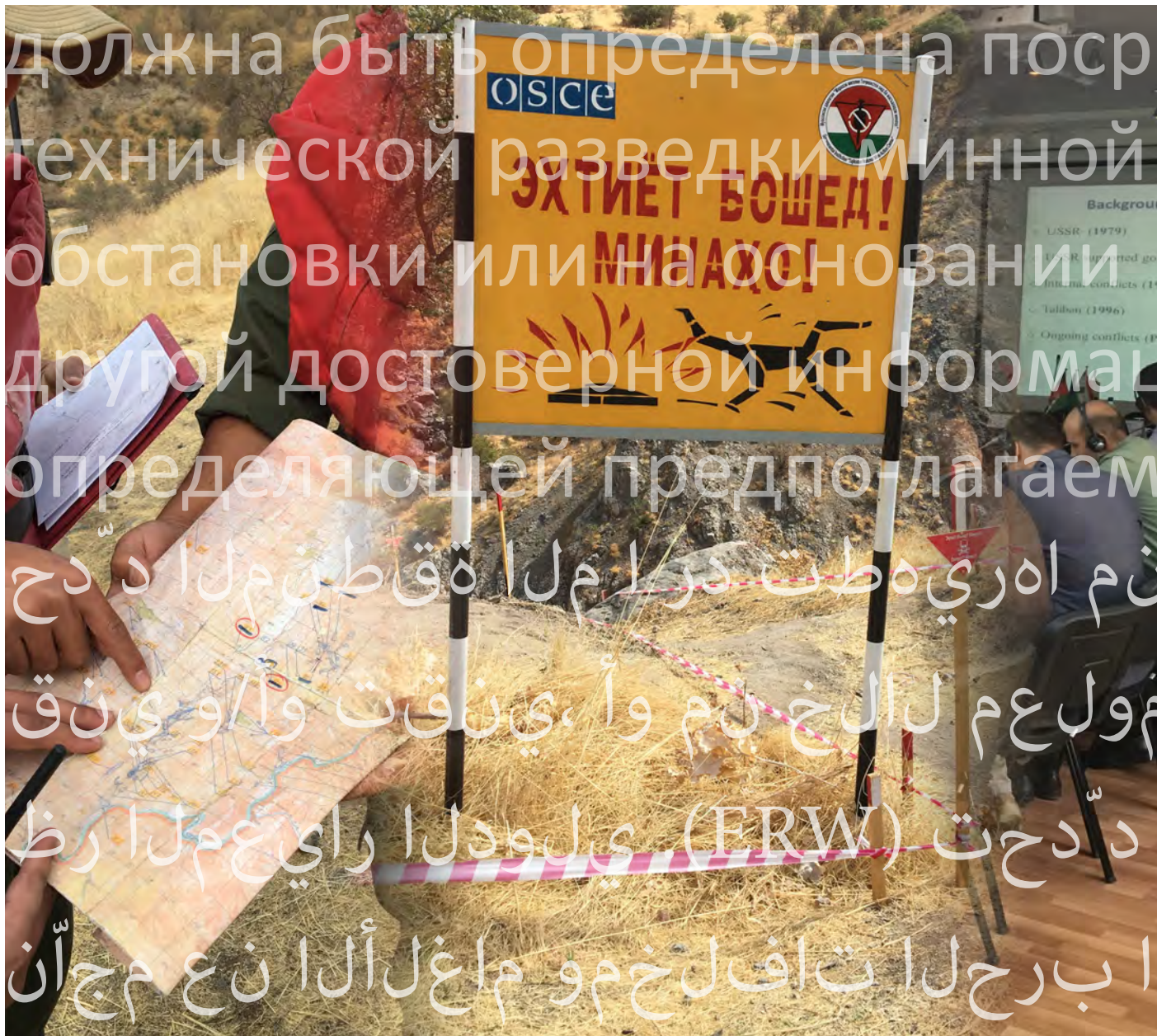


FINAL REPORT

COOPERATION PROGRAMMES EVALUATION

Geneva International Centre
for Humanitarian Demining GICHD



Acronyms and Abbreviations

AOP	Arabic Language Outreach Programme
ARCP	Arab Regional Cooperation Programme
CPs	Cooperation Programmes
DDPS	Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (Switzerland)
DMA	Directorate for Mine Action (Iraq)
EECCA RCP	Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Regional Cooperation Programme
EO	Explosive Ordnance
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
IATG	International Ammunition Technical Guideline
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IKMAA	Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LMAC	Lebanon Mine Action Centre
LOP	Linguistic Outreach Programme
NCDR	National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation (Jordan)
NMAA	National Mine Action Authority
MA	Mine Action
MAP	Mine Action Programme
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE PCU	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Project Coordinator in Ukraine
RCP	Regional Cooperation Programme
SEMA	Somali Explosives Management Authority
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely
TNMA	Technical Note for Mine Action
TMAC	Tajikistan Mine Action Centre

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Furthermore, the consultant would also like to offer her thanks to the representants of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) Switzerland, the Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Project Coordinator in Ukraine (OSCE PCU), the Directorate for Mine Action of Iraq (DMA), the Georgian Mine Action Authority, the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation (NCDR) in Jordan, the Somali Explosives Management Authority (SEMA) and the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC) for their participation in KIIs. Finally, recognition goes to all staff of beneficiaries (national authorities) who contributed to this evaluation by responding to the online-survey. Without their willingness to transparently share information and valuable insights, the evaluation would not have been possible.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the first quarter of 2021, GICHD will undertake a mid-term review of its Strategy 2019 – 2022 (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, 2019a). A series of external evaluations will inform this review and subsequently support and assist GICHD in its internal reflection relating to the validation of its past and current work, as well as potentially defining enhancements which could be utilised to enable continuous improvement. One of these evaluations aims to assess GICHD's ability to facilitate dialogue and cooperation operationalised through its cooperation programmes. For that purpose, the Centre contracted the RISKey GmbH to review the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability of the two main existing cooperation frameworks – the Arab Regional Cooperation Programme (ARCP) and the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Regional Cooperation Programme (EECCA RCP). The period that was covered by the evaluation is 2017 – 2019 and the evaluation has been conducted between October and December 2020 (see annex A for a detailed activity schedule).

The findings and related recommendations summarised in this report are based on preliminary findings that have been presented to and agreed with GICHD.

The relevance and effectiveness of the Cooperation Programmes could both be confirmed. Stakeholders highly appreciate the initiative and acknowledged that without the programmes, cooperation and dialogue would not exist among national authorities in the relevant region. With that, a clear impact and long-term effect is assessed to be confirmed as well. It was also assessed that activities relating to capacity building, cooperation and the linguistic outreach are equally important for beneficiaries with minor differences between the ARCP and the EECCA RCP which seem to be based on how long the Cooperation Programme has been up and running. Nevertheless, it was also stated that particularly cooperation and networking beyond formally implemented activities should be increased and that not all partners seem to have equal appetite to share information.

The work of the GICHD Cooperation Programme team was given very positive feedback by all stakeholders and the team's performance and enthusiasm is seen as key for the success of the programmes. It was also noted that the team manages to facilitate numerous activities with the given resources. As an area for improvement, it was stated (predominantly by GICHD non-project staff) that the unit is assessed as not having the respect and reputation within the Centre that it deserves and the initiative could be used to a greater effect to leverage the Centre's activities for the benefit of both the beneficiaries of the Cooperation Programmes and GICHD as a whole. In general, it was also suggested that the unit should try to initiate more online courses as this would mitigate the current pandemic-based restrictions and in addition, potentially increase the number of activities.

