. Camp management is not a linear process like mine clearance, but a complex set of issues (food, shelter, health, security, education and so on) each with its own workflow. Furthermore, most of these issues cannot be “solved” in the sense that landmines or environmental hazards can. While camp management requires databases to track people and problems, some of which would benefit from spatial representation, customisation of IMSMA for this purpose would be a very large investment with other more readily adaptable alternatives available.
90. All organisations use similar productivity software (e.g. Microsoft Office); larger organisations will have invested in an intranet (e.g. Microsoft SharePoint) or communications suite (e.g. Lotus Notes); individuals within some organisations have driven adoption of web-based collaboration tools (such as Google Docs or Calendar). However, while a number of other software products have been developed by organisations sometimes identified as potential clients for IMSMA, there are few software options developed specifically for field operations available to relief and development actors, a market niche that provides an opportunity for IMSMA (Chart B). IMSMA has long been viewed by actors outside the mine action sector as a success story, but those actors have rarely considered adopting and adapting IMSMA themselves. Rather, IMSMA is viewed as an example of what they might be able to achieve with sufficient investment in their own software for project management and coordination.
91. Software adoption in the relief and development community is not necessarily a rational business decision, as the case of IMSMA itself shows; adoption is often guided by familiarity or availability, and constrained by organisational resources or policy. Organisations that have invested in their own dedicated software – whatever its strengths or weaknesses – are unlikely to consider IMSMA as an alternative. While IMSMA may be an improvement on ad hoc solutions (including relatively complicated systems managed in Excel or MS Access), organisations and individuals will still be attached to their own solutions and need to be persuaded to change. Organisations that have pursued neither of these options are unlikely to be large enough to be interested in IMSMA or well-resourced enough to implement it.
92. The level of support available is often the key variable in software adoption, particularly since relief and development organisations have historically had relatively small IT departments. While initial UN-donor imposition of IMSMA may account for why IMSMA was so widely adopted, the support that GICHD provides is part of the reason that it continues to be used. Other sectors lack this support – and will probably continue to, since few other institutions have the type of mandate that GICHD has within its sector – and they would struggle to support IMSMA deployment on the scale that mine action has. The question of where new users would receive training and ongoing support – given the demonstrated needs of current IMSMA users – should be addressed before any such deployment takes place. ICRC’s recent adoption of IMSMA for its mine action projects (without the buy-in of its own IT department, illustrating the role of individual experience in such decisions) may provide a useful test case to monitor what those costs are likely to be and how other organisations might bear them.

93. Organisations like to develop their own solutions as it raises their visibility and credibility, but it is difficult to sell those solutions to other organisations for the same reason. IMSMA is seen as mine action software, and changing the brand to make it more appealing outside mine action will be difficult. The tendency for clusters and organisations to develop their own software (for their own “unique” problems) makes marketing difficult, and attempts by GICHD may be perceived as empire-building. Donor influence with key actors may help to overcome this, especially since donors that have invested in IMSMA have a stake in its wider use. In principle there is no reason why IMSMA could not be applied to a much wider range of work processes in other sectors, but GICHD must consider the costs that would be involved to it and to potential new users, including initial outreach and customisation for new clients.
94. The core technical capability of IMSMA can be described in relatively simple terms: it is a project management tool modeled on workflow for tracking progress systematically and representing it spatially, using a relational database accompanied by an integrated GIS (geographic information system). IMSMA was designed to support the work processes used by mine action programmes to manage their activities on the ground, including improvement of knowledge through repeated data collection, allocation and management of assets, tracking results of actions, and spatial representation of results. The development of NG created a more flexible structure that could be configured for a wider variety of work flows, meaning that in principle it could be an attractive option for other organisations.
95. The open-source aspect of IMSMA may be a selling point, but the impact of this is lessened by the inclusion of proprietary ESRI products (ArcGIS in IMSMA NG and ArcPad in IMSMA Mobile) and GICHD cannot fully leverage the open source development community. The need for a hardware key to run this GIS means that end users are linked to GICHD, the sole distributor of those keys, an arrangement which may not be possible for actors outside the mine action sector. GICHD could consider “forking” IMSMA development, continuing to provide GICHD-supported IMSMA which includes ESRI products for mine action, while also releasing an open-source version with an alternative GIS package. An open-source IMSMA may also be able to generate a user community that could provide supplementary technical support. The success of such an approach is uncertain, but it is relatively low-risk since most of the software development has already been paid for.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Key Conclusions

