

# GICHD Insights

## BUILDING ON THE PAST, FACING THE FUTURE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SIEM REAP-ANGKOR OUTCOMES IN AN EVOLVING GLOBAL CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

On 29 November 2024, after a week of – at times – intense exchanges, the Fifth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) (also referred to as the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World) successfully came to a close. As one of its main outcomes, the Conference adopted the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan (SRAAP),<sup>1</sup> which will guide efforts to implement the Convention until the Sixth Review Conference in 2029.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of a worsening global security environment and increasing pressure on international humanitarian law, as exemplified in current conflicts in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Within this broader context, international instruments applicable to mine action met challenges of their own, with one State – Lithuania – announcing its decision to withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), and others reconsidering their membership of the APMBC. Discussions during the latest annual conferences of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) were also deadlocked over disagreements on the rules of procedure.<sup>2</sup>

This issue brief analyses some of the key provisions of the SRAAP, showing how they build not only on its predecessor – the Oslo Action Plan (OAP) of 2019<sup>3</sup> – but on 25 years of lessons learned in a process of continuous improvement, and adaptation to changing operational environments and new challenges.

The brief also considers the broader context of the Conference outcome, illustrating the potential impact of international developments, both political and financial, on APMBC implementation and on the overall system of international humanitarian law of which the Convention is considered a part.<sup>4</sup>

A few days before the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit, the United States of America (State not party to the APMBC) announced that it had approved a transfer of anti-personnel mines (APMs) to Ukraine (a State Party),<sup>5</sup> triggering public condemnation by civil society organizations, complicating negotiations of the Siem Reap-Angkor Political Declaration, and generally placing further strain on the international norms against landmines.

Under these difficult circumstances, a successful outcome of the Summit was not assured. Its positive conclusion represented a critical reaffirmation of the international community's commitment towards this historic humanitarian disarmament treaty.

## THE SIEM REAP-ANGKOR ACTION PLAN: KEY ELEMENTS

The SRAAP resulted from a consultative and transparent process that ran throughout 2024, with the text of the OAP serving as its starting point. Alternating formal and informal consultations with several rounds of written inputs by interested stakeholders, this endeavour faced the challenge of updating an already comprehensive and detailed text while keeping it as realistic and as succinct as possible. As with any process of negotiation, this required a careful balancing of diverse views, which ultimately led to a solid roadmap for action that built not only on the text of the OAP, but on 25 years of experience and lessons learned in the overall mine action sector.

The SRAAP maintains the OAP structure with an initial section outlining best practices to implement the Convention and seven thematic sections on universalization, stockpile destruction and retention of anti-personnel mines, survey and clearance of mined areas, mine risk education (MRE) and reduction, victim assistance, international cooperation and assistance, and measures to ensure compliance.

The Plan includes an updated monitoring framework, first introduced in the OAP, comprising

107 indicators that will allow for the measuring of implementation advancement. While greater in number, the SRAAP indicators are more focused and more clearly defined than those in the OAP, enabling a more accurate and targeted tracking of developments. As with the OAP, the SRAAP also provides for the establishment of a first-year baseline against which progress in subsequent years will be assessed.

Finally, the SRAAP reiterates that information submitted by States Parties through their Article 7 transparency reports will be the main source of data to assess progress.<sup>6</sup> While an independent monitoring system might arguably offer a more robust assessment of implementation, such an approach would depart from the Convention's foundational reliance on mutual trust and the principle of good faith implementation.

In terms of content, the SRAAP is more comprehensive and coherent than its predecessor, in at least two ways: it more clearly connects APMBC implementation to broader global efforts, including on development, human rights, and humanitarian action; and it places stronger emphasis on a strategic, long-term approach to national implementation, with a focus on building sustainable national capacities.



