

Evaluation of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

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Executive summary

The GICHD, under the leadership of Ambassador Martin Dahinden and backed by the support of a Foundation Council presided by Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga, has fared well. Indeed, its activities and budgets have expanded considerably and it has produced a number of high quality outputs that are used as reference materials in mine action worldwide.

The GICHD has evolved from being a purely Swiss private foundation to acquire a *sui generis* international status, although the Swiss image still marks it. It has successfully involved other Governments, some of which have generously contributed financially to its activities. It has concluded agreements with a number of them, as well as with international organisations. Its international recognition has also been demonstrated by the important mandate entrusted to it in the framework of the Ottawa process. The Centre has built for itself a reputation of excellence and expertise with governmental actors. However, operational NGOs tend to have a less positive perception of its work. Indeed, a significant number of them consider that the Centre has increasingly allowed itself to be detached from the realities and needs of field work. There is therefore a need for the Centre to become more proactive in its relations with the field in general, and with NGOs in particular. It should develop more elaborate and critical criteria to select or accept projects. As much as possible, this should be a transparent and participative process, responding to needs identified in, or coming from, the field.

Relations with the UN have for the most part improved over the last four years. Essentially, the relationship has been one of give-and-take, and both have benefited from it. The UN has received (and requested) support and expertise it could not afford to pay for, and the GICHD has received “legitimacy” and “validation” of its products. The Centre has strived to keep the relationship close enough to maintain legitimacy yet sufficiently distant to preserve a reputation of independence.

The 2003-2005 Strategy of the GICHD has allowed the Centre, by providing it with broad directions and principles, to achieve a lot. This flexibility has nevertheless come at a price, most notably a lack of guidelines with regard to decision-making and priority-setting. The Strategy has arguably not sufficiently emphasised the requirement that the Centre’s activities be driven by identified needs of end-users.

The flagship products of the GICHD, the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) and the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), have become reference tools deployed worldwide in cooperation with the UN. Increased efforts at simplification and outreach are now needed. Some of their shortcomings have been pointed out by observers and users, and have for the most part been acknowledged by the Centre. Nevertheless, the cost-efficiency and operational impact of these products have never been independently evaluated.

As the needs for research reach a plateau, the challenge for the Centre will increasingly become determining what is still required and with which returns on investments. The GICHD also needs to determine the point at which enough information exists to take a decision as to when and how to “let go” and stop fine-tuning studies. In taking decisions with respect to the appropriate course of action regarding existing and proposed activities, proactive, participatory and creative methods will have to be used to ascertain the needs and demands of field operators and the relevance of the projected action.

The GICHD offers training, outreach and evaluation services which relate mostly to its particular area of expertise. Before going further or expanding these activities, the Centre

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needs to carefully examine its own added value, methodology and capacities, and thoroughly assess the current and future needs of mine action.

The Centre has had a crucial and much appreciated role in supporting the Ottawa process through its Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and Sponsorship Programme. Its expert function in the CCW context has also been welcomed. Its role in providing platforms for the different key actors of mine action to link-up has also received much praise.

The Council of Foundation has mostly been a club of donors and questions are being raised as to the pros and cons of inviting mine-affecting countries to become members and, more generally, to determine innovative ways for them to increase their inputs in the work of the Centre. The Advisory Board has been experiencing a crisis and needs to be revitalised in order ensure it is able to fulfil its intended purpose, which is to keep the Centre abreast of the developments taking place in mine action and to determine the needs of the latter.

The management of the GICHD has generally been praised. Efforts could nevertheless be made to better utilise the potential for synergies within the Centre. Human resources management could also be more proactive in ensuring that staff is as close to the field as possible.

Section 7. below presents recommendations addressed both to the GICHD and its Council of Foundation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and aim of the evaluation

During its December 2003 meeting, the Council of Foundation of the *Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining* (hereinafter referred to as “the GICHD” or “the Centre”) followed a proposal by Ambassador Maurer (Switzerland) and indicated its wish to have the Centre evaluated by an outside organisation. In the May 2004 meeting, the Council agreed that the evaluation report should contribute to the review of the Centre’s strategy (2003-2005), which will start in late 2004. The Council also agreed that the evaluation should focus on two questions: (1) is the Centre doing the right things? and (2) is it doing the things right? The Council was also informed that the relevant funding for the evaluation would be provided by the Swiss Government.

On the recommendation of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Stéphane Jeannet, of the Geneva-based company *Human Solutions Consulting*, was contracted to carry out this evaluation.

The evaluator’s terms of reference (ToR) indicate that the following areas are to be included into the evaluation process:

- a) Positioning of the GICHD in the mine action sector and the perception of it by the outside;
- b) The content and form of the Strategy;
- c) The development process of the Strategy;
- d) Management Review;
- e) Guidance for potential sectoral evaluations regarding the implementation of the Strategy.

1.2 Methodology

According to paragraph 4 of the ToR “the evaluation shall be based on document review, interviews of key actors in mine action (preferably during the June 2004 Intersessionals) and contributions provided by GICHD staff.” One of the obvious limitations of the evaluation is that it was restricted to discussions with persons present in Geneva and Berne, as field visits were not included in the ToR. Nevertheless a relatively wide variety of actors were met.

The list of the forty-two plus persons interviewed is included as an annex to the report. In addition, a number of mine action managers who had heard about the evaluation volunteered comments by e-mail. Although this method had not been foreseen at the beginning of the evaluation, such inputs, when they corroborated information already received in face-to-face interviews, were taken into account.

The vast majority of the interviews were carried out under the agreement, or sometimes on the direct request, that information given would not be quoted in the present report. This was also the case for the e-mail contributions. The evaluator, in respecting the assurances given, will therefore not attribute statements or present them in a manner that allows identification of their authors.

The ToR for the evaluation contain no less than 97 “possible questions”, many of which in addition include sub-questions. These questions are meant merely to “provide guidance to the evaluator and indicate the areas of interest of the Centre”. Not every single question was, or could be, specifically answered. The present report consequently gives an overview of the issues raised and goes into some detail in a number of areas of particular concern.

Paragraph 30 of the ToR provides that the evaluation shall *not* focus on the implementation of particular projects/programmes of the Centre, which may be the subject of future evaluations, but states that “the opportunity should be used to get some input for future – potential – evaluation missions.”

As foreseen in the ToR, the evaluator provided to the GICHD a first draft of the evaluation report dated 1 October 2004 for comments on facts. Those comments, dated 23 October 2003, as far as they were justified and did not imply reopening the evaluation process, were taken into consideration in the present report.

Section 7 below presents a first set of recommendations addressed to the GICHD and its Council of Foundation, which is intended to be of help in the context of the formulation of a new strategy. A second set is addressed solely to the Centre but may also be of interest in the discussions leading to the adoption of the strategy. None of the two clusters of recommendations is exhaustive, as a number of other, less crucial but nevertheless important recommendations, are included in the present report – for ease of reference they are in **bold prints**.

2. The GICHD in the mine action world – realities and perceptions

2.1 Status and international recognition of the Centre

The GICHD has evolved from being a purely Swiss private foundation to acquire a *sui generis* status. Although it is still subject to Swiss law, the signing on 25 February 2003 of a

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status agreement¹ with the Swiss Federal Council, which “guarantees the independence and liberty of action” of the Centre and grants it privileges and immunities, constitutes the most recent sign of the GICHD’s specific standing.

Along the same lines, whereas the GICHD was totally dependent on funding from the Swiss Confederation when it was created, it has managed to attract other governments, which are not only represented on the Foundation Council (see section 4.1) but which also financially contribute to the work of the Centre. Multi-year co-operation agreements were signed with the Governments of the UK, Canada, Sweden, and, of course, of Switzerland. The Centre also receives contributions from countries not represented in the Council of Foundation – e.g. in 2003 the Czech Republic and New Zealand. Finally, a number of countries contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Implementations Support Unit (ISU) and the Sponsorship Programme.

Memoranda of understanding were also signed with international organisations – OAS, UNDP and, more recently, UNMAS. The Centre is therefore multilateral without being an intergovernmental organisation, but at the same time it is not a classic non-governmental organisation.

Another sign of the Centre’s specific international status is that it is the only non-UN institution apart from the ICRC to be mentioned in UN General Assembly resolutions on mine action. It is also referred to in resolutions of other intergovernmental organisations, such as the OAS and the European Union. Finally, the GICHD is mentioned in reports of the UN Secretary-General, and the Director of the Centre (at the time Ambassador Martin Dahinden) was invited to address the UN Security Council.

The Centre’s status has also evolved as a consequence of the mandate it received from the Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention in 2001 – see section 5.5.1. Finally, to the surprise of a number of persons interviewed, it obtained observer status at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Review Conference and chaired a Military Expert Group meeting – see section 3.5.2.

