

GICHD Insights

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND LOCALIZATION: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS UNDER THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

INTRODUCTION

The success of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) is not solely dependent on its legal framework; it requires robust national ownership and effective localization to ensure full realization of the Convention obligations. The Oslo Action Plan (OAP) 2020–2024, adopted at the Fourth Review Conference (4RC) of the APMBC in 2019, provided a solid strategic framework to advance the goals of the Convention that aimed to advance the principles of localization and national ownership through a set of targeted actions¹ designed to strengthen national capacities, promote inclusive approaches, and enhance the effectiveness of mine action efforts. This issue brief examines the status of national ownership and localization in the implementation of the Convention, highlights best practices, and offers recommendations for enhancing these aspects during the APMBC Fifth Review Conference (5RC) and subsequent implementation cycle.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND LOCALIZATION IN THE CONVENTION

The concept of national ownership and localization have been central to the implementation of the APMBC since its inception in 1997. The Cartagena Action Plan (2010–2014) formally emphasized these principles, encouraging states to develop national capacities, mobilize domestic resources, and actively involve local communities in the implementation of the Convention's obligations.² The Maputo Action Plan (2014) further reinforced the importance of national ownership and localization by calling on affected states to develop national strategies and integrate mine action into broader national frameworks. It also urged states to ensure sustainable national capacities, emphasizing the need for national technical standards and monitoring mechanisms.³ The OAP builds on these foundations by setting out a series of actions aimed at encouraging national ownership and localization. These include: actions that emphasize developing comprehensive national mine action strategies, including integrating mine action into national plans (Actions #1, #2), making national financial commitments (Actions #1, #7, #42), ensuring inclusion and responsiveness to the needs, priorities and vulnerabilities of affected states/countries (Actions #3, #4, #5, #33, #39), integrating mine action into

broader humanitarian, peacebuilding, development, and human rights frameworks (Actions #1, #6, #28, #33), and strengthening and sustaining national capacities (Actions #26, #31, #44, #45).

DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE

In the APMBC, national ownership is defined as maintaining interest at a high level in fulfilling Convention obligations; empowering and providing relevant state entities with the human, financial and material capacity to carry out their obligations under the Convention; articulating the measures state entities will 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.⁴

As defined in the framework of the Grand Bargain, localization refers to enhancing local and national capacities and financial support to local organizations. This concept of localization is not addressed as such in the Convention or the OAP. However, elements relevant to it are contained in both. These include removing barriers to partnerships, supporting local mechanisms and involving local actors in international mechanisms.⁵

STATUS OF PROGRESS ON NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND LOCALIZATION

Institutional and legal frameworks

A robust institutional and legal framework is essential for the effective implementation of mine action activities and the realization of national ownership. This includes the establishment of national mine action authorities, the adoption of relevant legislation, and the development of regulatory mechanisms to oversee mine action activities. Since the 4RC, 75 States Parties reported they have adopted legislation in the context of Article 9 obligations, while 43 States Parties consider existing national laws to be sufficient to give effect to the Convention.⁶ The States Parties have agreed that pursuing fulfilment of Article 9 is an important goal for the Convention in the coming years. However, 46 States Parties did not report on the adoption of national legislation.⁷

While not a specified indicator in the OAP, the number of mine-affected States Parties having a functioning and effective national mine action authority/centre (NMAA/NMAC) is a good reflection of their commitment to national ownership.⁸ In 2023, 31 out of 35 mine-affected States Parties had an NMAA/NMAC in place. Furthermore, 10 States not party had an NMAA/NMAC.⁹ National authorities/centres face challenges such as inadequate resources,¹⁰ limited technical expertise,¹¹ insufficient funding,¹² high staff turnover,¹³ unclear roles and responsibilities,¹⁴ overdependence on donor funding¹⁵ and declining donor funding¹⁶ which hamper their ability to fulfil their mandate. Capacity gaps are highlighted, particularly in newly established national mine action authorities/centres. There is need for targeted capacity enhancement to strengthen these institutions, emphasizing the importance of legal frameworks that clearly delineate roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms.¹⁷

