

# HOW DO GENDER AND DIVERSITY RELATE TO MINE ACTION?

- ▶ Mine action takes place in diverse social contexts, where differences and inequalities associated with gender roles and diversity factors have implications for programming.
- ▶ Organizations have learned that integrating gender and diversity considerations, such as age and disability, into their work can have positive impacts.
- ▶ Mainstreaming different diversity factors helps mine action better address affected people's needs and protect their rights, making mine action more effective. It can also help to reduce gender inequalities or at least avoid exacerbating them.
- ▶ An inclusive approach to mine action can unlock professional opportunities for women and have a positive impact in their lives and in their communities.

## SURVEY AND CLEARANCE

Women, girls, boys, and men may have access to different information depending on culturally gendered roles, attributed mobility patterns, daily tasks and knowledge.

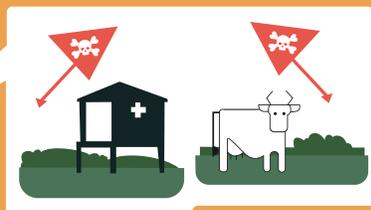
In some cultures, girls are encouraged to stay close to the home with other women and girls, while boys and men may have more responsibilities and opportunities outside the home.

Differences in occupations, daily activities and mobility patterns may lead to different exposure to risks and different knowledge of contaminated areas. For example, children attending school will have knowledge of different areas of suspected contamination than children involved in agricultural activities.

In Jordan, for example, the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation carried out an inclusive consultation process, in which men and women submitted information on where landmine accidents had taken place. The information gathered showed a clear gender differential.

In many displacement settings, women have taken over many of the household chores previously done by men (e.g., collecting firewood or charcoal); they in turn may have additional information to inform surveys on contamination.

Consulting widely across different groups of society can lead to more comprehensive data, which can better inform decisions related to survey and clearance.



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# EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE RISK EDUCATION

Explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) programmes are more effective when they are age appropriate, gender sensitive, and especially target and reach those most at risk.

Mixed gender teams are critical for reaching those most at risk. In some cultures, women can only be reached by other women, while some men may be more comfortable talking to men.

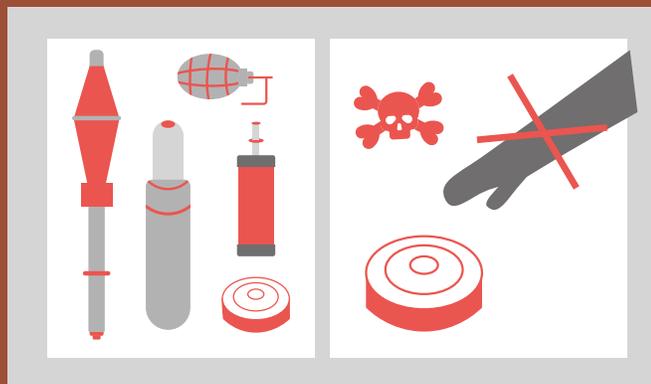
In 2021, children represented 50% of civilian casualties where the age group was known. This points to the importance of reaching children with EORE, making them aware of mined areas by pointing out and explaining explosive ordnance warning signs, and telling them not to touch mines or explosive remnants.

EORE for children can also involve their parents in activities that indirectly help to educate the parents or inspire them to seek further information. In areas with high illiteracy this approach provides parents and communities with a valuable source of information.

'Child-to-child' and 'child-to-adult' risk communication approaches have been adopted by different organizations as part of their EORE campaigns, for instance in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen.

Gender- and age-sensitive EORE has positive impacts on social development. In Colombia, Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas conducts sessions in indigenous communities which incorporate messaging on domestic violence, offering safe spaces for women.

EORE activities directed towards young people in Colombia have also provided opportunities for recreation through sport or theatre.



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# VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Women, girls, boys and men who have been injured in explosive ordnance accidents can have very different needs, even when faced with the same type of injury. For example, it is important to have in place gender-sensitive mental health services to help in management of post-traumatic stress disorder among landmine survivors.

Women, girls, boys and men may face distinct challenges in accessing healthcare (including psychological support), rehabilitation, and socioeconomic inclusion opportunities due to cultural and social factors. While such challenges are often specific to a given cultural context, men and boys more often face challenges accessing mental health and psychosocial support services, whereas women and girls face greater barriers to accessing physical rehabilitation and immediate and ongoing care services.

Due to gendered social and economic roles, men and boys are more likely to be killed or injured by mines.

Women and girls are more often indirect victims. Because of predominant gender norms, they are often expected to take on a caregiving role for survivors and provide financial support for their families when the main provider is injured or killed.

Understanding and addressing these gender-specific impacts is vital to ensure the delivery of effective victim assistance. That is why gender, but also age, disability and other diversity factors, should be taken into account when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating Victim Assistance.

For instance, in cases where men survivors can no longer support their families, feelings of powerlessness, sadness, anger and inadequacy may emerge. An organization working with [landmine survivors in Colombia](#) observes that injured men tend to suffer from depression and aggressiveness, and in some cases become violent towards family members.

Some victim-assistance operators have informally reported that sexual and reproductive health and rights of survivors and persons with disabilities are not addressed due to sensitivities and cultural taboos preventing frank discussion of these issues. The situation can be improved by the use of peer-based counselling.

For women and girls, unmet needs of rehabilitation are greater compared to men and boys according to [a study released by the consortium ReLAB-HS](#). Women and girls have more barriers to accessing rehabilitation, worse rehabilitation outcomes, and in low and middle-income countries are less likely to have access to assistive devices, such as wheelchairs.

Due to gendered labour markets, women survivors face additional barriers in accessing employment after an accident. Therefore, socioeconomic support programmes must be adapted to meet the needs of women.

For direct and indirect victims, access to services is even more complicated when gender intersects with other diversity factors such as disability. For example, girl survivors and girls with disabilities are more likely to have no opportunity to access the education system and to thrive in school, according to [a study conducted in several Sahelian countries](#) and another study conducted [in Palestine](#).



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# EMPLOYMENT

Field estimates and observations indicate that mine action is a male-dominated area of work, both at the technical and policy levels.

A 2023 survey with 11 non-governmental organizations involved in land release and landmine clearance showed that men make up approximately 70% of the workforce, while women represent 30% of personnel. However, this is a major step forward from 2019, when the percentage of women personnel in the same sample was around 20%.

When it comes to technical roles in mine action, such as explosive ordinance disposal, women are often severely underrepresented.

Employment of women in different roles in mine action, including operational and management roles, is transformative and can contribute to women's economic empowerment and increased decision-making power.

Gender-responsive mine action has the potential to challenge negative stereotypes and gender norms on the perceived limitations of women and girls and contribute to greater gender equality. Women deminers can serve as role models in a more gender-equal work force.

Recent studies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Sri Lanka show that the employment of women in demining activities leads to an improvement in women's access to resources and services, as well as to changes in gender norms beyond the mine action sector.

In Cambodia, gender is included in national policies and structures and disaggregated employment figures are consolidated at country level. Gender equality and women's empowerment is prioritized in the National Mine Action Strategy and in the National Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action.

There are many current and previous examples from around the world of women working as deminers, including in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Jordan, Kosovo, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

A 2022 study by GICHD and Fenix Insights compared the clearance rates of women and men in clearance roles across several countries and found there to be no meaningful difference in operational productivity or in availability to work between women and men in field-based roles.

## LEARN MORE

- ➔ Visit the [GICHD website](#)
- ➔ Visit [UNIDIR's Gender and Disarmament Programme website](#)
- ➔ Visit the [Gender and Diversity in Mine Action Working Group website](#)



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