These developments demonstrate not only the growing international recognition of the Centre but also, and this must be pointed out, the remarkable aptitude of its President (Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga) and Director (Ambassador Martin Dahinden) for networking and public relations at the highest levels. The present status and international recognition of the GICHD are therefore not merely a reflection of the appreciation of the work done by the Centre, but also the result of a successful promotional strategy.

It can therefore be said that the Centre has outgrown the Swiss strategy which was the basis for its creation. In other words, it has ceased to be mainly an instrument of Swiss foreign policy and has become a multilateral entity.

2.2 Partnerships

The GICHD’s 2003-2005 Strategy (Principle 5) states that “The GICHD further develops and strengthens its co-operation with governments, international and non-governmental organisations. It avoids duplication with other actors and works closely together with all relevant actors.”

¹ “Accord entre le Centre International de Déminage Humanitaire – Genève et le Conseil fédéral suisse relatif au statut du Centre en Suisse.”

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The GICHD has contacts with a wide-ranging variety of actors and has, as we will see later in this section, developed partnerships with some of them:

- a) International organisations such as the EU, OAS, ICRC;
- b) Organisations and agencies of the UN system other than UNMAS, such as UNDP, UNOPS, UNICEF, UNDDA, etc.;
- c) NGOs at the international as well as national level (e.g. MAG, HALO Trust, NPA, FSD, SAC, VVAF), including national NGOs in mine affected countries (MDC, RSC contacts);
- d) National mine action programmes (IMSMA alone is running in 40 national/regional mine action programmes);
- e) National governments in both donor and mine affected countries (see Annual Report 2003);
- f) Commercial companies active in mine action (e.g. Mechem).

As was seen in section 2.1, collaboration agreements exist with international organisations and with governments. No such institutionalised partnership (e.g. based on a general cooperation MoU) exists with NGOs, although collaboration with NGOs does take place; the only formal example given concerns the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which requested and funded tasks.

2.2.1 Relations with the United Nations

It is useful to remember that the Centre was created at a time when Switzerland was not a member of the United Nations, but when the Swiss Government was intent, through technical issues, on having an influence and a role to play in multilateral affairs. One of Switzerland's main aims in creating the GICHD was to provide a service to the international community. Indeed, the UN was seen as unable to deliver on its own due to a lack of flexibility and political blockages. The idea was to bring the key stake-holders together and provide them with a platform for dialogue and action. In return, the association would lend some of the UN's legitimacy to the Centre.

Analysing relations between the GICHD and the UN proved to be an immensely complicated endeavour. Indeed, there exist as many opinions about what they are and ought to be as there are interlocutors – some of whom have described those relations as “at times slightly schizophrenic”. The main reason for this is that there is in fact no consensus in the mine action world as to what the responsibilities of the UN are or should be. To complicate matters further, there have been turf wars and power struggles within the UN as to whom of UNMAS, UNDP, UNICEF and UNOPS should do what.

According to some key players, the alliance with the UN is a condition for the Centre's survival whereas, for others, the Centre's credibility is endangered by its association with the Organisation (because the latter is “political and inefficient”). Essentially, the relationship has been one of give-and-take, and both have benefited from it. The UN has received (and requested) support and expertise it could not afford to pay for, and the GICHD received “legitimacy” and “validation” of its products – see also section 2.1 above on status and international recognition, and below section 5.5 on decision-making and priority setting for projects. The Centre has therefore so far managed to walk a fine line and use certain ambiguities to its advantage. As it gained in strength in confidence, the GICHD has nevertheless increasingly tried to assert its “independence” from the UN. For the reasons explained in the previous paragraph, these attempts have been received with very different reactions from donors. Many NGOs appear not to have noticed or acknowledged this drive towards more autonomy.

2.2.2 Relations with the United Nations Mine Action Service

Relations with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) seem to have been tense during the first few years of the existence of the GICHD. This was partly due to problems between persons, but also due to a lack of clarity as to what each organisation's responsibilities ought to be. UNMAS, for its part, initially perceived the Centre merely as a service-provider and not as a partner. Starting in 2000, the new Directors of both institutions managed to find first a *modus vivendi* and then, gradually, to improve relations, culminating in the signing in June 2004 of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UNMAS and the GICHD. This agreement does not contain any fundamentally new elements to the relationship, but merely formalises the common understanding that has prevailed for the past two or three years.

According to UNMAS, the relations between itself and the GICHD can be said to belong to three categories: The first category concerns the relation relating to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS; see section 3.3.2), where UNMAS exerts full control over the content of the standards and the formal procedures for adopting them, this with a view to ensuring their universal legitimacy. Apart from this, the related work of the GICHD – i.e. development of the standards and outreach activities – are left to the Centre and are therefore carried out in an independent and flexible way.

The second category is the reverse model and is exemplified by cases for which UNMAS needs research to be carried out independently on a certain topic – e.g. the effectiveness of dogs in mine action – and asks the GICHD for help. In such instances, the Centre develops its own terms of reference and takes its own decisions; UNMAS' role being limited to comments and inputs. The results of such studies remain the property of the Centre. The only exception was the socio-economic study, which was commissioned (i.e. requested *and* funded) by UNDP and bears both the GICHD and the UN logo.

The third category is a combination of the first two and concerns the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA; see section 3.3.1), which is a project complicated by the variety of actors involved: the system is promoted by the UN, is developed by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ), is the property of the GICHD, but the data it contains belongs to the mine-affected State.

2.3 Perception of the Centre

The first “Principle” contained in the GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy is as follows: “In pursuing its goals, the GICHD is committed to humanitarian principles. It acts as an independent and impartial centre of excellence.”

The GICHD was often referred to as a “reference point” or a “centre of excellence”, or both. In other words, its reputation is excellent... at least among governments and international organisations, as will be seen below. Its activities are well covered in the media and on the internet – including on the Centre's own Website. Efforts to contribute to disseminating knowledge about mine action by various means, including by contributing articles to various publications or delivering speeches at a variety of venues, have been welcomed. In this context, the Centre's “Guide to Mine Action” has been widely praised as a well conceived tool whose goal (to provide basic information for diplomats, donors, lawyers, practitioners, scholars, as well as journalists in the key aspects of mine action) has been reached.

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Among its admirers, the GICHD's main comparative advantages were said to be:

- Swiss origins;
- Independence and neutrality;
- A “well-oiled machine”;
- Location – Geneva – not US, not EU, in a neutral country, at a central location and in the “capital” of humanitarian action and disarmament; close to the UN Office;
- Competence and expertise of staff;
- A one-stop-shop for the main areas of expertise useful to mine action;
- A platform for exchange between the wide varieties of actors active in mine action.
- According to a senior UN official, “the key to the Centre’s success is that it focuses on what it is good at and does not attempt to be more than what it is.”

Despite its efforts at multilateralism, the GICHD is still largely perceived as a Swiss organisation – this however, as was pointed out above, is not always a handicap. Even though the Swiss nationality of some key persons of the Centre is dictated by Swiss law regulating private foundations, the fact remains that the President of the Council, its Secretary and its Treasurer are Swiss. The Centre’s Council of Foundation consists of 23 members (see also section 4.1), of which five are selected by the Swiss Government, and two by the Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva. In total, seven members have Swiss citizenship. In addition, the Director and Support Director of the Centre are Swiss.

Despite this positive image, however, some extremely harsh comments were heard from a number of non-governmental operators – “a Swiss white elephant” probably being the most scathing. Generally, there is a feeling that the GICHD does not always consult enough, both internally and with external interested actors, and that this has increasingly become an issue of concern over the past two years. For instance, advisory or users focus groups are sometimes said to have as main purpose to “give legitimacy” to a project which has already been decided upon – see also section 4.4 on the Advisory Board. Consequently, some individuals do not wish to be associated with the Centre, as they do not want to be seen as giving their blessing or legitimising some of the Centre’s projects which they do not consider needed or relevant. There is clearly a problem in this regard but, in all fairness to the Centre, it also appears that opportunities for giving opinions to, or requesting outputs (e.g. research) from, the Centre have not always been seized by those persons and institutions who voice the most stringent criticisms. Mine action NGOs are prompt to claim to have been left out of consultation whereas in a number of instances the problem appears in fact to have been poor communication within their own organisation, especially between the field and headquarters. **Nevertheless, if the Centre truly wants to consult NGOs, it should keep that weakness in mind and do its best to address it, in particular by being more proactive.**

One of the main points of contention with NGOs is that some individuals believe that when GICHD was created, there was a commitment that the Centre would be funded exclusively from money that was not earmarked for humanitarian mine action. The feeling among them is that GICHD is currently (at least partly) receiving funding that was earmarked for concrete demining activities, and this for purposes (e.g. certain studies) that they tend to consider as being of little use to them. In other words, there is a belief that money spent by the GICHD is money that is not used to “take mines out of the ground.” The present evaluation was not mandated to determine the usefulness and relevance of particular GICHD outputs for operational work (see section 1.2), nor was it in a position to trace back the original purpose at the national level of the funds provided to the GICHD. The evaluation was, however, mandated to assess the “positioning of the GICHD in the mine action sector and the *perception of it by the outside.*” It is the strong belief of this evaluator that the GICHD **ought**

to consider such opinions and allegations seriously and not merely shrug them off as “over simplistic”, “wishful thinking” or “mere jealousy.”