96. The following summarizes key conclusions of the evaluation:
- a. The GICHD IM programme currently faces a particularly friendly environment. A majority of mine action programmes and individual respondents consider current support to IMSMA to be significantly better than it was in the past, although they also think that it should be improved further.
  - b. A majority of programmes using IMSMA NG consider that it is a significant improvement over the earlier versions of IMSMA, although it is reportedly very slow when handling large datasets, particularly when the GIS is used.
  - c. There are still concerns over the quantity and quality of support that GICHD is able to provide across the user base. One-half of mine action programmes were not visited in 2009 and nearly one-third of programmes received no technical support from the IM Section during 2009 – neither on-site nor remote. Most such programmes are national

- or using IMSMA Legacy. GICHD risks that these programmes may feel left behind and alienated from GICHD and slow to develop their capability with IMSMA.
- d. GICHD support visits are directed slightly more to national than to UN programmes; however, UN programmes benefit disproportionately, receiving significantly more comprehensive training even when they do not request it. This may be due to centralized coordination and response to the needs of these programmes, as well as relative ease of language access, but should be assessed further.
  - e. NG programmes are generally more satisfied with and better served by technical support than are Legacy programmes, as are UN programmes in comparison with national ones. The programmes that are most satisfied are the ones that were visited one or more times during 2009. Programmes that were not visited at all are much less satisfied. GICHD support will be more effective to the extent that it visits each programme each year.
  - f. Operations staff held consistently more negative opinions about IMSMA performance and GICHD support compared to IMSMA and Management staff. This more critical view of GICHD and IMSMA should be given consideration, and may reflect lack of integration of IMSMA units within the programmes themselves.
  - g. The Implementing Partner arrangements have strengthened overall support to IMSMA. Its impact can be enhanced with more active management of the partner scheme.
  - h. There has been very limited cooperation with other GICHD units, but there is currently a willingness to find mutually beneficial activities to conduct together. The evaluators are convinced that this can be developed in many areas, with one key being support to improve the quality of Ottawa Convention reporting, through increased conceptual clarity and system support.

## **Key Recommendations**

### **Focus on information management**

- 97. Developing information systems should start with identifying the specific decisions that need to be made by the end users of the system. IMSMA units should work with users to establish what information is needed to make those decisions, and then work out whether and how that information can be provided. This process needs to be continuously updated and user satisfaction monitored to ensure that necessary changes to the system are implemented quickly.
- 98. The IM Section should continue to focus on information management and service provision rather than restrict its attention to software development and application. Mine action programmes generally recognize the importance of moving from treating IMSMA primarily as a data warehouse to treating it as a support tool for planning, priority setting and reporting. Nonetheless, the concept of information management as more than merely good data and software management is not clear to many parties. The IM Section should develop generic guidelines, questionnaires, model SOPs, etc. to assist information staff in programmes and at HQ to carry out this broader information management role. It should reach out to operations and management, particularly while on mission, while continuing to provide core support to data and information management.

### **Continue with general support to use of IMSMA**

- 99. Basic and follow-on training in IMSMA and GIS continue to be necessary and should be an ongoing part of the IM Section work programme. Training to date has focused largely on how to use IMSMA rather than how to produce useful information. In general, mine action programme management are not interested to know how to operate IMSMA, other than to

seek useful reports. GICHD IM Section and the Operations Division should develop a training package for general and operational management on how to make effective use of IMSMA.