The main point of concern (depending on what GICHD wants to achieve with the Cooperation Programmes initiative), is that sustainability is not factored into considerations: in the sense that the ARCP and EECCA RCP are likely not to exist without the support of GICHD. Stakeholders clearly confirmed that they see the Centre as the neutral partner, enabler and Centre of excellence needed to lead the programmes based on well-balanced decisions for the sake of all beneficiaries equally. This insight is important with regard to the future strategy for and evolution of the Cooperation Programmes. It is not clear for stakeholders what GICHD wants to achieve with the initiative in long term, what the ultimate objective is and whether the Centre plans to hand over the programmes at some point.

With regard to the main strengths of the programmes, their uniqueness was mentioned together with their ability to bring partners together who would otherwise likely not talk to each other. On the other hand, the lack of clarity regarding the long-term strategy and with that, an unclear expectation of how the programmes should evolve over time, was mentioned as one of the weaknesses; together with a partly limited appetite of beneficiaries to share information. As arguably the most important opportunity, the GICHD internal leverage potential for the unit was mentioned. As an example, the respondents indicated that the Cooperation Programmes unit and thus the Cooperation Programmes could be used to a much greater extent to disseminate and promote other GICHD initiatives and activities. Furthermore, again, the unused potential of cooperation and sharing of information and experience beyond formal programme activities was mentioned as an opportunity. Equally, the lack of a clear strategy for the evolution of the programmes is seen as a constraint, which could potentially affect future donor interest. Furthermore, it was also mentioned that future obstacles such as the current pandemic or regional politics and power imbalance may affect the programmes negatively.

Based on these findings, the report includes recommendations of how the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Cooperation Programmes could be improved. These include the development of a clear long-term strategy with the identification of an ultimate desirable end state for the Cooperation Programmes and based on that, consistent and meaningful quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to measure the programmes' progress and performance towards the achievement of identified outputs. The strategy should include the planning of activities based on considerations with regard to the life cycle of the Cooperation Programmes and beneficiaries MAPs – not all activities may be equally important for all in all phases of a life cycle. Also, GICHD should aim to gather more insights relating to why cooperation and networking does not yet occur sufficiently beyond formal programme activities. Suitable instruments such as an easy-to-access and well-utilised virtual communication platform may be established to enhance what has been stated to be the main outcome of the Cooperation Programmes under the current GICHD Strategy: facilitating and contributing to cooperation and dialogue among national authorities in a specific region.



ARCP Threat Assessment and Building Search Awareness course, Lebanon, 2019.

1. BACKGROUND

The evaluation of the GICHD Cooperation Programmes was expected to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP for the period 2017 to 2019. In doing so, the evaluation aims to inform the mid-term review of the GICHD Strategy 2019 – 2022 and reveal the importance of the Cooperation Programmes in relation to the achievement of identified objectives and outcomes.

Scope and Purpose of the evaluation

The scope of the evaluation of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP was not only to assess the progress towards identified quantitative objectives as listed in the GICHD Strategy 2019 – 2022, but more importantly, to gather information with regard to the overall success of the Cooperation Programmes in facilitating and contributing to linguistic outreach, and capacity building, as well as dialogue and networking. Furthermore, by using the above mentioned evaluation criteria for humanitarian work; as proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC, 2019), the evaluation was expected to release insights relating to its formal and substantial suitability to fulfil beneficiaries needs and the programmes' expected long-term effects. With that, the evaluation results will inform the GICHD management about stakeholders perceptions and expectations and help to adjust and/or clarify the centre's intentions relating to the future of the CPs.

The GICHD Strategy 2019 – 2022



GICHD's vision of creating a world in which communities thrive, free of risk from explosive ordnance (EO), includes four strategic objectives, intermediate and immediate outcomes and related services (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, 2019a). The Cooperation Programmes initiative is linked with the centre's strategic service line aiming to facilitate dialogue and cooperation as well as with the immediate outcome 5, which strives to foster exchange and dissemination of good practice. For the monitoring and evaluation of immediate outcome 5, the strategy identifies three indicators which have, however been expanded with a forth:

- Number of national mine action authorities (NMAAs) and/or mine action programmes (MAPs) exchanging good practice.
- Number of NMAAs and/or MAPs adopting good practice.
- Number of NMAAs and/or MAPs establishing and/or concluding partnership(s).
- Number of mine action resources/IMAS translated in local languages.

In addition to the objectives identified in the current strategy, different indicators and targets have been used to measure the performance of the CPs throughout the evaluation period 2017 to 2019. An overview of related quantitative results is given in chapter 3, page 14.

Furthermore, the Cooperation Programmes aim to broaden cooperation from regional to a wider scope; building on the natural organic evolution and progress of the programmes. With a broader comprehensive cooperation model, not limited to regional or linguistic proximity, the role of the Cooperation Programmes in facilitating dialogue and contributing to cooperation and building networks is expected to be strengthened.

History of the Cooperation Programmes

Initiated by GICHD, the Cooperation Programmes have their roots in the French Linguistic Outreach Programme (LOP) dating back to 2006. The programme was created following a request from French-speaking countries affected by mines and EO. This request nurtured the idea of setting up a common platform – then based on the linguistic commonality – for countries to work together and benefit from one another. Consequently, the following additional programmes have been initiated by GICHD over the last decade:

- In 2012, the Arab Regional Cooperation Programme (ARCP)
- in 2013, the Persian Regional Cooperation Programme
- in 2015, the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Regional Cooperation Programme (EECCA RCP)

While the French-speaking programme was handed over to the African partners in December 2011, the Persian Programme was closed in 2019. The ARCP and EECCA RCP on the other hand, do not focus any longer on linguistic outreach only, but based on the geographical proximity and common regional technical challenges, more and more on cooperation and sharing of experiences in managing and reducing risks from EO.

The ARCP encompasses 18 Arabic-speaking states of the Middle East and North Africa region. For the management of the ARCP, GICHD partners with the Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC). The main activities of the programme are stated to be:

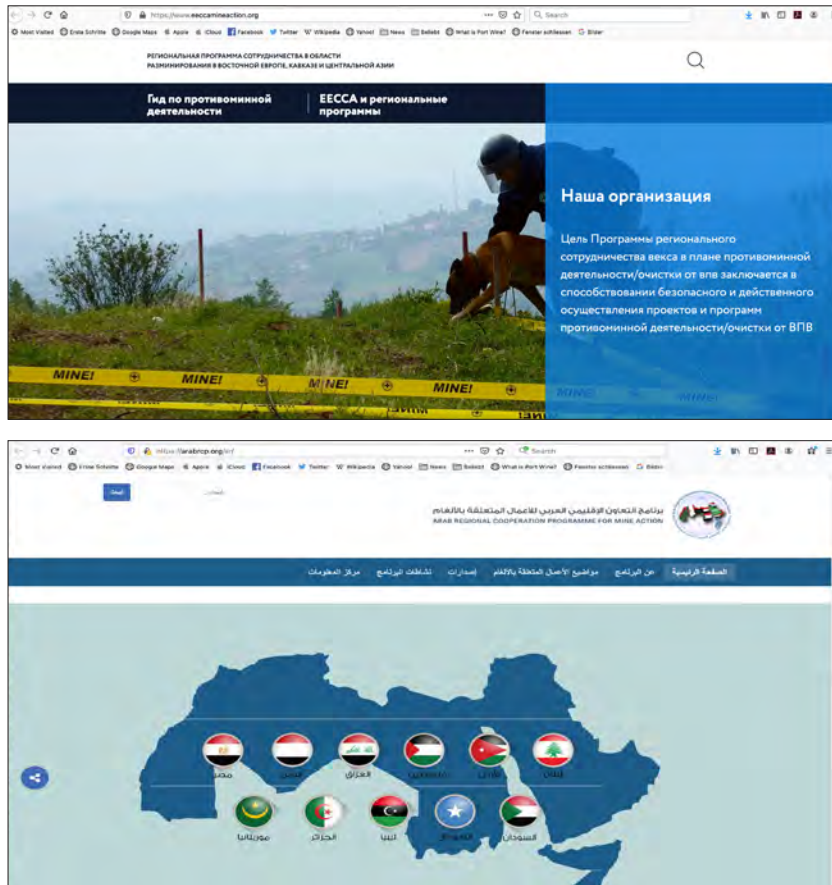
- organisation of mine action training and workshops in Arabic
- facilitation of regional and international exchanges (experience or staff)
- mobilisation of local and regional Arabic-speaking expertise
- translation of major mine action documents and publications into Arabic.

