

GICHD Insights

INTEGRATING MINE ACTION INTO THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA: RECOMMENDATION BRIEF FOR GOVERNMENTS IN EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the mine action sector share common goals: peace, recovery, and advancing human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings. However, the strategic and operational alignment between these two fields remains underdeveloped. Recent research illustrates that few countries reference mine action in their WPS National Action Plans (NAPs).¹ This gap is particularly concerning given that mine action has historically been a male-dominated field, and its full potential to advance the goals of the WPS agenda is still not sufficiently recognized. When implemented inclusively, mine action can serve as a powerful tool to promote participation, protection, and recovery in line with WPS principles. This brief—for states that are implementing WPS NAPs—provides recommendations on the NAP design process, as well as the types of strategic objectives and actions to integrate mine action more holistically in WPS NAPs.

WHAT ARE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE AND THEIR IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES?

Long after hostilities have ceased, explosive ordnance (EO)—including landmines, cluster munitions, unexploded ordnance, and improvised explosive devices—continue to kill, injure, and disrupt the daily lives of affected communities. These legacies of conflict restrict mobility, impede access to essential services, and delay recovery and development.

There has been considerable progress over the past two decades in reducing the humanitarian and socio-economic impact of EO through clearance, risk education, and victim assistance (VA). However, recent armed conflicts have led to a resurgence in EO contamination and a sharp increase in casualties. Many incidents and accidents remain undocumented, particularly in ongoing conflict zones, where reporting systems are weak or inaccessible. This increasingly complex and evolving threat landscape underscores the need for adaptable, inclusive, and forward-looking mine action strategies.



Deminer, Lebanon, 2008
© MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency),
photo by Johan Eklund

Removal of EOs is essential for restoring access to land, housing, public services and infrastructures, enabling safe movement and supporting peacebuilding, recovery, and development.

HOW ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS IMPACTED BY EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE?

Humanitarian crises—including those involving EO—have unequal impacts across populations. They often result in widespread loss of life, displacement, and destruction of critical infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, and roads. These consequences disrupt entire communities, but they do not affect all people in the same way.

Men and boys are statistically more likely to be direct victims of EO accidents, particularly in the context of agricultural work, scrap metal collection, transportation, or security-related activities that expose them to contaminated areas. For example, data from the Landmine and Cluster Munition

Monitor show that approximately 85 per cent of recorded EO casualties in recent years were men and boys, highlighting their greater exposure due to gendered roles in affected contexts.²

However, the impacts of EO contamination on women and girls, particularly from marginalized groups, are often less visible but no less significant. EO-contaminated land limits women's and girls' freedom of movement, especially in areas where they are responsible for tasks such as collecting water or accessing healthcare and education. It also exacerbates existing gender inequalities, restricting their participation in livelihood recovery, community engagement, and decision-making processes. Moreover, the presence of EO increases the risk of gender-based violence, especially when women must take longer, isolated routes to avoid contaminated areas or when displacement places them in insecure environments.³

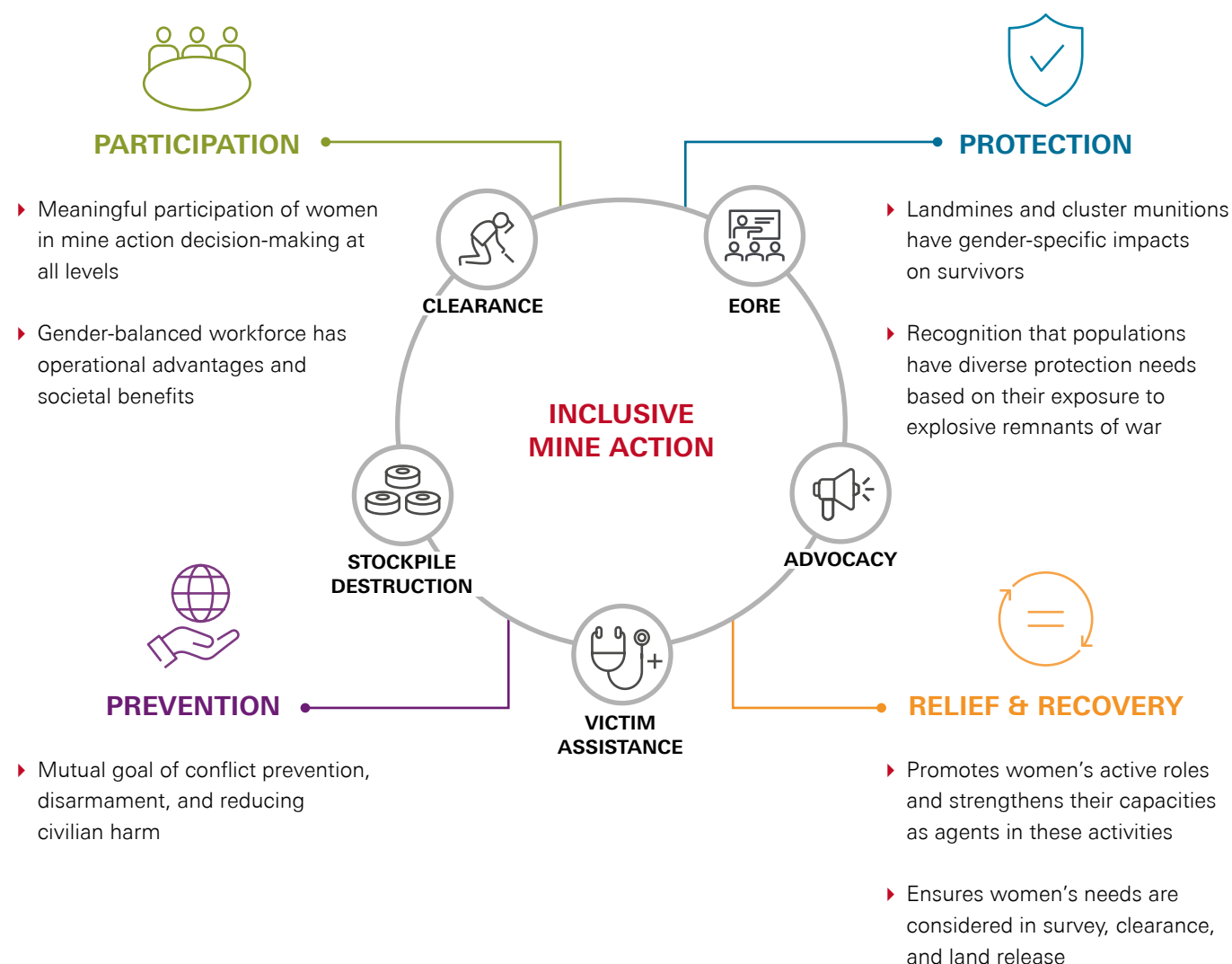
Furthermore, marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and ethnic minorities, often face heightened vulnerability due to limited access to early warning information, risk education, or post-accident support services. Women and girls with disabilities, in particular, experience multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion in EO-affected environments.

