



# THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF EMPLOYING FEMALE DEMINERS IN SRI LANKA | FULL STUDY

GENEVA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DEMINING  
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# Executive summary

## Brief overview

It has been more than 10 years since the first international and national operators started clearing Sri Lanka from explosive ordnance, generating employment opportunities for hundreds of Sri Lankan women and men in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. Demining operations in Sri Lanka have among the highest proportions of female to male deminers in the world; at the time of the study, 39% of our partners' demining staff were women. This study looks at the differentiated socioeconomic impact of the employment of female and male deminers, such as their ability to access and own resources and services. In addition, the study explores changes in female deminers' decision-making capacities in their families and communities, how they perceive themselves, and shifts in their families' and community members' attitudes towards gender norms. Through the support of The HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group, SHARP and DASH, 226 deminers (113 women and 113 men) were surveyed, and family and community members (69 women and 34 men) were interviewed. Opportunities for additional individual interviews arose throughout the data collection process, and 13 individual discussions with deminers were further conducted (9 women and 4 men).

## Summary of findings

### 1. Demographics of interviewees

The study found that:

- Female and male deminers have similar primary and secondary school attendance and completion rates, which confirm the high rates of education and literacy reported by Sri Lanka for both women and men at the national level.<sup>1</sup>
- Eight out of ten female deminers interviewed reported being married. This seemed to contradict the reported belief that many female deminers are widows or members of female-headed households (FHHs). However, stigma surrounding divorce, separation and abandonment might have contributed to self-reported marital status.
- 50% of female deminers interviewed are the only income earners in their household. Nine out of ten reported earning a higher income than their partners. This indicates that the majority of female deminers are at least the primary income earners of their households.

### 2. Impact of employment on ownership and access to resources and services

- More female than male deminers reported an increase in purchasing power since employment in mine action. More than one third of women did not have any income before joining this sector, as opposed to one in twenty men.
- Women's average salary more than tripled compared to before their mine action employment, which significantly increased their access to resources and services.
- 89% of female and 77% of male deminers reported greater access to food as a direct result of their employment. Six in ten respondents of both genders reported an increase in their access to running water.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. [Sri Lanka. Country Profile](#). 2018.

- One in five female and male deminers was able to purchase land; one third of men and half of women were able to acquire property.
- More than half of the mine action workforce was able to have electricity installed in their homes as a direct result of their employment.
- Other types of purchase were made possible thanks to mine action income, most notably cell phones and motorcycles.
- Both female and male deminers reported an increase in their access to financial services. 42% of women and 37% of men got access to bank accounts; 42% of women reported gaining access to loans.
- Seven in ten female and six in ten male deminers reported an increase or strong increase in the numbers of years spent by their children in school.
- 75% of women and 81% of men noted an increase or strong increase in access to health care services; 74% and 77% respectively an increase in access to medication and prescription drugs.

### 3. Gendered work dynamics

- Mine action was reported to be one of the only sectors where women and men work alongside and have the same benefits and income. These benefits include being paid on time and having access to promotion on an equal basis.
- As women generally continue to be expected to carry out most of the unpaid domestic work in addition to paid employment, they reported experiencing a substantial double burden.<sup>2</sup>
- Female deminers reported feeling unsafe traveling to and from work alone in the dark, due to the reported presence of intoxicated men in the routes they travel.
- Some Tamil female deminers expressed feeling self-conscious about the uniforms they are provided with to perform demining tasks. For many of them, this was the first time wearing tee-shirts and trousers, and some have faced mocking or hurtful comments by community members.

### 4. Changes in gender norms perceptions

Female deminers:

- 95% of female deminers expressed having more confidence in themselves since their employment. This could be attributed to being financially empowered, being able to support their families, learning new skills, and contributing to the safety of their communities.
- Nine in ten female deminers reported an increase or strong increase in financial independence following their employment, and 94% said were more confident that women can financially support their families.
- 98% of female respondents were more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men.
- Nine in ten female deminers saw themselves as more useful to their communities, and seven in ten believed that female deminers are perceived more positively by female and male community members since their employment in mine action.
- Most women needed to adjust to working as deminers as the work is tough and many have never been exposed to that type of labour before. For many, this was

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'double burden' refers to the fact that many women across the world work full time in the labour market while also being responsible for significant amounts of unpaid care work in the household and in the community.



the first experience working alongside men. The majority of male and female deminers saw the employment of women in mine action as a good thing.

Family and community members:

- Employing female deminers contributed to changing expectations about women in general. According to more than seven in ten female deminers, their family and community members now look more positively upon women who financially support themselves.
- The female and male deminers interviewed believed that their community members have become more confident that women are able to do the same jobs as men. Concerns for female deminers' safety, whilst strong at first, were reported to have generally decreased over time.
- 'Bravery' was one of the most common word used by community members to describe female deminers. Family and community members often shared that willpower was more important than physical strength to carry out demining tasks.
- Female deminers were seen as having 'dignity' and 'independence'. Not having to 'work in other people's homes' as maids or help was presented as a source of pride in local culture. More rarely, some community members expressed feeling pity for female deminers, believing they must have been forced to take up the job due to dire financial needs.
- While it is more acceptable for women to undertake traditionally masculine jobs as deminers, they are still expected to provide most of the care work in their family. Leaving small children alone at home to go to work was a controversial topic of discussion, and it could be expected that women with a working husband would be seen negatively if they decided to also work instead of staying home with the children.

## 5. Demobilisation and skills acquisition

Mine action employment creates great opportunities for women and men alike. However, as Sri Lanka becomes closer to being declared mine free. Some information gathered throughout the study can thus prove useful moving forward towards completion in an inclusive manner.

- Prior to their recruitment in mine action, more than half of male deminers interviewed were likely employed in informal daily jobs, such as masonry, painting, tailoring, cooking, and driving.
- Four in ten female deminers could not indicate which sectors they worked in before their mine action experience. It is possible that they were likely not employed before their mine action job, since one third of female deminers did not earn an income before their current employment.
- Were they not employed in mine action, the majority of respondents of both genders explained that they would most likely be working in agriculture.
- The majority of deminers reportedly gained a variety of skills through their mine action work. Of these skills, knowledge of Sinhala and/or English improved for many deminers across genders.
- A number of female and male respondents reported that, in the absence of other job opportunities post demobilisation, there may be a risk that many women would be forced to turn to illegal activities. Female primary income earners were perceived as especially at-risk.

# 1. Introduction

In 2017, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly conducted a study investigating the links between mine action and the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>3</sup> This was followed in 2018 by an article which examined how gender mainstreaming in mine action contributes to progress across the SDGs.<sup>4</sup> While these documents highlighted the existence of a nexus between gender mainstreaming in mine action and the SDGs, it was recognised that more empirical research was needed to collect evidence to confirm the extent of these links. This study wishes to contribute to this effort by measuring the socioeconomic impact of the employment of female deminers in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka on their lives and the lives of their families and communities. The study also highlights the developmental impact of mine action by demonstrating the extent to which the recruitment of female deminers contributes not only to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5), but to the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Female employment in mine action is also inscribed within the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, based on Security Council Resolution 1325, which advocates for the full inclusion and effective involvement of women and girls at all levels of peace and security efforts.<sup>5</sup>



Focus group discussion, SHARP

<sup>3</sup> GICHD-UNDP. [Leaving No One Behind: Mine Action and the SDGs](#). 2017.

<sup>4</sup> GICHD-GMAP. [Gender mainstreaming in mine action: Powerful interlinkages for progress across the SDGs](#). 2018.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. [Security Council Resolution 1325](#). 2000.



## 2. Aim of the study

It is estimated that globally, 19% of individuals employed in mine action are women. Demining operations in Sri Lanka have one of the highest proportions of female to male deminers in the world, and some operators have reached gender balance in their workforce. The exceptional proportion of female deminers employed, in combination with ten years of clearance progress to look back at, make Sri Lanka an ideal case study to investigate the socioeconomic impact of the recruitment of female deminers. The study also looks at the differentiated socioeconomic impact of the employment of female and male deminers on their access to and ownership of resources. In addition, the study explores changes in female deminers' decision-making capacities in their families and communities, how they perceive themselves, and shifts in their families' and community members' perceptions of gender norms.

## 3. Background

### 3.1 History and impact of conflict

More than 10 years have passed since the end of the civil war in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The armed conflict, which took place over nearly three decades (1983-2009), was prompted by an attempt of the Liberation Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE) to create an independent state for the Tamil people in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The civil war ended on May 18, 2009, when the Sri Lankan government declared victory over Tamil militants.<sup>6</sup>

A humanitarian crisis unfolded in the north-east of the country during the armed conflict. The cost of war had a significant negative impact on Sri Lanka's economy, affecting the country's production, exports, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows.<sup>7</sup> Costs associated with damages to basic infrastructure were especially high.

The speedy recovery and steady growth of the Sri Lankan economy over the last decade has had significant impact on the economic well-being of Sri Lankans. For instance, during this phase of recovery and reconstruction, hundreds of thousands of individuals were lifted out of poverty nationwide between 2013 and 2016. However, while progress at the national level is undeniable, a quick look at the regional distribution of poverty across the country reveals that high poverty incidence remains concentrated in the Northern and Eastern Provinces,<sup>8</sup> with the highest levels of poverty in 2016 reported in Kilinochchi District<sup>9</sup>. In addition, employment opportunities vary extensively on the basis of gender, with 34.1% of total women and 72.9% of total men in the nation-wide active labour force having a job. Further research shows that unemployment among women is higher than that of men in all age groups.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to a challenging economic situation, the war left the North-East of Sri Lanka extensively contaminated by explosive ordnance. Land release efforts have removed most of this contamination, from 506km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land in 2010 down to 25.8km<sup>2</sup> in 2018.<sup>11</sup> In June 2017, Batticaloa district in the Eastern Province was the first mine-affected district to be declared safe from landmines.<sup>12</sup> As of early 2020, Sri Lanka is still affected by explosive ordnance contamination, especially in the Northern Province.<sup>13</sup>

The impact of explosive ordnance contamination on the socioeconomic development<sup>14</sup> of the Province is significant. Contamination has limited opportunities for the

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<sup>6</sup> The Landmine Monitor. [Sri Lanka: Mine Action](#). 2019.

<sup>7</sup> S Jayasundara-Smits. [Lost in transition: linking war, war economy and post-war crime in Sri Lanka](#). 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Census and Statistics. [Spatial Distribution of Poverty in Sri Lanka](#). August 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Census and Statistics: Poverty Indicators. [Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016](#). 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Finance, Economic and Policy Development, Department of Census and Statistics. [Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics Quarterly Bulletin – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2019](#). 2018.

<sup>11</sup> The Landmine Monitor. [Sri Lanka. Mine Action](#). 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Mines Advisory Group. [Sri Lanka declares first district safe from landmines, thanks to work by MAG deminers](#). 2017.

<sup>13</sup> The Landmine Monitor. [Sri Lanka Profile. Mine Action](#). 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Socioeconomic development is defined in this paper as the process aimed to improve the living conditions and well-being of individuals, families and communities in terms of economic and social progress. It can be measured

resettlement and return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and hindered the residents' ability to carry out livelihood activities and access basic services. In a part of the country which was already heavily damaged by almost thirty years of conflict, the large-scale presence of explosive ordnance continues to constrain sustained recovery and development opportunities.

In this context, demining operations are not only essential to guarantee the basic safety needs<sup>15</sup> of people but constitute a key enabler of the recovery and development of affected communities. Removing explosive ordnance greatly enables socioeconomic development by enabling the return of land, housing and infrastructure, thereby restoring sustainable livelihoods and re-establishing a safe environment for women, men and children to live, work, and thrive. At the same time, mine action generates employment opportunities in the areas of operations. Access to decent work can be particularly transformative in the Northern Province, where professional opportunities are scarce, especially for women.

## 3.2 Mine action

### 3.3

Clearance in Sri Lanka is based on the combination of manual and mechanical approaches, with manual clearance teams representing the largest proportion among the two.<sup>16</sup> As of 2020, demining operations in Sri Lanka are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Community Empowerment and Estate Infrastructure Development. The National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) is the operational body which coordinates all mine action activities on the ground.<sup>17</sup> At the district level, clearance operations are coordinated by the Regional Mine Action Office in Kilinochchi, in the Northern Province. As of 2020, mine action is being carried out by the following entities:

Type of operator	Name of operator
National	Sri Lanka Army (SLA)
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	Devon Assistance for Social Harmony (DASH) SHARP
International NGOs	The HALO Trust Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

There are two types of manual clearance team deployments in Sri Lanka:

- The first type of arrangement is known as 'camping', where deminers deploy to the demining location for 21 days and return home for a 10-day stand-down period.
- In the second type of arrangement deminers work during the day and return to their homes every evening. The three-week operational cycle is usually followed by a stand-down period.