The EECCA RCP includes 15 mine/EO affected states which use Russian as the language for communication. The purpose of programme is stated as:

- to promote safe and efficient implementation of mine action projects and programmes
- to enhance regional cooperation through information and experience sharing
- to embed the best mine/EO action practices throughout the region

With that, the EECCA RCP aims to assist national mine action authorities and local operators to accelerate capacity development through access to international standards, training material and advisory services in a more accessible language. For the management of the EECCA RCP, GICHD occasionally partners with the OSCE country office in Ukraine.

During the evaluation period 2017 to 2019, the Cooperation Programmes unit in GICHD and the activities of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP have been enabled by funding from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Governments of Finland, Germany and Switzerland.



The website of the EECCA in Russian launched in 2017: <https://www.eccamineaction.org/> (first picture) and the website of the ARCP in Arabic (second picture) which is maintained by the LMAC on behalf of the Cooperation Programmes: <https://arabrcp.org/ar/>.

3. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The following paragraphs summarise the approach, methodologies and instruments used for the design and implementation of the evaluation, including potential limitations and constraints relevant for the interpretation of the gathered data.

Evaluation Objective and Research Questions

By assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP, the evaluation aimed to gather insights with regard to the programmes' performance towards outcome 5 and indicators identified in the GICHD Strategy 2019 – 2022. Furthermore, the evaluation was expected to highlight insights relating to its overall success in fulfilling stakeholders' expectations and creating long-term effects. The table on the following page gives an overview of the research questions used for the evaluation. Apart from queries directly linked with the evaluation criteria, questions included crosscutting issues relating to gender and potential strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/constraints of the Cooperation Programmes (SWOT analysis).

Evaluation Methodology (Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation)

For the data collection, a **mixed-method approach** was applied to gather the required quantitative and qualitative data and to ensure data triangulation required for the credibility of the evaluation. Apart from secondary information sources that included different documentation provided by GICHD (see chapter 6), data gathering focused on KIIs and an online-survey with stakeholders.

A total of 16 **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with seven beneficiaries of the Cooperation Programmes (the national mine action authorities/centres of Georgia, Iraq, Iraq Kurdistan, Jordan, Somalia and Tajikistan), the two GICHD partners (LMAC and OSCE PCU Ukraine), seven GICHD Cooperation Programme personnel and other staff and one donor (DDPS Switzerland). The interviews followed a given script (see annex B), but allowed additional questions and comments based on the course of the interview. All interviews were conducted online on using Skype, Zoom or Whatsapp. Only in one case, an interpreter was required to support the communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, but remain in the evaluators possession to maintain interviewees' answers' anonymity. Interviewees were informed about the purpose of and conditions for the interviews and signed an Informed Consent Form (see relevant template in annex D). A list of the interview partners is added to this report as annex E.

22 individuals from the national authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine, Tajikistan and Ukraine participated in the **online-survey**. While the KIIs were designed to gather comprehensive information relating to all aspects of the Cooperation Programmes, the online-survey predominantly aimed to gain insights with regard to how useful different activities are for the national authorities and what activities they benefit most from. The complete set of collected data is added to this report in annex C.

Research Questions

Relevance: The extent to which the Cooperation Programmes are suited to the priorities and needs of the stakeholders.

- Why and on what basis were the programmes developed on?
- Were stakeholders and their needs identified and have they been updated as the programmes evolved?
- Have stakeholders been part of the development of programmes? If so, what was the process of engaging them?
- How were the programmes launched or introduced to the mine action sector?
- What was the initial feedback from partners and other stakeholders following the launch of the programmes? Was the feedback taken into account?

Effectiveness: The extent to which the Cooperation Programmes achieve their objectives.

- To what extent are the programmes suited to stakeholders needs?
- Are the programmes fit for purpose? Why or why not?
- To what extent have identified outputs and outcomes been followed and achieved?
- Dialogue and cooperation: To what extent do the programmes facilitate and contribute to bilateral visits and/or partnerships amongst national authorities and how important are these activities?
- Capacity building: To what extent do the programmes facilitate and contribute to the distribution of good practice and experience amongst national authorities and how important are these activities?
- Linguistic outreach: To what extent do the programmes contribute to linguistic outreach and how important are these activities?

Efficiency: Measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs.

- What were the costs associated with the development of the programmes?
- What were the costs associated with the launch of the programmes (if applicable)?

- How long has it taken to develop the programmes?
- Are resources (human/financial) allocated to the programmes reasonable to achieve identified objectives on time?

Impact: Positive and negative long-term effects on produced by the Cooperation Programmes, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

- What are the positive and negative (if any), intended and unintended long-term effects of the programmes for the different stakeholders and the mine action sector?

Coherence: The compatibility of the Cooperation Programmes with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.

- Do competing programmes and/or similar initiatives exist in the mine action sector?
- How well do the programmes complement other initiatives/activities of stakeholders and non-stakeholders?

Sustainability: The extent to which the impact of the Cooperation Programmes is likely to continue under changing circumstances.

- Do the programmes lead to a lasting change? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- Do stakeholders continue to benefit from the programmes after the completion of an intervention?
- What is the level of independent ability of a partner/ government to continue sustaining the programmes after the Centre's support is discontinued?
- What is the general outlook for the programmes?
- How did the programmes evolve from regional to a wider scope cooperation?

Crosscutting criteria

- Are gender and diversity mainstreamed in the programmes and does it lead to a measurable change?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of the programmes?

Research questions used for the evaluation of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP.

The collected information was processed by re-reading it several times and analysing it with a coding system in order to group statements and observations in different thematic spheres. This step was done independently by two different evaluators, who subsequently compared, discussed and combined their insights, which form the basis for chapter 4 and 5 of this report. Prior to the production of this document, the lead evaluator discussed and agreed with GICHD on the preliminary findings and structure of the final report.

Evaluation Constraints and Limitations

The main constraint to the evaluation was the limitation in data collection due to the tight timeline and limited days available for the implementation. However, it should be noted that with the KIIs and the number of participants in the online-survey, the target sample size was achieved.

Another constraint was expected to be the language and the potential need of an interpreter to conduct KIIs with beneficiaries. This was however an unfounded fear, and only in one case an interpreter was required to support the communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. Unfortunately, only three of 16 interviewees and three of 22 participants of the online-survey were female. With that, appropriate gender diversity could not be achieved in the data collection phase. During the KIIs, it became apparent that some of the interviewees also participated in the online-survey: which limits the diversity of collected information. In retrospect, it should be acknowledged that it would have been more valuable to utilise the online survey in a slightly different way, i.e. to collect additional opinions to ideas expressed by key informants during interviews.

