Dear Readers,

As the director of the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR) at James Madison University and a landmine survivor, I educate others about the dangers of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). I urge survivors to embrace life by becoming aware of their rights and taking control of their recovery and future. Students and staff at CISR are aware that they should never travel without knowing three things: (1) their blood type, (2) how to use a tourniquet and (3) to keep their mobile phone or two-way radio with them at all times, especially when traveling in known mine/ERW contaminated areas. These three things saved my life 20 years ago, when I was injured by a mine in Somalia.

In September, I traveled to Zambia for the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), where I met people involved in survivor assistance activities from around the globe. I presented on victim assistance and information management along with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was the first convention to include victim assistance in its provisions. The CCM continues to include this component.

The Focus section of this issue offers a selection of articles about disability rights, gender and the power of peers in survivor assistance. Megan Burke and Loren Persi, two of the world’s leading mine and cluster munitions victim assistance researchers, highlight several organizations that are empowering survivors. Ayda Eke looks at how the needs of landmine/ERW child survivors differ from adult survivors.

The Feature section examines the changing landmine/ERW situation in the Middle East and its effect on the population. In particular, Nataša Urišić and Goran Gačnik describe the rehabilitation program initiated by ITF Enhancing Human Security for injured children and young adults in the Gaza Strip.

In the Special Report section on Syria, Elizabeth MacNairn and Molly Feltner discuss Handicap International’s operations in northern Syria. Mike Geddes of streetfootballworld USA introduces Spirit of Soccer’s innovative mine risk education program serving Syrian children in the Za’atari refugee camp in northern Jordan.

In recent years, maintaining the necessary resources for mine action has become a global challenge as land is released, donor funding diminishes and international attention turns away. In response, our next issue will focus on these issues. As always, we look forward to learning from your experiences, challenges and triumphs.

Sincerely,
Ken Rutherford