3. The work of the GICHD – from strategy to impact

3.1 *The 2003-2005 Strategy*

The draft of the 2000-2002 Strategy was a document prepared by the President with very little preliminary consultation. At the time, this lack of participation was considered unavoidable given the poor shape in which the GICHD was at the time. By 2002, however, the Centre’s situation had improved, and consultations were organised within the Centre, in the Advisory Board and in the Foundation Council. Opinions as to the effectiveness of the consultation process (in terms of substantive inputs) vary, although it appears that those who could have contributed were given a chance to do so.

The 2003-2005 strategy document is very concise, and this is to be welcomed. Its three-year span is long enough to ensure a certain level of stability and to plan activities, yet short enough to retain the flexibility to evolve with the rapidly changing world of mine action. According to the Strategy, the output of the GICHD is in three core areas: (1) operational assistance, (2) research, and (3) support for the implementation of the Convention banning anti-personnel mines, and other relevant instruments of international law. The distinction made between research and operational support at times appears somewhat artificial, given that they feed one into another – this is the “chicken and egg” problem, but cannot be said to be a fundamental flaw of the Strategy.

The Strategy appears to be designed to be precise enough to give a general direction but broad enough to leave room for flexibility. This, however convenient it may be, also has its downsides. In fact, the Strategy is more a long mission statement – i.e. it spells out what the Centre *intends* to do. Some have compared it to a policy paper or a “shopping list.” It is not strategic in the sense that every aspect of mine action is included² – which not only enables it to seize opportunities as they arise, but also opens the door for a dispersion of activities. The absence of principles or guidelines concerning decision-making and priority-setting for projects and programmes can give to the critical observer the impression that the projects do not necessarily have to respond to needs identified in, or requests coming from, the field – see the discussion on the “golden rule” in section 5.5 below. This is not to say that every activity ought necessarily to be directly linked to wishes and desires coming from the field, as it can be said of operational personnel (and this is not specific to mine action) that they sometimes suffer from “tunnel vision” or have fallen into the “activity trap”, i.e. they have lost contact with the “big picture.”

The Strategy provides no measurable objectives and does not contain an action plan, or even priorities – which makes it difficult to evaluate the Centre’s work. The argument that this is due to the fact that the Centre is a service provider is not persuasive. Neither is it to say that objectives are not set because impact is difficult to measure. Lastly, the fact that “donors are happy with this” is not a convincing reason either.

² “Regarding its activities, the GICHD focuses on all aspects of mine action [1], including: mine clearance (including planning, survey, mapping, and marking), information development, operational support, socio-economic effects, advocacy (to stigmatise the use of land mines and support a total ban on anti-personnel land mines), mine risk education, stockpile destruction and victim assistance.”
[1] Mine action addresses the issue of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO).

3.2 Principles

The 2003-2005 Strategy contains a list of principles aimed at guiding the GICHD's work. Some of those principles are analysed in this section, the rest elsewhere in the evaluation report – e.g. section above on status (2.1), partnerships (2.2) and perception (2.3).

3.2.1 Capacity-building

Capacity-building is one of the points emphasised in the 2003-2005 Strategy, and rightly so. Indeed, action aimed at making it easier for international actors to hand-over mine action projects and programmes to national structures should be very high on the Centre's agenda. Furthermore, the gradual shift of mine action from humanitarian towards development (see section 5.3.2) will strengthen the drive towards local capacity building. Within the UN, the main responsibility for this has been assigned to UNDP. A few general comments should nevertheless be made.

In most cases, capacity-building, in order to be effective and sustainable, ought to be carried out in the field, if possible by people living in the field, and ideally being from the country or at least from the region. Another factor of success is a long enough commitment. Without active and sustained follow-up, capacity-building can easily become a waste of time and money and, perhaps worse, be a source of frustration and disillusionment for the people whose capacities are supposed to be built.

The intention of the GICHD to engage in this area is therefore commendable, but the question is whether the Centre has sufficient means (in terms of human resources and programme funding) at its disposal to have a meaningful impact in areas other than those narrowly dealing with its specific areas of expertise – e.g. IMSMA, IMAS, socio-economic training, mine detection dog work, which are designed to transfer skills to key local actors. Even with those areas, however, time is of the essence.

The first step in answering this question is probably to define what the Centre means by “capacity building” (which is too often a buzz-word) in this context – what capacities, whose capacities, where, how, for how long, etc.?

3.2.2 Duplication of work

The Strategy emphasises that duplication with other actors is to be avoided. This problem seems not to have been a major issue thus far because so much had to be done in mine action and because many of the mandates were given to the Centre by the UN – which was mandated with the coordination of much of what was being done. Today, however, a great deal has already been accomplished, particularly in terms of studies and standards-setting.

Declining funding for mine action projects will boost competition among actors and involve increased scrutiny over the use of funding and a diminishing level of tolerance for duplication. **This is all the more reason to adopt a clearer strategy, based on thorough and participatory needs assessments, and including priority objectives.**

3.3. Operational Assistance

The GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy states that:

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6. “The GICHD supports mine action by making expertise available. It continues to develop a nucleus of highly qualified international staff with field experience.
7. The GICHD continues to develop and disseminate the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) in co-operation with UNMAS and other users.
8. The GICHD supports the UN in developing, reviewing and distributing the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). It produces and makes available to the field Technical Notes for Mine Action (TNMA) on subjects of special technical importance.
9. The GICHD prepares training packages in response to the needs of mine action programmes in the field.
10. The GICHD continues to develop a capacity to evaluate mine action programmes, and to provide specific advice.
11. The GICHD retains the capability to provide short-term operational assistance for mine action programmes by deploying members of its staff.
12. The GICHD provides a variety of platforms for discussion and information exchange among relevant key actors in mine action. It facilitates networking between mine affected countries. It continues to host the International Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and Advisors, organised by UNMAS.”

3.3.1 Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA)

The Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), which has been described as the “flagship product” of the GICHD, is in use in 40 programmes/countries around the world. Its widespread acceptance has contributed to avoiding a multiplication of standards, systems and software, and has therefore made mainstreaming of information easier and rendered interoperability possible.

IMSMA has so far been developed by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ) but is a licensed and copyrighted product of the GICHD and is not freeware or shareware. IMSMA, which is promoted by the UN, is provided free of charge by the Centre to mine affected countries and to the governments of countries actively involved in peace keeping and mine action support operations.

The main criticism of the product is that it was developed at a desk by computer scientists with no experience of mine action and little knowledge of the conditions under which it is conducted in the field, or of the actual needs of deminers. The result was that the software was not always fully operational or used properly. The product was coined by some operators as a “Rolls-Royce to be used in a country without roads”. To a certain extent those initial criticisms are still heard today and GICHD is aware of them.

There has also been a gradual realisation that the powers of IT specialists in managing and decision-taking at country level ought to be decreased in favour of that of the end-users, i.e. mine action managers or operators.

Another issue of concern has been that IMSMA is distributed only to governments and UN agencies and operations. There are in many instances good reasons for this (not least related to technical difficulties), but criticism has increasingly been voiced against these restrictions. For instance, some governments are not using the information properly or retain it (“information is power”), or do not use the product for its intended purpose. The UN has also taken a restrictive approach to the distribution of the product. Some non-governmental operators have contested such practices and have requested access to IMSMA – actually, some have acquired bootlegged copies of the software. **This, in itself, is proof that the system is useful, but also that the strict distribution policy ought to be reconsidered.** It is foreseen that the purely technical difficulties of a wider distribution will be addressed in the IMSMA re-engineering project.

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The GICHD has been investing heavily in teaching how to use IMSMA, including by stationing regional focal points for that purpose (Regional Support Centres). Such a move, although its impact could not be assessed in the framework of the present evaluation, is welcomed, as it brings the Centre closer to its strategy of engaging in capacity-building. Nevertheless, the road is still long to ensure that all IMSMA users are proficient, from the point of data collection to strategic use of outputs. In fact, problems that have mired the product have discouraged some operators from continuing to feed their data into IMSMA and some have given up on expecting to receive information back.

Consequently, the situation is still currently sub-optimal because the data is not consistently and properly entered and, worse, not put to its full potential use. The product is free, which means there is no restriction for the intended beneficiaries to request it when it is needed. However, on the downside, the will to become proficient in its use may sometimes be lacking.