The potential bias of the evaluator was mitigated using a second evaluator and the transparent processing of the evaluation, which included several online consultations with GICHD including the presentation and discussion of the preliminary findings prior to the production of this report. Despite these limitations, it is believed that the chosen evaluation methodology, the instruments and methods used for data collection, processing and analysis, data triangulation as well as transparency throughout the process, guarantees the credibility of the evaluation and the report at hand.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The following paragraphs summarise the findings gathered through the desk study, KIIs and the online-survey. While the first sub-chapter aims to give an overview of targets and indicators utilised as well as quantitative results achieved during the evaluation period 2017 – 2019, subsequent chapters focus more on qualitative insights relating to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of the ARCP and EECCA RCP. Each of these sub-chapter is concluded on utilising an ample system that indicates whether the performance relating to the relevant criteria has been good and should be maintained (green), has been moderate and shows potential for improvement (orange), or significantly negatively affected the programmes' performance and should be enhanced (red). Finally, the last sub-chapter gives an overview of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/constraints inherent to the Cooperation Programmes (SWOT analysis). The presented findings per criteria, if not stated otherwise, always apply for the ARCP and the EECCA RCP.

Overview of quantitative achievements 2017 – 2019

The GICHD Strategy 2019 – 2022 identifies particular indicators for the monitoring of the Cooperation Programmes' performance (see page 7). However, as the evaluation at hand covers the time period 2017 to 2019, different objectives, indicators and targets to measure quantitative achievements were utilised throughout the evaluation period. A list of available forecasts and results for 2017 to 2019 is shown in the table on the following page. In general, it has to be mentioned that objectives and related indicators and targets should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely and it should be documented which methodology is utilised to assess whether targets have been achieved. As an example, the currently used indicator aiming to measure the number of NMAA exchanging and adopting good practice or establishing and concluding partnerships lacks clarity regarding what is considered as 'exchanging', 'adopting', 'establishing' and 'concluding'. Furthermore, analysing the currently used indicators, GICHD needs to reflect on whether the mere number of translations completed is a valuable measure and whether it would be of more value to identify translation priorities and to establish an indicator that focuses on the importance of translated documentation (based on a pre-set ranking) but also on other equally important linguistic efforts such as the number of workshops facilitated in either Arabic and Russian. This point was defined as one to be improved as beneficiaries believe that Cooperation Programmes activities should ideally be conducted in Arabic and Russian, or where this is not possible, as a minimum, have translation services available. This seems not always have been the case in the past and is recognised as being a challenge as most GICHD experts involved (particularly in technical training) are not Russian or Arabic speakers. However, at least translation should be ensured for all activities conducted under the ARCP and EECCA RCP.

Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
-----------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------

The quantitative achievements are given a moderate performance ranking because changing objectives, indicators and targets make it difficult to effectively assess progress and performance over the evaluation period of three years. Furthermore, it is not entirely clear how achievements towards certain indicators are measured. In the future, this can be improved with more consistent and comprehensible monitoring and evaluation efforts.

2017			
Achievements (no outcomes, indicators and targets reported)			
Translations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26 IMAS translated into Arabic and 42 IMAS revised in Russian 16 Technical notes for mine action (TNMA) and 10 test/evaluation protocols translated (Arabic/Russian) IMAS 7.12 and 45 International Ammunition Technical Guidelines IATG translated into Russian 3 ARCP Workshops			
2018			
Outcome	Indicator	Target	Achievements
Directors of NMAA value the benefits of regional cooperation / are committed to the programme.	Requests for support through the RCP.	2 countries (Yemen, Libya)	3 workshops and 1 meeting conducted upon regional requests with representatives from Yemen and Libya.
Directors understand the need for a wider and inclusive participation by assigning the right people to RCP activities.	Profiles appropriate for thematic workshops.	1 country (Libya)	Libyan NMAA representatives attended 3 ARCP workshops.
Participants trust each other, and confidence is built between them.	Participants actively discuss and present.	> 90% incl. 3 countries (Somalia, Jordan, Iraq)	Somalia, Jordan, Iraq representatives were actively present and involved in 3 ARCP workshops.
Experiences and lessons learnt on MA are shared.	Presentations made during workshops.	Exchanges on IEDs at ARCP (Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Yemen, Somalia)	Exchanges took place at 3 ARCP workshops. Due to country security, Yemen only participated in the Gender and Diversity workshop in Beirut.
	Participants are trainers on certain thematic areas.	2 countries	LMAC contributed in various interventions in Arabic to support 2 events on copresenting on their national case study.
Cooperation on MA issues between NMAs is strengthened.	Bilateral visits between programmes.	1	Target not achieved due to lack of funding to support this type of initiatives.
2019			
Participants trust each other and confidence is built among one another, which allows for the sharing of best practices	N° of NMAA attending, exchanging and conducting bilateral visits.	8	9
Widen the scope of NMAs and national ministries that cooperate on good practice by making mine action resources in local/regional languages available.	N° of NMAA using resources in national/regional languages and cooperating on good practice.	N/A	4
Increased capacity/knowledge on specific topics at the regional level.	N° of NMAA increasing their knowledge on specific topics.	N/A	N/A
Increased regional cooperation between NMAs on good practice.	N° of partnerships or project agreements concluded between NMAA.	N/A	4

Outcomes, indicators, targets and achievements of the ARCP and EECCA RCP 2017 – 2019 (data source: donor and annual reports 2017, outlook reports 2018/2019, performance report 2019).

Relevance

This criteria measures the extent to which an activity is suited to the priorities and needs of the different stakeholders. Previous evaluation reports (Ernst Young, 2019; Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining GICHD and The Graduate Institute Geneva, 2016) and past surveys (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining GICHD 2018 d, 2019f, 2019j) as well as the current online-survey and KIIs have shown that the Cooperation Programmes are seen as being required and useful, and beneficiaries feel that their needs are both taken into account and considered. It was confirmed that needs assessments are conducted on a regular basis, but beneficiaries understand as well that different needs must be balanced and cannot always be addressed immediately. Based on answers given in previous surveys as well as from statements given in the KIIs, it is appropriate to assume that the EECCA RCP needs more attention and support of the GICHD to further develop. It seems that members in this Cooperation Programme are not yet as pro-active as ARCP members. This may be based on the fact that it is the youngest Cooperation Programme, but possibly this could also be linked with cultural nuances and different expectations.

With regard to expectations, stakeholders are well aware of the Cooperation Programmes aim to facilitate dialogue and cooperation. However, it was also apparent that stakeholders are not aware of the ultimate objective of the Cooperation Programmes and whether GICHD aims to facilitate the Cooperation Programmes as a continual service or whether they intend to reach a final state (with a potential handover of the programmes to regional partners). While beneficiaries are less concerned with the long-term strategy of the Cooperation Programmes and see GICHD as in charge of it, other stakeholders raised concerns and stated that clarity in strategy is required and a multi-year plan relating to it should be established, communicated and followed.

Differing statements were given relating to the importance of the linguistic element of the Cooperation Programmes and particularly critical is the evaluation report produced in cooperation with The Graduate Institute (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining GICHD and The Graduate Institute Geneva, 2016). Although it is acknowledged that the linguistic outreach with regard to the mainstreaming of international standards is key, it is also recognised that this is only relevant, if translated standards are finally applied and adopted. This is linked with the criticisms raised on page 13 that indicators are needed that focus more on the quality and importance of translations in all aspects than the mere number of translated documents without



The GICHD Cooperation Programmes team in discussion with beneficiaries of the ARCP.

measuring if they are adopted (which requires a methodology to effectively do so). The report questions as well the importance of the linguistic element for the EECCA RCP by discussing the ambivalent relationship to the Russian language some of the member states may have. This concern was mirrored in the KIIs of the evaluation at hand, although not strongly. While beneficiaries of the ARCP emphasised the importance of Arabic as a common language in general, the interviewed beneficiaries of the EECCA emphasised that Russian is important for the regional communication and cooperation, but on a national level the local language is more important (particularly on a field level) and this should be taken into account in the strategy of the Cooperation Programmes.