With the exception of the Sri Lankan Army, all other entities have historically employed numerous women. At the time of the research, the HALO Trust had 692 staff working in

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through a variety of indicators, such as increase in income, increased access to resources, improved access to education and technologies. Ref. IGI Global. [Socioeconomic Development](#). 2020.

<sup>15</sup> According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, safety needs include physical safety, such as shelter and the absence of violence, and a stable environment. [Psychological Review. 1943](#).

<sup>16</sup> The Landmine Monitor. [Sri Lanka: Mine Action](#). 2018.

<sup>17</sup> [National Mine Action Programme Sri Lanka](#). Consulted in March 2020.

demining operations (322 female, 370 male), for a total of 47% female demining staff. MAG has had a largely consistent presence in Sri Lanka, employing 79 female and 564 male deminers. National NGO DASH is consisted of 422 staff members (110 females, 312 males), while SHARP had a workforce of 125 persons (15 female, 110 male). In total, at the time of research, the four operators had 1,882 demining staff, of which 1,356 were men and 526 were women. In total, women represented 39% of the demining working force at the time of the research.



Visit to demining operations, SHARP

### 3.3 Gender analysis of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a population of about 22.5 million (49% male and 51% female), primarily distributed within a broad wet zone in the Southwest, urban centres along the western coast, and in the Jaffna Peninsula in the North.<sup>18</sup> Sri Lanka ranks as the fifth least urbanised country in the world, meaning that most of the population lives outside urban centres.<sup>19</sup>

According to the latest Census of Population and Housing from 2012,<sup>20</sup> the Sri Lankan population is classified as follows:

- 75% of the total population are Sinhalese, of whom the majority is Buddhist;
- 11% of the population is Sri Lankan Tamils (also known as 'Ceylon' or 'Jaffna' Tamils);<sup>21</sup>
- Although shrinking due to return to India, 4% of the population is Indian Tamil. Tamil groups are predominantly Hindu.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> CIA World Factbook, 2018

<sup>19</sup> UN Habitat. [Sri Lanka Urban Expansion](#). 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Census and Statistics. [Census of Population and Housing of Sri Lanka](#). 2012.

<sup>21</sup> The Indian Tamil group is formed by descendants of immigrants who came under British sponsorship to Sri Lanka to work on plantations.

<sup>22</sup> The Indian Tamil group is formed by descendants of immigrants who came under British sponsorship to Sri Lanka to work on plantations.

- Finally, the Moors, a Tamil-speaking group predominantly followers of Islam, make up around 10% of the population. Muslims also include smaller groups such as the Boras and the Kolas.<sup>23</sup>

The most widely practiced religion in the country is Theravada Buddhism (70.2%), followed by Hinduism (12.6%, most prevalent in the north), Islam (9.7%), Roman Catholicism (6.1%), and other Christian-based beliefs (1.3%).<sup>24</sup> The two official languages of Sri Lanka are Sinhala, spoken by 87% of the population, and Tamil (28.5%). Tamil speakers are mostly found in the North and the East of the country.

Sri Lanka is a lower middle-income country. The economy is predominantly rural, but slowly transitioning towards more urbanised activities in the manufacturing and service sectors. Since the end of the conflict in 2009, tourism has grown significantly. At the national level, almost half of the population is employed in the area of services, while the remaining half is split almost equally between agriculture and the industrial sector.<sup>25</sup> Currently, women's participation in the paid labour force is significant, although not evenly distributed. Women are mostly employed as maids, garment workers, tea pickers, nurses, and teachers. Men are more likely to be employed in manual labour, such as manufacturing and agriculture. Within the home, women and girls tend to carry out most of the domestic tasks.<sup>26</sup>

As many labour markets in developing countries, the economy of Sri Lanka is also characterised by a predominance of informal activities.<sup>27</sup> The fact that almost two-thirds of total employment in the country is informal is cause for serious concern, especially in terms of ensuring decent work standards and social security schemes. For a total of 72.5% of working men, 63.5% participate in the informal sector. Out of the 66.6% of women that are employed in Sri Lanka, 55% of them work in the informal sector.<sup>28</sup>

Concerning workplace rights, the Constitution of 1978 stipulates that women and men have equal rights of 'work, wages and benefits'<sup>29</sup>; however, these Constitutional provisions do not cover workers in the private sector. Following a reform of the Maternity Benefits Ordinance in 2018, both in the public and private sectors women are now entitled to 84 days of maternity. However, the extent to which the law is observed largely depends on self-regulation by employers and consistent labour inspections.<sup>30</sup> International organisations are most likely to adhere to the national legislation on maternity leave. It is possible to expect that the law is implemented to a lesser extent for informal workers, who represent the overwhelming majority of the active labour force in the country. Paternity leave is not envisioned under Sri Lankan law.

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<sup>23</sup> World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Groups. [Sri Lanka Profile. Minority Rights Group International](#). 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Sri Lanka. Department of Census and Statistics. 2011

<sup>25</sup> International Labour Organisation. [Factors Affecting Women's Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka](#). 2017

<sup>26</sup> Everyculture. [Culture of Sri Lanka](#). 2020.

<sup>27</sup> An activity defined as not being monitored by the government and which is not taxed. It includes activities such as agriculture or daily waged labour which is not declared. Cf. SMP Senanayake. Informal Sector and the Economy in Sri Lanka. January 2016.

<sup>28</sup> International Labour Organisation. [Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture](#). 2018

<sup>29</sup> [Constitution of 1978 of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka](#). 1978.

<sup>30</sup> Social Institutions and gender Index. Sri Lanka. 2014



Women have equal access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of credit from a variety of sources including the government, private financial institutions and donor-assisted or local credit delivery programmes. Sri Lanka's constitution is non-discriminatory on ownership of land and property, which both women and men can legally own, transfer, inherit, and dispose of. However, Kandyan, Thesavalamai, and Muslim law all contain different provisions relating to inheritance and property rights. In this context, discrimination against women's ownership of land and property is largely dependent on her identity as Sinhalese, Tamil, or Muslim.<sup>31</sup>

The adult literacy rate is 92%, with very close figures for women and men. The rate is above average regional and global standards.<sup>32</sup> In the former war zone, some schools remain in need of repair and improvement even though the conflict ended in 2009. In the estates, schools are often housed in dilapidated buildings or even outside.

In the north, the main livelihood activities include farming and fishing. The Northern Province's contribution to the GDP is the lowest among the nine provinces, but also the fastest growing alongside the North Central Province.<sup>33</sup>

The civil war resulted in a rise in the number of female-headed households (FHHS), particularly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. There are currently around 1.2 million FHHs.<sup>34</sup> With an increasing number of female breadwinners, it is possible to expect that traditional gender norms such as the assumption that men are the key providers in the household are being challenged.

Reportedly, FHHs, internally displaced women, war widows, and former female combatants are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and violence.<sup>35</sup> It is estimated that, of the 12,00 former LTTE combatant, more than 3,00 were women.<sup>36</sup> Reintegration in civilian society has reportedly been challenging for former female combatants, especially due to stigma associated with their previous roles. Their employment and marriage prospects have also been limited, allegedly as a result of the conservatism of Tamil society.<sup>37</sup> Sources have reported that former female combatants may still face more stigma and live in situations of vulnerability until this day, in comparison with their male counterparts.<sup>38</sup>

Decades of conflict have significantly affected women's physical integrity. Even after the end of the civil war, many women, especially Tamil widows and the wives of disappeared or 'surrendered', allegedly continued to be vulnerable to sexual harassment, transactional sex, rape, exploitation and assault.<sup>39</sup> In an effort to redress the gendered consequences of conflict, the Sri Lankan government endorsed the *United Nations Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict* in 2016.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Social Institutions and gender Index. Sri Lanka. 2019.

<sup>32</sup> UNESCO. Adult and Youth Literacy Rate. 2017

<sup>33</sup> Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Provincial Gross Domestic Product. 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Department of Census and Statistics. 2013

<sup>35</sup> Women and Media Collective. 2017

<sup>36</sup> The New Humanitarian. [Sri Lanka's Rehabilitated Ex-Combatants Struggle to Adjust](#). 2014.; Relief Web. [Sri Lanka: Fewer "I Do's" for Former Female Rebels](#). 2011.

<sup>37</sup> The New Humanitarian. Fewer 'I do's' for Former Female Rebels. 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [LTTE Female Black Tigers Faces Social Hostility](#). 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Social Institutions and gender Index. Sri Lanka. 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Sri Lanka Endorses the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict](#). 2016.

Access to property for both Sri Lankan women and men was also affected by the civil war. In the conflict-affected areas in the north, many women owned houses that were given to them as dowry upon marriage. However, after the end of the conflict they have frequently been unable to claim compensation for destruction or damage due to loss of documentation or other restrictions. Similar challenges to property restitution or compensation have also affected men in the north. Following the end of the civil war, backdrop of competing claims and mass resettlement, minority women in the north and east of Sri Lanka also became especially vulnerable to 'land grabbing' and other rights violations.<sup>41</sup>

Currently, women are still expected to defer to men across all domains of life, including for decisions concerning the workplace and the home. Women also face dire consequences if they do not comply with societal expectations, such as exclusion from family and community life and violence.<sup>42</sup> It plays an important role in reinforcing value beliefs and social stigma about certain behaviours. It can deter women's capacity to act differently, claim certain rights, or challenge social expectations.<sup>43</sup>



Our enumerators and translator

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<sup>41</sup> Social Institutions and Gender Index. Sri Lanka. 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Everyculture. Culture of Sri Lanka. 2020.

<sup>43</sup> UNDP. [Tackling Social Norms: A Game Changer for Social Inequality](#). 2020.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Study design

The research project was based on a combination of quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (individual interviews and focus group discussions, or FDGs) methods. Mixed methods were preferred to enable the identification of patterns and general trends, as well as the in depth-exploration of specific topics. Regular debriefs with the enumerators enabled a better understanding of how the questions were understood by the deminers surveyed, as well as the identification of topics to integrate into individual and group discussions.



Survey locations

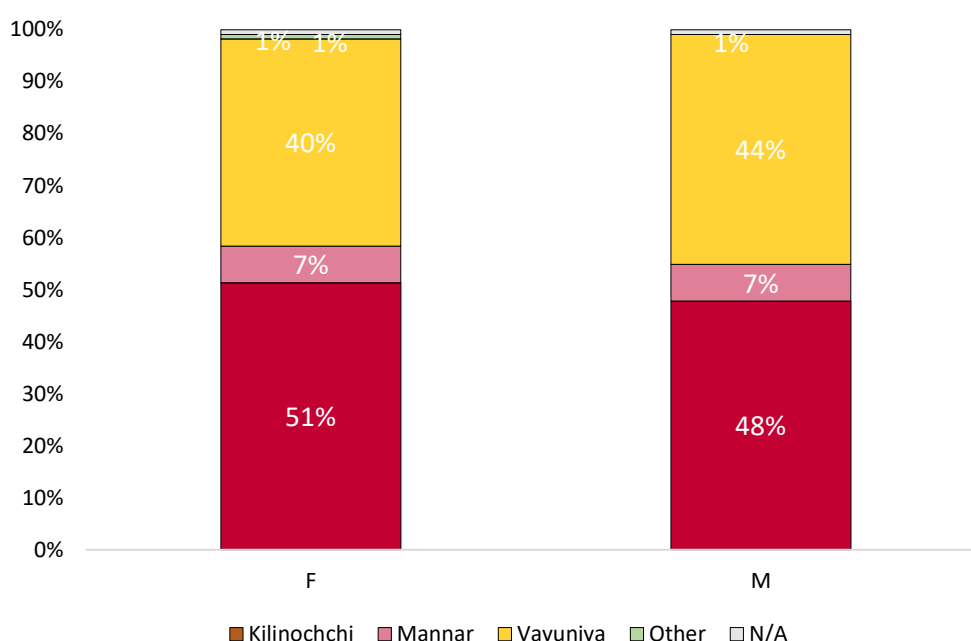
### 4.2 Methods

#### (A) Geographic location and timeline

Fieldwork took place over a period of eight days in November 2019. The study was carried out in seven different locations across Sri Lanka's Northern Province:

- Puthukkudiyirippu Village, Vavuniya District
- Parasankulan Village, Mannar District
- Muhamalai Defence Line, Kilinochchi District
- Vembodukerny Village, Muhamalai Defence Line, Kilinochchi District
- Nagarkovil Village, Jaffna District
- Kilinochchi Town, Kilinochchi District
- Elephant Pass, Kilinochchi District

Percentage of deminers surveyed by gender and district



## (B) Target groups

The target population for the data collection process comprised four groups. These target groups were identified to ensure that the study would be as comprehensive as possible. They are:

- Female manual deminers
- Male manual deminers
- Family members<sup>44</sup> of target groups one and two
- Community members<sup>45</sup> of target groups one and two

## (C) Scope of the study

In total, 342 individuals were interviewed over six days (191 women and 151 men). This included 226 deminers<sup>46</sup> (113 female and 113 male) who were surveyed by eight local enumerators (four women and four men). The sample frame corresponds to 12% of all demining staff at the time of the study (in total, 21% of all female demining staff and 8% of all male staff were surveyed).<sup>47</sup> The deminers' questionnaire was custom-built on Survey123 by the Information Management Division at the GICHD. It included two distinct versions for male and female deminers (see Annex II and Annex III). Opportunities for additional individual interviews arose, and 13 individual discussions took place, nine with female deminers and four with male deminers.