The GICHD, as noted earlier, is aware of the main shortcomings described above. It therefore concluded that a re-engineering project was necessary because of the following reasons: (a) experience from the field which indicated user needs and deficiencies of the current software; (b) the need to reduce the complexity of processing sequences and basic navigation; (c) the rigid process-oriented approach initially chosen for IMSMA was no longer applicable with the variety of user environments being served; and (d) high dependency on Microsoft products and the Microsoft development cycle. An open tender procedure was used for the next phase of IMSMA, which followed a recommendation of the 2002 PricewaterhouseCoopers study on information management mandated by UNMAS.

Although it should be mentioned that IMSMA was included in the above mentioned PricewaterhouseCoopers study, it should be stressed that **to date no independent evaluation of the efficiency, impact or cost of system has taken place. The following questions could be asked by such an evaluation: Is IMSMA adapted to field work? Does it cover the whole territory? Do all involved actors provide the necessary information? Is data entered, and if yes, properly? Do the people who need the information have access to it? Is the information collected in the field returning to the field? Are operators using released data? Are strategic decisions made on this basis? How is the work of the IMSMA Team integrated with the overall work of GICHD?**

3.3.2 International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)

The International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) project is managed by the GICHD on behalf of the United Nations. It consists of the review process of existing standards and the development of new ones on a continuous basis. The standards can then be used to produce guidelines for national governments, Mine Action Centres and demining organisations. They then become the basis for National Demining Standards, and Standing Operational Procedures. The risk of duplication with EU standard setting (CEN) was averted through consultation.

Whereas no one questions that standards are needed, some have reservations about the necessity of developing elaborate standards for aspects of mine action falling outside security issues. One of the phrases heard repeatedly, and not necessarily from non-governmental operators, is that standards were taking a life of their own, that IMAS was becoming a “monster” in terms of numbers, scope, topics and size. **The question therefore is what is the point when it can be said that all the standards needed have been developed** – indeed, there could be a risk of “standarditis”, whereby every single aspect of mine action, including the most innocuous ones, are subjected to the IMAS process.

Another comment heard was that existing IMAS need to be streamlined, made more user-friendly and easier to be adapted to the national level – simplification of language and translation into local language are needed. More ought to be done to simplify IMAS and to make them easily adaptable to particular contexts – otherwise they run the risk of being merely copied as such but not implemented and considered to be “a big fat UN document.” It has also been pointed out that IMAS “got ahead of itself – [we] jumped to standards without developing the support needed to implement them.” **There is therefore a need to continue efforts to adapt IMAS to the national level through outreach, but probably also a need for increased coaching taking into consideration local capacity and circumstances.**

Whereas it was acknowledged that some of the NGOs’ criticisms against IMAS (e.g. that they were pedantic, complicated and expensive) are justified to a certain extent, it was also rightly pointed out that those same NGOs did not do as much as they could have to constructively contribute to improving those standards. **Efforts are being made to improve the functioning and representativity of the Review Board, and critical operators need to be reminded of their own responsibilities to constructively contribute to reviews.**

So far, IMAS have been reviewed, but the concept itself, its added-value and cost-effectiveness have never been independently evaluated. Decision for such a process of course belongs to the UN itself, but the GICHD, given its central role, cannot remain complacent. The first questions to be examined would of course be to determine how much money has been spent on developing IMAS, and whether they make mine action more cost-effective, what is the balance of costs and benefits resulting from the introduction of IMAS. It is not sufficient to monitor whether standards are being adapted and/or adopted nationally, what is also needed is to check whether standards are actually implemented and respected in the field, if yes how successfully, and if not, determine the reasons why.

3.3.3 Training

The 2003-2005 Strategy foresees that “GICHD prepares training packages in response to the needs of mine action programmes in the field.” **In practice, however, there seems to be different and overlapping understanding of the terms “preparing training packages”, “training”, “outreach” and “capacity-building.” There is also a certain need for clarification as to the target audience(s) and the venue for the training, i.e. in the field, in capitals or in Geneva?**

There is also recognition, including within GICHD, that training is something that must be done by professionally trained personnel – for example, experience has shown that military-style instruction or training delivered by ex-military often did not achieve the same impact as teaching delivered by professional trainers.

There appear to be two main positions as to training: the first is that the Centre should continue resisting the temptation to become a training provider, and rather pursue its strategy of developing training “packages” and concentrate on outreach of GICHD’s outputs. This is because of the belief within the Centre that “it has a responsibility to ensure that its products are properly put into action.” The model for this is what is currently being done concerning IMSMA. There is also a sense among a sizable number of the observers interviewed that the market is already saturated with offers of training, and therefore that GICHD would enter into competition.

The second position, which is not totally opposed to the first one, is that a comprehensive training strategy may be needed, but that it should be preceded by a needs assessment. Training would then be done only in cooperation with others already engaged in it.

A specific training unit was included in the original organisational chart of the Centre: is there currently a need for it, and in the future? Should it be institutionalised, as for IMSMA? Or could training be sub-contracted with strong monitoring and quality control?

Before any decision is taken, however, an in-depth needs-assessment would be necessary. The first question to ask could be: what is the value-added of the GICHD at this stage of the development on mine action? There seems to be consensus that any training ought to concern matters within the Centre's expertise (e.g. IMAS) and should deal with "thematic areas" as opposed to operational training. **As will be pointed out below with regard to outreach (section 3.4.2), the GICHD's products and their impact have not yet been independently evaluated, and therefore, there is a risk to provide training in a product that is not fully relevant.**

In any case, training ought to be given only upon requests based on a clearly identified need and not because of any other reasons, for instance that the training is provided free of charge. **When possible, priority should be given to the use of local trainers or trainers from mine-affected countries – replication, transfer of knowledge, capacity-building and boosting self-confidence are important spin-offs.**

3.3.4 Evaluations

Following point 10 of the 2003-2005 Strategy, there appears to be a strong drive within the Council of Foundation and within the senior management to see the GICHD involved in "evaluation." Here again, several opinions or perceptions seem to exist as to what exactly this would entail.

There is a feeling, including within the Centre, that evaluations were so far conducted on an *ad-hoc* basis. The need for better methodology, more consistency, coherence, follow-up and lessons-learned is recognised. Steps have been taken to address this issue, first by the development of a handbook (still in draft form at the time of writing) and the recruitment in July 2004 of an evaluation specialist – it must be noted that this post was shown vacant in the Centre's organizational chart as far back as May 2001.

A number of donors need an independent body with unquestionable expertise, independence and neutrality to go to the field and check how their money was spent. This issue will become increasingly crucial because, as funding will decrease, the conditions for its use will become more stringent, and as the international standards developed so far are applied to mine action. **There are strong arguments why the Centre should engage in evaluation, but also a number of rather difficult (and sometimes provocative) questions to be answered beforehand:**

- Although the Centre has an excellent track-record in terms of reporting on the use of its own funding, it has so far not been measuring the impact of its work. Is it therefore credible to assess other organisations?
- To date, no generally-accepted and systematic procedure, concept, standards, or benchmarks exist – although some research has been conducted.³

³ See the *Study Report, Producing Better Evaluation of EC Funded Mine Action Projects*, prepared for the European Commission, JRC, Ispra, by D. Dohm, W. and P. Banks.

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- The Centre may run the risk of being judge and party if it attempts to evaluate the application of its own products – studies, standards (IMAS), IMSMA, etc. Would the Centre be able to question fundamental issues it has taken for granted and promoted so far?
- Does the Centre have a sufficient number of experienced evaluators to conduct numerous or sustained mandates simultaneously? If not, how credible and practical is it to recruit independent consultants to carry out mandates entrusted to the Centre?
- Mine action is a very small world and is increasingly competitive. Are there risks of conflicts of interest for the Centre and its staff?
- It is likely that evaluations would be commissioned by the same donors which fund the GICHD. This could be perceived by the targets of the evaluation as a negative factor with regard to the Centre's independence. This may however be less of a problem in case of multi-donor evaluations.
- Many donors, especially multilateral ones, either have their own oversight services or have tender procedures for evaluations. Would the Centre be willing to enter into competition with other bidders? Which funds would the Centre use to cover the costs of bidding, and would the use of these (public) funds not create unfair competition for private bidders? Could the Centre make all costs fully transparent in a tender?

This long list of critical questions is not intended to discourage the Centre of going into the evaluation business. It is merely a reflection of the issues it will have to face if it does. Many questions are related to the problem of independence. But it must be pointed out that independence is not so much a theoretical or legal concept as it is one of perception and of transparency. **It is therefore likely that, if practice and reputation are kept spotless, the potential problems outlined above can be avoided.**

GICHD's added-value is not necessarily in conducting evaluations itself, but rather in developing standards and methodology for evaluations by others in order to enhance result-based management. Indeed, it seems clear that evaluation methodologies used in either humanitarian action or development work so far cannot simply be used as such in mine action. **The GICHD's objectives could therefore be threefold, and aim at making evaluations more than just administrative hurdles driven by the donors' concerns:**

- **Improve the methodology and quality of evaluations;**
- **Enhance the ownership by mine action centres (MAC) of evaluations processes; and**
- **Accelerate the implementation (and replication) of recommendations of evaluations.**

The GICHD could also play the role of a clearinghouse and build a repository of all past evaluations and lessons learned, review them and identify trends. Such work could also serve in the review process of standards.

