GICHD Insights

ENABLING MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN MINE ACTION

Practical guidance for national mine action authorities and national mine action centres



Attendee of YPS and Mine Action workshop, Colombia © CCCM

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This brief is one of three complementary publications examining the relationship between youth, peace, and security (YPS) and mine action. Together, they consider the evidence for youth engagement in mine action, opportunities to strengthen the integration of mine action within YPS policy frameworks, and the role of national mine action institutions in enabling meaningful youth participation.

Youth Engagement in Mine Action: Evidence from Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine examines how young people are already contributing to mine action, the conditions that enable meaningful participation and leadership, and the barriers that continue to limit opportunities and influence.[1]

Mine Action and Youth, Peace and Security: Practical Guidance for Integrating Mine Action into YPS National Action Plans provides guidance for governments and YPS stakeholders on recognizing the implications of explosive ordnance (EO) contamination within YPS policy frameworks and integrating mine action into the development and implementation of YPS National Action Plans.[2]

This brief, *Enabling Meaningful Youth Engagement in Mine Action: Practical Guidance for National Mine Action Authorities and National Mine Action Centres*, focuses specifically on national mine action authorities (NMAAs) and national mine action centres (NMACs). It considers how they can use their existing mandates and functions to create an enabling environment for meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable youth engagement within national mine action programmes.



Youth active in delivering EORE, Colombia © CCCM

WHY YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MATTERS TO NATIONAL MINE ACTION PROGRAMMES

Young people already contribute to mine action as educators, communicators, community mobilizers, advocates, practitioners, and emerging leaders. Evidence from Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine shows, however, that these contributions often take place outside formal mine action structures and remain dependent on individual projects, organizations, or individuals.[3]

Meaningful youth engagement can strengthen mine action by improving communication with affected communities, supporting more accessible and relevant explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), and creating additional channels for community participation.[4] Experiences from Ukraine and Somalia also demonstrate how youth-centred approaches can contribute to community ownership and support broader recovery outcomes.[5]

Youth engagement is also relevant to the long-term sustainability of the mine action sector and wider recovery efforts. Pathways through volunteering, internships, mentoring, training, and employment can enable young people to develop skills and experience needed to progress into professional and leadership roles–strengthening national capacity over time.[6] These pathways can also expand livelihood opportunities and enable young people to contribute to longer-term recovery, resilience, and peacebuilding.

Participation does not necessarily mean influence. Young people may be present in consultations or activities without having meaningful opportunities to shape priorities or decisions.[7] Furthermore, not all young people have equal opportunities to participate. Factors such as gender, disability, ethnicity, geography, displacement, and socio-economic status can shape who participates, whose perspectives are heard, and who is able to access professional and leadership opportunities.[8]

FROM YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES TO AN ENABLING NATIONAL SYSTEM

For national mine action programmes, the question is therefore not simply whether young people participate, but whether national systems and frameworks enable diverse young people to participate meaningfully, safely, and sustainably, as well as to influence decisions where relevant. NMAAs and NMACs can support youth engagement through their existing mandates and functions.

The role of NMAAs and NMACs is not specifically to develop or directly implement youth-specific activities. They can, however, help to establish the conditions in which meaningful youth engagement can be supported, coordinated, and sustained across the national mine action programme–by using existing institutional functions rather than establishing parallel youth structures or programmes.

The respective roles of NMAAs and NMACs vary according to national arrangements. In general, NMAAs provide strategic direction and exercise national responsibility for mine action, while NMACs support the coordination and implementation of the national programme.[9] The recommendations in this brief should therefore be applied based on function rather than institutional title.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL MINE ACTION AUTHORITIES

The following recommendations identify practical ways in which NMAAs can strengthen meaningful youth engagement across national mine action programmes. They are organized around the relevant core functions set out in the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) "Guide for the Establishment of a Mine Action Programme" and should be adapted to national priorities, structures, and contexts.[10]

Mine action legislation and institutional frameworks

When developing or reviewing mine action legislation and institutional frameworks:

- Provide for the participation of young people and youth organizations in relevant consultation and coordination mechanisms.
- Ensure mine action legislation and institutional frameworks do not create unnecessary barriers to the participation of diverse young people.
- Where appropriate, define institutional responsibility for supporting and coordinating youth engagement within existing national mine action structures.

Advice to government

When advising other government bodies on mine action policies, priorities, and international commitments:

- Highlight the implications of EO contamination for young people and for national youth, peace, and security (YPS) commitments.
- Promote coordination between mine action institutions and ministries or bodies responsible for youth, peacebuilding, and YPS.
- Advocate for mine action to be reflected in relevant national policies and plans, including YPS National Action Plans.[11]

National policy and strategy

When developing or reviewing national mine action policies and strategies:

- Consult diverse young people, particularly those from EO-affected communities.
- Identify how youth leadership and engagement can support national mine action goals, including EORE, community involvement, recovery, and advocacy.
- Include relevant commitments and actions on youth engagement in national strategies and implementation plans.