Development of national mine action strategies

A critical measure of national ownership is the development and implementation of comprehensive national mine action strategies in an inclusive manner. In line with international good practice, national strategies should be context specific, present strategic priorities, risks and assumptions and outline a country's road map and resource requirements to meet its Convention obligations. In line with Action #2 of the OAP, 35 States Parties reported having evidence-based, costed and time-bound national strategies and work plans for achieving their mine clearance obligations.¹⁸ Some States Parties have developed detailed multi-year plans with specific targets, timelines, and budgetary frameworks, while others have produced more general documents. Countries like Sri Lanka,¹⁹ Iraq²⁰ and South Sudan²¹ have established comprehensive national strategies that align with OAP objectives. South Sudan has national ownership as a strategy objective,²² it also emphasizes mine action integration into national plans, including the national development strategy.²³ Similarly, Iraq has national ownership as a strategy objective.²⁴

There are still gaps in strategic planning and implementation, particularly in countries affected by ongoing conflict. In these contexts, political instability and limited access to contaminated areas have hampered the development and implementation of effective national strategies.²⁵ The OAP emphasizes the need for national strategies that are both ambitious and realistic considering available resources and the specific challenges faced in each state, urging states to integrate mine action into broader national development and humanitarian frameworks. Since the 4RC, 29 States Parties implementing Article 5 and/or victim assistance obligations have reported including Convention implementation activities into broader national frameworks.²⁶ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, mine action is integrated into national disaster risk reduction strategies, enhancing the resilience of communities to both natural and human-made hazards. A joint GICHD-UNDP

study in Bosnia and Herzegovina linked mine action to 12 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 35 associated targets, highlighting its impact on flood prevention.²⁷ In Cambodia, mine action is integrated into the national poverty reduction strategy, ensuring that mine clearance activities are aligned with broader development goals.²⁸ Meanwhile, in Colombia, mine action is linked to the peacebuilding process, with a focus on the socio-economic reintegration of former combatants and affected communities.²⁹

In 2022, another GICHD-UNDP study on the significant role of mine action in promoting sustainable development in Colombia highlighted the positive impact of mine action on economic growth, social cohesion, environmental protection, confidence-building, and peace efforts. It presented proof of the comprehensive and diverse influence of mine action in the country, highlighting its direct support for 16 SDGs and at least 83 associated targets.³⁰ These examples demonstrate the benefits of aligning mine action with broader development goals as it ensures more coordinated interventions. Maintaining this alignment requires ongoing coordination and commitment from national and international stakeholders. The integration of mine action with broader peacebuilding efforts in Colombia has proven effective but requires continuous adaptation to changing conditions on the ground. The importance of maintaining strong national leadership and engaging local communities in every aspect of mine action are key lessons learnt from Colombia's experience.³¹

Resource mobilization and national funding

National funding is a cornerstone of national ownership. The ability of states to finance their mine action programmes, independent of external aid, is a key indicator of sustainability. Since the 4RC, 33 of the States Parties (74 per cent) implementing Article 5 and/or victim assistance obligations have reported that they have made a national financial commitment to carry out mine clearance and victim assistance obligations under the Convention. However, most of the States Parties have highlighted insufficient national financial resources to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. Prioritizing the allocation of national resources remains a key focus for States Parties.³² Angola's 2022 contribution is unclear, although it supports the national mine action authority – the Agência Nacional de Acção contra Minas – and is the largest donor to The HALO Trust, funding clearance in protected areas near the Okavango Delta in Cuando Cubango province.³³ Cambodia has explored alternative and/or innovative sources of funding and encourages other states to do the same.³⁴

Affected states do not all provide the same level of information on national resources allocated to mine action activities, and some have never done so,³⁵ making it difficult to lay out a fully accurate global picture. However, available information makes it clear that many states rely heavily on international donors, which poses a risk to the stability, continuity and sustainability of their mine action

programmes.³⁶ The fluctuation in international funding can lead to interruptions in mine clearance activities, delays in victim assistance, and challenges in meeting APMBC obligations. International sources still constitute about 80 per cent³⁷ of mine action funding with significant shortfalls observed in Africa and the Middle East.³⁸