3.3.5 Deployment of staff to the field

Point 11 of the GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy states that the Centre "retains the capability to provide short-term operational assistance for mine action programmes by deploying members of its staff." The overwhelming opinion among the interviewees, of all sides, was that **the Centre must not become a field operator** – except maybe with regard to field presence to provide technical support relating to IMSMA. **Short-term operational assistance for mine action programmes by deploying members of its staff should be envisaged only in exceptional circumstances according to clear criteria.** Indeed, other institutions have this capacity and this can take staff away from their normal duties. **The**

GICHD's strategy should therefore continue to be interpreted in a restrictive way in this respect.

3.3.6 Providing platforms

Point 12 of the GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy states that the Centre "provides a variety of platforms for discussion and information exchange among relevant key actors in mine action. It facilitates networking between mine affected countries. It continues to host the International Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and Advisors, organised by UNMAS."

According to the vast majority of persons interviewed, the GICHD provides a useful interface between all the key actors, i.e. political actors, donors, mine-affected countries, mine action operators, international organisations, etc. Its work in the context of the Intersessionals and the Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and Advisors has been praised by all, even those otherwise critical of the GICHD.

It was often suggested that the Centre should increase its role of repository and clearinghouse, via databases or other means, of initiatives and projects in existence in mine action – e.g. concerning training being offered, best practices, completed and ongoing studies, evaluation reports, etc. It was noted by those interviewed that this function would not necessarily give the Centre a coordinating role, but rather one of information.

3.4 Research

The GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy states that:

13. The GICHD develops strategies and procedures for mine action, with the aim of improving quality and making mine action safer and more cost-effective.
14. The GICHD creates and disseminates knowledge to better understand and solve mine action problems.
15. The GICHD uses its expertise in research to produce accurate, impartial, objective and detailed studies. These studies provide guidance and support to mine action programmes in the field.
16. The results of such studies are transformed into specific recommendations and guidelines for dissemination to the field, backed up by practical instruments like field demonstrations, workshops, training courses, handbooks, software tools."

3.4.1 Needs curve for studies

Humanitarian mine action is a relatively new field. The Centre was created when virtually everything was still to be done in terms of research and, gradually, it covered almost all the issues that needed study. It was pointed out that the Centre's studies in some cases did not create new knowledge but compiled existing information. This was not necessarily considered as negative, as giving the GICHD "imprimatur" was deemed important in itself.

Returns on investment were considerable at the beginning because research was responding to immediate needs of operators in the field. With time, however, returns have logically been decreasing. Some of the research shifted from "need to have" to "nice to have." **The question for the Centre has therefore increasingly become to determine what was still needed, and, importantly, at what price.**

Some research undertaken by the Centre is eminently complex and raises intricate scientific questions. Such studies, if left open-ended, can go on for a very, very long time. Here again, the Centre is facing (although it seems at times to experience difficulties recognising it) thorny questions, for instance the fact that the longer a research lasts, the lesser the returns on investments. **There is therefore a need to determine the point where enough information exists to take a decision as to when and how to let go and stop fine-tuning studies.**

In some instances, as with the REST study, it is deemed that *if* research can prove the efficiency of the method, *then* a groundbreaking advance will have been made in terms of the efficiency of demining – and result in an important multiplier. There is therefore an implicit understanding that such a conclusion is not foregone, and therefore a risk is taken. **As long as the Centre is pursuing this avenue as the result of a transparent, conscious and rational decision, then such a risk can be incorporated in a strategy.**

The issues raised above are interesting from the point of view of epistemology, but such is not the purpose of the present evaluation. **The question here is one of strategy and cost effectiveness of the Centre's work.** The GICHD's cannot afford to give the impression that its research has taken a life of its own.

3.4.2 Outreach

There is a growing sense that most research, by itself, has only limited impact, as it too often results in reports that can easily be left on a shelf to collect dust – especially in the field, where operators have more immediate concerns and priorities. "Outreach" is considered by the GICHD to be the answer to this problem; it is understood both as taking a new product to mine-affected countries to explain its content (for instance through training or a workshop) as well as, when appropriate, publishing a manual or guide explaining how to put to use the results of the research.

This raises several issues. Firstly, is there sufficient capacity to absorb (i.e. understand, take the decision to use and have the means to use) the outcome of research? This question is of course related to the Centre's strategy concerning capacity-building, which was discussed earlier in section 3.2.1.

Secondly, this strategy of outreach starts from the postulate that the research in question was needed by mine action actors in the first place. However, this cannot be said of every study. **The first step prior to engaging in an outreach project should therefore be to critically assess, when the results of the concerned study are not put to use, whether this is due to a lack of knowledge and absorption capacity, or if this is due to a lack of relevance of the study itself.**

3.5 Implementation of instruments of international law

The GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy states that:

17. The GICHD supports the Convention banning anti-personnel mines according to the mandate given by the States Parties, which includes (1) the preparation and the support of meetings, (2) providing independent professional advice and assistance, (3) offering a documentation and resource database facility.

18. The GICHD provides independent technical input into international efforts to minimise human suffering caused by weapons and/or remnants of war. It follows developments in relevant areas closely."

3.5.1 Ottawa process

The Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) agreed to provide a mandate to the GICHD to establish an Implementation Support Unit (ISU). An agreement with the GICHD on the functioning of the unit was subsequently concluded.

Both instruments described above entrust responsibility for the ISU directly and specifically to the GICHD's Director and insist on the independence of the staff of the ISU. The current set-up of the organisational chart of the Centre, in which the ISU is directly placed under the Director, therefore seems appropriate.

During the evaluation interviews, one of the first things mentioned spontaneously by many key actors was the extraordinary contribution made by the Centre, and more specifically its ISU, to the Ottawa process. Although part of this enthusiasm may be attributed to the fact that many of the interviews took place in the framework of the June Intersessionals, this overwhelming appreciation for the ISU's work was remarkable.

The impact of the ISU both in terms of visibility of the GICHD and of the quality of inputs by States is all the more impressive in view of the fact that a lot of the work of the ISU is "below radar screens" and therefore does not bear the GICHD's stamp, and that the total of the ISU's activities amounts to less than 5% of the GICHD's budget.

The ISU plays a proactive role in assisting States (including by providing support to their individual representatives) and reminds them of their treaty obligations. **While the ISU would benefit from increased support and input from the rest of the GICHD, it needs to retain an image of a transparent and neutral *secretariat* – which corresponds to the mandate given by State Parties – and not of an *actor* of the process.**

The Sponsorship Programme managed by the GICHD is another service that is very much appreciated by all actors. The reason for this is of course that the programme has enabled a wider participation by less affluent State Parties but also that the Centre has been able to achieve in most cases genuine contribution of the beneficiaries to the meetings – and has thereby avoided "conference tourism."

3.5.2 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The GICHD provides technical support to the meetings of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and related Groups of Government Experts. The Centre, which was granted observer status, contributes work on the issues of mines, booby traps and other devices, and explosive remnants of war (ERW). **The purely apolitical, technical approach adopted by the Centre in the framework of the CCW Review Conference, which was encouraged by a number of members of the GICHD's Foundation Council, is considered by all actors interviewed to be wise and constructive.**

4. Governance

4.1 Council of Foundation

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According to the Statutes of the GICHD, the Council of Foundation (hereinafter “the Council”) is the “supreme organ” of the Centre which decides on broad policy issues (“grandes orientations”). The Swiss Confederation nominates five members of the Council, among them the President and the Secretary. The Canton of Geneva may nominate two additional members. The remainder of the Council is composed of a maximum of twenty representatives of “countries which actively participate in the fight against antipersonnel mines and are interested in contributing their experience to the Centre.”

It can be noted that representatives of countries not party to the Ottawa process (but Party to the CCW) are members of the Council, which ensures a broader debate. **A more controversial issue that needs to be openly debated, however, is the representation of mine-affected countries in the Council.** South Africa and Mexico were invited to become members because of their leading role in the Ottawa process. Cambodia is currently the only mine-affected country represented in the Council. Schematically, there are two approaches to the question.

One side considers that the Council must represent the donors, who must be allowed to take decisions on the use of their funds with as little interference as possible – as one member put it: “In the Council, large donors have the influence that belongs to them.” The possibility of including other states evokes fears of turning the Centre into a “mini United Nations”. As an aside, it can be noted that proponents of that approach usually consider that the Advisory Board should have a minimal role, and be as unintrusive as possible.