Another point that was discussed during KIIs, predominantly by members of the ARCP, related to the scope of the Cooperation Programmes; who should be part of it and what roles the different members should play. While there was no clear statement with regard to who should become a member (or not), it was emphasised that participating countries should have an equal opportunity to host ARCP events, should be willing to share information and to accept advice from more experienced MAPs, but also that countries with more monetary resources should show more interest in the Cooperation Programmes and support activities accordingly.

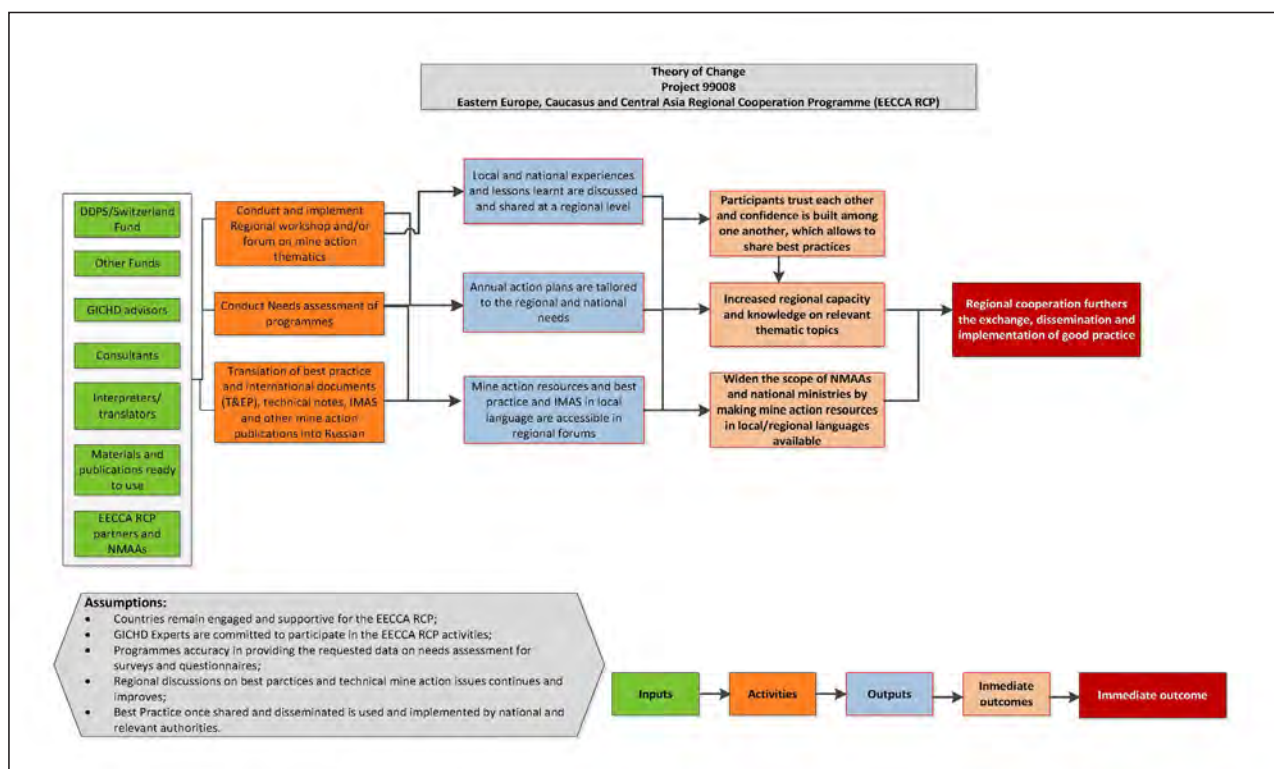
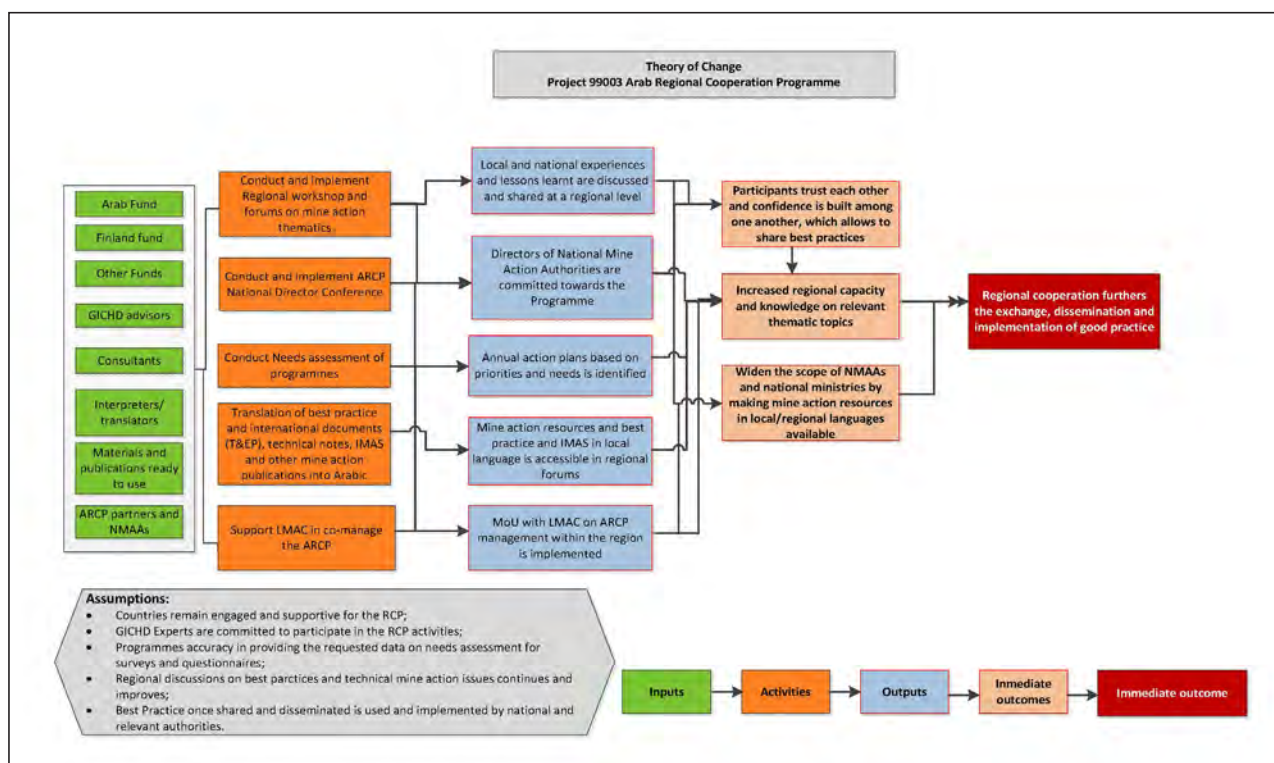
Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
-----------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------

The Cooperation Programmes are relevant, important and useful and beneficiaries feel that their needs are recognised and addressed. However, it is not clear what strategy GICHD is pursuing with the Cooperation Programmes and what the ultimate goal is. Equally, particularly in the ARCP, there seems to be some concern about the roles and participation of different countries. This concern may be mitigated by having clearer guidelines with regards to who can participate in the Cooperation Programmes and by clarifying responsibilities and duties of participating countries. Furthermore, the linguistic dimension of the Programmes needs more careful consideration, particularly with regard to the use of the Russian language in the EECCA. With a clear strategy and relating multi-year plans with clear objectives, indicators and targets, the relevance of the Cooperation Programmes can be further enhanced.