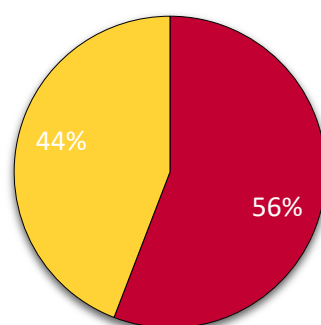
<sup>44</sup> Family members include persons who are part of the immediate or extended family, such as spouses, children, siblings, parents, grand-parents, and aunts and uncles.

<sup>45</sup> Community members are either individuals who live in the communities from which deminers come from, or those who live in the communities in which the deminers work. The study interviewed community members who had or have contact with deminers.

<sup>46</sup> For the purpose of the research, the term 'deminers' includes female and male deminers, team leaders, medics, supervisors and section commanders.

<sup>47</sup> At a confidence level of 95%, the confidence interval is 6. At a confidence level of 99%, the confidence interval is 8.

### Total percentage of participants interviewed by gender



■ Women (191) ■ Men (151)

In addition to collecting data from the deminers, the GICHD conducted nine mixed FGDs and one all-female FGD, of a total of 103 deminers' family and community members (69 females and 34 males including two male landmine survivors). The focus groups discussions were made possible by the support of translators (one independent female translator, and three male and one female translators provided by partners). The guiding questionnaire for FGDs can be found in Annex IV.



Visit to DASH operations

## 4.3 Challenges and limitations

A number of challenges were faced by the research team during the implementation of the project:

### (A) Data collection methodology and survey forms

The survey forms, which were based on a custom-built questionnaire for offline data collection, could not be modified or updated once the research had started. Individual interviews with deminers provided additional information that was not initially intended to be measured through the questionnaires. For instance, the questionnaire did not capture the deminers' ability to acquire resources and increase



access to services for family members outside the household, neither could it accommodate discussions around uniforms, which recurred throughout individual interviews. While additional contextual knowledge was acquired in individual interviews and further integrated in the questionnaire during interviews and FGDs, it was not possible to include it in the survey forms, limiting the scope of the data collected on the topic.

(B) Cultural sensitivities

Because of the three decade-long conflict and particularities of Sri Lanka's cultural context in the north, many areas of enquiries, such as questions on marital status, were considered too sensitive. The cultural implications of those topics are outlined and addressed as they emerge throughout the report.

(C) Individual interviews

In light of the richness of information acquired during the individual interviews with the deminers, it became evident by the end of the fieldwork that more time should have been scheduled for these conversations. Similar studies should thus include more time for individual meetings with female and male deminers alike.

## 5. Structure of the study

The findings of the study are presented in five sections: demographics of interviewees, impact of mine action employment on access to and ownership of resources and services, gendered work dynamics, perceptions of interviewees, and demobilisation considerations. Each section is preceded by a summary of the main findings. Additionally, extensive information on the impact of clearance on the socioeconomic development of the communities interviewed was gathered as part of focus groups discussions with community members. Although not the focus of the research, a summary of key findings can be found in Annex I.

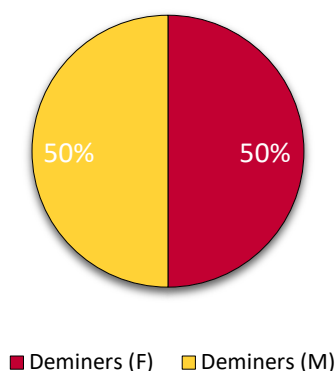
## 6. Findings

### 6.1 Demographics of interviewees

Among the deminers interviewed, the following characteristics were identified:

- Women and men have similar primary and secondary school attendance rates.
- Eight out of ten women reported being married.
- 50% of women interviewed are the only income earners in their household.
- Nine out of ten female deminers interviewed reported earning higher income than their partners.
- Half of female deminers were still displaced at the time of the study as a result of the war.
- More than one third of women employed as deminers at the time of the study did not receive any income before joining mine action, as opposed to one in twenty men.
- Women's average salary more than tripled.

Percentage of deminers surveyed by gender

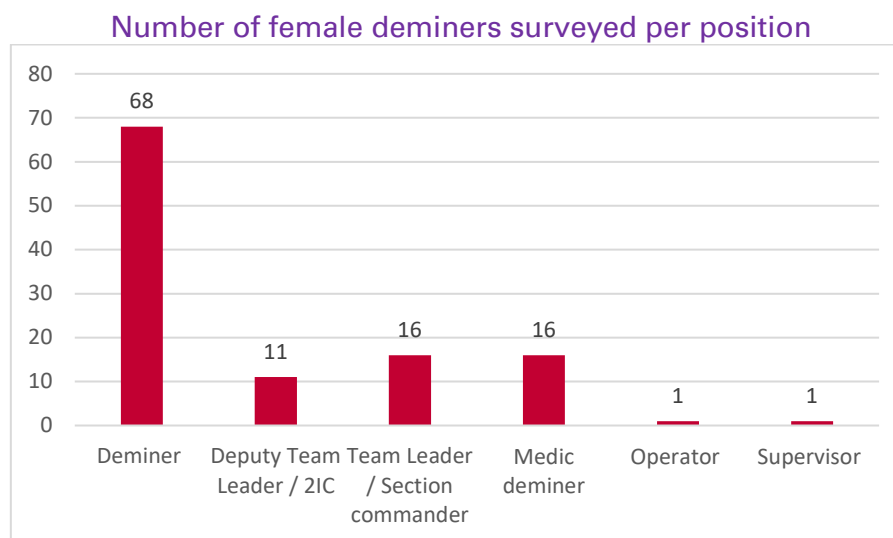


According to the data collected on the 226 deminers interviewed, both female and male deminers have been working in the sector for an average of four years. 60% of women interviewed were deminers, 10% were section commanders, 9% were deminer-medics, and 7% were second-in-command. 15% of women interviewed self-declared having a disability compared to 10% male, and two female deminers disclosed being landmine survivors.

Educational backgrounds were similar for both female and male interviewees. One in three reported having completed only primary school, while two in three interviewees of both genders had completed both primary and secondary education. This relatively high level of educational attainment among deminers is not overly surprising. In 2018, Sri Lanka's adult literacy rate was approximately 92% (91% for women, 93% for men), which is above both global and regional standards.<sup>48</sup> In comparison to the last national averages on educational attainment recorded in 2012, the surveyed deminers also

<sup>48</sup> UNESCO. [Sri Lanka. Country Profile](#). 2018.

displayed a higher secondary school completion rate (66%) than national averages (50% in the latest population census on educational attainment, in 2012).<sup>49</sup>



79% of women interviewed reported being married, 12% being either divorced or widowed, and 8% single.<sup>50</sup> This seemed to contradict the discussions with deminers and community members. While many married women are the main breadwinners in the area, several interviewees emphasised that it is common for female deminers to be widows or to have been abandoned by their husbands after the war.

Through regular debriefs with the enumerators, it became clear that the marital status categories used in the survey failed to capture the reality of the women in a manner that reflected the cultural sensitivities of the context, in particular stigma associated with separation and divorce. It was reported that some women do not disclose their actual marital status in the workplace, to avoid potential rumours or negative treatment by colleagues or community members. For instance, participants reported that many widows would still identify themselves as married in the survey. A number of women who identified as married also disclosed at a later stage having been abandoned by their husbands.<sup>51</sup> This was further complemented during group discussions where community members revealed that sometimes husbands could not provide for the household because they were 'on and off husbands' - meaning that they were not present for the family on a regular basis - or were struggling with alcoholism. The husbands' irregular presence forces women to take responsibility to provide for their families. This is a very relevant finding, as it shows that mine clearance operators significantly support economically vulnerable female-led households, even if this cannot always be reflected in statistics on the demographic composition of staff.

Whether they self-declared as married, widowed, divorced, or single, more than half of the women interviewed did not receive any financial contribution to their household from a partner at the time. Indeed, almost 50% of self-declared married women did not have an income-earning partner. 46% of married women had a partner who contributed

<sup>49</sup> Department of Census and Statistics. [Population \(5 years and above\) by educational attainment, residential sector and sex](#). 2012.

<sup>50</sup> 2% of respondents answered 'Other', for a total of 100% of the 113 female interviewees.

<sup>51</sup> Seemingly, during the war time many young people had rushed into marriage to prevent forceful recruitment. After the war ended, many men ended these marriages, leaving their wives behind with the children.

to the household with an income ranging anywhere from 1,500 to 48,000 LKR per month.<sup>52</sup> By comparison, the minimum national wage in Sri Lanka is 10,000 LKR per month.<sup>53</sup> A garment worker earns approximately 15,000 LKR per month, and a daily labour worker between 12,000 and 14,000 LKR per month, whereas the average monthly salary in mine action is 34,000 LKR. Furthermore, 90% of the female deminers interviewed reported earning a higher income than their partners.<sup>54</sup> By this measurement, even if female deminers were not the sole income earners for their household, the majority of them were at least the primary providers.

In addition, three in five male deminers and four in five female deminers agreed that their purchasing power had increased or strongly increased after being employed in mine action. According to the survey, more than one in three women currently employed as deminers did not receive any income before joining mine action, as opposed to one in 20 men. The average salary for women went from 9,580 to 34,447 LKR a month, signalling an increase in yearly income of more than 3.5 times. The average salary for men went from 19,455 to 33,824 LKR a month, an increase of 1.7 times.

## 6.2 Impact of employment in mine action on access to and ownership of resources and services

- More female than male deminers reported an increase in purchasing power.
- 89% of female and 77% of male deminers reported greater access to food as a direct result of their employment.
- One in five female and male deminers was able to purchase land; one third of men and half of women were able to acquire property.
- More than half of the mine action workforce was able to have electricity installed in their homes as a direct result of their employment.<sup>55</sup>
- Half of women and men declared having purchased a motorcycle.
- 42% of women and 37% of men got access to bank accounts, while 42% of women reported gaining access to loans.
- Seven in ten female and six in ten male deminers reported an increase or strong increase in the numbers of years spent by their children in school.
- 75% of women and 81% of men noted an increase or strong increase in access to health care services; 74% and 77% respectively an increase in access to medication and prescription drugs.

### Access to resources

The survey completed by the 226 female and male deminers measured the resources they could acquire thanks to their mine action income. Indeed 89% of female deminers and 77% of male deminers reported an increase in access to food, and six in ten respondents of both genders observed an increase in their ability to pay for and collect safe drinking water.

<sup>52</sup> According to exchange rate averages for 2019, 1 USD corresponds to approximately 180 LKR. Thus 10,000 LKR is 55 USD. Cf. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Exchange Rates 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Wage Indicator. [Minimum Wage – Sri Lanka](#). 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Only 10 % of male deminers interviewed have partners who earn an income. In total, 96% of male deminers interviewed reported having equal or higher monthly income than their partners.

<sup>55</sup> According to the latest World Bank statistics in 2014, electric power consumption (kWh per capita) in Sri Lanka is 531.091 against a global average of 3132.48.



In addition, one out of five female and male deminers reported having been able to purchase a plot of land. When results are further divided between women who had an income-earning partner and women sole income earners, the data shows that one in three women with a working partner purchased land, compared to one in ten women sole income earners. This difference may be attributed to a generally higher purchasing power in families where both partners work, in comparison to households in which women are sole income earners, which can be expected to use their income to cover basic needs and thus less likely to make costly purchases such as acquiring land.

Half of female deminers and a third of male deminers reported being able to purchase property. Livestock purchased thanks to mine action income were mainly cattle with one in five deminers of both genders having purchased cows and bulls. Women with working partners were almost three times as likely to purchase cattle (29%) than female sole income earners (11%).<sup>56</sup>

The survey also looked at access to electricity and running water. Two thirds of female deminers and half of male deminers reported having been able to acquire electricity thanks to their income. This means that more than half of the mine action workforce was able to electrify their houses as a direct result of their employment. In addition, 24% of men and 18% of women reported gaining access to running water. Women sole income earner were almost twice as likely to report improved access to running water compared to women with contributing partners.

Regarding other types of purchases made possible by their income, seven out of ten female and male deminers were able to acquire mobile phones. 10% of female and male deminers could also acquire access to the internet, including data. Half of female and male deminers declared having purchased a motorcycle as a direct result of their employment. Women with contributing partners were almost twice as likely to acquire a motorcycle compared to women sole income earner. In addition, one in four female and male deminers purchased a bicycle as a result of their income. Access to public transportation also increased, with 16% of women and 12% of men declaring being able to access it thanks to their employment. Finally, the deminers were surveyed in relation to their access to financial services. 42% of women and 37% of men got access to bank accounts. One in three women sole income earners and half of women with contributing partners acquired a bank account thanks to mine action. 42% of women obtained access to loans, compared to 35% of men. Subdivided by household status, one in three female sole income earners increased their access to loans, compared to one in two women with working partners.