Capacity-enhancement and technical assistance

Capacity-enhancement is essential for empowering local actors and ensuring that mine action programmes are both effective and sustainable. It enables local actors to take on greater responsibilities in mine action. The OAP emphasizes targeted capacity-building initiatives that strengthen the skills, knowledge, and resources of local mine action organizations and institutions.³⁹ It is important to tailor the capacity enhancement initiatives to address the specific needs of national mine action authorities, local NGOs and community-based organizations. For example, in Angola, capacity-enhancement programmes have focused on strengthening the technical skills and improving the management capabilities of national mine action authorities.⁴⁰

There has been significant progress in capacity-building efforts, particularly in the areas of technical training, management, and coordination. For example, South Sudan's mine action programme is fully committed to the localization agenda, as reflected in its 2024–2028 national mine action strategy,⁴¹ which details strengthening and empowerment of the NMAA as one of its outcomes, and localization as a cross-cutting factor.⁴² Iraq's strategic objective on national ownership is underpinned by outcomes focusing on enhancing the capacity of the Directorate for Mine Action and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency, and a commitment to increase national funding for mine action.⁴³

In 2022, many States Parties engaged in national capacity-building, through training of trainers programmes in explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) with community focal points, security forces, emergency service personnel, teachers, and volunteers to enhance the reach and effectiveness.⁴⁴ They also integrated EORE into various humanitarian, development, and protection initiatives and in many integrated clearance programmes.⁴⁵

While many local organizations have received training and technical assistance, gaps remain in ongoing support. While local capacities have improved, there is still a need for continued investment in technical expertise and resources.⁴⁶ Challenges remain in ensuring that capacity-building efforts are sustainable and that they lead to long-term improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of mine action programmes. These efforts are indeed often fragmented and short-term, with limited emphasis on sustainability.⁴⁷ The OAP calls for a more sustainable approach to capacity-building (Action #6), focusing on adaptation to changing needs and contexts (Actions #5, #31) and on exchanging equipment, material and scientific and technological information (Action #47).

Community involvement in mine action

Community involvement is a critical aspect of localization, ensuring that mine action activities are responsive to the needs, priorities and vulnerabilities of those affected by explosive ordnance. The OAP emphasizes the need to involve affected communities in the planning, implementation, and monitoring aspects of mine action, recognizing that they are best placed to identify their needs, priorities and vulnerabilities. There has been significant progress in involving communities in mine action particularly in the areas of explosive ordnance risk education and victim assistance.⁴⁸

Community-based approaches have proven effective in ensuring that activities are responsive to the needs of affected populations and that they contribute to broader development goals. For instance, in 2022 risk education was predominantly targeting affected communities identified as most vulnerable in countries like Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Ukraine.⁴⁹ In Colombia, risk education focused on indigenous communities living in mountainous areas, while Chad considered nomads, animal herders, gold miners, traditional guides, and trackers as high-risk groups due to their mobility in desert areas which may be contaminated. Community-based risk education programmes have been instrumental in reducing landmine incidents, particularly among children and farmers who are at high risk. These programmes involve local leaders, schools, and civil society organizations, ensuring that messages are culturally relevant and widely disseminated.⁵⁰ However, challenges persist in ensuring meaningful participation of all community members, including women, youth, and marginalized groups. The OAP calls for the adoption of gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches in explosive ordnance risk reduction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND LOCALIZATION AT THE SIEM REAP-ANGKOR SUMMIT ON A MINE-FREE WORLD

Based on the analysis of progress, challenges and best practices, the following recommendations are proposed to continue enhancing national ownership and localization in the implementation of the Convention. The 5RC presents an opportunity to highlight these recommendations:

- ▶ **Strengthen national strategies and planning.** States should continue to develop, implement and review national mine action strategies that align with the Convention and its action plan. These strategies should be developed in an inclusive manner, include clear objectives, realistic timelines, and budgetary allocations, with regular updates to reflect changing conditions and emerging challenges.⁵¹