Effectiveness

This criteria measures the extent to which the Cooperation Programmes achieve identified objectives. With the current activities, the Cooperation Programmes cover three strategic dimensions and aim to facilitate and contribute to bilateral visits and partnerships and sharing of good practice and experiences among national authorities. Furthermore, the linguistic outreach is an identified objective too, which apparently is linked with the other strategic dimensions. Based on the current GICHD strategy and the Theory of Change developed for the ARCP and the EECCA RCP (see graphs next page), the ultimate outcome of the Cooperation Programmes is to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among national authorities.

As mentioned previously, this outcome, although documented, does not seem to be equally understood by all stakeholders; and more importantly does also not seem to be entirely achieved. Insights from the desk study, the newly conducted online-survey and the KIIs show that all activities including technical workshops and training, cooperation meetings, bilateral visits and the translation of documents are highly and almost equally appreciated by beneficiaries. However, there are some differences between the ARCP and the EECCA RCP. The linguistic dimension was rated as being more important by beneficiaries of the EECCA RCP. This may be based on the fact



Theory of Change for the ARCP (upper picture) and the EECCA RCP (lower picture). For both programmes, the regional cooperation furthering exchange, dissemination and implementation of good practice is identified as the ultimate outcome.

that the programme is younger and not as much documentation has been translated yet, or beneficiaries of the ARCP may have better English skills. However, it also somewhat contrasts statements given with regard to the limited importance of the Russian language on a national level.

While key informants of both Cooperation Programmes identified the sharing of experience and best practice (and with that regional conferences and meetings) as being most important, participants of the online-survey rated technical workshops and training as being more beneficial for them. This difference certainly mirrors the range of people questioned for this evaluation. While key informants are all management staff, the participants of the online-survey included operational personnel of national authorities, which may be more interested in technical issues in general.

An interesting difference is that EECCA RCP key informants think that the sharing of good practice, cooperation among national authorities including bilateral visits are facilitated sufficiently, while interviewees of the ARCP do not necessarily agree with that statement. In particular, it was mentioned by ARCP interviewees that there is limited appetite to learn from each other and cooperation beyond regular RCP activities does not take place. As possible reasons, the different culture of humanitarian and military led mine action programmes was mentioned, but also potential geopolitical sensitivities and a lack of a suitable means to facilitate communication beyond institutionalised activities of the Cooperation Programmes. While the possibility of newsletters, databases and online communication platforms seems to have been discussed and proposed previously already (Ernst Young, 2019), key informants emphasised they would benefit from a mobile application which allowed them to share information and questions in a timely, uncomplicated manner and based on requirements emerging from daily operational challenges. An equal appetite for sharing information was not shown by beneficiaries of the EECCA RCP. This may be based on less common challenges (which were mentioned by ARCP key informants as to be the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices IED and management of residual contamination), but it may also be linked with how mature the mine action programmes involved in the two Cooperation Programmes are. There was no agreement with regard to whether bilateral visits should be fostered or not. While some said, they think it is a good opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other, some were also concerned whether such visits are for the benefit of all. In any case, all members of the Cooperation Programmes should have an equal opportunity to be visited or to visit. In general, it seems to make a difference how long a Cooperation Programme exists, and in which phase of a MAP life cycle the different members in a Cooperation Programme are. Consequently, interests differ and are related more to translation of documentation and capacity building (on a management and operational level) in the early phase of a MAP and a Cooperation Programme, while sharing of best practices and experiences (and with that cooperation among national authorities) is assessed as becoming more important in the mature phase of a MAP and a Cooperation Programme.

Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
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The Cooperation Programmes do only partially achieve identified objectives. Particularly the ultimate outcome, to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among national authorities, is assessed as not being sufficiently achieved. GICHD needs to consider how to better communicate its goals (and how to achieve them), and also needs to evaluate the life cycle of MAPs and Cooperation Programmes, with the different needs and expectations inherent to the different phases. Finally, the Centre should think about how to facilitate information sharing and cooperation beyond formal activities, e.g. by developing and providing appropriate and up-to-date means of communication.

Efficiency

Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. Throughout the evaluation, the efficiency and good performance of the GICHD Cooperation Programme team was emphasised. It was said that the team is particularly successful in keeping in touch with the different stakeholders and addressing their needs and concerns in a timely and sensitive manner. One point that was mentioned which could be improved was the timeliness of provided information with regard to upcoming activities and also considering the selection of the recipients of such information (whether it is sent to directors of national authorities only or also to other personnel of national authorities). All key informants equally highlighted that the GICHD Cooperation Programmes' teams' commitment and passion for their work is key for the success of the ARCP and EECCA RCP and that their work is seen as being very challenging and not sufficiently rewarded GICHD internally.

In conjunction with that, GICHD non-project staff additionally emphasised that they think the Cooperation Programmes initiative could internally be of much more benefit by using them to disseminate and promote other GICHD activities. In doing so, this could potentially also attract more donor interest for both, the Cooperation Programmes and other GICHD activities. Conversely, it was also mentioned that the experience of the regional partners (particularly with regards to IED and operational efficiency) should be considered by GICHD and could lead to lessons learned and best practices applicable for the whole mine action community, for example on how to best address IEDs in urban environments in a humanitarian context. Furthermore, it is assessed that it is not very well understood why the Cooperation Programmes unit was moved away from the Operations division. It was said that, now being a part of the External Relation division, the Cooperation Programmes initiative may be misused as support service unit for other divisions to reach out for national authorities more easily.

All documentation provided and interviews conducted also confirmed that, with the available resources, an appropriate number of activities has been conducted over the evaluation period. However, it was also mentioned that the implementation of activities still requires additional support of countries who host activities (e.g. by facilitating transport and accommodation), which may also limit certain countries ability to facilitate events.



EECCA RCP IMSMA Core Implementation workshop in Ukraine, September 2019.

The activities of the Cooperation Programmes were all assessed as being very useful, well prepared and implemented, fulfilled participants' expectations and beneficiaries stated to wish more activities, if financial resources would allow it. Only the language issue discussed previously (courses should be held in Arabic/Russian, or where not possible, with interpreters) was mentioned as one point to be improved which would affect the efficiency of activities positively. Throughout the interviews, it was also mentioned several times that it is expected that activities are still implemented, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, and in order to potentially offer more activities with the limited budget available, GICHD should consider offering more online training and workshops. In previous surveys, beneficiaries acknowledged their interest and willingness to participate in such activities (although stating that they prefer face-to-face events). For online activities, ARCP members prefer courses of a few hours distributed over several weeks while EECCA members would prefer block courses. Particularly mentioned as a measure that would contribute to the efficiency of the Cooperation Programmes, was to distribute an annual review and offering a platform to share information about both upcoming and previous events.

Enhanced internal communication within GICHD could assist in improving staffs' knowledge and understanding of the Cooperation Programmes initiative. Also, more consistent documentation of activities, finances, achievements and lessons learned for the ARCP and the EECCA RCP; presented periodically, as a spreadsheet or powerpoint document, would be a benefit for GICHD internal and external stakeholders and help to increase a mutual understanding of the Cooperation Programme's objectives, resources and performance.

Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
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Despite limited resources, GICHD's Cooperation Programmes initiative is accountable for remarkable quantitative and qualitative outputs. However, with a clearer strategy, consistent reporting, enhanced internal and external communication and an increase of online activities, the efficiency of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP could be further improved.

Impact

The Cooperation Programmes produce a number of positive long-term effects. In previous surveys, beneficiaries confirmed that the cooperation among them increased thanks to the Cooperation Programmes' activities. However, it is not clear to what extent and exactly how cooperation increased. It was also confirmed that the programmes assist NMAA to improve their skills over time, but again, it is not clear in what sense the initiative supports the national authorities to become better. The newly conducted online-survey, based on statements given with regard to the usefulness of the implemented activities, equally confirms that the ARCP and the EECCA RCP do have a positive impact on beneficiaries.