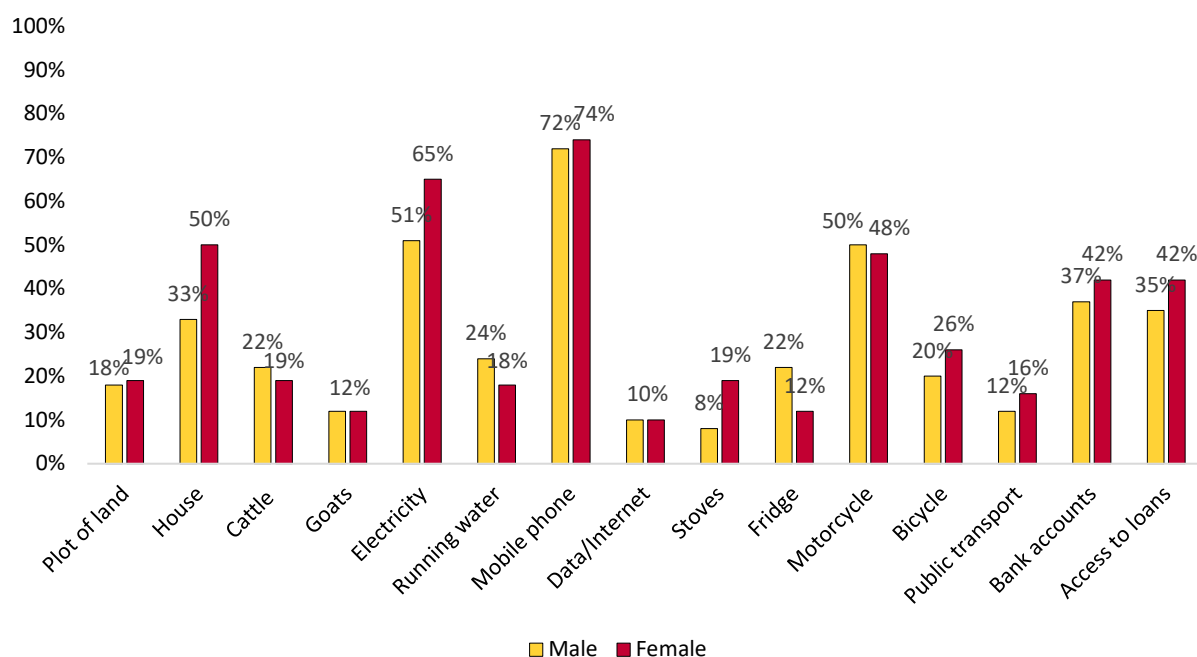
As highlighted throughout the section, there is at times a significant difference in access to resources between women who are the sole breadwinners in their households and women with income-generating partners. The hypothesis is that the extra income that women with working partners bring to their household can be invested in the household after covering basic needs. This could contribute to these households' ability to afford more demanding purchases such as plots of land, property, or transportation, as opposed to women who are the sole income earners and do not benefit from the extra

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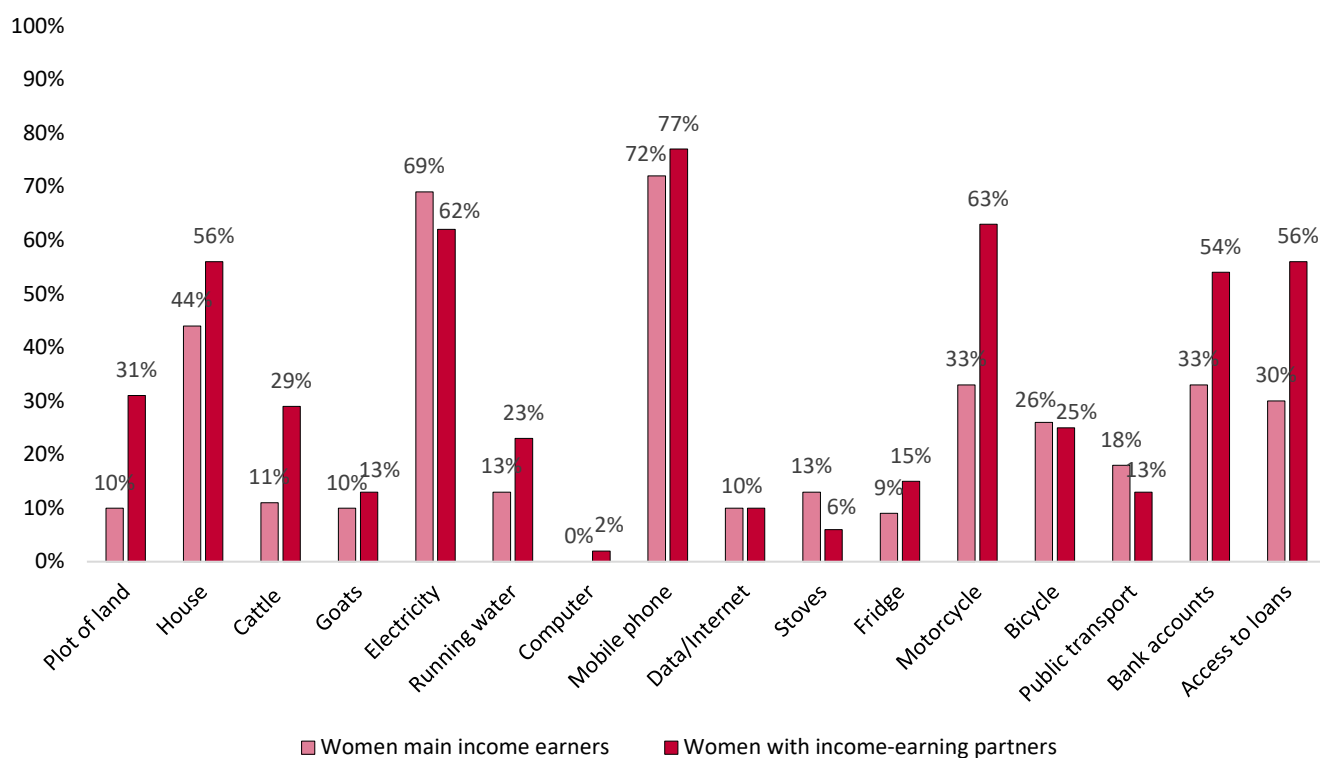
<sup>56</sup> This difference between among households may partly be attributed to the fact, in Sri Lanka, 'the raising of cattle is done mostly by men. This situation can be attributed to a number of underlying causes related to cultural aspects of the pastoral community, which is by nature patriarchal.' FAO. [Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Sri Lanka](#). 2018.

income brought by a partner. This finding provides strong evidence that female sole-income earners should be considered a high priority group for employment, because they are more economically vulnerable and the income they receive through demining work has a significant impact on their and their families' lives.

### Percentage of deminers who acquired resources, by gender



### Percentage of female deminers who acquired resources, by household status



## Access to Services

Deminers were asked to rate the extent to which their access to services had changed as a result of their employment. More than two thirds of female deminers and half of male deminers indicated that the number of children in their households who could go to school had increased or strongly increased. Seven in ten women and six in ten men also reported that the number of years spent by their children in school had increased or strongly increased. Three in five female and male deminers added having better access to education for themselves.

75% of women and 81% of men reported an increase or strong increase in their access to health care services, and 74% and 77% respectively an increase in access to medication and prescription drugs. Seven in ten female deminers and six in ten male deminers observed an increase or strong increase in their access to psychological and mental health services.<sup>57</sup>

## 6.3 Gendered work dynamics

- Mine action was reported to be one of the only sectors where women and men work alongside and have the same benefits and income.
- Because women were expected to carry out most of the unpaid domestic work in addition to paid employment, they experienced a substantial double burden.
- Women frequently reported feeling unsafe traveling to and from work alone in the dark.
- Tamil female deminers sometimes reported feeling self-conscious about the uniforms and had been subject to mocking and hurtful comments by community members.

## Stability of salary

It was frequently mentioned during the interviews that the amount and stability of salary were of utmost importance for them, as well as a source of pride. It was further explained that being paid on time is rare in most other jobs in the area. One female interviewee explained that ‘within the organisation, salary and benefits are the same for men and women.’ According to the majority of interviewees, demining is the only sector where not only women and men work together, but they are also treated and paid equally. This is supported by the evidence gathered throughout the data collection, which demonstrates that the female deminers interviewed were at the time earning an average of 34,447 LKR per month, and male deminers 33,824 LKR per month. The slight discrepancy in salary can be explained by the fact that more female team leaders/commanders were interviewed than male ones, skewing the average monthly salary up for women.

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<sup>57</sup> Interview responses revealed that there was significant stigma attached to mental illness in the affected communities. It was reported that going to the doctor for mental health reasons means that ‘your brain is sick.’ When asked whether their access to mental health care services had increased, enumerators explained that the question was mostly interpreted as whether deminers feel supported by the presence of their friends and colleagues. For example, many deminers considered the interviews with the enumerators as a form of counselling, because they were asked questions about their wellbeing and able to share their feelings on topics they had never had the opportunity to discuss with anyone else before, due to social stigma and taboos. Examples include women disclosing for the first time that they had been abandoned by their husbands. During an interview, a female deminer revealed being a Muslim, something she had not shared with her employer.

## Job opportunities and employee benefits

Opportunities for formal waged employment in Northern Sri Lanka seem to be limited, and especially so for women. As of 2018, the female unemployment rate in the Northern Province was reportedly 13%, compared to a national average of 8.3%. On the contrary, the male unemployment rate was allegedly 2.7%, against a 3.1% national average. Mine action provides local jobs for women and men in Northern Sri Lanka. In some FGDs, local women and men discussed that jobs were rare, and there were instances of people moving to the Gulf countries to work and send their salaries back. In more than one FGD, it was identified that they had seen women in their communities be hired as help or maids abroad. Others discussed that as an alternative to the lack of employment in the Northern Province, people were moving to other regions of Sri Lanka, primarily the broader region of Colombo. They explained that thanks to demining jobs, there was no longer a need to move to obtain employment, which is what many local people were doing or were planning to do. Demining provides a combination of good salary, better employee benefits and work standards, little education requirements, and opportunities for advancement to women and men in northern Sri Lanka.

Among other benefits, salary is one of the biggest incentives for working as a deminer. Female deminers shared that the pension scheme they receive does not exist in any sector other than government work. An FGD highlighted that paid parental leave was assumed to be much better than in other workplaces, and that learning about it had made people want to join. Other positive aspects of the working conditions extended to the everyday life at work. For instance, in individual interviews, female deminers mentioned that they were happy and grateful to be able to have a job where they were allowed to take breaks during the day, which was not usual in other sectors according to the interviewees. Merit-based promotions were also referenced by many women as a positive aspect of this job. It was considered a source of pride that the quality of their work and their character were equally valued as those of their male counterparts, allowing them opportunities for advancement on an equal footing.

The requirements for being a deminer were discussed by many women interviewed. It was mentioned that some other sectors allegedly discriminate based on gender and age. For example, one female interviewee shared that she had tried getting a job in the garment industry but was told they only hired women who were 25 years old or younger. The mine action sector is not perceived to perpetuate such practices. Additionally, many of the female deminers interviewed mentioned that mine action offered a good and stable job, with little to no education requirement, which many referred to as a type of employment virtually non-existent for them.





Demining operations by SHARP

## Working hours

Working hours were a recurring and relevant conversation topic for most of the interviewed women. It is deeply tied to the gendered division of labour, the perceived role and responsibilities of women in their household, and women's safe mobility in their community. As mentioned in section 3.2, there are two types of arrangements for demining work in Sri Lanka:

- The first type is 'camping', where deminers deploy to the demining location for 21 days and return home for a 10-day stand-down period.
- In the second type of arrangement, deminers work for the day and return home every evening.

Many women and men alike expressed in the interviews that they preferred for women to travel to the task and return home at the end of the working day, as it allowed them to take care of the children and carry out housework. The daily schedule of a female deminer was described by different sources as follows: women would wake up around three in the morning to do household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, waking up the children, and getting them ready for school. They would then leave for work between four and five in the morning. Work would end between two and three<sup>58</sup> in the afternoon, after which they would be able to return home and resume their chores before the children come back home from school.

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<sup>58</sup> In the 24-hour clock format, it would mean between 1400 and 1500 hours.

Female deminers with children who are too young to go to school can leave them with the children's fathers, grandparents, or other close relatives. If necessary, the children would be left with neighbours. Perspectives varied across interviewees on the extent to which it is appropriate and safe to leave children with people outside of the family during working hours. Older children can be left at home between the time women leave in the morning and the time they need to go to school.

