

Integrating a Gender Perspective in Mine Action Proposals for Consideration for the Oslo Action Plan

Introduction

The Gender and Mine Action Working Group¹ was created at the request of the Government of Norway in the lead-up to the Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) to be held in Oslo, Norway in November 2019. Three other informal working groups have been formed working on mine clearance and completion deadlines, risk education, and improvised explosive devices. The Working Group reviewed challenges and best practices in the sector and examined how the sector can further progress on gender mainstreaming within mine action and identified recommendations and actions which seek to inform the Oslo Action Plan.

The group agreed that assessing a gender perspective in isolation would be counter-productive and discussions on gender in mine action should consider the intersectionality of other key factors including disability, age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

The group also considered the various implications of gender for all pillars of mine action and agreed to look particularly at:

- **Gender sensitive programming** - including gender considerations in operations, including community liaison, non-technical survey and mine risk education, as well as in victim assistance activities.
- **Advocacy and women's representation and participation** in the mine action sector.
- **Promoting gender equity through employment** in the mine action sector.

Initial findings of the working group suggest that there are many examples of best practices and useful resources on the topic. What is missing is political accountability, a mechanism for monitoring progress towards improved mainstreaming of gender in mine action and a forum for discussion within the Convention. These gaps in the sector are inhibiting progress towards truly inclusive and effective mine action, so the working group is proposing setting out ambitious objectives on gender for the Oslo Action Plan, as well as integrating gender into the Convention's machinery and meetings (see Annex 1 below for the latter).

Integrating a gender perspective in mine action

States Parties agreed to implement the Maputo Action Plan in a "gender-sensitive manner" building on the Cartagena Action Plan and the Nairobi Action Plan. Following the growing emphasis on gender sensitivity under the previous Action Plans, the Maputo Action Plan represented a step forward towards integration of gender perspectives in mine action.

Implementation of activities in a gender-sensitive manner and recognition of the importance of including a gender perspective in mine action has increased since the Maputo Action Plan was agreed by States Parties in 2014. However, this has not been done systematically. Given that gender is not formally included within the scope of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, there is no mechanism for holding States Parties to account or monitoring progress towards improved mainstreaming of gender in mine action. The lack of a forum for discussion on gender in mine action means it is difficult to galvanize support for action, discuss challenges or share best practices.

Equal and meaningful participation of all women, girls, boys and men does not only strengthen Humanitarian Mine Action, it is also our obligation to realise the rights of women, girls, boys and

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men in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition to drawing on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which has long provided a reference point for gender in mine action, stronger links with National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security would be highly beneficial. It is also important to understand and show how mine action contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG5: Gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender-sensitive programming

Civil society and the United Nations (UN) have taken significant steps to ensure mine action is implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) NGOs have started to include gender-focused objectives in organizational strategies, they are increasingly conducting gender analysis and disaggregating data by sex and age is now standard sector practice. In some areas, disaggregated data is used to inform the approach taken to mine action at the community level. For example, this includes tailoring risk education (RE) messages to different activities undertaken by women, girls, boys and men or taking additional measures to ensure that men and boys are reached adequately by RE programmes in contexts where they represent the majority of mine casualties. Similarly, consulting women, as well as girls and boys during non-technical survey can lead to a more accurate picture of mine contamination and, therefore, more efficient and effective land release.

In February 2019, the UN launched its Mine Action Strategy for 2019-2023 which prioritizes that mine action programmes address gender, age, and diversity considerations in their planning and implementation. In addition, recently updated UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes that will be published in 2019, will serve as a practical tool for the sector on integrating gender considerations in mine action.

The Landmine Monitor collects and publishes gender-disaggregated data on mine/ERW casualties, and it highlights the differences in victim assistance provided to women, girls, boys and men. Despite the increased collection of disaggregated data in the sector, weaknesses remain around the operationalization of such data in prioritization and programming. In addition, data should be disaggregated by age, sex and disability in order to look at the intersectionality of these factors and fully address all forms of vulnerability and exclusion, and should inform whether a casualty had a pre-existing impairment.

