

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 11
Issue 2 *The Journal of Mine Action*

Article 26

April 2008

The VA Information System in BiH

Zoran Grujic
Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre (BHMIC)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal>



Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [Emergency and Disaster Management Commons](#), [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grujic, Zoran (2008) "The VA Information System in BiH," *Journal of Mine Action* : Vol. 11 : Iss. 2 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol11/iss2/26>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

The VA Information System in BiH

Because of the conflict there in the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been plagued by landmines, unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and all of the problems associated with them. With so many victims, the need for an organized system to help these people was imperative. In this article, the author describes how the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center and other organisations helped establish an information system in BiH to help inform landmine victims about what they can do to help themselves and their families.

by **Zoran V. Grujić** [Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center]

According to the Landmine Impact Survey, conducted in 2002 and 2003, mine- and UXO-contaminated locations directly impact the security of an estimated 1,376,000 people, 100,000 of whom live in highly-impacted communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

From the beginning of the conflict until the end of 2006, there were 4,922 mine/UXO casualties in BiH. In the period from 1996 until the end of 2006, there were 1,577 mine casualties, out of which 463 persons were killed. For the period 2005–2007, there was an increase compared to the period of 1998–2003 of mine accidents with 35 victims, including 18 deaths.

Demining has been taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 12 years. Landmine victim assistance in BiH is even older—the first landmine victim-assistance activities started in early 1994. Naturally, the state had institutions that were expected to take care of the task, but it was unreasonable to expect them to contribute significantly in the middle of the war, which lasted from 1992 to 1995.

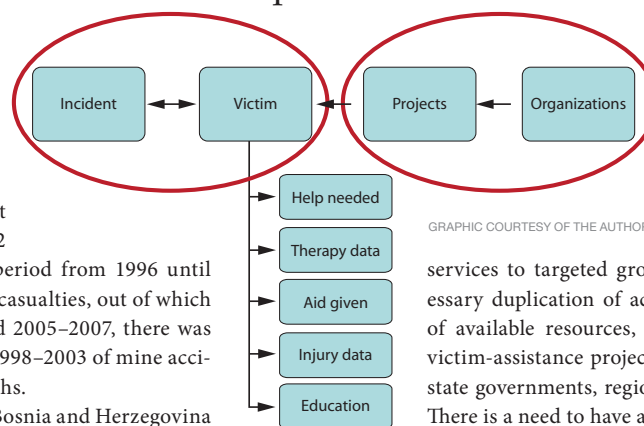
Thus far, a number of different organisations have worked to provide aid to landmine victims, either through stand-alone projects or by working with other organisations to support their activities. The common denominator for all of them has been that they were gathering data and creating databases for their target groups and locations.

Nevertheless, there was no coordination of any kind; at the end of the day, the landmine victim-assistance issue is all about cooperation, and this is difficult, given the complicated governmental structure of the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a rather unique governmental structure encompassing one state, two different entities, 10 cantons within one of the entities and finally an independent district that is internationally supervised. In total, there are 14 different governments within the country.

While mine action was under the authority of the United Nations Mine Action Centre, it was not possible to think about meaningful coordination between a nongovernmental organisation (U.N. Mine Action Centre) and a government organisation, so neither paid much attention to the landmine victim-assistance issue. In 1998 when the Bosnia and Herzegovina governments took over demining activities, landmine victim-assistance was not a point of concern.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center is recognized as a state coordinating agency for landmine victim-assistance activities and over the years has decided to conduct coordination through data sharing. After 2002, when the mine-action strategy was accepted and the need

Conceptual Solution



to approach landmine victim assistance in a more serious, planned and systematic way became obvious, the Landmine Victim Assistance Sub-strategy was developed and incorporated into the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Strategy.²

In light of the existence of programmes that partly overlap services to targeted groups, which in turn leads to unnecessary duplication of activities and inappropriate spending of available resources, stronger coordination of landmine victim-assistance projects and activities is necessary among state governments, regional governments and organisations. There is a need to have an information system available to all interested parties and to provide appropriate information to

those who need it. Specifically, the new information system is designed to address the following:

- Mine victims will get a reference database needed to define their status, present their needs and inform them of good and bad practices related to landmine victim-assistance activities.
- BHMAC will obtain all the mine-incident locations for all victims (previously this information was available only for BHMAC-gathered data).
- The donor community will have full oversight of all the projects, budgets required, final results of their donations, etc.
- Organisations will have access to the victim data (locations, general info, needs, etc.) required to plan projects and will be provided with the conduit to present brief forms of their projects to the donor community in real time.