### Household chores and the double burden

In many interviews, women discussed the extent to which they were facing a double burden, namely the responsibility for most of the unpaid domestic labour in addition to having a paying job. In the survey, 64% of female deminers reported that their time spent on household chores either increased or strongly increased since their employment.

Men's ability to carry out domestic work was questioned in many interviews. In an FGD, a woman joked that 'even in an earthquake, husbands would not move a finger,' making everyone in the group laugh. In another FGD, one male interviewee joked that if women are not at home, the house will not be cleaned. One female interviewee added, more seriously, 'men will clean if they absolutely have to, even if they say they won't.' This is supported by 60% of female deminers who reported that their male family members were spending more time on household chores, which seems to contradict the above findings that female deminers spend more time doing household chores since their employment. However, this is their *perceived* change in household chores, which may appear to be higher once female deminers have full time employment but are still expected to carry out most of the unpaid care work in the household (double burden). More research would be needed to confirm this assumption.

A female deminer who had been working for many years in her organisation shared that many female deminers had raised the concern of the double burden with her. According to the interviewee, more experienced female deminers would frequently advise new recruits encouraging them not to resign due to the hardship of adjusting to the double burden. When told by the newly recruited women 'Acca<sup>59</sup>, acca, this is very difficult, I can't do this,' she said her answer was 'no other job pays like this, you should bite the bullet.' Ultimately, she said, most women get used to it. In another individual interview, a male deminer also identified the first few weeks as challenging for women. 'Women need some time to adjust to the workload both at work and at home.' Progressively, this balancing act becomes easier, he concluded.

Notable exceptions were heterosexual couples working as deminers, who reported an equal division of housework. One interviewee stated that these 'are women and men who understand each other's jobs.' Another female deminer, married to a male deminer, explained that her husband would not expect her to do all the housework because 'he knows how difficult and tiring demining is.'

For the women working in 'camping' arrangements, household chores did not appear to be a source of strain. This can be explained by the fact that these women are away from home three weeks at a time. However, because they are away from home for such long periods of time, they must rely on the support of family to look after their children

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<sup>59</sup> 'Acca' in Tamil means 'older sister'.

and households. This could potentially be a restriction for women doing camping, as they would need to have this support in the first place to be able to become deminers.

### Mobility and safety

It was reported that, despite the advantage of finishing work early in the afternoon, having to leave home early in the morning when it is still dark was a cause for safety concerns among female deminers, especially younger ones. Some intoxicated young men are allegedly aware of the working schedule of the young female deminers and wait for them in isolated paths that the women cross to head to work early in the morning. The concerns are reportedly more frequent in rural areas. The women interviewed contrasted this situation with the garment industry, which would schedule buses to pick them up early in the morning and drop them off late at night. Having their husbands also work as deminers in the same shifts was mentioned as a solution to safety concerns by a number of interviewees.

The issue of safety when travelling has not been brought up by deminers camping. From what could be inferred from individual interviews and FGDs, women and men who camp live in separate accommodation and travel to and from their work locations together.

### Uniforms

Male and female deminers are issued uniforms for their work. Both groups reported having immense respect for their organisations' uniform, and what it stands for. However, the enumerators reported that the topic of the uniform was regularly mentioned when surveying female deminers. Many female deminers had mentioned feeling self-conscious because they had to wear trousers and tee-shirts, which are tight on the hips. Many of them explained that their first time wearing tee-shirts and trousers was with the demining uniforms. In discussions with the enumerators, female deminers mentioned trying to change to traditional clothing after work before going back to their village. If they are not able to, many reported receiving uncomfortable looks by community members, which may make them not feel as a 'Tamil family girl'.<sup>60</sup>

Once the topic of uniforms was first brought up by the enumerators, opinions on the topic were integrated in individual and group interviews. In an individual interview, a female deminer shared that she had heard comments about not being seen as a 'Tamil family girl' because she is a mother of two children and should not be wearing tee-shirt and trousers. The uniform was a source of shame and cultural transgression for a respectable Tamil woman. She shared that the comments were hurtful to the point that she thought about resigning. Many female deminers reported having been made fun of by their community members, and closer to home sometimes by their own families and husbands. One of them recalled that her husband asked her 'Can I wear your jeans when I go outside?'.<sup>60</sup>

During an FGD, interviewees picked up the topic of the uniform and linked it with the pride and respect associated with different occupations. For example, jobs in the garment sector or in government were seen as especially good because they allowed women to wear a sari at work, which in the local culture is seen with pride. There is also

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<sup>60</sup> The Tamil family girl, it was explained, is a respectable woman who upholds Tamil values and protects the reputation of her family by acting respectfully in the family, community, and at work, including by wearing culturally appropriate clothing.

an age and body size component to wearing tee-shirts and trousers. While it is more acceptable for younger and smaller women to wear these clothes, older or rounder women are sometimes subjected to hurtful comments.

It is worth noting that the war brought about significant changes to gender norms, including women's clothing style. However, as a number of women used to be LTTE combatants, some men expressed having gotten used to seeing them in less traditional clothes. Therefore, the demining uniform was not perceived by many interviewees as problematic.<sup>61</sup>

## 6.4 Perceptions of gender norms by deminers, family and community members

### 6.4.1 Female deminers

- Nine in ten female deminers reported an increase or strong increase in financial independence.
- 98% of female respondents were more confident that women could be employed in the same jobs as men.
- 94% of female respondents were more confident that women can financially support their families.
- Seven in ten female respondents believed that female deminers were perceived more positively by female and male community members since their employment in mine action.
- 86% of female deminers expressed more confidence in sharing their opinions in their household.
- For most female deminers, this was their first experience working alongside men and required some adjustment.
- The majority of male and female deminers saw the employment of women in mine action positively.

### Deminers' perceptions of themselves

There is strong evidence that women's perception of their own confidence, usefulness, and relationships with others had become more positive since working in mine action. 95% of female deminers expressed having more confidence in themselves since their employment. Many interviewees agreed that incurring risks and having to face challenges daily contributed to increasing their self-esteem and confidence in themselves. Other motivations behind this change included having an equal salary to men, being able to financially support their families, and increasing the safety of their communities. In addition, promotions at work and the acquisition of new technical skills were mentioned as contributing factors. This shared sense of increased self-esteem is reflected in further data collected through the survey: almost all (98%) female deminers interviewed reported being more confident that women can be employed in the same

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<sup>61</sup> It should also be noted that negative perceptions associated with the uniform are allegedly most prevalent in Tamil villages and communities. This issue of clothing is reportedly different in Sinhalese regions or in more multicultural settings. However, for the women from Tamil villages, the best option remained leaving home in their own traditional clothing and being able to change into their uniforms on site, and vice versa.

jobs as men, and that women can financially support their families (94%). During an interview, one deminer shared that she feels 'as good as any man'. A supervisor shared that she believes she has earned *adhigaaram*<sup>62</sup> by facing the danger of the job and the responsibilities it entails. She added that clearing land made her feel like 'the queen of the region'.

At the same time, different women had different understandings of self-confidence. For some female deminers, more confidence entailed financial empowerment – nine in ten respondents reported increased or strongly increased financial independence. For another group, their direct contribution to the safety of the community increased their respect among female and male community members.<sup>63</sup> Other interviewees identified confidence with being able to stand up for themselves at work to protect their rights.

Nine in ten female deminers saw themselves as more useful to their communities. According to several interviewees, female deminers felt like they were generally looked at with respect by their respective community members. Significant changes were noted in female deminers' relationships with each other, their families, and their community members. The discipline acquired through the job was mentioned multiple times as a positive outcome of employment. A supervisor explained that the job taught her to be more patient and to listen and communicate respectfully with colleagues. Working in a stressful environment, she learnt to disregard negative comments and to be more understanding and compassionate towards her colleagues' fears and stressful moments. In addition, she said that her enthusiasm and high energy level were recognised as positive additions to the workplace.

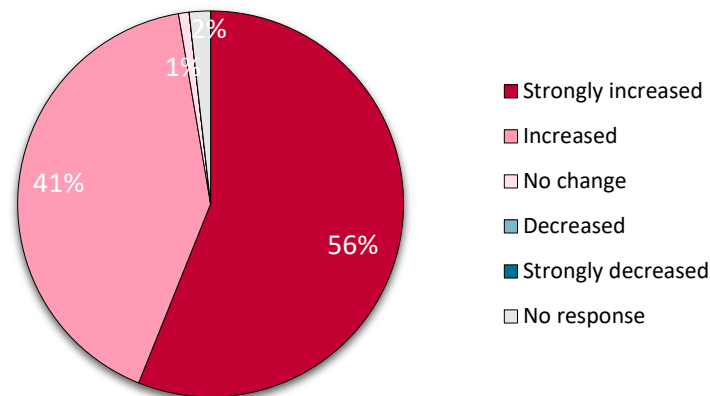
In addition, an overwhelming number of female respondents (98%) mentioned feeling more useful to their families following their employment. Approximately seven in ten female deminers believed that women working in mine action are considered more positively by their female and male family members alike. Additionally, according to 86% of female deminers, their knowledge and confidence to express their opinions in the household had either increased or strongly increased since their employment.

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<sup>62</sup> The Tamil word *adhigaaram* can be translated with the English terms 'power' or 'authority'.

<sup>63</sup> This was further confirmed by survey findings. Nine in ten female deminers declared seeing themselves as more useful to their communities since their employment in mine action.

### Percentage of female deminers' confidence to express opinions in the household



### Adjusting to the new job

According to many interviewees, when female deminers first join, they would tend to be quiet and unsocial. Many would be homesick, especially as they are not allowed to keep contact with their families during working hours<sup>64</sup>. Interviewees also explained that getting used to the equipment may take time. Female deminers were reported as becoming more confident and outspoken over time. According to a female interviewee, once women join demining, they are exposed to a different model of a woman compared to what they are used to at home. She explained that women would not have had much exposure to different female models since they are mostly at school or at home. Contact with other female colleagues, both from their same communities or from other parts of the country, in a context in which women are valued for their demining abilities instead of unpaid household work, allegedly contributes to changing women's self-perception.

The adjustment process may be longer for women working in 'camping' arrangements. For most, this would be the first time they spend an extensive period of time away from their families. According to a female supervisor in a camping site, once women get used to the living and working spaces, they usually develop close relationships among themselves, especially as they live in shared accommodations. According to both male and female colleagues, over time female deminers become progressively more engaged with the team.

### Workplace culture and relationships

The majority of male and female deminers saw the employment of women in mine action positively. The stable source of income deriving from this job was considered especially beneficial for FHHs, due to their situation of increased precarity.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> As a rule, cell phones are not allowed in the minefields for safety reasons.

<sup>65</sup> Despite the overwhelming support towards the employment of female deminers, it is worth noting that a limited minority of male deminers reported that some of their colleagues expressed resentment towards female deminers, seeing them as taking job opportunities away from men. This is especially relevant in the context of



While workplace relationships were presented as overwhelmingly positive a few male interviewees mentioned having noticed instances where female deminers would spread rumours about each other, usually in retaliation for promotions or other work-related benefits. These rumours, which usually had a sexual undertone, were expected to have an especially negative impact on single women, potentially jeopardising marriage prospects.

The reputation of single women working in 'camping' arrangements was also presented as being at risk of damage, especially in case of misunderstandings by community members about how female and male accommodations were separated. Sexual rumours were perceived as especially compromising for Tamil women coming from conservative families. Important efforts are made by the organisations and the staff to ensure that the neighbouring communities are aware that women and men in camps have separate accommodations, toilets, showers, and other basic services. This is crucial to counteract the spreading of hearsay.



Focus group discussion, The HALO Trust

#### 6.4.2 Family and community members

- According to more than seven in ten female deminers, their family and community members would look more positively upon women who financially support themselves.
- An average of nine in ten female and male deminers believed that their community members had become more confident that women could do the same jobs as men.
- 'Bravery' was one of the most common word used by community members to describe female deminers.
- Family and community members believed that willpower was more important than physical strength to be a deminer.
- Not having to 'work in other people's homes' as maids or help was perceived as a source of pride in local culture.
- Leaving small children alone at home to go to work was a controversial topic.

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the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, as demining offers one of the most stable and profitable working arrangements in this area.

## Family members

The findings below highlight the extent to which family members' perceptions of female deminers, as well as expectations about women in general, can shift following the employment of their female relatives in mine action. This confirms previous anecdotal evidence on the potentially transformative impact of the employment of women in mine action.<sup>66</sup> Female deminers reported that, since they started working in mine action, both male and female family members started to look more positively upon women who financially support themselves (72% and 75% respectively). Female deminers also expressed that their family members had become more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men. The comparatively high and stable salary of female deminers was expected to increase not only the financial but also the social status of their families.

At first, the families of many female deminers did not support their employment, mostly due to safety concerns. One of them shared that at first her parents used to wait for her at the end of the workday. In most cases, these concerns decreased with time, as family members became more familiar with safety procedures and training requirements that all deminers are obliged to undertake. While for some family members, fear for the female deminers' safety had not necessarily decreased over time, they recognised demining was the highest-paying job in the area.