Promoting gender equity through employment

In addition to gender sensitive programming, there has been improvement in promoting gender equity through employment of women in the demining sector. Although cultural stigma and public perception of demining as a “male profession” continue to be a hindrance, an increasing number of women have been recruited in HMA NGOs since the last Review Conference.

Additionally, from an operator’s perspective, there has been increased recognition of the importance of supportive human resources policies such as promoting gender equality in recruitment processes, parental leave, flexible working hours and locations, strong safeguarding policies and childcare support to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. Significant work remains to ensure that these supportive human resources policies are in place throughout the sector and are available to all staff, including psycho-social care and mental health support. Both States and NGOs are beginning to address safeguarding challenges but there is significantly more to work to do. It is key that the NGOs have safeguarding policies and practices are informed by a holistic approach,

working towards a safe and inclusive culture both internally in the organisation and externally towards beneficiaries and the communities where NGOs operate.

Women's full equal and meaningful participation in mine action

Due to longstanding gender imbalances, operators, national authorities and States Parties see significantly fewer women in leadership roles. It is expected that this situation will improve with the recent increase in the recruitment of women across the sector, however, efforts must be made to ensure that workplace culture is supportive of women's advancement and that women are given the necessary training and opportunities to advance.

Formal reporting mechanisms for States Parties do not currently encourage reporting on women's participation or the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data. While States Parties are able to report on gender within their Article 7 transparency reports, this is currently underutilized by states, with only a small number of states regularly reporting on gender mainstreaming in their mine action programmes, mostly focused on casualties and victim assistance.

Female representation at formal and informal meetings of States Parties of the APMBC remains the lowest within the conventional weapons community. Over the past five years there have been slight improvements in women's participation in the Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC, with civil society sending significantly more women delegates than states. From 2009 to 2017, the participation of female delegates has increased by 3.5% and in 2017, 23.6% of overall delegates to the APMBC meetings were women.

The development of the International Gender Champions Initiative², and in particular the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, has encouraged greater focus among the diplomatic community on gender in disarmament in Geneva. The UN Secretary General's Agenda for Disarmament has also called for the "full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament and international security."

To conclude, there are many examples of best practices regarding gender sensitive programming, overcoming challenges related to employment of women and increasing women's representation, as well as many useful resources and guidelines on the topic. What is missing is political accountability and a forum for discussion within the Convention context to exchange best practices and discuss and address these challenges.

In addition, making significant improvements with gender mainstreaming in mine action will require additional resources to allow stakeholders to build up the skills and capacity to achieve this. Many donor states to mine action emphasise the need for increased gender mainstreaming, but few permit additional resources to build gender considerations into budgets. Programmes that primarily focus on achieving the lowest possible costs of their activities may hinder progress to integrating gender and strengthening the sector's ability to respond to the needs of all groups equally. Gender-responsive budgeting will not only promote equality, but will also improve the quality of mine action programmes.

Although significant progress has been made since the Maputo Action Plan on integrating gender perspectives into mine action, in this Review Conference year there is a need to change the structures within the Convention to create accountability for gender issues in mine action and facilitate best-practice sharing beyond the Review Conference.

² International Gender Champions is a leadership network that brings together female & male decision-makers determined to break down gender barriers and make gender equality a working reality in their spheres of influence.
<https://genderchampions.com/>

Proposals for the Oslo Action Plan

States Parties should commit to implement the Oslo Action plan in an inclusive, age-appropriate and gender sensitive manner and to promote women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the sector. To measure success, the Oslo Action Plan should set ambitious objectives that encourage gender sensitive programming to become standard practise and to galvanise international support for promoting women's participation in mine action, such as:

1. Women, girls, boys and men meaningfully participate on an equal basis at all stages of the land release process.
2. Women, girls, boys and men have access to gender-sensitive and age appropriate victim assistance services.
3. Women, girls, boys and men are protected from harm from explosive hazards through the provision of gender-sensitive and age appropriate, comprehensive and tailored risk education.
4. Women and men are equally represented in employment across all mine action operations, including in positions of leadership and decision-making.
5. Women and men are equally represented and able to meaningfully participate in APMBC meetings.