The other side, which recognises some of the disadvantages of including mine-affected countries in the Council, nevertheless believes that the Centre's aim is to assist those states, which should be given the chance to participate in decisions ultimately affecting them – even if they cannot afford the pay the “entrance ticket.” For them, the present composition of the Council creates a risk that the Centre may become too detached from the field – an “ivory tower.”

The members of the Council are mostly Geneva-based diplomats whose responsibilities include negotiating disarmament treaties and who do not deal directly with the core activities of the Centre, i.e. operational and technical matters. The *ad personam* membership appears to be largely a fiction since members are Ambassadors of their country, and they are elected as such – Article 8 (2) of the Centre's Statutes indeed provides that they are “representatives” of countries. The choice of a Geneva-based membership is probably mostly due to practical reasons: it would otherwise be difficult and expensive to ensure attendance sufficient to reach the quorum, given that membership is nominal and members thus cannot be represented.

UNMAS could not, for legal reasons, become a member of the Council. Despite its preponderant role in UN policy issues affecting the Centre, UNMAS therefore only has an observer status at the Council.

Although it would be exaggerated to say that the Council is merely rubber-stamping what the Centre is presenting for decision, reading the minutes of the meetings tends to show that only limited substantive discussion and little controversy take place in the debates. These appear to be remarkably depoliticised and narrowly focused on the work of the Centre. Interviews with members of the Council showed that this was mostly due to a very deep sense of trust in the staff and the management of the Centre, as well as in the President of the Council. Skilful (and sometimes forceful) steering of the debate by the President appears to have at times also played a role. Discussions, however, are said to be at times more lively and substantive in meetings of the Council's Bureau, the organ mandated by the Statutes to deal with ordinary business (“affaires courantes”) and by the GICHD's 2003-2005 Strategy to

“prepare the Council's meetings and supports the Centre's management in preparing policy and strategic proposals for submission to the Council.”

4.2 Advisory Board

Articles 19 and 20 of the GICHD's Statutes foresee that an Advisory Board (hereinafter “the Board”) may be created, whose role is to “express opinions intended for the Council of Foundation or the Director.” In practice, it is only the Director who consults the Board. Feedback to the Council of Foundation has been minimal: for instance, it took only five lines in the minutes of the Foundation Council's December 2003 meeting to describe the October 2003 Advisory Board session (the last to date).

Whereas some representatives of donors believe that the Board should be revitalised because it provides the Centre with an appropriate sounding board, others seem to think that, if given more powers, the Board would bureaucratize the work of the Centre and that the latter may become manipulated by the vested interests of members. In other words, the Board is more a source of interference than of wisdom – some go as far as to suggest that the Board should be “scrapped.”

There is apparently consensus in the view that, in spite of the efforts made, the Advisory Board is experiencing a crisis. Attendance and the level of interest and participation of the members have been low. Several factors explain this situation. Members, who are participating in their personal capacity, are “very busy.” There has been a decreasing interest in contributing to the Centre's work, which has resulted in low attendance and resignations. The cost of participation (air-ticket and accommodation) must be covered by the participants, although the Director can make exceptions, upon request, for members from NGOs.

Clues for this lack of interest are given in different parts of the present report. The prevailing view among non-governmental actors is that the Advisory Board was set up out of political correctness and that the Board is not serving the purpose of telling the Centre what is needed in the field. Such views find their origin in the image that GICHD has acquired among some operators. Competition and lack of motivation undoubtedly also play a role here. The disillusionment factor should nevertheless not be played down.

Efforts should be made to revitalise and reform the Board. The discussion which took place on this issue during the last meeting of the Board on 17 October 2003 should be followed up, as it gives interesting cues as to what could be done to address some of the problems outlined above.

5. Management

5.1 Human resources

Despite a substantial expansion of the GICHD's budget, the number of staff has not grown in the same proportion. This wise conservative policy was motivated by reluctance to hire staff not covered by the funding committed for the mid-term – in other words a decision not to allocate resources in a non-reversible way. The needs for additional staff were mostly catered for by a rather flexible policy of hiring consultants.

Out of a total of thirty-five staff members, five are secondments: France (Army officer); Germany (Army officer); UK (civilian employee of the Ministry of Defence); Sweden (dog expert, civilian); and Switzerland (Director). The standards for the secondment of staff have

generally been improving. Whereas a few years ago three military officers seconded to UNMAS were apparently simply shifted to the Centre because of policy issues within the UN, today, the Centre has become more selective with regard to the secondment of staff – for instance tasks are normally defined *before* people are recruited. Also, when some donors proposed to second staff who did not correspond to the needs and criteria of the GICHD, these offers were declined.

These decisions were wise as, at least in the past, the independence of the Centre was questioned by some observers because of links (both real and imagined) between seconded staff and their government – this particularly concerned staff in active military service. Doubt was also cast on the qualifications and usefulness of some seconded staff.

Although the GICHD's Director and the Support Director are Swiss, the rest of the management is of other nationalities. It must be pointed out, however, that the Centre employs no staff from mine-affected countries. This is apparently due to the policy of filling posts with the best qualified people on the market, which does not take into account nationality. **It is therefore not suggested that the Centre has been closed to the idea of non-Western recruitment, but rather that more could have been done to make it happen – i.e. by being proactive, for instance by promoting exchange of staff between organisations or sponsoring internships.** A welcome and long-lasting side effect of such recruitment could also have been the capacity-building of mine action staff of affected countries. It would also have given an image of a centre attuned with the field and not as a centre that could be described as Western-oriented or, as some observers have put it, an “old boys club”.

A number of staff members have field experience, although sometimes not recent. Nevertheless, a policy of rotation between assignments in mine-affected countries and Geneva would contribute to ensure that staff keeps touch with operational realities. Short missions to mine affected countries, especially when they take place in capitals, however frequent they may be, are in themselves generally not sufficient to ensure such result.

5.2 Communication and coordination within the Centre

By policy, the GICHD's project managers are made responsible and relatively independent in their work. This, on the one hand, develops accountability and initiative but, on the other hand, runs the risk of a compartmentalisation of projects. Indeed, the units of the Centre do not always seem to communicate as much as they could between themselves, which is at first sight odd in such a small structure.

Generally speaking, there is a sense that more could be done to ensure exchange of information between the different parts of the Centre, which are to some degree self-contained. Tools for exchange – e.g. staff meetings and reports on intranet – do exist, but appear to be insufficient. Management meetings occur every three months, which is probably not enough. One main reason for this situation is that staff members are very often away on missions. **Nevertheless, it is felt that senior management ought to better make the link and to ensure smooth and efficient sharing of information between the different actors within the Centre. It must be pointed out in this context that there is no deputy to the Director and that when he is away no one is officially in charge.**

Another factor compounds what was said above: the dichotomy that seems to exist between operational support and research on one side and IMSMA and ISU on the other. Indeed, the latter seem to be in certain ways cut off from the rest – a tell-tale sign is that they are often

referred to as “the other side of the corridor.” **Although it must be recognized that their activities are in many ways distinct, more could be done to find synergies.**

Compartmentalisation also has an impeding effect on synergies that could be developed within the Centre with regard to missions. It has for example happened that several missions go to the same country without sufficient coordination. **The possibility to build composite teams to go to one state should be considered more often.**

Although the working atmosphere of the Centre and interpersonal relations between staff members appear to be generally good, **more could be done to ensure that the different individuals and sections of the Centre work more as a team.**

5.3 Funding

5.3.1 Funding base

The funding base of the GICHD rests on three pillars: project funding, programme (i.e. mid-term) funding and partnership agreements. The later two obviously enable the Centre to better plan for the longer term, which is necessary for extended tasks such as IMSMA or capacity-building.

The solid funding from Switzerland and the very generous contribution of the UK, both based on partnership agreements, have allowed the Centre to operate rather comfortably over the past few years. The budget has been multiplied since 2000. However, **the recent decision of the UK to decrease its mid-term funding by two-thirds (the reason/s for which could not be determined with certainty by this evaluation) will raise fundamental questions for the GICHD.**

The Centre has very aptly put itself in the comfortable position where large scale fundraising campaigns are not necessary. It therefore considers itself not in competition with others, which, however, is apparently not the perception of many in the mine action community – see section 2.3 on perceptions. The GICHD has rather “mobilised resources in a business-like way to achieve political objectives” (Council of Foundation, 14 May 2004, minutes, p. 2). In the present context, and given the increasing competition for resources in mine action, **an open and aggressive fundraising campaign would undoubtedly lead to major clashes, at least with operators.**

5.3.2 From humanitarian to development

There is increasing international pressure to shift mine action from humanitarian action to development cooperation. This move would also imply mainstreaming mine action into poverty reduction strategies. Such developments would not only have conceptual consequences on the work being carried out, but also on its funding sources and mechanisms. As the Evaluation of Danish Support to Mine Action (Danida, June 2003, chapter 11.1) put it: “since the de facto institutional separation of humanitarian and development assistance results in different funding sources, funding conditions, aid practices and methodological development, how mine action is identified will invariably affect the sector and is thus much more than an issue of semantics.”