Some female deminers shared changes in their own attitudes and expectations towards their own female family members. One female deminer explained that, prior to her recruitment, she would tell her daughters to be careful and impose stricter rules on them than on her sons. Now, she would encourage them to engage in activities which she had previously prohibited, such as climbing trees or helping with housing renovation projects. Another female deminer reported encouraging her female friends and family members to inspire young girls in their households to be brave and outspoken.

## Community members

Nine in ten female and male deminers surveyed believed that their community members had become more confident that women could do the same jobs as men. Seven in ten respondents were also convinced that their community members had started to look more positively upon women working in mine action. These positive changes can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as continued exposure to female deminers over time, as well as witnessing them clearing the land in the areas of operations. At the same time, according to male community liaison officers working in Vavuniya district, female deminers were most likely seen by community members while walking to and from the minefields. Therefore, community members often would only have a limited view and understanding of the role of a deminer in action and may find it difficult to distinguish male and female deminers under their protective gear. Female deminers also shared that they had been approached by community members who were curious about their work tasks.

Most interviewed community members expressed gratitude for land clearance. 'If they were not here, we could not be here and be smiling,' explained one interviewee. At the

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<sup>66</sup> GICHD. [Gender Mainstreaming in mine Action: Powerful Linkages for Progress Across the SDGs](#). 2018.

same time, most interviewees explained that the first time they saw female deminers at work, they were concerned for their safety. While they all expressed fear for male deminers as well, this feeling appeared stronger in relation to women. Some interviewees believed that men were generally more prone to taking risks, which would make them more used to dangerous situations such as handling explosive ordnance.

Other community members expressed feeling pity for the female deminers, believing that they must have been forced by daring financial needs in the household to undertake this job. This applied especially to women who were the sole or primary income earners in the household. This sense of commiseration was especially reported regarding pregnant female deminers. Many community members felt sorry for female deminers who worked in the heat and had to wear heavy personal protective equipment (PPE). One male interviewee reported initial surprise towards female deminers, because it is unusual in the area for women and men to be treated equally, including in terms of pay.

### Respect and status in the community

Many of the themes addressed before are intrinsically linked to female deminers' changing social and financial status, and how this was reflected in the community. Seven out of ten respondents agreed that their community members looked more positively at women who financially support their family. The fact that community members positively considered female deminers as self-reliant, was mentioned as an important reason for respect within the community. Discussions around being self-reliant were recurrent during the interviews, and it was defined as finding pride in not being 'a slave to someone else'. Allegedly, a person would be perceived as a 'slave' when forced to 'work in the other people's homes'<sup>67</sup> to make a living. Therefore, working as a deminer signalled dignity and independence, two qualities highly regarded in Tamil culture.

Other respondents were more careful about associating pride with this specific job, considering any activity that brings remuneration without resorting to illegal means to be in itself the biggest source of pride. 'It is the way that we do work that matters,' explained one male community member. 'It's what's in the heart that matters,' added another. 'There are no jobs that bring more respect than others. People do what they can with their education level and capacity,' and 'Work is your God,' continued others.

### Changes in gender norms in the community

When asked about how communities perceive men and women working together in mixed teams, different perspectives were presented. Two section leaders, one man and one woman, agreed that mixed teams were progressively becoming more accepted by the community. 'The demining community has helped changing the community's perspective on female deminers,' reported one female section leader. In addition, a group of male interviewees explained that, even in Muslim-majority communities, in which men and women do not usually work together, mixed teams were well-received as they worked for the safety of the community. According to other male colleagues, female deminers were highly respected by women in the community precisely because they worked side by side with men in mixed teams.

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<sup>67</sup> For instance, the job of a maid would be considered 'working in someone else's home'.

Interviewees across different communities overwhelmingly believed that women are strong enough to be deminers and explained that mental strength was more important than physical abilities to work in a traditionally 'male' domain. In addition, a desire to provide for the family, willpower, and eagerness to try and learn new things were highlighted as useful skills. 'Bravery' was one of the most common adjectives word used to describe female deminers.

Some male community members mentioned having changed their sceptic perception of women's ability to do the same jobs as men thanks to female deminers, and that they now believed that women could work as fast as men. They added that what was relevant was the quality of clearance and acknowledged that this was not related to the gender of the deminer. At the same time, some women reported being inspired by female deminers and considering them as role models. They added that seeing them in action made them want to become deminers themselves.

Gender norms with regards to traditionally male or female occupations have also been changing in the last several years. War has allegedly changed gender norms, making it more acceptable for women to undertake traditionally masculine jobs such as handling explosive ordnance. One woman mentioned 'Women can do all the things that men can do. I can climb on top of a coconut tree or drive tractors.' She explained that these skills were learnt by many women during the war. It was also mentioned that women used to carry weapons during the war and are used to heavy tasks.

However, rigid gender norms about the role of men and women in the family and in the community were still seen as creating challenges. For example, the unemployed husband of a female deminer explained that community members, both male and female, would make negative comments about the fact that he was not the breadwinner in the family. He added that while he was aware of these rumours, they did not affect him as what mattered was that his wife was able to contribute to the household at a time in which he was facing challenges being recruited as a deminer himself.

The topic of leaving children at home during the day to go to work presented mixed answers from community members. Many interviewees across both genders agreed that leaving children alone was not acceptable in households where both parents were present. If both decided to work, then they were likely regarded as 'greedy' and 'running after money'. In such cases, it was perceived as more appropriate for women to stay at home and take care of the children, as 'fathers can't take care of children in the same way.' On the other hand, a male community member believed that 'times have changed', meaning that men today could look after the children and take on a share of household chores. This change may be attributed to influence from outside the family unit, such as shifts in gender norms during the civil war. When it came to FHHs, sympathy for having to leave their children alone was expressed by all interviewees. In this case, the need to provide for the family was perceived as a fair motivation for leaving the children alone to go to work. Having older children or family support was presented as a key facilitating factor.

According to other interviewees, the only factor that would prevent women from working outside the household is the husband's demand that they stay at home and take care of the children. Without the approval of the husband, married women allegedly cannot become deminers. As leaving children alone is considered inappropriate and hiring help is too expensive, the presence of grandparents or other

close relatives who are available to take care of the children was presented by many as a key requirement for married women with working husbands to be able to go to work themselves. A different perspective was expressed by the wife of a male deminer who used to work in mine action herself before having children. She reported being interested in going back to demining work, explaining that 'one income in the family is not enough.'

## 6.5 Demobilisation and skills acquisition

- More than half of male deminers were employed in informal daily jobs prior to their recruitment in mine action.
- Four in ten female deminers could not indicate which sectors they worked in before their mine action experience.
- Most men and women believed that they would work in agriculture if they were not employed in mine action.
- Knowledge of Sinhala and/or English improved for many deminers across genders.
- A number of respondents reported that there is a risk that many women, especially primary income earners will be forced to turn to illegal activities if other job opportunities will not be available after demobilisation.

### Past employment and future prospects

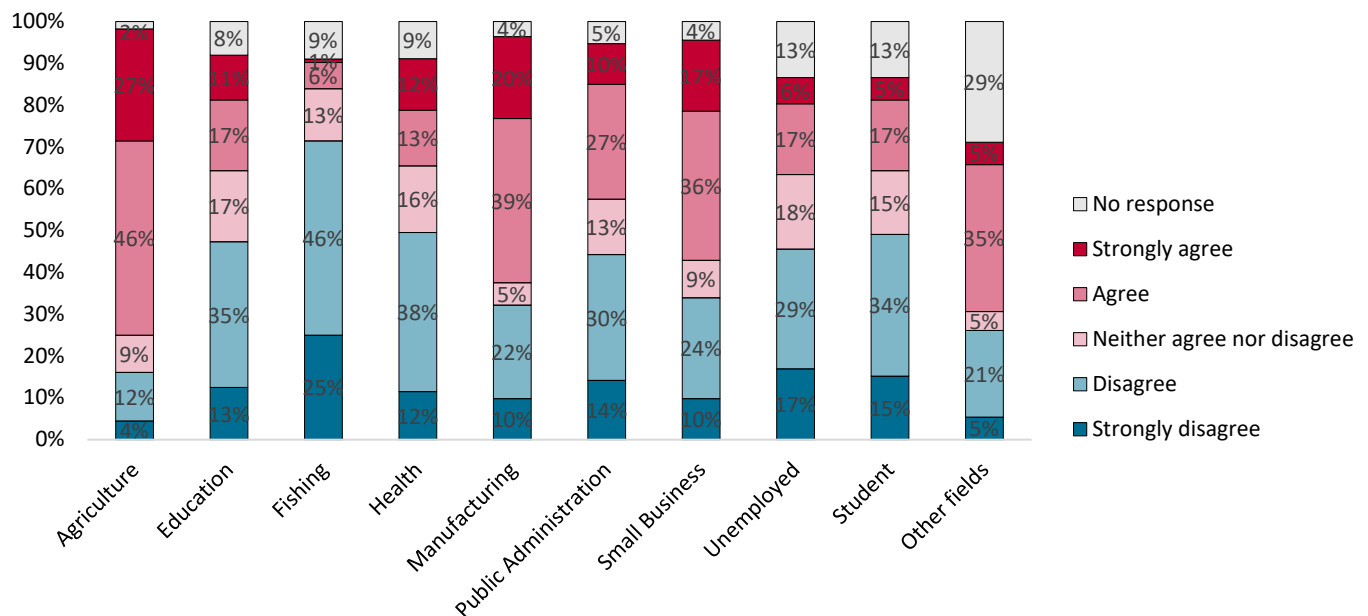
The dependence on mine action employment to access resources and services was frequently highlighted. While demining provides good and reliable sources of income, many interviewees were concerned about the sustainability of their employment, as they were aware that Sri Lanka was becoming closer to being free of landmines. It is worth noting that the demobilisation of deminers and mine action staff was not the focus of the research, and direct references to the topic were not included in the methodology. However, it is believed that some of the information gathered could prove useful as Sri Lanka moves forward toward completion of its mine survey and clearance obligations of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

In the surveys, male and female deminers interviewed were asked what sectors they used to work in during their previous employment. 26% of men interviewed answered that they used to work in agriculture. More than half of men interviewed answered 'other'. This answer mostly referred to having worked as masons, painters, tailors, cooks, drivers, or in the construction sector. These would most likely take the form of daily jobs. Four in ten female deminers answered 'not applicable', likely because they were not employed before. 15% of women used to work in manufacturing, and 14% in agriculture. 26% answered 'other'. When asked about what those jobs would be, it was believed by the enumerators and the female deminers themselves that they would be mostly involve working in 'other people's homes,' for instance as cleaners.

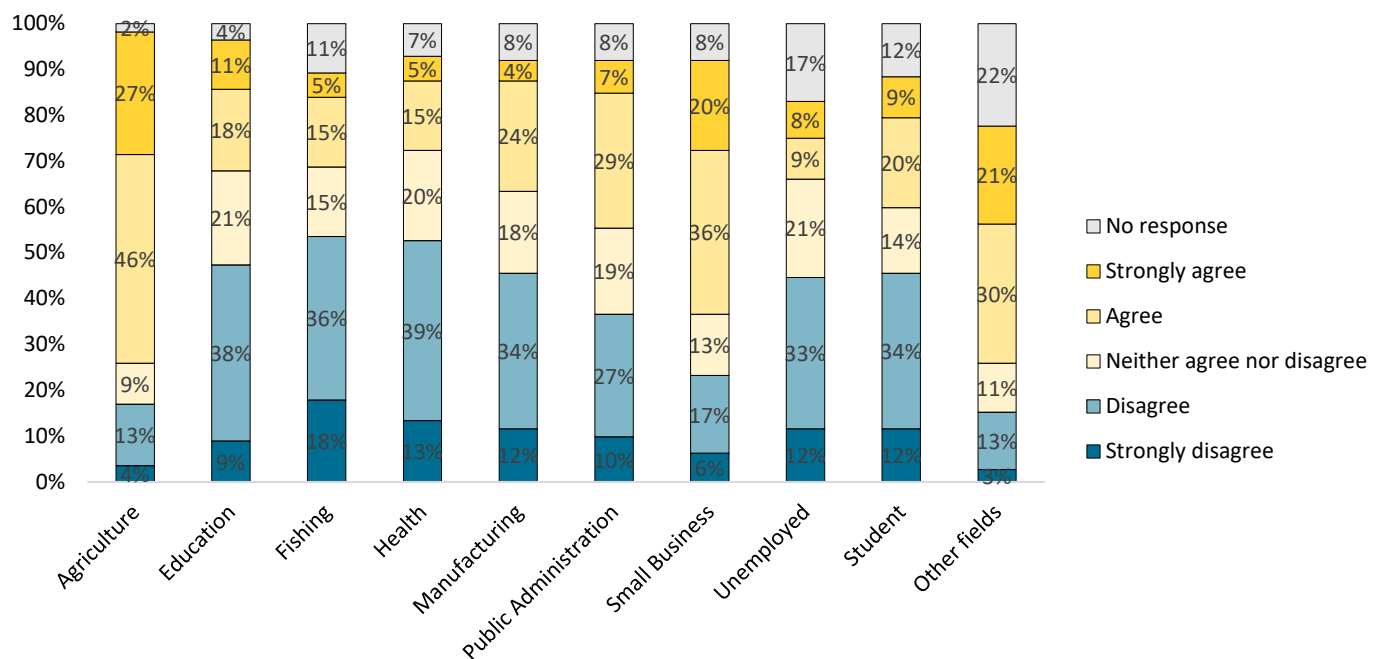
The women and men participating in the survey were further questioned on their likeliness to work in sectors other than mine action. Three in four men agreed that they would be likely or very likely to work in agriculture. More than half said that they would be likely to own or work in small businesses, and again half said that they would do 'other' work than the ones listed in the survey. The sectors men would be most unlikely to work in were education (47%) and manufacturing (46%). Women indicated that if they

were not working in mine action, they would most likely be working in agriculture (73%), manufacturing (59%), and having or working for small businesses (52%). They would least likely be working in fishing (71%), health (50%), and education (47%).