Despite these differentiated impacts, mine action programming and EO risk reduction strategies have not consistently integrated gender, age, and diversity-sensitive approaches, nor have they adequately linked to WPS National Action Plans.

HOW DOES MINE ACTION STRENGTHEN THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA?

Mine action contributes directly to the four pillars of the WPS agenda:

SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WPS AGENDA AND MINE ACTION



WPS NAPs that include mine action can be more practical, inclusive, and relevant to peace and recovery efforts on the ground. When mine action is not integrated, NAPs risk leaving critical security threats and their solutions unaddressed.

Mine action contributes directly to key pillars of the WPS agenda by removing explosive hazards which prevent women's safe participation in public life, limit their access to land, livelihoods, education, and health services, and increase their exposure to violence and insecurity. Without addressing contamination, women's ability to meaningfully participate in peacebuilding, economic recovery, or political processes remains limited.

Moreover, mine action creates tangible opportunities for advancing women's leadership in traditionally male-dominated sectors, from employment in operations to policy-level decision-making. Integrating mine action in WPS NAPs ensures that women's protection, participation, and rights are embedded in all stages of post-conflict recovery, making peace processes safer, more inclusive, and grounded in the specific needs of affected communities. It also promotes accountability by aligning mine action with broader national gender equality commitments.

Mine action operates at the critical intersection of human rights, security, and development. It works directly with communities impacted by conflict and displacement and is often among the earliest state-supported activities to reach areas that were previously inaccessible. This early engagement creates important opportunities to promote inclusive governance, support gender equality, and strengthen trust between state institutions and local communities. This intention must be included in both the Women, Peace and Security agenda (articulated in the WPS NAP) as well as the national mine action strategy.⁴



The GICHD and the Solomon Islands' EOD Team working with IMSMA in Honiara, 2024 © GICHD

WPS NATIONAL ACTION PLAN DESIGN PROCESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Include mine action stakeholders in the design of WPS National Action Plans

A 2025 draft report from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research highlights the persistent divide between the mine action and women, peace and security sectors, noting that collaboration across these domains remains limited and often difficult to achieve.⁵

Mine action stakeholders are often not included in the design of WPS NAPs, nor are WPS stakeholders involved in the design of mine action plans or strategies. This represents a missed opportunity for alignment. Key mine action stakeholders—including national mine action authorities (NMAA), as well as national and international operators—must be actively involved in reporting on past WPS NAPs and the design of new ones.

The active involvement of mine action stakeholders is essential to ensure that WPS NAPs comprehensively address the needs and priorities of women in EO-affected communities through coordinated, gender-responsive actions—including inclusive survey and clearance, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), EO victim assistance, and employment opportunities within the mine action sector.

Expand responsibility, accountability, and funding for implementation of the WPS agenda

Responsibility for implementation of the WPS NAP should be shared across relevant government institutions, including the NMAA, to strengthen accountability and coordination. This can be achieved by aligning WPS NAPs and national mine action strategies, including common objectives, activities, and performance indicators to ensure coherence, efficiency, and measurable progress across both policy areas.