In order to achieve these ambitious objectives, cooperative dialogue will be required to overcome context-specific challenges and share best practices among States Parties and mine action organisations. As outlined in Annex A below on proposed modifications to Convention machinery, the establishment of two Gender Coordinators, who would report to the Convention, could facilitate the set-up of a Gender Forum, which is a plenary discussion in the margins of Convention meetings dedicated to gender.

The additional structures are required to create accountability and ensure guidelines on gender sensitive programming and women's participation are implemented in practice. The objectives should be monitored each year and reviewed at the Fifth Review Conference with support from the Gender Coordinators. If the objectives are achieved, States Parties may consider renouncing the additional proposed structures of Gender Coordinators and Gender Forum as the sector would then have the capacity to fully mainstream gender across all activities.

The GICHD is in the process of setting up a Community of Practice/Technical Working Group on Gender. This Community of Practice will aim to identify best practices and ways to overcome context-specific challenges for gender sensitive programming and women's participation. We suggest that the Community of Practice can work in collaboration with the Gender Coordinators to identify more specific gender indicators and targets and present them to the Gender Forum for discussion and adoption by States Parties. The Community of Practice can also provide suggestions for improved gender mainstreaming in International Mine Action Standards.

Action points linked to the above objectives can be integrated in the various sections of the Oslo Action Plan as follows:

Land release

States Parties should put in place the systems and processes to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all land release activities, in line with the UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action. Specifically, States Parties should:

1. Require that a gender and power dynamics analysis is conducted as part of the desk assessment for non-technical survey. This analysis should be used to inform operations, prioritisation, and land release.
2. Ensure that all data collection forms and data management systems allow for the collection and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data during survey and community liaison activities. Additionally States Parties should require the collection of information on the preferences of women, girls, boys and men for clearance tasks and then systematically use this data to inform the clearance prioritisation process. The data should also be included in Article 7 Transparency Reports.
3. Require that implementing partners adopt a gender-sensitive approach to land release, including by consulting with women, girls, boys and men in all non-technical survey activities to ensure effective operations, as different groups may hold different information on contamination.
4. Require that implementing partners consult with women, girls, boys and men in all impact assessment activities to understand the impact of contamination and of clearance activities on all groups.
5. Include information on gender mainstreaming best practice in land release activities, adapted to the local context, in all national demining plans, national mine action strategies, national mine action standards, and in Article 5 extension requests.

Victim assistance

States Parties should put in place the systems and processes to ensure that gender and age appropriate victim assistance services are available, in line with the UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action. Specifically, States Parties should:

1. Ensure that the provision of survivor assistance for women, girls, boys and men is proportionate to the casualty figures for each group in the respective country. This data should be included in Article 7 Transparency Reports.
2. Require that victim assistance services are designed and delivered in a gender, age and disability sensitive manner, meaning that States Parties should identify and advocate for the removal of any barriers which might prevent particular groups from accessing required support.
3. Ensure that data collection forms and data management systems allow collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex and age, as well as cause of impairment and the existence of a pre-existing impairment.
4. Ensure that the needs of indirect victims are met in a gender-sensitive and age appropriate manner to ensure no one is left behind.

Explosive ordnance risk education

States Parties should put in place the systems and processes to ensure that gender and age appropriate explosive ordnance risk education is provided to affected populations, in line with the UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action and with recommendations from the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group. Specifically, States Parties should:

1. Require that a gender and power dynamics analysis, as well as a thorough casualty data analysis, is conducted as part of the needs assessment. This analysis should be used to prioritise operations and deliver targeted and tailored explosive ordnance risk education to the most at risk, even if this means not achieving gender balance in beneficiary numbers.

2. Ensure an evidence-based approach to risk education, whereby materials and messages reflect the risk taking behaviours undertaken by, and are accessible for, different age and gender groups.