Percentage of female deminers' likeliness to work in other sectors



Percentage of male deminers' likeliness to work in other sectors





## Skills acquired

96% of men and 85% of women agreed or strongly agreed that demining had provided them with greater leadership skills. Three in five men and half of women also reported having gained computer skills.<sup>68</sup> More than nine in 10 men and women reported an increase in first aid skills. Nine in ten women and men also experienced an increase in their management and time management skills. 97% of men and 95% of women agreed that mine action has provided them with skills to better work in teams, nine in ten women and men report having better communication and mediation skills. 81% of men and 65% of women also reported having developed their language skills, especially in Sinhala and English, thanks to training offered by their organisation, or through interactions with colleagues and beneficiaries.

## Illegal work

Many male and female survey respondents, interviewees and FGD members mentioned that if there were no opportunities for waged employment for women, it would not be unusual for them to turn to illegal activities to sustain themselves and their families. Waged employment opportunities mostly seemed to be found in the garment sector, in mine action, or through demand for maid/cleaning services.

The topic of illegal work was mostly brought up in the context of conversations about female employment in Sri Lanka. When prompted to clarify what was meant by illegal work, both male and female interviewees explain that it consisted mostly, for women, of prostitution and drug dealing, mainly of opium and weed. Through the interviews, it was discovered that drug dealing is, allegedly, most often carried out by women. It was also shared on many instances that waged employment means that women do not need to turn to illegal activities to make a living.

Mine action provides great employment opportunities for women-headed households, or as described above, women without a partner to provide an income to the family, whether widows of war, abandoned women, women with 'on and off' husbands, or with husbands who may not be in a condition to work (for example due to a disability). Without this source of income, many of these households would be in dire financial precarity. Based on discussion with male and female deminers alike, as well as community members, it was highlighted that those women who carry the responsibility to provide for their families can find themselves in extreme situations of vulnerability. The findings highlight a high extent of vulnerability of this group of women and the need to monitor closely their situation, both in relation to their current employment and for future livelihood opportunities when Sri Lanka is declared mine free.

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<sup>68</sup> This was mostly the case when being assigned different tasks during light duties, pregnancy leave, or for professional training.

## Conclusion

In November 2019, the GICHD carried out fieldwork across several locations in Sri Lanka's Northern Province to identify the impact of the recruitment of female deminers on their individual socio-economic status as well as on broader perceptions of gender norms within their families and communities at-large. In doing so, the GICHD has completed one of the first large-scale research projects to substantiate anecdotal information on the positive impact of employing female deminers with empirical evidence. Sri Lanka was selected as a case study because of the longevity of its demining operations and high proportion of female demining staff, which offered a broad range of data across a sustained period of time. As the final output of this research project, the present report provides an in-depth description and analysis of the fieldwork's findings.

This research gathers empirical evidence on the contributions of employing female and male deminers across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in terms of access to and ownership of resources like water and food, shelter, land plots, energy, and transportation. It also measures increased access to services like education, health care, and financial services. In addition, the research takes a deep dive into the larger socio-economic impact of employment women, such as increase in their financial independence, confidence in speaking for themselves, and belief that they can work in the same jobs as men. All these measurements of changes in perceptions indicate shifts in feelings of empowerment. Additional information gathered from family and community members also report greater changes in norms around female deminers.

Some of the findings of the project were unexpected or could not be explored sufficiently due to time and resource constraints. However, they may prompt further research, both in Sri Lanka and in other explosive ordnance-affected countries which already deploy or plan to recruit female demining staff. For example, it would be relevant to conduct more in-depth research on how marital status and other considerations affect the extent to which female deminers face a double burden in relation to unpaid care work. A more systematic use of comparative analysis of perception changes between male and female deminers could also be useful to understand how employment in the same roles (and possibly in the same mixed teams) influences views on traditional gender norms. Nonetheless, this study can be regarded as a relevant contribution to the limited evidence available worldwide on the medium- to long-term effects of employing female demining staff on gender norms and perceptions at the individual, family, and community levels. Furthermore, it also aspires to offer valuable information to guide the integration of gender-related considerations in demobilisation systems and practices. As Sri Lanka is on the road to become mine-free, ensuring that the demobilisation of male and female deminers is reflective of their specific capabilities, interests and vulnerabilities is imperative. This study is a first step towards raising awareness of the importance of thoughtful and inclusive demobilisation.

# ANNEX I

## Impact of Clearance on Socio-Economic Development

While not being the focus of the study, extensive information on the impact of clearance on the socio-economic development of the communities interviewed were gathered. Here is a comprehensive summary of the main findings per region, for women and men.

- Clearance activities have enabled hundreds of people to resettle and start their livelihood activities again.
- Across regions, clearance gave access to land for resettlement and livelihood activities, including cultivation, grazing, fishing, etc.
- For many communities, clearance has given access to schools, health facilities, and religious sites.
- The clearance of roads enabled most communities to travel to access resources, including stores, pharmacies, government offices, etc. It also facilitates women and men finding more employment opportunities.

### Livelihood activities

A common theme throughout the interviews with community members was that clearance was a primary enabler for women and men to resume livelihood activities and access employment opportunities. Women and men often have different occupations and opportunities for livelihoods. While agriculture seems to be appropriate for both men and women, men tend to occupy most daily waged labour, such as construction or masonry work. Fishing is also a strictly male occupation. Women work in agriculture, or work from home by sewing or weaving baskets they then try to sell. Those who are formally employed work as maids or in the garment sector. Otherwise, their role is mostly to take care of the household, the children and other domestic tasks. According to the community members interviewed, the one job opportunity that seemed to be equally accessible to men and women across the regions visited is demining.

### Mannar district

Focus group discussions (FGDs) taking place in the Mannar District highlighted the importance of the role of MAG in clearing paths in the jungle areas. Through interviews with community members in the Mannar District, the impact of clearance was described to be centred around the jungle. 'We depend on the forest,' explained a community member. It is in the jungle that they can obtain firewood, wood for construction, as well as do some hunting and honey collection. Clearance of the jungle area has also freed land necessary for cattle grazing. The safety of animals was put forward by the interviewees. Thanks to clearance, they are finally able to move around safely.

## Kilinochchi district

Extensive demining operations are taking place in Kilinochchi District by The HALO Trust, SHARP and DASH, mostly but not exclusively in and around the Muhamalai Forward Defence Line. Interview participants from the areas outside the Muhamalai Forward Defence Line confirmed that their respective communities were contaminated when they came back after the war. Now they have access to land to cultivate paddy fields, peanuts, and eggplants. They were able to rebuild houses.

One of the biggest changes has been access to services, especially to schools and hospitals thanks to clearance and the reconstruction of roads. New roads also enable them to reach Kilinochchi town, where a variety of services can be found, such as the marketplace, post office, as well as the council office which provides administrative services such as the issuing of birth certificates and land property certificates.

## Muhamalai minefields

In the Muhamalai minefields, SHARP accounted for more than 150 resettled people as recently as 2017. In meetings with community members, they shared that before the war there used to be an abundance of coconut trees, which were key resources both as food and as material to build roofs. After resettling, people have started to farm again, and most importantly, they are able to cultivate coconuts. Coconut trees and paddy fields were presented as the two main priorities for recovery. For one village in the Muhamalai minefield in which community members have recently resettled, 2020 will be the first year they will yield harvest from the recently planted coconut trees.

Recent resettlement was a common theme throughout the interviews taking place in Muhamalai. In a meeting with beneficiary communities from The HALO Trust operations, community members who had just been resettled explained that the task at hand was going to be reconstruction. 'Before, there were huts, and trees. Housing is now here, but the coconut trees are all gone.' Their plan is to plant them all again. The Muhamalai region also offers lagoons where people can fish. Other livelihood activities include hunting for deer and wild boar, or collecting timber, all of which may be illicit depending on the context. According to community members, there are limited opportunities for waged employment for women. Women work primarily in farming (coconuts, paddy fields, vegetables), milking animals and selling their products. Therefore, their livelihoods heavily depend on the cleared land. The women who don't work in the fields most likely weave or sew and sell the outputs of their work. Men have more opportunities for waged employment, including masonry, construction work, painting, and farming.

In the Muhamalai second defence line, the clearance of a road has allowed, according to SHARP, its daily use by more than 1000 children and adults to go to school or work, as well as access most basic services. In The HALO Trust cleared land, community members rely heavily on cycling to access services, and most people can now cycle to facilities such as schools or the nearest health centre.

Another focus group discussion with female community members highlighted how the clearance of a main road has enabled them to reach the town of Kilinochchi, where most facilities are based, such as grocery stores, clothing stores, pharmacies, the post office and government offices. The road permits them to have access to those services as

customers, but also opens the possibility for employment opportunities they would not have without clearance.

### Nagarkovil, Jaffna district

In Nagarkovil, a village on the East Coast of Northern Sri Lanka, community members have faced similar challenges after resettling: 'At first, it was like a desert.' They explained they had to first find and identify their land, fence it, and rebuild houses. The roads also needed to be rebuilt, and the Hindu temple reconstructed. The men started fishing again, even though many community members still report how substantial remains of wartime equipment in the sea damages their fishing nets. They planted coconut trees, and other plants and bushes. Both women and men cultivate and sell blackberries. All of this was made possible by clearance in the area. Women in the focus group discussions confirmed that fishing and other daily waged labour are strictly men's jobs. Women cultivate or sew.

The community members say they now have electricity and water, but electricity is not accessible everywhere yet. The school had been destroyed, but it reopened in 2014 after reconstruction, allowing children to go to school regularly. They also said that the road to Kilinochchi is now safe to travel. This is particularly important because 'everything except fish needs to be bought in Kilinochchi', referring to clothing, cooking supplies, medication, and other basic necessities.

# ANNEX II

## INTERVIEW FORM FOR DEMINERS (FEMALE)

### FOR ENUMERATOR USE ONLY

E.1. Name of Enumerator	E.2. Date of survey	
<b>LOCATION</b>		
L.1. District	L.2. Municipality	L.4 Village (if applicable)

### CODING SYSTEM FOR SECTIONS X

1	2	3	4	5	0
Strongly decreased	Decreased	No change	Increased	Strongly increased	No response

### CODING SYSTEM FOR SECTIONS X

1	2	3	4	5	0
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No response

### INTRODUCTION

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am working on behalf of the GICHD, an organisation based in Geneva that works in humanitarian demining. The organisation is conducting a survey on the impact of employment of women in the mine action sector. The results will be written up in a report, but your personal answers will be kept confidential. Your answers will not affect your employment with your organisation. We would like to begin by interviewing you. Participation in the survey is voluntary and you are free to decline to answer any or all questions. This survey will take a maximum of 60 minutes to complete and is anonymous.

### 1- CONSENT

1.1 Are you happy to participate in this survey?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Thank the respondent for his/her time and proceed to the next question.

### 2 - RESPONDENT DETAILS

2.1 Survey Respondent number:

2.2 Position of interviewee in the organisation:

2.3 Sex of interviewee:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- Prefer not to say

2.4 Age of interviewee:

2.5 Marital status

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Cohabiting
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ No response
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say



## Basic Information

Please list the gender and age of all household members (people who live with you), and how they are related to you?

	Relationship	Gender	Age	Occupation
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Were you working before working in mine action?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to say

For how many years? (insert numbers)

*Ask only if the answer to the previous question was 'Yes' - Where were you working before mine action?*

- a. Agriculture and farming
- b. Education
- c. Fishing
- d. Health care
- e. Manufacturing (textiles, etc.)
- f. Public administration
- g. Small business
- h. Student
- i. Tourism
- j. Other

What level of schooling have you completed?

