

# EORE AG

## Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group

### Minutes of the EORE AG Meeting

**Date:** 12 March 2025

**Time:** 14:00 – 16:00 Geneva time (CET)

**Location:** Virtual (Teams)

### Summary of Action Points

Action	Responsible	Suggested Deadline
<b>EORE AG</b>		
Provide input on the 2025-2026 EORE Advisory Group work plan	AG members	ASAP
Final review and submission of EORE competencies developed by the Task Team to the IMAS Review Board	AG members	To update the AG of the status
Submitting a draft of the EORE AG NDM side event	Matt, Colin, H�lo�se	21 March 2025
Election of Mine Action Authorities Representatives for the EORE AG	Co-chairs and Secretariat	Ongoing till May 2025
Develop a position paper on the principles and priorities of the EORE sector	Task Team	Ongoing
Review of the final draft of the Progress Report 2024	AG Members	15 April 2025
NGOs to volunteer to become the new Co-chair	AG members	June 2025

### Participants

**Co-Chairs:** Hugues Laurence (UNICEF) & Furat Al Malkawi (The HALO Trust)

**Secretary:** Lubna Allam (GICHD)

### Attendees: Core members, associate members and observers

- **DCA:** Lene Rasmussen - Mark Wilkinson
- **GICHD:** Matt Laruelle
- **HI:** Sofia Cogollos
- **IOM:** Severine Lacroix
- **Colombia OACP:** Hector Mauricio
- **UNDP:** Lee Gahyun
- **MAG:** Sebastian Kasack

- **HALO Trust:** Kim Fletcher
- **NPAID :** Colin Bent
- **UNMAS:** Constantin Steven Goundou
- **FSD:** Michael Barry
- **ICRC:** Louis Maresva

Attendees: Guest speakers and guest attendees

- **GICHD:** Celine Cheng
- **MAG:** Myriam Rabbath
- **ICBL:** Elea Boureux
- **Syria MA AoR:** Aida Burnett-Cargill - Safa Alkahaf

## MOM

### 1. Welcome remarks

Hugues opened the meeting by sharing welcoming remarks and welcoming the AG members as well as the guest speakers to the first meeting of the year 2025, which is also an emergency meeting to discuss the challenges that are facing the sector, namely the US funding cuts.

The AG welcomed Michael Barry from FSD headquarters in Geneva, with wide experience working with EORE in Ukraine, Tajikistan, and Libya. Michael will be representing FSD as a core AG member.

Hugues presented the agenda items, as shown in Annex One. To accommodate the time of the guest speakers, the members proceeded with the agenda item on Syria. Hugues welcomed Aida Burnett-Cargill and Safa Al-kaahaf from the Syria MA AoR.

### 2. Situation in Syria

Aida And Safa moderated this agenda item, sharing with the members important information, data, and also resources about the EORE efforts in Syria. The discussion started with a Syria Mine Action overview, where Aida highlighted the ongoing mine contamination in Syria, with at least 1 billion munitions used since 2011. A large number of unexploded ordnance remain, posing significant risks. Recent trends show that 301 accidents were reported, with 248 fatalities and 381 injuries, many of which involve children and women. Among the challenges that persist are the resource shortage for mine action activities, lack of coordination due to diverse regional actors, and rising volunteer-led mine-clearing activities that risk further complications.

On the transition of Mine Action AOR, Aida noted the shift in coordination efforts, now led from Damascus, and the reactivation of key working groups (e.g., Risk Education, Victim Assistance, Mine Action Information Management). There are now current plans in development for unified coordination and strategy to improve risk education efforts across Syria.

Safa Alkahaf gave a comprehensive EORE activities update in Syria, explaining that EORE TWG has unified efforts across the country. Major actors include UNHCR, UNICEF, DRC, and others,

with efforts to reach 500,000 people. The main challenges to the conclusion of EORE activities remain the coverage in rural areas, difficulties in targeting people with disabilities, and issues with ensuring consistent behavior change. The current strategy in place is striving for unified messaging, leveraging local and international partners, and expanding outreach in the context of ongoing population movements and seasonal activities like truffle hunting.

The AG members then participated in a fruitful discussion with Aida and Safa, where they answered questions on the challenges in the current situation. The main challenge is the existence of multiple actors working in various parts of Syria with different priorities. The AG discussed the challenge of coordinating effectively, particularly regarding messages and education for returnees who may not be familiar with the risks in Syria. The speakers highlighted difficulties with digital campaigns due to a lack of infrastructure (e.g., electricity, mobile network access) in certain regions.