Closing of the Fifth Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention in Cambodia (c)ISU/CMAA

## The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention as part of broader global efforts

While pursuing an objective that relates primarily to disarmament, the APMBC recognized in its preamble that mine contamination poses a threat to the lives and safety of people but is also an obstacle to long-term development and reconstruction, as well as the repatriation of displaced populations.<sup>7</sup>

Over the years, and through successive action plans, this link with global agendas has grown in scope and application. Early notions of connections between APMBC implementation and development, human rights and health, often limited to victim assistance, have now shifted to a more comprehensive understanding of how the implementation of *all* Convention obligations contributes to, and sometimes enables, progress in global agendas spanning a wide set of themes. The connection is operationalized through the commitment, in Action #1 of the SRAAP, to integrate APMBC implementation into “national development plans, strategies and budgets including on poverty reduction, humanitarian response, health and mental health, gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, peacebuilding, human rights, climate change adaptation, environmental protection and improvement and/or disaster risk reduction”.

References to the integration of climate and environmental considerations, which are introduced for the first time in an APMBC Action Plan,<sup>8</sup> are included as a distinct best practice and weaved into the rest of the document, especially in the sections on stockpile destruction, and survey and clearance. References to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda are also included for the first time, even if in introductory paragraphs rather than through specific actions.<sup>9</sup>

The SRAAP further commits states to “Ensure that survey and clearance are prioritized based on clear nationally driven humanitarian and sustainable development criteria.”<sup>10</sup>

Taken together, these updates reinforce the notion that, in addition to offering its own value – most notably in protecting civilians – mine action is an enabler, and part of a broader set of efforts that should guide planning and prioritization. In so

doing, the SRAAP moves the focus from outputs (square metres cleared, number of casualties and victim assistance beneficiaries) to outcomes (how these outputs contribute to broader development goals), pushing towards more coherent national efforts and, potentially, facilitating the insertion of mine action financing into broader development and humanitarian assistance programmes (beyond humanitarian emergency contexts).<sup>11</sup>

## Investing in sustainable national capacity development

Strong national ownership remains the bedrock of APMBC implementation, which is grounded in the principle that “individual States Parties are responsible for implementing the Convention’s obligations in areas within their jurisdiction or control”.<sup>12</sup> The OAP was the first plan to clarify what national ownership entails: high-level interest in fulfilling Convention obligations and addressing challenges, clear measures for implementation, adequate human, financial and material capacities, and regular significant national financial commitments – a definition that was repeated almost verbatim in the SRAAP.<sup>13</sup>

The SRAAP builds on this notion of national ownership, placing greater emphasis on the **sustainability** of national capacities, which is added as a best practice for implementation. Sustainable capacities are defined comprehensively as those needed “to coordinate, regulate, and manage the national mine action programme including survey, clearance, mine risk education, and victim assistance and undertake post completion activities”.<sup>14</sup> The SRAAP also reiterates the need for states to establish or maintain sustainable capacities to address residual contamination post completion, comprising newly discovered or newly mined areas.<sup>15</sup>

The SRAAP also features explicit mentions of localization that were absent or captured indirectly in previous action plans.<sup>16</sup> It adds a best practice on “Strengthened localization efforts to support the sustainability of interventions” and includes contributions to local organizations among the channels for international assistance.<sup>17</sup> This is a long overdue formal acknowledgement of two interrelated elements: first, that the development of endogenous structures, frameworks and capacities

is the best way to ensure the long-term management of risks posed by known and residual explosive ordnance contamination, adequate support to mine victims, and effective protection of civilians through MRE. Second, that the inability of local organizations to directly access international assistance has been a key stumbling block to effective localization in this sector, as in others.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the SRAAP maintains the OAP's strong focus on evidence-based planning and implementation, specifically in actions relating to national strategies,<sup>19</sup> the establishment of contamination baselines,<sup>20</sup> work plans on survey, clearance, and MRE,<sup>21</sup> work plans to be included in Article 5 extension requests,<sup>22</sup> and the collection of information on victims as a basis for "comprehensive and sustainable" responses.<sup>23</sup>