- a) Primary schooling
- b) Secondary Schooling
- c) College Education
- d) No formal schooling
- e) Other
- f) Prefer not to say

Were you or your household forced to leave your home because of the war?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

Are you or anyone in your household currently forced to live outside of your home because of the war?

- a) Yes

- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

For how many years have you been working in mine action? *(insert number only)*

To what extent do you agree with the following statement (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree):

If I were not working in mine action, I would most likely be working in...	<u>Code (0 to 5)</u>
Agriculture and farming	
Fishing	
Public administration (village, district, government administration, etc.)	
Tourism	
Manufacturing (factories, plants, etc.)	
Education (teacher, etc.)	
Health care	
Student	
Unemployed	
Others	

Are you living with a disability (defined as any physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments)?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

If yes, are you a landmine survivor?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

In LKR, approximately how much income do you and your family members currently contribute to your household per month? *(insert numbers only)*

	Figure in LKR
Myself	
Partner	
My children	
My parents	
My partner's parents	
Family abroad	
Other relatives	

## Access to resources and services

Which of these could you acquire thanks to your employment in mine action?

	Asset		
1 .	Property	1.1	Plot of land
		1.2	Garden
		1.3	House
		1.4	Apartment
2 .	Livestock	2.1	Cattle (cows, bulls)
		2.2	Swine (pigs)
		2.3	Chicken
		2.4	Fisheries
3 .	Technology	3.1	Electricity
		3.2	Running water
4 .	Telecommunications	4.1	Landline
		4.2	Mobile phone
		4.3	Data
		4.4	Internet
5 .	New appliances	5.1	Stoves
		5.2	Fridge
		5.3	Washing machine
		5.4	Dishwasher
6 .	Transportation	6.1	Car
		6.2	Motorcycle
		6.3	Bicycle
7 .	Financial services	7.1	Bank accounts
		7.2	Access to loans
		7.3	Insurance
9 .	Prefer not to say		

Observations:

How much were you paid per month in your previous job before being employed as a deminer? *(Insert numbers only)*

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action?

Statement	Code (0 to 5)
Access to food	
Access to potable water	
My purchasing power (capacity to buy goods)	
My ownership of land and property	
My ability to undertake small-scale farming	
The number of children in my household who can go to school	
The number of years spent by children in my household in school	
Access to education for myself	
Access to education for other adult family members (siblings, family-in-law, partner etc.)	
Access to health care services for myself and my family	
Clothing for myself and my family	
Access to medication and prescriptive drugs for myself and my family	
Access to psychological and mental health services for myself and my family (counselling, peer support, consultation with a trusted person, etc.)	

Have you ever needed psychological and mental health services? *(The interviewer should mention again that the survey is anonymous and that the interviewee's answer to this question will have no impact on their employment)* **IMPORTANT: THIS QUESTION SHOULD ONLY BE ASKED ON A 1:1 BASIS.**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

### Self-perception, the family and the community

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action.

Statement	Code (0 to 5)
My perception of being useful to my family	
My perception of being useful to my community	
My energy level when I spend time with my family	
My interest and motivation to spend time with my family	
My interest in my community	
Confidence in myself	
The importance I give to my own happiness and well-being	

The importance I give to the happiness and well-being of my friends and family	
The extent to which I feel safe from the danger of mines in my community	

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action.

<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Code (0 to 5)</u></b>
Technical skills	
Leadership skills	
My financial independence	
Confidence in my capacity to work and provide for myself and my family	
Confidence that women can work as deminers	
Confidence that women can support their family financially	
Confidence that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	

Please rate the level of change (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Code (0 to 5)</b>
My female family members look more positively upon women working in mine action	
My male family members look more positively upon women working in mine action	
My female family members look more positively upon women who financially support their family	
My male family members look more positively upon women who financially support their family	
My female family members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	
My male family members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	

My female community members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	
My male community members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	
My female community members look more positively upon women who financially support their family	
My male community members look more positively upon women who financially support their family	
My female community members look more positively upon women working in mine action	
My male community members look more positively upon women working in mine action	

### Decision-making power and influence

Compared to before your work in mine action do you take more, less, or the same amount of decisions on money allocations and expenditures in the household?

- a) Less
- b) Same
- c) More
- d) I only take decisions on the money I earn myself
- e) Other
- f) Prefer not to say

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action.

<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Code (0 to 5)</u></b>
Knowledge and confidence to express my opinions in my household	
Time I spend on chores in my household	
Time other female family members spend on household chores	
Time other male family members spend on household chores	
Time spent with my children	
Time spent with my other family members	



Confidence to express my opinions freely during community discussions and decisions	
Time spent attending religious activities and celebrations	
Confidence to express my opinions in discussions and decisions at my workplace	
Extent to which I feel I can speak up if I feel like I face unfair treatment at my workplace	
Knowledge of my rights at work (working hours, vacation, maternity leave, health insurance, etc.)	
My female family members take my opinion more seriously	
My male family members take my opinion more seriously	
Female community members take my opinions more seriously	
Male community members take my opinions more seriously	

On average, how many hours a day do you spend on household chores now? *(Insert numbers only)*

How many hours a day would you spend on household chores before employment in mine action? *(Insert numbers only)*

### Impact of work

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree):

Employment in mine action has provided me with...	<u>Code (0 to 5)</u>
Leadership skills	
Computer skills	
First aid (medical care)	
Management skills	
Teamwork skills	
Communication skills	
Time management skills	
Mediation skills	
Language skills	

To what extent do you agree with the following statements (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree):

Since I started working in mine action...	<u>Code (0 to 5)</u>
My female family members believe I have gained new technical skills	
My male family members believe I have gained new technical skills	
My female family members believe I have gained new leadership skills	
My male family members believe I have gained new leaderships skills	

# Annex III

## INTERVIEW FORM FOR DEMINERS (MALE)

FOR ENUMERATOR USE ONLY		
E.1. Name of Enumerator		E.2. Date of survey
LOCATION		
L.1. District	L.2. Municipality	L.4 Village (if applicable)

CODING SYSTEM FOR SECTIONS X					
1	2	3	4	5	0
Strongly decreased	Decreased	No change	Increased	Strongly increased	No response

CODING SYSTEM FOR SECTIONS X					
1	2	3	4	5	0
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No response

INTRODUCTION
<p>Hello. My name is _____ and I am working on behalf of the GICHD, an organisation based in Geneva that works in humanitarian demining. The organisation is conducting a survey on the impact of employment of women in the mine action sector. The results will be written up in a report, but your personal answers will be kept confidential. Your answers will not affect your employment with your organisation. We would like to begin by interviewing you. Participation in the survey is voluntary and you are free to decline to answer any or all questions. This survey will take a maximum of 60 minutes to complete and is anonymous.</p>
1- CONSENT
<p>1.1 Are you happy to participate in this survey?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
Thank the respondent for his/her time and proceed to the next question.

2 - RESPONDENT DETAILS		
2.1 Survey Respondent number:		
2.2 Position of interviewee in the organisation:		
<p>2.3 Sex of interviewee:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>Prefer not to say</p>	<p>2.4 Age of interviewee:</p>	<p>2.5 Marital status</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Single</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cohabiting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Married</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Divorced</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Widowed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No response</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say</p>

## Basic information

Please list the gender and age of all household members (people who live with you), and how they are related to you?

	Relationship	Gender	Age	Occupation
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Were you working before working in mine action?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to say

For how many years? (insert numbers)

*Ask only if the answer to the previous question was 'Yes' - Where were you working before mine action?*

- a) Agriculture and farming
- b) Education
- c) Fishing
- d) Health care
- e) Manufacturing (textiles, etc.)
- f) Public administration
- g) Small business
- h) Student
- i) Tourism
- j) Other

What level of schooling have you completed?

Primary schooling  
Secondary Schooling  
College Education  
No formal schooling  
Other  
Prefer not to say

For how many years have you been working in mine action? *(insert number only)*

To what extent do you agree with the following statement (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree):

<b>If I were not working in mine action, I would most likely be working in...</b>	<b><u>Code (0 to 5)</u></b>
Agriculture and farming	

Fishing	
Public administration (village, district, government administration, etc.)	
Tourism	
Manufacturing (factories, plants, etc.)	
Education (teacher, etc.)	
Health care	
Student	
<b>Unemployed</b>	
Others	

Are you living with a disability (defined as any physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments)

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

If yes, are you a landmine survivor?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer not to say

In LKR, approximately how much income do you and your family members currently contribute to your household per month? *(insert numbers only)*

	Figure in LKR
Myself	
Partner	
My children	
My parents	
My partner's parents	
Family abroad	
Other relatives	

### Access to resources and services

Which of these could you acquire thanks to your employment in mine action?

	Asset		
1	Property	1.1	Plot of land
		1.2	Garden
		1.3	House
		1.4	Apartment
2	Livestock	2.1	Cattle (cows, bulls)
		2.2	Swine (pigs)
		2.3	Chicken
		2.4	Fisheries
	Technology	3.1	Electricity

3		3.2	Running water
4	Telecommunications	4.1	Landline
		4.2	Mobile phone
		4.3	Data
		4.4	Internet
5	New appliances	5.1	Stoves
		5.2	Fridge
		5.3	Washing machine
		5.4	Dishwasher
6	Transportation	6.1	Car
		6.2	Motorcycle
		6.3	Bicycle
7	Financial services	7.1	Bank accounts
		7.2	Access to loans
		7.3	Insurance
9	Prefer not to say		

Observations:

How much were you paid per month in your previous job before being employed as a deminer? *(Insert numbers only)*

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action.

Statement	Code (0 to 5)
Access to food	
Access to potable water	
My purchasing power (capacity to buy goods)	
My ownership of land and property	
My ability to undertake small-scale farming	
The number of children in my household who can go to school	
The number of years spent by children in my household in school	
Access to education for myself	
Access to education for other adult family members (siblings, family-in-law, partner etc.)	
Access to health care services for myself and my family	
Clothing for myself and my family	
Access to medication and prescriptive drugs for myself and my family	

Access to psychological and mental health services for myself and my family (counselling, peer support, consultation with a trusted person, etc.)	
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### Impact of work

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree):

Employment in mine action has provided me with...	Code (0 to 5)
Leadership skills	
Computer skills	
First aid (medical care)	
Management skills	
Teamwork skills	
Communication skills	
Time management skills	
Mediation skills	
Language skills	

### Perception of female deminers at work, with the family and the community

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action alongside female deminers.

Statement	Code (0 to 5)
Confidence that women are strong enough to be deminers	
Confidence that female deminers can clear as much ground as male deminers	
Confidence that women can support their family financially	
Confidence that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	

Please rate the level of change (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action alongside female deminers.

Statement	Code (0 to 5)
My female family members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	



My male family members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	
My female community members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	
My male community members are more confident that women can be employed in the same jobs as men	
My female community members look more positively upon women who financially support their family	
My male community members look more positively upon women who financially support their family	
My female community members look more positively upon women working in mine action	
My male community members look more positively upon women working in mine action	

Please rate the level of change (strongly decreased, decreased, no change, increased, strongly increased) in the following statements, since you started working in mine action alongside female deminers.

<b>Have you noticed a change in female deminers since their employment in...?</b>	<b>Code (0 to 5)</b>
Leadership skills	
Technical skills	
Confidence to express their opinions freely in discussions and decisions at the workplace	
Confidence in themselves	
Female community members take their opinions more seriously	
Male community members take their opinions more seriously	
Knowledge of their rights at work (working hours, vacation, maternity leave, health insurance, etc.)	
Extent to which they feel like they can speak up if they are treated unfairly at their workplace	

# Annex IV

## Focus Group Discussion Questions

### Introduction

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for the Geneva Centre, an organisation that works in humanitarian demining. The organisation is conducting a survey on the impact of employment of women in the mine action sector. We would like to interview you and get your opinions and experiences. The results will be written up in a report, but your personal answers will be kept anonymous. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to decline to answer any or all questions. This should take around 60 minutes.

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself?
2. How long have you lived in this village?
3. Do you have a relative (male or female) who is employed by the ORG?
4. How familiar are you with HALO/MAG/SHARP/DASH and their work?
5. How has your life in the village changed since the arrival of the ORG?
  - Have you seen a change in your access to food, water, land, education, health care?
  - Are there things you can do today that were not possible before MAG/HALO/SHARP/DAH arrived?
6. The ORG employs a lot of local staff, and especially women. At first, did you think women could work as deminers? (if yes/no, why?)
7. What were your reactions when you saw or heard about women working in minefields the first time?
8. How has your initial reaction changed? How differently do you think of women working as deminers compared to men?
9. Before women started working in mine action, what were they doing in the family and community? What were their roles and responsibilities?
10. How do women both work and fulfil those roles (described previously)?
11. What are the bad consequences of women working as deminers? What affects you most?

- Change in the family? Taking care of the household? Taking care of children?

12. What changes have you witnessed in women who started working as deminers?

- Financial, confidence, outspoken, taken more seriously, less time at home, less participation in the community?

13. Do you think the community members treat female deminers with more respect (now that they're employed)?



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