### Continue to emphasise service orientation

100. The service orientation of the IM Section – its willingness to listen and respond – is the source of its current positive image. The IM Section should continue to emphasise this orientation as well as to promote information management as a support process for programmes. When on mission IM Section staff should provide clear examples of this service orientation, taking time on mission to discuss programme needs with Operations and in order to improve the integration of IMSMA into management and operational structures.
101. GICHD should conduct a capacity assessment of each mine action programme interested to do so, in order to arrive at an agreed capacity development strategy tailored to the programme, guiding both GICHD and programme management. GICHD should consider whether to limit this assessment to information management issues or to broaden it to the full range of GICHD activities. Part of the assessment process should be to develop metrics for the outcomes of improved behavior and performance of mine action programmes.
102. The IM Section should maintain contact with all mine action programmes, including visits to each programme at least once each year and email contact on a quarterly basis. If that proves to be too heavy a mission load, scheduling an annual regional meeting for training and exchange of experience, allowing personal contact with each programme, combined with site visits to several of the programmes in the region could be a good alternative. The possibilities for peer support through regional partner cooperation should be incorporated into such an approach.
103. GICHD should make an effort to provide materials in the local language especially for languages that are used in multiple countries, and particularly for Spanish and Arabic speaking countries (in addition to French). It can facilitate the exchange of experience and support among mine action programmes, and the IM Section could develop regional partner structures for technical support in the local language and working groups to agree translations of key documents.
104. Many important programme functions are well supported through external/add-on software, and the IM Section should work with rather than try to supplant such external databases, including promotion and dissemination of add-ons where appropriate. NGO and commercial operators often have their own database systems, developed to serve their own requirements, and GICHD should offer to work with them to provide ensure that data exchange with IMSMA is as simple as possible. The IM Section also should develop appropriate strategies to support small programmes which may not require IMSMA.
105. The IM Section should seek to harness the strong end user interest to be involved with future development. An active users group could be encouraged by periodic focus group consultations, updates on in-process and planned developments of system capabilities, meetings with end users to identify their information needs and to ensure that system outputs meet those needs, and outreach to operations and programme managers on how IMSMA can support their work.
106. Programmes have felt a greater sense of support from GICHD over the past year. However, they are usually in the dark about work being done on their requests, and thus unable to respond to their own clients when asked about progress on the resolution of issues. Existing procedures for receiving, tracking and responding to requests for support are not systematic enough to ensure effective management of those requests. The IM

Section should establish a mechanism to track contacts with each mine action programme, issues raised, requests and responses in process or delivered. It should regularly inform programmes about the status of pending responses, bug-fixes and development.

107. The IM Section should assess the gap between technical support requests and what it has actually provided, noting in particular that some types of programmes have benefited much more while others have been only weakly served, in order to design a balanced technical support strategy. GICHD should ensure a level of consistency and response to need in the support provided to programmes. In addition, GICHD should establish a mechanism to measure client satisfaction with its support, and the resulting information should be used to adapt GICHD programmes to ensure greater effectiveness. The ratings generated by the survey for this evaluation could serve as benchmarks.

### **Capacity development of GICHD IM Section**

108. Despite the service orientation at the core of their strategy, the IM Section does not have metrics to measure the success of those services. The IM Section should establish and monitor indicators of effectiveness of its efforts to strengthen information management capacity. Routine provision by mine action programmes of timely and credible Article 5 and Article 7 reports (clear statement of original problem, progress, and remaining problem) would provide a good indicator of the quality of information management.

109. The IM Section should develop an appropriate strategy for information management support to closing of mine action programmes, seeking to ensure that all necessary information will be available but that successor institutions will not be perpetually dependent on IMSMA or GICHD support. The IM Section should develop a range of options for mine action programmes to consider during their close-out period together with the support to implement those options successfully.

110. In order to maintain strong service capability, the IM Section should ensure that the capabilities of its own staff are continually upgraded, in particular to better understand and respond to the breadth of operational and management information needs of mine action programmes.

### **Capacity development of IMSMA units in mine action programmes**

111. The support requirement most frequently identified by programmes was for more training. However, while this request included on-going training in basic use of IMSMA, many noted that training should be more inclusive in two senses. First, training should not focus solely on how to use the IMSMA database system, but on how to use it to “describe the problem well and guide decision-making.” Second, training should be more inclusive, showing operations and management staff what IMSMA can do for them.

112. Just as the IM Section should concern itself with client satisfaction (both for its “immediate clients”, the IMSMA sections of mine action programmes, and “general clients” in the mine action programmes themselves), it should also encourage IMSMA sections in turn to be concerned with the sense of satisfaction on the part of the operations department of their own mine action programme. The IM Section can support this by increasing the effectiveness of IMSMA units, promoting the increased integration of those units within mine action programmes, and addressing training to operations and management staff so that they become more demanding regarding the role of IMSMA and other information in operational and strategic programme decision-making.