Key informants in particular, confirmed the long-term positives but also some negative effects of the Cooperation Programmes. One frequently stated effect which encompasses both positive and negative elements is that the programmes themselves and regional cooperation would not exist without GICHD's lead and support. This shows both, the importance of the initiative, but also its dependence on the Centre's engagement. Furthermore, it was mentioned on the positive side, that the Cooperation Programmes strengthen the acceptance and applica-

tion of international standards and with that, help to standardise mine action activities around the world. It was also confirmed that, through regular activities with the same partners, trust and partnerships among beneficiaries of the programmes are built. GICHD staff mentioned that the Cooperation Programmes have a positive effect on the Centre's reputation by strengthening its position as neutral partner, enabler and Centre of excellence. But equally, GICHD non-project staff sees potential to increase the impact of the Cooperation Programmes initiative on using it more to disseminate and promote the Centre's activities for the benefit of national authorities, donors and GICHD (e.g., by utilising regional experiences and expertise with regard to the IED threat). Furthermore, particularly beneficiaries of the ARCP mentioned that they think, with a more frequent and pro-active exchange of experience, the impact of the Cooperation Programmes would be enhanced. However, they could not give ideas how experience and information sharing among beneficiaries could be improved.

As negative effect, beneficiaries mentioned the change of key personnel in national authorities, which limits the efficiency of capacity building activities. Additionally, it was mentioned that the interest in the Cooperation Programmes may decrease over time, if the programmes are not evolving and the long-term objectives are not clear.

Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
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The Cooperation Programmes create a clear positive impact – without the Centre's initiative, regional cooperation and dialogue would not occur. However, this stands as well for one of the effects GICHD should analyse in more details: So far, beneficiaries only showed a limited appetite to cooperate and share experience and good practice beyond the programmes' activities. Also, the Cooperation Programmes could be used more to promote other GICHD initiatives and activities and with that, create a higher impact for both, beneficiaries and the Centre.

Coherence

Although some forms of regional cooperation exist in other contexts (particularly relating to weapons and ammunition management), the Cooperation Programmes initiative of the GICHD, with its focus on regional cooperation and dialogue in humanitarian mine action, based on a common language, is unique. In addition, the initiative uses, as far as possible, existing platforms such as the meeting of the National Mine Action Directors to promote regional exchange on current topics. With that, the Cooperation Programmes are clearly coherent and compatible with other initiatives in the mine action sector. The only area for potential improvement concerns again GICHD internal possibilities to better leverage activities by using the Cooperation Programmes as a platform. However, whether this should be strived for, is a strategic decision linked with what the Centre wants to achieve with the Cooperation Programmes long-term.

Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
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The Cooperation Programmes, with their focus on regional cooperation and dialogue based on a common language, are a unique and highly appreciated initiative in the mine action sector.

Sustainability

This criteria measures the extent to which the impact of the Cooperation Programmes is likely to continue if circumstances changes: particularly if donor funding ceases and/or the initiative is not supported anymore by GICHD. The feedback given by key informants in that regard was very clear: It is not expected that the Cooperation Programmes and with that, cooperation and dialogue among regional partners would continue, if GICHD would not lead the programmes and facilitate and coordinate activities. It was said that even with ongoing funding and a regional focal point taking over from GICHD, it is not likely that the ARCP and EECCA RCP would exist further. These statements include the opinion of the current regional partners, the LMAC and the OSCE Office Ukraine, which see themselves as partners of GICHD but not necessarily as entities to take the future lead of the relevant programme.

All interviewees emphasised that the role of GICHD as neutral partner and Centre of Excellence is of utmost importance and only the Centre has the necessary trust and reputation to take well-balanced decisions on behalf of beneficiaries. The expectation that GICHD offers continual support and takes responsibility for the programmes now and in the future, is an important insight relevant for the Centre's strategy development relating to the Cooperation Programmes, and it shows as well that cooperation and dialogue beyond the current formal activities do not yet occur as wished and expected.

Beneficiaries also discussed which roles different members of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP should have in the programmes, based on the maturity of the MAP in the relevant countries. However, this is a point assessed to be more pertinent for beneficiaries of the ARCP and it seems that this is also linked with the maturity of the Cooperation Programme, with beneficiaries showing concern regarding the further evolution of the programme. This shows again the importance of having a clear long-term strategy, which considers the different life cycle phases of MAPs and the Cooperation Programme itself.



ARCP gender and diversity workshop Lebanon, July 2018.

GICHD should not only consider these findings for the future strategy of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP but should also take into account lessons learned from the Francophone programme, which was handed over to regional partners in 2011 but is assessed as not currently being effectively active.

Another point that was discussed by key informants was whether the current institutional form of the Cooperation Programmes is suitable or not. While beneficiaries of the ARCP tended to favour a more formal constitution on arguing that this would make visits and cooperation easier, particularly between civilian and military authorities; EECCA RCP key informants clearly preferred the current constitution of the Cooperation Programme, arguing that its informal character is one of the advantages that enables uncomplicated exchange and cooperation based on changing interests and needs.

Good performance that should be maintained	Moderate performance, potential for improvement	Performance is seriously affected and should be improved
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The Cooperation Programmes are not sustainable in the sense that they are not likely to exist without GICHD having the lead and ensuring relevant donor funding. Furthermore, the objective to facilitate cooperation and dialogue beyond programmes' activities could not sufficiently be achieved so far. GICHD needs to take this into account when developing the long-term strategy and expected evolution of the Cooperation Programmes.

Crosscutting criteria

In addition to the quantitative achievements of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP, and the performance relating to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability of the Cooperation Programmes, interviews with key informants included the question whether stakeholders think that the Cooperation Programmes help in mainstreaming gender and diversity. Beneficiaries stated that they feel this is predominantly a topic to be addressed on national levels. Yet, key informants of the ARCP expressed their appreciation for the Arabic gender and diversity course that is currently being held online during the evaluation period on acknowledging that it is very important to have the possibility to access relevant courses and material in Arabic.

In general, there seems to be a vital interest in gender and diversity training. This has the potential, in the long term, to also generate a broader impact and real change in mine action programmes participating in the Cooperation Programmes. Considering the key informants, participants of the online-survey, but also participants of past activities of the Cooperation Programmes, it is desirable that the proportion of women can be increased over time.

Aside from stakeholders' opinions relating to gender and diversity, key informants were also asked what they see as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/constraints of the Cooperation Programmes. A summary of the answers given is shown in the table on the next page.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique and highly appreciated initiative with a proven positive record. • Strengthens position of GICHD as neutral partner, enabler and Center of Excellence. • Strengthens acceptance and importance of international standards. • Brings partners together who are otherwise not likely to talk to each other and with that contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 16. • Fosters solution finding with regard to common regional challenges. • Capable and externally/internally highly respected GICHD project team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GICHD internal allocation of the Cooperation Programmes unit within the External Relationship division limits the initiative's possibilities to promote other activities and initiatives of the Centre, particularly with regards to technical workshops and courses. • GICHD Cooperation Programmes unit is partly misused as support service unit instead of using the unit as an enabler for leverage. • The Long-term strategy for the Cooperation Programmes is not clear – what is the intended further evolution and ultimate objective of the initiative? • Limited appetite of beneficiaries to share information and experience and benefit from each other beyond Cooperation Programmes' activities. • Limited benefit for countries with a mature MAP.
Opportunities	Threats/Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cooperation Programmes are platforms offering leverage potential that is not yet fully used and could help to raise additional donor interest and funding for a wide range of topics and activities. • With systematic follow-ups on technical workshops and courses on national levels, the impact of activities initiated by the Cooperation Programmes could be increased. • With sharing of information and experience of Cooperation Programme beneficiaries beyond formal activities, the sustainability of the initiative could be increased. • With more online activities, the total number of activities with given resources could be increased and help to get back on track during the pandemic. With that, the overall efficiency of the Cooperation Programmes could be increased. • With a clear strategy and plan to rotate regional hosts/ chairs for activities of the Cooperation Programmes, local ownership (and with that general engagement) could be increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreasing donor interest if the long-term strategy and ultimate objective is not clear and does not include thoughts with regard to the intended evolution of the Cooperation Programmes initiative. • Further shocks such as the current pandemic that affect the efficiency of the Cooperation Programmes. • Regional politics leading to restrictions and power imbalance within Cooperation Programmes in conjunction with missing guidance/strategy on GICHD's side how to deal with such potential circumstances. • Full potential of the Cooperation Programmes not used and initiative therefore misused as platform to facilitate technical workshops without having a clear regional approach.