- ▶ **Increase national funding and resource mobilization.** Integration with broader development frameworks, and mobilization of domestic resources are crucial for sustaining mine action efforts.⁵² Integration helps leverage additional funding from other sectors. Where feasible, states should also explore innovative financing mechanisms to increase funding for mine action programmes.
- ▶ **Enhance capacity-building and technical assistance.** Capacity-building initiatives should focus on strengthening local skills, knowledge and resources. This includes training, technical assistance, and access to modern technologies. States Parties should also prioritize the development of sustainable capacities that can be maintained by local actors in the long term.^{53, 54}
- ▶ **Promote inclusive and participatory approaches in all aspects of mine action.** Mine action programmes should actively involve all community members, including women, youth, and marginalized groups. Inclusive approaches ensure mine action activities that are responsive to the needs, priorities and vulnerabilities of affected populations and contribute to social cohesion and community resilience.⁵⁵

- ▶ **Foster regional and international cooperation.** States should continue engaging in regional and international cooperation to share best practices, coordinate efforts, and address cross-border challenges. Collaborative approaches enhance the effectiveness of mine action programmes and support the achievement of common goals under the APMBBC. States Parties should also explore opportunities for cooperation with local organizations, identifying and enhancing their capacities in line with affected states' priorities.

CONCLUSION

The OAP has advanced national ownership and localization in mine action, helping states and mine action organizations strengthen their efforts. Despite progress, challenges such as ongoing conflict, limited resources, and complex socio-political dynamics persist. To fulfil the APMBBC's obligations, sustained commitment from states, donors, and stakeholders is essential. This requires innovative capacity-enhancing approaches, greater investment in national and local capacities, and inclusive, context-specific mine action programmes. By building on best practices, addressing gaps, and fostering collaboration, the international community can ensure the successful implementation of the APMBBC and work towards a world free from landmines.

Endnotes

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- 2 Cartagena Action Plan (2010-2014), 2009, Actions #16, # 20, #23, #30.
- 3 Maputo Action Plan, 2014, #9, #13, #16, #19, #23, #26.
- 4 OAP, footnote 1.
- 5 *The Grand Bargain and Localization Commitments*, p. 7.
- 6 *Draft review of the operation and status of the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction: 2019–2024*, para. 129.
- 7 *Ibid.*, and *Achieving the aims of the Oslo Action Plan: Progress Report 2022–2023*, para. 119.
- 8 Mine Action Review, *A Guide to the Oslo Action Plan and Results of 2023 Monitoring: Survey and Clearance*, 1 September 2023, p. 5.
- 9 Mine Action Review, *Clearing the mines 2023*, Country Profiles, 1 September 2023
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 174.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 206, 282, 284.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 96, 170, 173, 282, 286, 312.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 250, 297, 346, 349, 364.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 364.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 31, 94, 105–106, 134, 161, 205, 240, 247, 270, 282, 285, 321, 378.
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- 17 OAP.
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- 19 NMAC Sri Lanka, "Progress Sri Lankan Mine Action Programme", presented during the 2024 APMBBC Intersessional Meetings, 2024.
- 20 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy, 2023–2028.
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- 24 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy, 2023–2028, p. 16.
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- 29 *Ibid.*
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- 31 *Ibid.*, pp.103–105.
- 32 *Draft review of the operation and status of the APMBBC: 2019–2024*, para. 138.
- 33 Mine Action Review, *Clearing the mines 2023*, p. 46.
- 34 *Achieving the aims of the Oslo Action Plan: Progress Report 2022–2023*, para. 100, and International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2023*, p. 101.
- 35 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2023*, p. 101.
- 36 Mine Action Review, *Clearing the mines 2023*, Country Profiles.
- 37 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2023*, p. 102.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- 39 OAP.
- 40 APMBBC, *Article 7 Reporting: Angola (January 2023 to December 2023)*, p. 17.
- 41 South Sudan National Mine Action Strategy 2024–2028, p. 9.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 43 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy, 2023–2028, p. 32–33.
- 44 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2023*, p. 36.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 73, 98.
- 46 Mine Action Review, *Clearing the mines 2023*, Country Profiles.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2023*, p. 70.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–73.
- 51 OAP, Action #2.
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