113. The IM Section focus on IMSMA as an information management support tool brings attention to the need for IMSMA to effectively support programme management and for IMSMA staff to be concerned with the satisfaction of other parts of the organisation regarding the service they provide. To improve information management in any given organisation requires the development of an information management strategy which involves all business units within the organisation, as well as senior management buy-in. For those mine action programmes that lack the expertise necessary to develop such a strategy, the IM Section could offer its support, including the following:
- a. Focus on IMSMA as support tool, and the IMSMA section as support unit
  - b. Strengthen quality assurance of the data collected and entered into the system
  - c. Work with mine action programmes to assess work processes and information flow
  - d. Focus on provision of information for management decisions
  - e. Collection of data required for operational and management functions
  - f. Focus on provision of reports to meet needs of internal and external stakeholders
  - g. Development of institutional tools such as IM strategy, standards and SOPs

### Key areas for future technical support

114. Several key areas for further technical support identified by mine action programmes were discussed previously (Table 26, Annexes 8 and 9), with particular attention to information management support to the mine action programme, data collection and management, GIS, reporting, information analysis and capacity development. The IM Section should carefully assess the multiple suggestions for future technical development and support and adapt its strategy and response accordingly. As part of this support, the IM Section should act as a clearinghouse to collect and make known a range of templates for use by mine action programmes for data collection and report dissemination to the typical range of internal and external users.
115. The focus of the IM Section should be on the following activities: a) problem solving and bug fixing in IMSMA NG; b) continued technical support to IMSMA users, particularly focused on transition (from Legacy to NG) and close-out issues; c) increased emphasis on information management, including improving the quality of information in the system and educating interested parties how they can make use of the system. This last component should include development of a standard user guide for non-IT staff, which could be prepared and updated on the basis of best practice experience from mine action programmes.

### Further development of IMSMA

116. GICHD should decide and announce that the current version of IMSMA is the last one. Future development should be limited to serve client requirements identified to support mine action programmes more effectively and other adjustments that may be required to improve efficiency of the system and maintain compatibility with other software, including in particular data export as datasets or reports in formats that can be utilized by external software.
117. Not all mine action programmes require an information system as sophisticated as IMSMA. Countries with small problems in a known area could manage their situation well with simple spreadsheet and off-the-shelf GIS tools, or a largely preconfigured standard IMSMA setup. The IM Section should support an appropriate alternative in such cases.
118. The data analysis aspects of IMSMA are still underdeveloped and underutilized by many mine action programmes. They should be strengthened, or where they already exist,

marketed and trained in more effectively. The IM Section can assist by providing clear use cases for how such tools could work, including incorporating links to standard statistical and trend analysis software. The IM Section could also act as a clearinghouse to identify and make known good practices in using such analysis.

### **Strengthen Implementing Partner arrangements**

119. Implementing Partners ensure a good basic level of IMSMA support but often do not focus on information management support. If GICHD wishes broader information management support, it should provide appropriate guidance to its partners and their staff, and this may require a different profile for candidates. The IM Section should consider whether it would like to have (and would make use of) periodic updates from the Implementing Partners regarding their work and the situation they encounter in the field. The IM Section should consider regular (annual) meeting with its partners and address principles of information management support and client service in its coordination with partners and training of Implementing Partner staff.
120. GICHD should continue with the Implementing Partner initiative but clarify with all stakeholders exactly what the arrangement is intended to deliver to mine action programmes, and work with IPs to ensure that they are able to deliver this to programmes in addition to any other areas of expertise that they feel they contribute. If GICHD wishes to keep its role clear and maintain consistent quality of advisory support, it should increase the level of supervision of the Implementing Partners. The IM Section should explore the expansion of Implementing Partner arrangements with individual mine action programmes, in order to provide peer support on a regional basis. GICHD should discuss the results of this evaluation with Implementing Partners.