SWOT analysis of the ARCP and EECCA RCP based on answers given by stakeholders during KIIs.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the major findings gathered with the evaluation of the Cooperation Programmes including the desk study, the online-survey and most importantly, the key informant interviews. Furthermore, potential implications of the insights are discussed and finally, concrete recommendations are given aiming to help GICHD in its further development of the Cooperation Programmes initiative.

Summary of Major Findings and Implications

The Cooperation Programmes initiative is a unique, very well established, highly appreciated and important platform for regional capacity building, cooperation and networking based on a common linguistic foundation. Activities within the three strategic dimensions – bilateral visits and partnerships amongst national authorities, distribution of good practice and experiences, as well as linguistic outreach – are seen as equally important and well balanced, with a slightly higher importance of the linguistic component in the EECCA RCP, and the sharing of experience with regard to common regional challenges in the ARCP. With that, the relevance and effectiveness of the Cooperation Programmes initiative has been assessed to be confirmed and equally the impact and long-term effect of the ARCP and EECCA RCP. However, a lack of understanding of the long-term strategy and



The GICHD team responsible for the Cooperation Programmes initiative.

ultimate objective relating to the Cooperation Programmes and with that, unclear expectations with regard to the evolution of the programmes over the next few years negatively affects both the relevance and effectiveness of the initiative. A long-term strategy clearly identifying the ultimate desirable end state of the Cooperation Programmes would not only help to guide stakeholders' expectations but could also be used as baseline to develop relevant and meaningful indicators to measure progress towards expected achievements.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge where in the life cycle of a MAP beneficiaries stand and what the life cycles of the Cooperation Programmes are. The same needs are not equally important at every stage of a life cycle. Linguistic outreach and capacity building activities (including operational and management training and workshops) seem to be more important in the early phases, while cooperation and exchange of experiences become more important in the more mature phases of a MAP/Cooperation Programme. The long-term strategy and relevant objectives should consider that and equally, which institutional form suits the programmes best in the different phases.

The programmes work, with the resources available, very efficiently: which is predominantly thanks to the GICHD Cooperation Programmes unit, who received very good feedback from all stakeholders and is seen as key for the success of the Centre's initiative. However, stakeholders do also have the expectation that, despite the pandemic, activities are implemented as planned. It is therefore important that GICHD looks into providing more online activities and with that, can increase the Cooperation Programmes efficiency. Also, efficiency could be increased if GICHD better utilised the programmes to leverage activities. However, this needs to be carefully considered and it needs to be clear whether this is wanted or not, as the benefit may be with other divisions of the GICHD, but not necessarily helps to fulfil the objective of the Cooperation Programmes. In conjunction with that, the question will also have to be addressed where the cooperation programmes are best placed within GICHD. Communication, in multiple dimensions is as well key to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of the Cooperation Programmes. However, the current efforts are good and should be maintained, knowing its importance. Finally, the linguistic outreach should not be limited to the translation of relevant documentation, but if possible, regional events should consequently be held in Arabic or Russian. Furthermore, GICHD internal communication, particularly with regards to the commitment of the leadership and the promotion of its strategy relating to the Cooperation Programmes initiative, could be enhanced.

The main point of concern, which is relating to the unclear long-term strategy, is the sustainability of the initiative. It is unlikely that the programmes exist without GICHD's support and lead. Furthermore, the appetite to cooperate and share information and experience beyond Cooperation Programmes' activities seems to be limited, which also questions the relevance of the current objective to facilitate and contribute to regional cooperation and dialogue. GICHD should engage more in gaining insights regarding what jeopardises cooperation among national authorities and how the Centre can help to increase it, e.g., by providing platforms such as smartphone applications, which facilitate easy and uncomplicated communication amongst beneficiaries.

To summarise: The initial aim of the Cooperation Programmes to facilitate regional cooperation and dialogue (based on a common language) must be reconsidered. Based on the presented findings, it is required to define what the scope, purpose and ultimate objective of the initiative should be for the future.

Recommendations

1. For easier future **monitoring and evaluation** of the Cooperation Programmes' performance; objectives, indicators, targets and relevant reporting should be consistent, comprehensive and easy to understand. It should be considered whether a handy reporting format could be used to produce an annual report for the ARCP and the EECCA RCP (e.g., Powerpoint presentations). This would enhance internal and external stakeholders' understanding of the Cooperation Programmes purpose and achievements. In conjunction with that, indicators should be meaningful, better balance quantitative and qualitative expectations (e.g., what is more important: the number or the relevance and quality of translated documentation) and most importantly, it has to be clear what methodology is used to measure relevant achievements (e.g., what is meant by 'adopting' good practice).
2. For future strategy development and activity planning, GICHD should consider both the **life cycle of beneficiaries' MAPs and the life cycle of Cooperation Programmes**. It should be acknowledged that linguistic outreach and capacity building may be more important in the early phases of a life cycle, while cooperation and networking (and with that the enhancement of operational efficiency) becomes more important in the mature state of MAPs and Cooperation Programmes. A concept regarding which linguistic efforts and capacity building activities should be enabled over time is required and equally, how cooperation and networking can be fostered beyond Cooperation Programmes activities. Also, it is necessary to clarify how beneficiaries in different phases of their MAP life cycle can benefit most from the Cooperation Programmes, but also what their duties and responsibilities are. Benefits and duties should be well-balanced and distributed among beneficiaries, e.g., with regard to hosting activities or being able to participate in bilateral visits.
3. In conjunction with recommendation 2, the Cooperation Programme initiative needs a **clear long-term strategy** that clearly identifies the desirable end state of the cooperation programmes as well as their purpose, demarcation and ultimate objective/outcome of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP. In addition, relevant multi-year and yearly objectives should be identified in order to ensure progress towards the identified strategy. The strategy should also include considerations whether the Cooperation Programmes initiative should be used more to leverage other GICHD activities or not. Finally, the strategy and relevant plans have to be introduced and communicated to internal and external stakeholders.
4. In order to **increase cooperation and networking** beyond regular Cooperation Programmes activities, GICHD should consider establishing and providing a virtual platform that allows easy, timely and informal exchange of information. Furthermore, it may be helpful to investigate in more depth, what hinders beneficiaries to engage more with each other beyond scheduled activities and whether a virtual platform would effectively foster cooperation and exchange. Questions that need to be further investigated: Do beneficiaries not wish to cooperate more or what hinders them doing so? Are there any restrictions that complicate cooperation (e.g., protocols to be followed)? Is there not enough mutual trust and appetite to learn from each other? Etc.
5. GICHD should aim to increase the proportion of **online activities**. This would help the Centre to get back on track during the COVID-19 pandemic and with that, to meet stakeholders unchanged expectations. It could also help to increase the overall number of activities and further improve the efficiency of the Cooperation Programmes initiative. Also, for physical activities, GICHD should focus on implementing them predominantly in Arabic and Russian and continue to use translators, if facilitators are not Arabic or Russian speakers.

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