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## A Real Survivor: Ken Rutherford

David M. Ahearn

*Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)*

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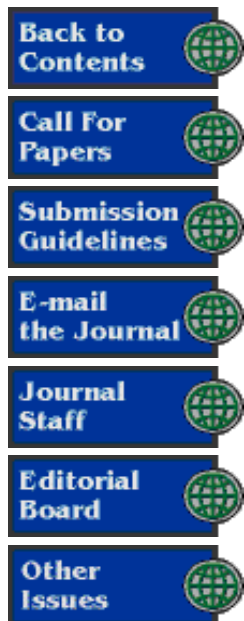
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## The Journal of Humanitarian Demining



### **A Real Survivor: Ken Rutherford**

Davey Ahearn,  
Online Publication Editor

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Ken Rutherford did not choose to join the humanitarian demining community. Rather, fate intervened when a landmine blew up his car as he traveled along the Somalian border where he was working as a loan officer helping to rebuild the Somalian economy. The encounter with the mine forever changed Ken Rutherford's life, for at that moment, he suddenly became a landmine victim. More importantly, he became a landmine survivor.

In September 1995, Ken Rutherford and fellow landmine survivor Jerry White founded the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) at the United Nations Review Conference in Vienna. This conference was dedicated to strengthening controls on weapons considered "excessively injurious" and that had "indiscriminant effects;" it was the first gathering of its kind in fifteen years. While at this conference, Rutherford discovered another weapon in the fight against landmines: the power of personal testimonies of those affected by landmines, from all parts of the globe, from all walks of life. With this discovery, the Landmine Survivors Network began.

To know the man, one must understand his organization. LSN is the first international organization created by landmine survivors for landmine survivors. Landmines kill or maim more than 70 people per day, some 26,000 per year. These victims are mostly innocent civilians, with no role in the political pretext with which the mines were originally intended. Rutherford's mission is to assist as many of these victims as he can, around the world. This mission is reflected in the Network's goal of providing landmine survivors with the rehabilitation they need to become productive members of their respective communities once again. LSN directs urgently needed assistance to the civilian victims who need it most.



**Left to Right: Rutherford, Zarko, Princess Diana, Malic, and Jerry White**

Though much has been accomplished since LSN was founded in 1995, Rutherford will be the first to assure you that plenty remains to be done. LSN reflects this philosophy in its support of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, a coalition of more than 1,000 humanitarian, religious, and developmental groups that won the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize. The Campaign's ultimate goal is a total ban on the production, stockpiling, export and use of anti-personnel mines, worldwide. To assist the Campaign, LSN has pledged to complete the following tasks:

- Develop a comprehensive database on landmine victims worldwide and publicize their needs through the Internet. The database will concentrate on survivors in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Lebanon, and Mozambique and will link them to medical facilities, prosthetic clinics, and rehabilitation projects.
- Work closely with the mass media to help journalists and educators identify and interview mine victims.
- Organize groups of survivors in mine-affected countries to speak out in favor of a global ban.
- Create a photo-library on landmines and mine victims for use by the media and by organizations involved in the international movement to ban landmines.

Rutherford has also been very successful in his attempts to incorporate landmine victim assistance language into the Ottawa treaty and at other international conferences. He also hosted Princess Diana on a three-day visit to Bosnia last August to highlight the plight of landmine survivors across the globe.

Rutherford and LSN have many activities looming on the horizon. LSN will host a national landmine survivor and disability conference in Bosnia in early August and a landmine victim assistance conference in Jordan. LSN also plans to branch out by launching other networks. LSN

already has offices in Bosnia and Jordan, and local landmine survivors staff both offices.

Rutherford sees coordination among the donors and demining organizations, and especially coordination among the demining organizations themselves, as the greatest challenge to humanitarian demining. Rutherford emphasizes, "Harmonization of tasks and priorities within each country is essential for effective national reconstruction." He also emphasizes the need to employ those most affected by landmines—the landmine survivors themselves. "Hire them as deminers, surveyors, markers, etc.," Rutherford asks, "You are not only giving these people jobs: an excellent form of rehabilitation: but also a sense of mission and purpose related to their accident."

Ken Rutherford's work for people affected by landmines seems to be aimed at one goal in particular: to take landmine *victims* and turn them into landmine *survivors*.

For more information, please see the [Landmine Survivors Network](#) website.

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