Furat then took the floor and expressed appreciation for the collective efforts of operators in Syria to harmonize risk education activities. While progress is still in its early stages, there is a positive outlook for further synchronization among stakeholders. A key concern raised is the different groups of returnees, including those displaced within Syria and those returning from neighbouring countries like Jordan and Turkey. The latter group, particularly children and adolescents, may have never encountered explosive ordnance and lack awareness of the associated risks and safety measures. Furat emphasized the urgency of preparing these returnees before they cross the border. This includes EORE, how to identify EO, and safe behaviours to adopt. Since returnees will not remain in border areas but move across different governorates, proactive risk education efforts are crucial to ensuring their safety.

Sofia took the floor to thank the speakers for the updates and provided a brief note on the Emergencies Task Team. She clarified that while the team has compiled a library of technical tools and resources, they have not conducted specific work on individual countries. The task team gathered resources related to incendiary weapons risk education and CPP and plans to develop general content on these topics this year. Sofia emphasised that since technical working groups already exist in various locations, it makes more sense for coordination and decision-making to happen locally. However, the task team remains available to share resources, facilitate exchanges, and provide support as needed while reinforcing that technical leadership should remain locally driven.

### **3. EORE Competencies Task Team presentation**

Celine provided an update on the EORE competencies draft and thanked the EORE AG members who commented on the draft. She outlined the next steps where TT will integrate comments where possible before sharing the final version with the task team for informational purposes. The document will then be shared with the EORE AG, allowing 14 days for approval. A silent approval process will be used—if no objections are raised within the timeframe, the document will be considered approved. Instead of setting up a technical working group, Celine proposed submitting the draft directly to the IMAS RB for final validation. This would expedite the process and align well with upcoming IMAS amendments. If the IMAS RB requests a technical working group, one will be formed.

Louis suggested proactive engagement with board members to facilitate acceptance. If approved, the framework will also require endorsement from the IMAS Steering Group, signifying its elevated importance. Hugues acknowledged the milestone this represents for professionalizing the sector and thanked Celine and TT for the update.

## 4. Update on NDM, including the EORE AG side event

Matthieu provided an update on a proposed side event at the NDM, focusing on CPP. This event aims to build on the first plenary session on Mine Action in Urban Contexts, organized by GICHD. The event, if approved (update: the event has been approved), is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 9th, after the lunch break, lasting 75 minutes. The event will be facilitated by the EORE AG Secretariat and will feature two key interventions from NORCAP that will present its initiative on improving civilian safety and security, and Colin, as NPA and co-lead of the EORE AG Emergency TT, will discuss mine action efforts. Speakers will include M. Grené (HI - Myanmar), M. Saleh (ICRC - Palestine), and Colonel Ali Makki (LMAC), who will highlight efforts in harmonizing risk education messaging. Colin will also discuss the EORE CPP TWG in the West Bank and Gaza. Hugues will speak about the integration of CPP and EORE into the LAHA platform (a digital tool supporting women and girls globally), which was highlighted as a successful initiative. Matthieu confirmed that the draft agenda for the side event will be shared early next week for feedback. While still working in progress, a template must be submitted to the NDM Coordination Committee by March 21st for final approval.

Sofia added that HI had also submitted a separate proposal on risk education and conflict transformation in collaboration with the Colombian MAA. She welcomed the interest of other participants in contributing.

Hugues shared updates from the NDM Prep Committee, namely that over 400 people have registered, with minimal cancellations. A record number of side event proposals (~50) have been submitted, and around 30 slots will be allocated, meaning some events might need to merge. EORE-related topics will be covered primarily through side events, as there will be no plenary dedicated to EORE this year. All side events will be recorded, ensuring accessibility for those unable to attend the NDM in Geneva. However, translation services will not be provided by organizers and must be arranged by event hosts.

Break & next agenda item

## 5. Challenges to the MA and EORE sector

Despite the positive updates about the NDM, we cannot ignore that funding challenges have led to staff layoffs and resignations, making it a difficult time for the sector. AG members discussed the challenges faced by organizations others due to the U.S. funding suspension. Many organizations are facing cuts and terminations of projects due to the suspension of U.S. grants. Another challenge discussed was language and gender considerations. The group discussed how donor agencies are now enforcing specific language conditions in projects, particularly around gender equity, diversity, and inclusion.

On the question of how the AG as a coalition should move forward, suggesting the possibility of integrating a new action point to the work plan, creating a small task team to discuss target audiences, key messaging, and the narrative around the impact of EORE and to establish clear positioning and guidance for the sector.