The shift from humanitarian to development also raises issues other than funding. The Danish report also strongly emphasises the idea that **the rights-based approach** ought to be used in this context. This idea, and the **need for the GICHD to study the relationship**

between this approach and mine action, were also put forward during the present evaluation. The question is whether the Centre as a whole has the theoretical background (legal and developmental) to conduct such a study, and whether it corresponds to its priorities. Regardless of this decision, **the GICHD should remain if not involved in, at least informed of, such developments.**

5.4 Cost efficiency and financial management

The representatives of the donors interviewed in the framework of this evaluation declared themselves satisfied with the Centre's cost-efficiency. Its rates are apparently considered warranted by the quality of its products. The cost of the Centre's work is nevertheless at times criticised because there is no practice to subject projects to bidding. Regular staff salary, overhead and infrastructure costs are paid for by the regular budget of the Centre, which is covered by the Swiss contribution. These, however, are not always systematically counted when the cost of a project is calculated. Apart from that, analytical accounting appears to have been a welcome change in terms of project management.

Value for money is not only a matter of how much a project costs, but what its impact is. And this is one major weakness of the Centre, which is discussed in section 3.3.1-4 and 3.4. No precise formula exists to determine whether the cost of a study is justified in relation to its audience. This does not necessarily mean that studies for small audiences are not needed, but rather that **the expected impact ought to be better (and explicitly) assessed before a project is selected, and that the effective impact be measured, if possible independently, upon completion of the project.**

According to the information received, the Centre is very efficient in terms of reporting to donors – Ambassador Dahinden was said to “run a tight ship.” Indeed, a main concern of the Director and Support Director seem to be to ensure financial soundness of the Centre and thereby to keep the donors happy – which is measured by the volume of funding and the numbers of mandates and projects.

Questions relating to management and allocation of resources were only indirectly included in the present evaluation. Consequently, no specific action was taken or analysis carried out to go much beyond noting the declared satisfaction of donors, the adoption of budgets and financial reports by the Foundation Council, the declarations of its Treasurer, the assurances given by its Support Director, and the green light given by the independent auditor (PricewaterhouseCoopers).

5.5 Decision-making and priority setting for projects: the “golden rule”

Point 26 of the ToR for the present evaluation requires that the following be assessed: “With regard to decision-making and priority setting, the Centre's management has introduced a ‘golden rule’, which indicates that the Centre should engage in a particular project/programme only if it is (a) requested by an outside (partner) organization and (b) funded by an outside source.”

Interestingly, this is the only reference made in the evaluation about criteria and procedure for decision-making and priority-setting concerning projects. Furthermore, the 2003-2005 Strategy does not contain any indication in that respect – see remarks in section 3.1 above. However, one paper dated 24 February 2002 entitled “Guidelines for setting up and implementing GICHD studies and projects”, which was given by the Centre as background

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documentation, provides a number of relevant indications with regard to those questions. It was, however, never elaborated upon during the interviews and was not included in the ToR of the evaluation.

The vast majority of studies have been requested by UN agencies or by donor governments. With regard to socio-economic projects, very few originate from mine-affected countries (those usually concern assessments or, in the case of Colombia, mine risk education) and NGOs (apparently only the Norwegian People's Aid, NPA). On the other hand, trainings requested by the authorities of mine-affected countries have generally been covered by the "outreach fund" and have therefore not been submitted to the "golden rule."

At first glance, the very conservative approach of the "golden rule" appears to have been a logical method to stay out of financial trouble and ensure an image of transparency and accountability. It is considered by some to have been the right approach given that the Centre was a relatively new institution and that its first few years of existence were not managed in the best way.

Seen from the outside, however, the rule can give the impression that the Centre is merely reactive, not proactive in response to needs. As outlined elsewhere in this report (e.g. in sections 2.3 and 3.5), there is an impression that the GICHD is not sufficiently connected to the needs of the field and is sometimes mostly offer-driven. In other words, if a project is requested and paid for, then there is a good chance the Centre will automatically carry it out. Only two rejected requests for projects were mentioned by those interviewed – the one most often referred to concerned a study on gender.

The reality of the work of the Centre is nevertheless somewhat different from that suggested by the "golden rule." Indeed, in practice, project managers appear not to simply sit in their office waiting for requests for studies to come in. Ideas for projects often do originate from within the Centre or as a result of discussions with outside actors. Requests, particularly those coming from the UN, are apparently often first "suggested" by the Centre itself. There is of course nothing reprehensible with such practices (which some have called "validation of an idea" or, as some cynics suggest, amount to "buying legitimacy"), but then **the "golden rule" should not be presented, as it was to the evaluator by some, as a dogmatically enforced law.**

The Centre, which has, thanks to very strict and conservative management of its resources, succeeded in gaining an excellent reputation with donors, could probably now afford to appear more proactive with regard to needs of, and open to requests from, mine action operational actors. In fact, it will probably have to.

At this stage, the Centre should develop more elaborate and critical criteria to select or accept projects. As much as possible, this should be a transparent and participative process, responding to needs identified in, or coming from, the field. Considering its excellent relations with a number of donors, the Centre should not experience much difficulty in finding funds for projects it considers to be genuinely needed.

6. Conclusions

The GICHD, under the leadership of Ambassador Martin Dahinden and backed by the support of a Foundation Council presided by Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga, has fared well. Indeed, the Centre, which was in poor condition when they arrived, has expanded considerably. The GICHD has produced a number of high quality outputs that are used as reference materials in the mine action world. The present evaluation highlights some of the

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important achievements of the GICHD, but also some of its shortcomings. This critical yet constructive approach will hopefully be of help in the formulation of the next Strategy for the Centre.

The GICHD should aim for a balanced relationship with the UN – i.e. close enough to maintain legitimacy yet sufficiently distant to preserve a reputation of independence. This ambivalence and ambiguity remain unavoidable and probably even necessary, at least for the moment.

As was shown by the evolution of the status, mandate and membership of the GICHD, public relations and networking appear to be among the strengths of the Centre. Yet, the Centre has come under some criticism, not so much from donor governments, which generally seem rather content with the reliable partner they have found in the Centre, nor from the United Nations, which for the most part has found a *modus vivendi* with the Centre. Rather, criticism originates from some of those actually targeted by the products of the centre, i.e. operational actors of mine action, which seem to have been less courted by the Centre. In such circles, the GICHD is sometimes considered to be aloof.

It would be both absurd and unfair to hold it against the GICHD that its donors have been happy about its performance. However, this is not sufficient in itself. Surely, accountability is not only about demonstrating *how* the funds have been spent but also *why* and with which *practical effect*. There is indeed a growing sense within the donor community that actual impact should be better measured. Yet, questioning the operational use of, for instance, IMSMA and IMAS thus far seems to be somewhat taboo – actually, both products have been described by some as “sacred cows.” Likewise, the relevance, impact and sustainability of other outputs have never been concretely evaluated. At this stage, criticisms voiced by NGOs can no longer be simply waived off as mere jealousy or lack of vision. Simply quoting the fact that a particular output has been requested by the UN can no longer be sufficient justification for carrying it out. As one leading actor put it, the ultimate test for GICHD’s outputs is their actual impact on the *victims* of mines.

With regard to some of the long-term projects of the Centre, there is a danger that, after investing so much time and money into a particular line of research, it becomes difficult to determine when enough is enough and to take the difficult decision to discontinue a project if it has not yielded the expected results.

For much of the technical work done so far, the Centre had been in a privileged position because of the funding at its disposal, the support given to it by donors, the legitimacy of being associated with the UN and, last but not least, the expertise present among its staff. However, the more the Centre involves itself with evaluation, training, outreach and capacity-building, the more likely it is to run into competition – which, in itself, is not a bad thing.

The ultimate aim of the Centre is not and should not become survival. It is likely that the demand for the Centre’s products will decrease, since in the near future all studies and standards needed in the field will have been completed and the re-engineered IMSMA will be operational – notwithstanding the fact that all those products will require maintenance and updating. When this happens, the GICHD should downsize and not try at all costs to create work for itself. This would ultimately prove the success of the idea behind creating the Centre. This does not mean that the GICHD should not start thinking about other related fields in which it could put its expertise and capacities to use – for instance small arms and light weapons? Any such change of mandate ought to be debated early on by the Council of Foundation, which is the organ responsible for changing the Statutes of the Centre.