### **Leaving no one behind**

Building on the OAP, which already contained strong language on gender and diversity, the SRAAP clarifies that gender and "diverse needs and experiences" must be taken into account across all areas of Convention implementation.<sup>24</sup> New references to gender and diversity are included in the section on survey and clearance, providing that States Parties will develop national work plans "in an inclusive manner" and "ensuring consideration for gender, age, disability, the diverse needs and experiences of people in mine-affected communities including mine survivors, climate, and the environment to achieve completion as soon as possible".<sup>25</sup> Action #19 also provides that survey and clearance should be prioritized "based on clear nationally-driven humanitarian and sustainable development criteria with consideration for gender, age, disability, the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities including mine survivors", with a corresponding indicator to measure progress. Section VIII of the Plan also recognizes that cooperation and assistance "should be responsive to gender, age, disability, climate, and environmental considerations among others".<sup>26</sup>

The SRAAP also strengthens provisions on accessibility and inclusivity, adding a best practice on the "inclusion and meaningful participation of mine survivors in all areas of the Convention's implementation" and the "removal of logistic

and administrative barriers to implementation" as one element to ensure "effective partnership, coordination, cooperation, and regular dialogue between stakeholders".

Finally, the Plan mandates the collection of information disaggregated by gender, age, disability and "other considerations" (sometimes referred to as "other diverse needs and experiences of affected communities") in relation to reporting on MRE programmes,<sup>27</sup> collecting data on mine victims,<sup>28</sup> on survivors and affected families' access to mental health and psychological support,<sup>29</sup> and on social and economic services.<sup>30</sup>

As a result, gender and diversity considerations are mainstreamed consistently throughout the SRAAP, which is particularly important in the current political context. Civil society, including the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, coordinated the drafting of inputs and messaging on this topic through the Gender and Diversity in Mine Action Working Group, ensuring that States Parties adopted language reflecting the operational necessity of gender and diversity mainstreaming in the work of the APMBC, the correct technical terminology, and alignment with broader policy agendas such as WPS.

### **Restating the importance of all Convention obligations**

The SRAAP tries to redress the "balance of focus" across the different APMBC obligations. The Convention contains time-bound commitments on stockpile destruction and clearance of contaminated areas, as well as others that are not time bound. The latter include provisions on MRE, which are embedded in Article 5 on the destruction of APMs in mined areas and referred to in Article 6 on international cooperation and assistance, and on victim assistance, also included under Article 6. While these obligations all have the same standing in the Convention, attention and funding have traditionally been focussed on the time-bound obligations, especially clearance. This is understandable, considering the extent of mine contamination around the world and its direct impact on safety and socio-economic development. However, this imbalance has negatively impacted the implementation of risk





Entrance of the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit, Cambodia, 2024 © GICHD

education, which is essential to protect civilians, especially when clearance cannot take place – and victim assistance – which remains relevant after the achievement of clearance completion.

In several actions and related indicators on sustainable national capacities, national work plans, Article 5 extension requests, and international cooperation and assistance, the SRAAP reiterates that commitments apply to “survey, clearance, mine risk education”, adding “victim assistance” where applicable. While seemingly redundant, this repetition helps to cement the notion that all Convention obligations must be complied with, also implying that adequate resources must be invested in fulfilling all of them.<sup>31</sup>

The OAP had already started to correct this “focus imbalance” by separating actions on risk education from those on survey and clearance, and by significantly strengthening commitments related to risk education. For example, it required states to include “detailed, costed and multi-year plans for context-specific mine risk education and reduction in affected communities”.<sup>32</sup>

The SRAAP embeds risk education more solidly within broader efforts but generally maintains the core commitments of the OAP in this area. The real ‘game changer’ for ensuring that MRE receives adequate recognition and is considered a priority, however, did not come from the SRAAP, but from the Conference’s decision on the machinery and programme of work for the next five years. This decision ensures that all Convention meetings – both Intersessional Meetings and Meetings of the States Parties – will include a sub-item on risk education under clearance, and that a focal point on MRE will be designated within the Committee on Article 5 Implementation.<sup>33</sup>

### Exploring alternative funding sources

The SRAAP further refines the solid framework for international cooperation and assistance that was developed over the years by placing greater emphasis on the role of coordination within affected states and among donors. It also underlines that cooperation and assistance should support all areas of Convention implementation, including in post-completion activities, and that it should be

“responsive to gender, age, disability, climate, and environmental considerations among others”.<sup>34</sup>

In this section, the most significant new element relates to Action #44, by which states commit to exploring “the feasibility of establishing a voluntary trust fund to support affected States Parties struggling to secure international assistance for their legal and time-bound commitments under Article 5 of the Convention”. The results of this feasibility assessment, which has been entrusted to a working group chaired by Norway, will be presented in a report to the Twenty-Second Meeting of the States Parties (MSP) of the Convention (2025), while a decision on the establishment of this voluntary trust fund will have to be made “no later than” the Twenty-Third MSP (2026).