Reporting

To better understand and demonstrate youth engagement:

- Include available age- and sex-disaggregated information on participation and, where appropriate, information on disability and other contextually relevant characteristics.
- Where possible and relevant, report on the nature and quality of youth engagement, rather than participation numbers alone.

National Mine Action Standards, regulations, and guidelines

When developing or reviewing National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), regulations, and related guidance:

- Include requirements for inclusive and age-appropriate community engagement where relevant.
- Ensure EORE requirements address the different risks, behaviours, and communication needs of young people.
- Include requirements or guidance for operators to establish accessible mechanisms through which young people can provide feedback on activities that affect them.
- Review recruitment, training, and professional development requirements to ensure they do not create unnecessary barriers for young people entering and progressing within the mine action sector.

Resource mobilization

When mobilizing and allocating resources:

- Reflect relevant youth engagement priorities and resource needs in national resource mobilization efforts and donor discussions.
- Calculate and highlight resource needs associated with inclusive youth participation, including engagement with local youth and community organizations.
- Promote sustained investment in youth participation and capacity development where these contribute to national mine action priorities.

Oversight of national mine action centres

When overseeing the work of the NMAC:

- Ensure that relevant commitments to youth engagement in national policies, strategies, and plans are reflected in the work of the NMAC.
- Review progress on relevant youth engagement priorities through existing oversight and reporting mechanisms.
- Use oversight processes to identify significant gaps between national commitments on inclusive participation and their implementation.



Attendee of YPS and Mine Action workshop, Colombia © CCCM

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL MINE ACTION CENTRES

The following recommendations identify practical ways in which NMACs can strengthen meaningful youth engagement through coordination and planning, information management, implementation, standards, accreditation, and monitoring.

Coordination and planning

When coordinating mine action priorities and plans:

- Engage relevant youth organizations and networks in national and subnational consultation and planning processes.
- Reflect relevant priorities identified by young people in mine action planning and coordination with wider humanitarian and development plans.

Information management and analysis

When gathering and analysing information:

- Collect and analyse relevant mine action data disaggregated by age, sex, and, where appropriate, disability and other contextually relevant characteristics.
- Use findings to inform priorities, planning, and programme adaptation.

Implementation of the national mine action plan

When translating national policy and plans into operational practice:

- Ensure relevant commitments to youth engagement are reflected in annual and operational plans.
- Support appropriate opportunities for young people to contribute to EORE, community engagement, and other relevant activities.
- Ensure accessible and safe mechanisms are available for young people to provide feedback on activities affecting them.

National Mine Action Standards and procedures

When developing NMAS, procedures, and operational guidance:

- Integrate relevant requirements for inclusive, age-appropriate, and safe youth engagement.
- Ensure EORE and community engagement requirements reflect different risks and communication needs among young people.
- Provide operators with practical guidance for applying these requirements.

Accreditation and monitoring of operators

When conducting accreditation and monitoring of operators:

- Assess operators against relevant requirements for inclusive and safe youth engagement.
- Use monitoring findings and youth feedback to identify gaps and improve practice.

INSTITUTIONALIZING MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful youth engagement is more sustainable when it is embedded in national mine action systems rather than dependent on individual projects or organizations. NMAAs and NMACs can use the framework below to assess current practices, identify gaps and prioritise actions to strengthen meaningful youth engagement.

Getting started: how to use the framework

1. Map existing engagement: Identify where and how young people currently contribute to mine action.

2. Consult young people: Engage youth organizations and diverse young people, particularly from EO-affected communities, to understand their experiences and perspectives.

3. Assess institutional practices: Use the maturity framework to review existing policies, strategies, standards and coordination mechanisms, identifying strengths, gaps and barriers.

4. Identify priorities for action: Based on the assessment, select practical changes to strengthen youth engagement within national mine action systems.

Use the framework below to assess each area of institutional practice and identify where further action is needed.

Youth Engagement Maturity Framework

	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	INSTITUTIONALIZED
Policy and planning	Youth engagement is largely project-based.	Youth engagement is recognized in some policies, strategies, or plans.	Youth engagement is integrated into relevant national policies, strategies, and plans and reflected in resource mobilization priorities.
Coordination and participation	Young people are engaged occasionally.	Youth organizations participate in some consultations or coordination processes.	Diverse young people have regular opportunities to contribute to relevant consultation, planning, and coordination processes.
Information and analysis	Limited data on young people is collected.	Age-disaggregated data and youth perspectives inform some analysis.	Data and youth perspectives routinely inform priorities, planning, and adaptation.
Standards and implementation	Practice depends largely on individual operators.	Some guidance or requirements address youth engagement.	Relevant standards, guidance, and operational processes systematically support inclusive and safe youth engagement.
Monitoring and accountability	Participation is mainly measured by numbers.	Quality and diversity of participation are sometimes assessed.	The quality and inclusiveness of youth participation and youth feedback are routinely monitored and used to improve practice.
Leadership and pathways	Opportunities are informal or occasional.	Internships, mentoring, or entry-level opportunities exist.	Clear and inclusive pathways support young people to enter, develop, and progress within the sector.