Hugues highlighted the importance of reaffirming the coalition's core principles, particularly those linked to human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). He suggested compiling a list of principles that the sector should uphold, such as ensuring the most vulnerable populations receive EORE access in contaminated areas. This document should also articulate why EORE is lifesaving, noting that there is currently no comprehensive document outlining its critical role in saving lives and reducing harm.

On moving forward, the members discussed how to navigate changes in donor policies and how to best present EORE as a lifesaving activity. It is important to improve evidence of EORE's

lifesaving impact. This data could help organisations better communicate the value of their work to donors, especially in the context of shrinking funding. Suggestions were made for exploring alternative funding sources and avoiding over-reliance on traditional donors. Also, adopting a pragmatic approach to navigating donor expectations, acknowledging the challenge of working within strict donor frameworks while maintaining humanitarian values. The AG agreed to form a task team to work on the list of principles, articulate why EORE is lifesaving, and define key messaging for different audiences.

Hugues concluded by reiterating the need for strategic action and collaboration to adapt to the changing environment and ensure continued support for life-saving activities in mine action and risk education.

## 6. AOB

Lubna shared some points in the final agenda item:

- EORE Hour – Since September, monthly EORE Hour events have been conducted successfully, with sessions planned until May. Currently, 600 people have registered, and feedback has been positive. The EORE AG members are encouraged to suggest guest speakers on the EORE Hour.
- MAA Elections – Six entities have applied to represent the national MAA in the EORE AG for the next term of 2 years, replacing Lebanon and Colombia. The next step involves a webinar where candidates will present their qualifications before proceeding with the voting process.
- Progress Report – The report is currently being written and revised, with a target completion date in May. Updates will be shared as the process advances.
- Work Plan 2025 - 2026 – AG members are called to fill out the work plan ASAP.

Lubna concluded with a call for engagement and collaboration on these key initiatives.

Furat Al-Malkawi officially announced that her term for the EORE Co-Chair from an NGO is coming to an end in June 2025. NGOs are encouraged to step forward for the role, and an email with details on nominations and deadlines will be shared soon. Furat reflected on a rewarding two-year term, expressing gratitude for the experience.

Hugues and the AG members thanked Furat for her great work in the role and emphasized the importance of the rotational process. Hugues also highlighted the opportunity for broader participation in chairing meetings. For the next meeting, any member can volunteer to chair, not just the Co-Chair, to promote inclusivity and engagement. Organizations interested in the long-term Co-Chair role (for the next two years) should reach out to the Secretary before June.

Louis Maresca announced that his assignment with the ICRC will end in two and a half weeks, not due to budget cuts but as part of a planned retirement that has been discussed for two years. They reassure the group that the ICRC will remain engaged in the advisory group, with a new representative taking their place.

Hugues acknowledged the significant role Louis has played since the AG's establishment in 2019. He highlighted his advocacy, particularly in elevating the profile of EORE, as well as their valuable contributions to RB.

The meeting concluded with a thank you to participants, and a follow-up with action points and meeting minutes will be shared.

## ANNEX 1

### Indicative Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Lead	Comments
05 min	1. Welcome notes	Volunteer Chair or Co-chairs	
45 min	2. Challenges to the MA and EORE sector	Hugues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arising challenges due to US suspensions and the overall aid situation.</li> <li>• Our position as a coalition.</li> <li>• Opportunities: advocacy and alternative funding streams.</li> </ul>
15 min	3. Situation in Syria	Syria MA AoR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The situation in Syria and the Syria Risk Education (RE) response.</li> <li>• Sharing the most recent Syria RE materials available via the AoR.</li> </ul>
<b>5 min</b>	<b>Break</b>		
10 min	4. Update on NDM, including the EORE AG side event	Matt, Colin, Héloïse and Hugues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NDM EORE/ CPP side event: organization and updates.</li> </ul>
10 min	5. EORE Competencies Task Team presentation	Céline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates on T&amp;EP: AG feedback and submission to the IMAS Review Board.</li> </ul>
10 min	1. HI efforts in Myanmar	Sofia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates on work conducted, lessons learned, and challenges.</li> </ul>
5 min.	2. Update on NMAA election	Lubna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update</li> </ul>
10 min	3. AOB	Volunteer Chair or Co-Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 4 (Hugues); EORE Hour (Lubna) Progress Report (Lubna); AWP (Furat); Next co-chair election (Furat)</li> </ul>