This system will ensure timeliness and consistency of programs and projects, coverage of all impacted areas, efficiency in the use of resources and an exchange of lessons learnt. Thus far, all stakeholders have been in constant agreement with regard to all the issues, so we think this integrated database will prove to be a positive endeavour for Bosnia.

This process demands the creation of coordination tools. The results that BiH has achieved in the field of mine-risk education activities through an informational system make it clear that the main landmine victim-assistance coordination tool should also be an information system. This system will be available to victims, organisations and donors, and its existence will provide full transparency of all activities and needs in the landmine victim-assistance field. Complete information on landmine victim rights will also be easily available through database and Web presentation.

JRC	INT	Jesuit Refugee Service	451
HOPE '87	AT	Hundreds of Original Project for Employment	1193
Stop Mine	BA		2386
LSN	INT	Landmine Survivors Network	1711
ICRC	INT	International committee of the Red Cross	4880
BHMAC	BA		1474
LIS	UN/SAC	For BA	131
Total			12,226

Table 1

Number of Appearance	Number of Victims	Remark
1	5224	
2	2178	
3	475	
4	115	
5	23	
6	5	
7	1	
595	1	Unknown
Total	8023	

Table 2

Of course, the information system will be fully integrated into the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Information System and organised in a way to offer information to all interested parties. BHMAC will coordinate delivering and updating the data.

The Solution

The BHMAC information system was created to inform and start the information gathering and retrieval process needed by BiH rather than to pass judgment on previous systems.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the guidelines for the system's creation were to:

- Cover all data gathered by all organizations
- Avoid gathering medical treatment and other data that may be considered a privacy violation by the victims
- Provide a system with enough information to make it a valid target-group assessment tool
- Provide initial information on mine-incident locations to improve mine-action planning.
- Provide landmine victim-assistance projects a planning tool with full transparency and traceability for landmine victim-assistance projects
- Create a basic LMV questionnaire form
- Create reporting forms in order to assure regular information flow from all stakeholders into the system

The Central Database Elaboration Project for the support and coordination of landmine victim-assistance activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina was created and had all of its data verified in 2006. As a part of these activities, memoranda of cooperation were signed and data was acquired from various organizations.

As shown in Table 1, the combined system includes 12,226 records; the oldest one lists an injury from WWII dated 1941 and there are approximately 350 records without a date. Qualitatively, there are 133 fields describing a mine victim. Using all applied information systems, only 28 entries were included more than 75 percent of the fields completed. During the process of data clarification, we determined the existence of a large number of records with the same name, but with other information described in a way that does not confirm that the records refer to the same person. These records were considered as unique. Consequently, the database contains 8,023 of these unique records as shown in Table 2.

The Way Forward

Having the information system software in place, the next task is to create and ensure the information-flow channels. In order to achieve this objective, BHMAC will create a working group with all the relevant ministries represented with the aim to produce a joint statement related to landmine

victim-assistance activities coordination. Once signed, this statement will become the base point for further building of coordinated activities for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In order to assure that all the data gathered is processed in timely manner, BHMAC, together with HOPE'87, an Austrian non-governmental organisation, will open a data entry office that will employ four landmine victims as data-entry personnel.

Conclusion

Effective landmine victim assistance is a difficult task under the best of conditions and depends greatly on the efficient flow of information. To achieve coordination through data exchange, BHMAC undertook the tremendous task of compiling and organizing information on mine victims to better assess their needs. Getting numerous agencies and governments to cooperate and contribute was not easy, but the results of BHMAC's efforts will have positive effects on all parts of the mine victim-assistance chain—from victim to donor to care providers, the new information system works to assure effective coordination of assistance. ♦

See Endnotes, page 112



Zoran Grujić is currently the Chief of Information Technology at BHMAC. He first became involved with mine action in 1996 as Data Management Officer of the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is the originator and head program designer of the BHMAIS (Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Information System). From 1998 to 2002 he held the position as the Assistant Director of Information for BHMAC. He holds a Master of Science in mechanical engineering and is currently finishing his master's thesis for postgraduate studies in strategic management at the European Centre for Peace and Development. He possesses in-depth field experience in UXO removal and mine-action capacity building.

Zoran Grujić
 Chief of Information Technology
 Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action
 Center Tvornička 3 71000
 Sarajevo / Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Tel: +387 33 253 858
 Cell: + 387 65 404 314
 Fax: + 387 33 464 565
 E-mail: Zoran_G@bhmac.org
 Web site: http://www.bhmac.org