7. Recommendations

The first set of recommendations below is addressed to the GICHD and its Council of Foundation and is intended to be of help in the context of the formulation of a new strategy. The second set is addressed to the GICHD but may also be of interest to the Council in the discussions leading to the adoption of the strategy. Neither of the two clusters of recommendations is exhaustive, as a number of other, less crucial but nevertheless important recommendations are included earlier in the present report – for ease of reference they are in **bold prints**.

7.1 Recommendations to the GICHD and its Council of Foundation

Preliminary work on the new Strategy: The new Strategy should be based on a thorough assessment of the present and future needs of mine action. This exercise should be participatory, in that all key actors should be given the opportunity to contribute effectively. Proactive and creative methods should be used in this context – e.g. workshops, questionnaires, internet fora, brainstorming sessions, focus groups discussions, etc. This process would probably benefit from external professional facilitation.

Objectives: The Strategy should define which aspects of mine action the GICHD will deal with or, at the very least, set priorities with regard to them. It should foresee that programmes, major projects or clusters of projects should include clear timeframes, measurable objectives and, from the outset, have evaluation mechanisms built-in and budgeted for. Such mechanisms should measure not only the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of projects, but also their relevance and impact.

Definition of concepts: The Strategy should clearly define the concepts it uses, for example:

- *Capacity building:* What capacities, whose capacities, where, how, for how long, etc.?
- *Training:* What are the differences between “preparing training packages”, “training”, “outreach” and “capacity-building”? What are the target audience(s) and the venue for the training, i.e. in the field, in capitals or in Geneva? Who conducts training?

Membership of the Council: The Council of Foundation should discuss the pros and cons of inviting mine-affected countries to become members and determine, more generally, innovative ways for them to increase their inputs in the work of the Centre.

7.2 Recommendations to the GICHD

Action plan for the Strategy: The GICHD should develop, maybe together with the Council of Foundation’s Bureau, an action plan aimed at implementing the new Strategy. The action plan should, among other things, aim to operationalise, within a determined timeframe, the recommendations outlined in section 7.1 above.

Selection of projects: The GICHD should develop more elaborate and critical criteria to select or accept projects. As much as possible, this should be a transparent and participative process, responding to needs identified in, or coming from, the field.

Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA): The reengineering of IMSMA should address the needs and comments from the field, including expanding access to its use. Since the process has already begun, an evaluation of IMSMA may not be timely.

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Nevertheless, the different questions which would have been included in an evaluation (last paragraph of section 3.3.1 above) should be taken into account.

International Mine Action Standards (IMAS): The GICHD should, together with the UN and the key actors involved, determine the point at which it can be said that all the IMAS needed have been developed. Efforts should be stepped-up to adapt and implement standards at the national level through outreach and coaching, taking into consideration local needs, capacities and circumstances. Existing IMAS need to be streamlined and made more user-friendly. Efforts should continue to be made to improve the functioning and representativity of the Review Board. So far, IMAS as such have been reviewed, but the concept itself, its added-value and cost-effectiveness, and its actual implementation in the field have never been independently evaluated. Decision for such a process of course belongs to the UN itself, but the GICHD, given its central role, cannot remain complacent. Some questions for such an evaluation can be found in the last paragraph of section 3.3.2 above.

Evaluations: GICHD's added-value is not necessarily in conducting evaluations itself, but rather in developing standards and methodology for evaluations by others in order to enhance result-based management. Though there are strong arguments in favour of the GICHD engaging in evaluation, there are also a number of rather difficult questions to be answered beforehand – those are outlined in section 3.3.4 above.

Exchange of information: The GICHD should increase its role of repository and clearinghouse (via databases or other means) of initiatives and projects in existence in mine action – e.g. concerning training being offered, best practices, completed and ongoing studies, evaluation reports, etc.

Research: With a view to improving its strategic planning and resource allocation, the GICHD should determine what further research is still needed by key actors, and at what price. The GICHD also needs to determine the point at which enough information exists to take a decision as to when and how to “let go” and stop fine-tuning studies. In taking decisions with respect to the course of action regarding existing and proposed research, as well as to related outreach or training activities, proactive, participatory and creative methods should be used to determine the needs of field operators and the relevance of the proposed action.

Human resources: The GICHD should adopt human resources policies that reduce the distance between the field and the GICHD, for instance by rotation between assignments in mine-affected countries and Geneva, and by being more proactive in hiring staff coming from mine-affected countries – including, for example, by promoting exchange of staff between organisations or sponsoring internships.

Management: The GICHD's senior management should meet more regularly. The whole staff of the GICHD should strive to better communicate internally, identify synergies and work as a team. The Implementation Support Unit should receive increased backing from the rest of the GICHD, but without endangering its independence.

Advisory Board: The Director of the GICHD should take steps to revitalise the Advisory Board and ensure it is able to fulfil its intended purpose, which is to keep the Centre abreast of the developments taking place in mine action and to ascertain its needs.

Relations with NGOs: The GICHD should urgently take steps to work proactively on improving its image, relations and dialogue with NGOs operating in the field.

* * * *

Annex – List of interviews

GICHD

1. Ambassador Martin Dahinden, Director
2. Ian Mansfield, Operations Director
3. Dr. Robert Diethelm, Support Director
4. Alan Arnold, Manager Mine Action Information Management
5. Kerry Brinkert, Manager Implementation Support Unit (ISU)
6. Eric Filippino, Head of Socio-Economics
7. Havard Bach, Head of Operational Methods
8. Phil Bean, Head of Standards and Stockpile Destruction
9. Davide Orifici, Assistant to the Director
10. Ted Paterson, Evaluations Manager
11. Paddy Blagden, Consultant, former Technical Director of the GICHD

Council of Foundation

12. Dr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the Council and former President of the ICRC, Geneva
13. Ambassador Gérard Chesnel, Ambassador at large for Mine Action, Paris, France
14. Ambassador Christian Faessler, Treasurer of the Council of Foundation, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva
15. Ambassador Ross Hynes, Ambassador at large for Mine Action, Ottawa, Canada
16. Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, and President of the 2nd Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (in 2000), Oslo, Norway
17. Ambassador Peter Maurer, Head Political Division IV, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Berne
18. Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations – Geneva and President-designate of the 1st Review Conference of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (in 2004), Geneva
19. H.E. Sam Sotha, Secretary-General of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
20. Ambassador Philippe Welti, Director of the Security Policy Directorate (DSP), Federal Department of Defence (DDSP), Berne

Partner countries

21. Canada – Lt. John MacBride, Programme Coordinator, Mine Action Team, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
22. Germany – Detlev Schroeder, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin (also former staff of the GICHD)
23. Switzerland – Thomas Greminger, Political Division IV, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Berne
24. United Kingdom – Andy Willson, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Department for International Development
25. United Kingdom – Alistair Craib, EOD and Demining Adviser, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Department for International Development

International organisations

26. European Commission:
 - Daniela Dicorrado, Head of Sector, Conventional Disarmament and Human Security, External Relations Directorate-General
 - Josik Van Dromme, Administrator, Horizontal Cooperation – APM, Europaid Co-operation Office
 - Damian Johnson, Detached National Expert, External Relations Directorate-General
27. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) – Peter Herby, Coordinator, Mines-Arms Unit, Member of GICHD's Advisory Board, Geneva
28. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) – Louis Maresca, Legal Adviser, Mines-Arms Unit, Geneva
29. Organization of the American States (OAS) – William Mc Donough, General Coordinator of the Mine Action Programme
30. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Sayed Aqa, Mine Action Team Leader, Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery
31. United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) – Martin Barber, Director

Field programmes' representatives

32. Afghanistan – Dr. Mohamed Haider Reza, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of the Demining Commission, Kabul
33. Bosnia and Herzegovina – Darko Vidovic, Member of the Demining Commission, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Sarajevo
34. Mozambique – Gamiliel Munguambe, Director, National Demining Institute, Maputo
35. Sri Lanka – Judy Grayson, UN Chief Advisor, Colombo – former member of GICHD's Advisory Board

See also Cambodia, listed above.

NGOs

36. Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) – Sara Sekkenes, Mine Policy Advisor
37. International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) – Susan Walker, Intersessional Programme Officer, Geneva
38. International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF), Jernrj Cimperse, Director, Slovenia
39. Danish Church Aid, Steven Olejas, Programme Co-ordinator
40. Landmine Action, Simon Conway, Deputy Director
41. Mine Action Group (MAG), Tim Carstairs, Policy Director
42. Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), Hans-Jörg Eberle, Secretary General, Geneva

In addition, a number of mine action managers who had heard about the evaluation volunteered comments by e-mail – see above section 1.2 concerning methodology.

Glossary of the main terms and acronyms used

CCW	Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
ETHZ	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
IMAS	International Mine Action Standards
ISU	Implementation Support Unit
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
REST	Remote Explosive Scent Tracing
ToR	Terms of reference
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service