The SRAAP maintains the OAP’s reference to innovative funding sources, adding a specific mention of frontloading mechanisms as one of the innovative finance models that could be leveraged to mobilize resources to implement the Convention.<sup>35</sup>

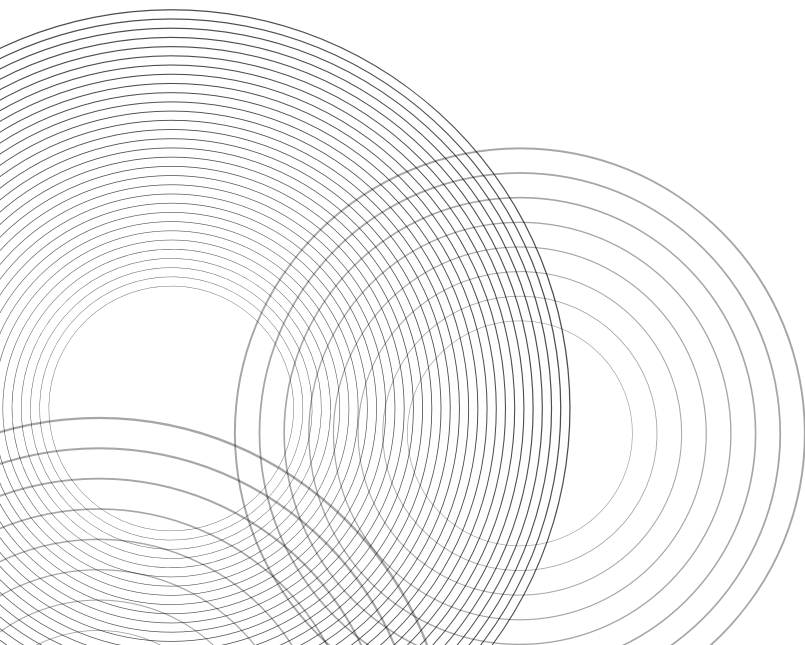
### **The broader context**

The Siem Reap-Angkor Political Declaration was the other main outcome of the Review Conference. As mentioned, its negotiation was complicated by the announced approval, by the United States, of a military assistance package to Ukraine that included “non-persistent APMs”. In Siem Reap, states disagreed on whether this should be reflected in the Political Declaration, more specifically on whether and how the document should enumerate all activities prohibited by the Convention, transfers included.<sup>36</sup>

As a compromise between these divergent views, the final text of the Declaration recalls that “each State Party has undertaken under Article 1 of the Convention never to use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain, or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines under any circumstances.”<sup>37</sup> It also condemns “the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor”, in line with political declarations of past review conferences.<sup>38</sup>

While the Conference succeeded in adopting a strong declaration, disagreements during the negotiations reflected the growing difficulty of upholding the core goals and objectives of the APMBC amid heightened insecurity in some States Parties and a broader shift toward prioritizing state security over humanitarian protection. This shift is manifesting in concrete terms through domestic debates on the withdrawal from the Convention, currently underway in at least five states, prompted by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and in the context of growing security threats in Eastern Europe.<sup>39</sup>

Recent trends in international assistance further cloud the immediate prospects for implementing the SRAAP fully. While the United States’ 2025 decision to drastically cut development assistance<sup>40</sup> – affecting mine action activities among others – was the most visible, it is part of a wider pattern. Several Western donors have reduced their aid budgets, with notable declines in both development and humanitarian assistance.<sup>41</sup> Although comprehensive data on mine action funding remains difficult to obtain, early figures from sources such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Global Protection Cluster, suggest that 2025 will be marked by significant shortfalls.<sup>42</sup> The funding cuts add to existing implementation gaps and delays historically caused by resource shortages, conflicting priorities in donor and affected countries, and technical challenges such as difficult terrain and adverse weather conditions. They also put more pressure on ongoing initiatives to diversify funding sources and move beyond traditional mechanisms of bilateral assistance.