International cooperation and assistance

States Parties seeking assistance should demonstrate a commitment to implementing gender-sensitive mine action operations and promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in mine action. Specifically, States Parties should:

1. Commit to implement all mine action operations, including land release, mine risk education and victim assistance, in a gender-sensitive manner, in line with UN Gender Guidelines. States Parties should also request that implementing partners deliver gender-sensitive mine action.
2. Advocate to remove obstacles to women's employment and advancement at all levels in the mine action sector. Affected States Parties should aim to achieve gender balance in their own mine action structures and encourage implementing partners to do the same across all mine action operations.
3. Collect disaggregated data on employment in the mine action sector, including from national mine action structures and from implementing partners. This data should be included in Article 7 Transparency Reports.

States Parties in a position to provide assistance should demonstrate their commitment to gender equality programming by:

1. Supporting plans and programmes that have adopted an evidence-based approach to programming and as such are informed by relevant and accurate information on contamination, the socio-economic impact of anti-personnel mines, and casualty data analysis. Preference should be given to programmes that demonstrate that relevant information is collected from affected women, girls, boys and men, and analysed from a gender perspective.
2. Supporting programmes that promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in mine action and should encourage the inclusion of dedicated gender budgets in mine action programmes.
3. Supporting States Parties seeking to receive assistance by providing specialist advice on gender mainstreaming and promoting women's participation.

All States Parties should work to achieve gender-balance in delegations attending Convention meetings and all-men and all-women panels should be banned.

Transparency and the exchange of information

States Parties should provide information on a voluntary basis regarding efforts to mainstream gender and promote women's participation. This information should be used to engage in cooperative dialogue and to exchange best practices on gender mainstreaming and promoting women's participation in mine action. States Parties should report on a voluntary basis on:

- Disaggregated data on employment across all mine action operations under their jurisdiction, including from implementing partners, in order to assess progress towards achieving gender balance in mine action.
- Disaggregated data on composition of delegations attending Convention meetings.
- Description of implementation of gender sensitive mine action programmes in line with UN Gender Guidelines.

Annex 1: Suggestions for integrating a gender perspective in decisions on the Convention's machinery and meetings

1. Gender Coordinators

Purpose

The purpose of the Gender Coordinators is to intensify efforts to implement gender sensitive mine action programmes and to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of the implementation of the Convention.

The Gender Coordinators will fulfil their purpose by facilitating discussions and exchange of information among States Parties on gender sensitive programming and women's participation and by providing feedback to States Parties that have submitted voluntary information on these topics.

Mandate

The mandate of the Gender Coordinators is to carry out the following:

- Review information on gender and women's participation submitted by States Parties through voluntary reporting and provide advice and support in a cooperative manner to States Parties on the fulfilment of the gender objectives set out in the Oslo Action Plan.
- Prepare and submit to the States Parties in advance of Meetings of the States Parties an analysis of the information voluntarily reported on and summarise sector trends with regards to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.
- Chair the Gender Forum, a plenary discussion organised at intersessional meetings and Meetings of the States Parties. The Forum would facilitate discussion and an exchange of information among States Parties on progress and challenges to implement gender sensitive mine action programmes and promoting women's empowerment. The Forum will also aim to secure high level political support for gender mainstreaming in the mine action sector. It will be a flexible medium for discussion, which can be adapted to overcome specific challenges to integrating a gender perspective in mine action, inclusive of other factors leading to vulnerability and exclusion.
- Support the Convention's Committees with mainstreaming gender in their areas of responsibility.
- Remain transparent and accountable, including by reporting on activities at both intersessional meetings and Meetings of the States Parties.
- The Gender Coordinators may also choose to support regional or national dialogues on integrating a gender perspective in the implementation of the treaty.

Membership

There will be two Gender Coordinators serving overlapping two year terms, including at least one mine-affected State.

Both Gender Coordinators will be responsible for convening and chairing meetings, issuing communications and directing the Implementation Support Unit to assist their work.

Working methods

The Gender Coordinators will be members of the Coordinating Committee. The Gender Coordinators may draw upon expert input as required.