### **Strengthen internal cohesion of GICHD programmes**

121. GICHD management can build on current positive attitudes to support greater internal coordination, adopting a clear policy that GICHD units should actively co-operate and that assessment of workplans and progress reports will include this. GICHD management should actively stimulate joint planning and practical cooperation. GICHD should address principles of information management support and client service in all of its training for staff of mine action programmes, particularly for IMSMA staff.
122. The development of unambiguous classifications of land provides a logical focus for cooperation among the Operations Division, the IM Section and the ISU, beginning with a joint project to map Ottawa Convention reporting language to IMSMA data and reports. The IM Section and ISU should establish appropriate metrics for measuring progress in information management focused on the reporting process itself, of which quality reports are the key output.
123. Policy should also establish that all GICHD units are responsible (within their normal activities) to assist countries to fulfill Art. 7 and Art. 5 reporting requirements, recognizing that provision of quality reports is a strong indicator of effective management of the mine action programme and indirectly of GICHD support in general.
124. GICHD should lead by example, showing how the Centre integrates information management to support its work, including the following:
  - a. Coordinated institutional planning and priority setting, in which each GICHD unit explains its criteria for prioritization of countries and seeks to identify and prioritize those where work by other units would assist its own effectiveness.

- b. IM Section meetings with other units to learn what support they require.
- c. Joint missions to countries, with effort to identify appropriate opportunities for cooperation on the ground.
- d. Posting of mission reports on shared server, with an expectation to review recent reports of others and be informed of key issues as part of mission preparation.
- e. Joint ISU, IMS and Operations Division workshops for countries two years before their Art. 5 deadline.
- f. Joint project of ISU, the Operations Division and the IM Section to map the language of the Ottawa Convention to IMSMA, and to develop an IMSMA Art. 5 reporting template.
- g. The IM Section to include development of Art. 5 reports in roll-out or adaptation of all IMSMA installations – based on country specific discussions with other GICHD units.
- h. IM Section provision of GIS, map and satellite imagery products for the Operations Division and mine action programmes. IM Section staff interaction with mine action programme counterparts should promote the professional responsibility to ensure that IMSMA is a service to the rest of the mine action programme by providing the information products necessary and useful to support the programme. Extending the cultural change of information management as a service orientation from the GICHD IM Section to the IMSMA database units of each programme would be perhaps the most important form of cooperation that could occur.

125. GICHD should seek to raise the level of discussion about information management with its partners, treating the issues as an essential component of programme management rather than simply a software issue. One concrete way this can be done would be through a session at the Annual Meeting of National Directors and Advisors organized around the topic of Ottawa Convention (IHL) Reporting and Information Management.

#### **Use of IMSMA outside mine action**

126. Regarding application of IMSMA outside of mine action, GICHD is right to consider whether their investment might return value not just to the mine action community, but also to other actors; however it should explore this with reasonable caution and modest expectations. GICHD has a product to supply in the form of IMSMA, which could be useful for humanitarian and development project management outside of mine action, but whether there is a demand for this product is not yet clear. GICHD should carry out market research before going any further down the path of marketing IMSMA to other actors in order to ensure that it does not waste resources. The first steps are to identify as specifically as possible which organizations might be potential users, why those users would be interested in IMSMA, and what alternatives exist to meet their interests. There are a variety of financial, technical and institutional obstacles that would have to be overcome before IMSMA would be likely to be adopted by other users, and GICHD should assess the likelihood that these obstacles can be overcome. At the same time, GICHD should explore the possibility of releasing a fully open-sourced version of IMSMA with a generic configuration appropriate to humanitarian field project management, in parallel with its support to mine action programmes and in addition to any pre-configured standard IMSMA version that may be developed.

## **Tables (separate document)**

## **Annexes (separate document)**

1. TOR for Evaluation of GICHD Information Management Programme
  2. TOR Addendum: Issues for Evaluation of GICHD IM Programme
  3. Note on Information Management
  4. Methodology and Data Collection
  5. Mine Action Programmes and Organisations which provided input to the Evaluation
  6. Summary of Country responses to on-line survey
  7. Summary of Individual responses to on-line survey
  8. Features to consider in future development of IMSMA
  9. Features to consider to improve future IM Section support
- Chart A: Potential Sectors for use of IMSMA in Field Project Management  
Chart B: Software products in relief and development