CONCLUSION

Young people are already contributing to mine action in affected communities and across the sector. The challenge is to ensure that these contributions extend beyond individual projects or one-off opportunities and are supported through national mine action systems.

NMAAs and NMACs can play a central role by integrating meaningful youth engagement into their existing functions–from policy and planning to coordination, information management, standards, implementation, and oversight. This does not require separate structures or programmes for young people; rather, it means ensuring that national systems enable diverse young people to participate meaningfully, contribute their knowledge and perspectives, and influence decisions that impact them and their communities.

Embedding youth engagement in this way can help NMAAs and NMACs fulfil their mandates more effectively. Young people's perspectives and capacities can strengthen understanding of affected communities, improve the relevance and reach of EORE and community engagement, inform priorities and planning, and enhance feedback and accountability. Creating pathways for young people to develop skills and enter the sector can also build national capacity and future leadership. Meaningful youth engagement is therefore not an additional area of work, but an approach that can strengthen the effectiveness, responsiveness, and sustainability of national mine action programmes, while contributing to wider recovery and peacebuilding outcomes.

ENDNOTES

1 Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), Fundación LATIR, and Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas (CCCM), *Youth Engagement in Mine Action: Evidence from Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine* (Geneva: GICHD, 2026).

2 GICHD, Fundación LATIR, and CCCM, *Mine Action and Youth, Peace, and Security: Practical Guidance for Integrating Mine Action into Youth, Peace, and Security National Action Plans* (Geneva: GICHD, 2026).

3 GICHD, Fundación LATIR, and CCCM, *Youth Engagement in Mine Action*.

4 GICHD and CCCM, Youth, Peace and Security and Mine Action Workshop, Bogotá, Colombia, November 2025.

5 United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), "Virtual Reality Technology: Improving Awareness of Explosive Risks in Ukraine," accessed 2 April 2026, https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/stories/virtual-reality-technology-improving-awareness-of-explosive-risks-in-ukraine; Ukrainian Deminers Association (UDA), "Walk Safe: Educational Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Game for Children," accessed 14 July 2026, https://www.uda.org.ua/en/walk-safe-en/; UN Somalia, "On Safer Ground: Supporting Efforts to Make Somalia Free of Explosive Remnants of War," last modified 3 April 2022, accessed 22 May 2026, https://somalia.un.org/en/176807-safer-ground-supporting-efforts-make-somalia-free-explosive-remnants-war.

6 Semi-structured interviews with young mine action practitioners and youth leaders, Colombia, May–June 2026.

7 Focus group discussions with young mine action practitioners and peacebuilding actors, Bogotá, Colombia, November 2025; Graeme Simpson, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (New York: UN, 2018), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3846611?ln=zh_CN&v=pdf.

8 Emily Laws, *The Impact of Mines and Explosive Remnants of War on Gender Groups* (Birmingham: Governance & Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham, 2017), http://gsdrc.org/publications/the-impact-of-mines-and-explosive-remnants-of-war-on-gender-groups/; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and GICHD, *Gender and Diversity in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC)* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2023), https://unidir.org/publication/gender-and-diversity-in-the-anti-personnel-mine-ban-convention; GICHD and CCCM, Youth, Peace and Security and Mine Action Workshop, Bogotá, Colombia, November 2025; Simpson, *The Missing Peace*.

9 International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), IMAS 02.10, Guide for the Establishment of a Mine Action Programme, 1st ed., Amendment 3, June 2013, https://www.mineactionstandards.org/standards/02-10/.

10 Ibid.

11 GICHD, Fundación LATIR, and CCCM, *Mine Action and Youth, Peace, and Security.*

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GICHD

The GICHD works to reduce risks to communities stemming from explosive ordnance, with a focus on landmines, cluster munitions, explosive remnants of war, and unsafely and insecurely managed conventional ammunition. As an internationally recognized centre of expertise and knowledge, the GICHD helps national authorities, international and regional organizations, NGOs and operators in around 40 affected countries and territories to develop and professionalize mine action and ammunition management.

Through its work, the GICHD strives for the fulfilment of international obligations, for national targets to be reached, and communities' protection from and resilience to explosive harm to be enhanced. These efforts support sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and inclusion. They save lives, facilitate the safe return of displaced populations, and promote peace and sustainable development.

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