## CONCLUSION

Despite a tense global context, the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World marked two important achievements: it reaffirmed the international commitment to the norms against landmines and adopted a coherent roadmap for implementation that capitalizes on over two decades of mine action experience.

Yet, less than six months later, the APMBC is facing severe and unprecedented political and financial challenges. While financial solutions may emerge in the medium term, the political crisis signals a deeper, systemic debate about the very “rules of the game” – a debate that extends beyond the Convention, threatening the broader international framework for the protection of civilians during and after armed conflict.

The choices made now will shape not only the future of the APMBC but also the credibility of humanitarian norms the world can no longer take for granted.

*This issue brief was authored by Dr. Silvia Cattaneo.*

- 1 Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan 2025-2029 (as adopted at the final plenary meeting on 29 November 2024), UN document [APLC/CONF/2024/15/Add.1](#), Part II, 5 February 2025.
- 2 In 2023 and 2024, annual meetings of the CCW (including those of Amended Protocol II and Protocol V) were blocked or conducted in informal sessions (with no record) because of disagreements on the rules of procedure concerning when and on which agenda items observers could take the floor.
- 3 [Oslo Action Plan](#) (OAP), UN document [APLC/CONF/2019/5/Add.1](#), 29 November 2019.
- 4 This concludes the series of analysis briefs launched by the GICHD in support of preparations for the Fifth Review Conference.
- 5 Jaroslav Lukiv and David Willis, “Biden agrees to give Ukraine anti-personnel mines”, BBC News, 20 November 2024.
- 6 Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan (SRAAP), para. 5.
- 7 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) preamble, first paragraph.
- 8 The APMBC contains two references to the environment: in Article 5 (para. 4(c)) requiring states to inform on the environmental implications of extension requests and in Article 7 on transparency (para. 1(f)), relating to information on the environmental standards to be observed in anti-personnel mine (APM) destruction programmes.
- 9 Para. 3 of the APMBC acknowledges the contribution of Convention implementation to advancing the WPS agenda, in addition to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “as well as other international frameworks and the commitment to leaving no one behind.” Para. 13 recognizes that victim assistance must be integrated into broader national plans relating to the WPS Agenda, among others, to be “effective and sustainable”.
- 10 SRAAP, Action #19.
- 11 Ángela Hoyos Iborra and Svenja Liu, “Mine action and global agendas”, GICHD Insights.
- 12 [Ending the Suffering Caused by Anti-Personnel Landmines: Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009](#), 3 December 2004, Section V(A), para. 6.
- 13 SRAAP, para. 7, footnote 1: “maintaining interest at a high level in fulfilling Convention obligations and addressing challenges; empowering and providing relevant state entities with the human, financial and material capacity to carry out their obligations under the Convention; articulating the measures its state entities undertake to implement relevant aspects of the Convention in the most inclusive, efficient and expedient manner possible and plans to overcome any challenges that need to be addressed; and, making a regular significant national financial commitment to the state’s programmes to implement the Convention.”
- 14 SRAAP, Action #2. The OAP linked the notion of sustainable national capacities specifically to information management systems (Best Practices for implementing the Convention; and Action #9) and residual contamination management.
- 15 OAP, Action #26; SRAAP, Action #21.
- 16 The concept of localization as defined in the framework of the Grand Bargain (enhancing local and national capacities and financial support to local organizations) is not addressed as such in the APMBC or the OAP. However, elements relevant to it are contained in both, as well as successive Review Conference action plans. These include removing barriers to partnerships, supporting local mechanisms, and involving local actors in international mechanisms. See GICHD, “National ownership and localization: progress, challenges, and future directions under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention”, GICHD Insights, p. 1.
- 17 “States Parties in a position to do so will provide assistance to all States Parties in need of support (...) including through multi-year-partnerships and funding and through contributions to local organizations as appropriate.” SRAAP, Action #7.
- 18 As highlighted, for example, during the high-level debate of the Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties (MSP) (2021).
- 19 SRAAP best practices and Action #3. The Cartagena Action Plan of 2009 already viewed the development, implementation and regular review of national mine action strategies and the associated “policies, plans, budget policies and legal frameworks” as one core component of national ownership (Action #16). Ten years later, the OAP committed states to developing “evidence-based, costed and time-bound national strategies and work plans” to fulfill Convention implementation generally, and to guide survey, clearance and mine risk education activities in particular, including towards completion of Article 5 clearance obligations (OAP Actions #2, #19, #24, and #26). In the SRAAP, strategies and work plans are also required to be “context-specific”.
- 20 SRAAP, Action #17.
- 21 SRAAP, Action #18.
- 22 SRAAP, Action #23.
- 23 SRAAP, Action #32.
- 24 SRAAP, Action #5.
- 25 SRAAP, Action #18.
- 26 SRAAP, para 14.
- 27 SRAAP, Action #29. The indicator for this Action refers to “other relevant factors”.
- 28 SRAAP, Action #32.
- 29 SRAAP, Action #36, indicator 1.
- 30 SRAAP, Action #37, indicator 3.
- 31 SRAAP Actions #2, #18, #23, #40, #43.
- 32 OAP, Action #24.
- 33 Final report of the Fifth Review Conference, UN document [APLC/CONF/2024/15](#), para. 40.
- 34 SRAAP, para. 14. See also Actions #42 and #44.
- 35 SRAAP, Action #40.
- 36 Views differed on paragraph 5 of the document as tabled at the opening of the meeting, which recalled that “no State Party can lawfully use, produce, acquire, stockpile, retain, or transfer, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines under any circumstance”. The same paragraph also condemned any violations “by any actor, anywhere, under any circumstances” of the norm against the use of APMs (UN document [APLC/CONF/2024/WP.22](#), 18 November 2024).
- 37 Siem Reap-Angkor Political Declaration, UN document [APLC/CONF/2024/15/Add.1](#), Part II, paragraph 3.
- 38 Siem Reap-Angkor Political Declaration, para. 5.
- 39 At the time of writing, the decision to withdraw from the Convention is at different stages in five countries: Estonia (“Estonian government approves withdrawal from anti-personnel mines ban,” Postimees (English edition), 24 April, 2025); Finland (Reuters, “Finland to exit landmines treaty and hike defense spending given Russia threat, prime minister says,” CNN, 1 April 2025); Latvia (Reuters, “Latvia’s parliament agrees to exit from landmines treaty amid potential Russia threat,” Reuters, 16 April 2025); Lithuania (“Lithuania’s parliament approves exit from landmines treaty amid Russia threat,” Reuters, 8 May 2025); and Poland (Vincenzo Genovese, “EU countries’ withdrawal from anti-landmine convention sparks controversy,” Euronews, 10 April 2025).
- 40 Thomas Escritt, Poppy Mcpherson and Maggie Fick, “Trump’s freeze on US aid rings alarm bells from Thailand to Ukraine”, Reuters, 28 January 2025; Norwegian People’s Aid, “The American funding freeze has severe consequences for Norwegian People’s Aid and global Mine Action”; Poppy Mcpherson and Josh Smith, “U.S aid freeze risks handing influence to China in Beijing’s backyard”, Reuters, 11 February 2025; PeaceTrees Vietnam, “PeaceTrees Vietnam Responds to State Department’s Halt on Mine-Clearing Programs”, 28 January 2025 and updates.
- 41 European Parliament Research Service, “Cuts in US Development Assistance”, Infographic, March 2025; Philip Loft and Philip Brien, “UK to reduce aid to 0.3% of gross national income from 2027”, Insight, House of Commons Library, 28 February 2025; Alice Obrecht and Mike Pearson, “What new funding data tells us about donor decisions in 2025”, The New Humanitarian, 17 April 2025.
- 42 Global Protection Cluster, “Funding Analysis and Protection Risks - Understanding the link and the cost of inaction”, accessed 8 May 2025; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Mine Action Sector: Funding Overview 2025”, accessed 8 May 2025.



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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