Expanding responsibility for WPS NAP implementation to include mine action stakeholders, not only strengthens cross-sectoral collaboration but also broadens the funding base. Recognizing mine action as a contributor to the Women, Peace and Security agenda enables the mobilization of resources beyond traditional gender equality or peacebuilding budgets—including through the Ministry of Finance and existing mine action funding streams—creating additional opportunities for sustained integrated financing.

Establish coordination mechanisms

To foster greater collaboration across sectors that have traditionally worked in silos, dedicated coordination mechanisms are essential. These mechanisms should bring together mine action actors, WPS focal points, and



peacebuilding institutions to align strategic objectives, facilitate data sharing, and strengthen cross-sectoral accountability. Coordination mechanisms may take the form of inter-ministerial working groups, such as a national task force with representation across sectors. These mechanisms are often managed by a lead government body or national coordination office, and may involve regular joint planning sessions, shared reporting frameworks, and integration of WPS and mine action priorities in national strategies or donor dialogue. Even without significant new financial resources, these mechanisms can deliver more cost-effective, efficient, and coordinated approaches.



'Strengthening synergies with the WPS agenda' panel discussion, APMBIC Intersessional Meetings, June 2025 © GICHD

WPS AGENDAS AND NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

RECOMMENDATIONS BY WPS PILLAR

To strengthen the integration of mine action in WPS NAPs, this paper outlines examples of objectives and priority actions across each of the four WPS pillars. Many actions are cross-cutting and may align with more than one pillar. These examples should be adapted to reflect local contexts, the priorities of women's organizations, and relevant national and regional commitments.

1. PARTICIPATION

Mine action is implemented by community liaison and survey teams who gather information on contamination; technical experts who clear explosive hazards; educators who raise community awareness, and collect and share information on the needs of survivors; advocates who promote safer, inclusive environments; and governance and administrative actors who coordinate operations, enforce policies, and ensure accountability. These roles are often shaped by gender norms, and people can face restrictions in accessing these roles and positions.

Institutional, structural, and cultural barriers must be addressed, with participation embedded as a core principle in order to have effective, efficient, and safe mine action.⁶ Women's meaningful participation in community decision-making in mine action can ensure that clearance priorities, risk education, and VA reflect women's diverse needs and experiences. Their inclusion can lead to more equitable, locally grounded solutions and enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of mine action efforts.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective

To promote the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women—including EO survivors and those from underrepresented groups—in all roles within mine action, including leadership, policy and standards development, operational roles, and community-based decision-making.

Priority actions

- ▶ Promote the recruitment and professional development of women, in all their diversity, in leadership including policy-making and standardization, survey and clearance, EORE and VA roles;
- ▶ Address barriers to women's recruitment, retention and advancement in mine action, through flexible policies, training, and safe workplaces;
- ▶ Provide entry points for women's leadership in local and national decision-making processes related to safety, security, and recovery;
- ▶ Promote public awareness campaigns that highlight women role models in mine action (e.g. deminers, EORE facilitators). This will help break stereotypes and may encourage other women to see themselves in these roles;
- ▶ Support women-led community organizations (or establish if needed) to engage in community-based decision-making processes, including identifying prioritized clearance areas, identifying high-risk zones, identifying the needs of victims, and informing risk education strategies from a gender perspective.



South Sudan, 2023 © GICHD

2. PROTECTION



The WPS agenda calls for the protection of the rights of women and girls, particularly in conflict and humanitarian settings, where the risk of violence, displacement, and exclusion are greatest, and basic rights and protections are often severely compromised. In mine action, this means not only addressing gender-related risks from EO and making sure that women and girls—in all their diversity—have access to life-saving information, but also upholding safeguarding standards that protect them from harm, abuse, and exploitation when they engage with mine action services or employment. Access to healthcare is particularly important, as studies show that women injured by explosive ordnance often face restricted access to health services.⁷

Protection must extend beyond physical safety to include freedom from sexual harassment and exploitation in the workplace, as well as fair and dignified working conditions for women carrying out operational roles. It also involves challenging and transforming the social and cultural norms that limit women's mobility, voice, and leadership—barriers that are too often reinforced in post-conflict recovery settings.⁸

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective

To strengthen the safety, security, and rights of women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups, by ensuring that mine action activities are gender-responsive, inclusive, and accessible.

Enhance the protection of rights of women working in the mine action sector ensuring their right to employment, to equitable pay, and freedom from violence.

Priority actions

Community-focused actions:

- ▶ Identify and respond to the physical and psychological risks related to EO for displaced populations and returnees, with particular attention to the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls;
- ▶ Design and deliver EORE in a gender-responsive and inclusive way that takes into account the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls;
- ▶ Engage women and community-based organizations in identifying priority areas for clearance, recovery, and development, ensuring that local perspectives and power dynamics are reflected in decision-making;
- ▶ Include clearance of EO-contaminated land that is essential for the livelihoods, mobility, and safety of women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups, with particular focus on areas facing high returnee or displacement pressures;
- ▶ Ensure that the needs of EO victims, survivors, and their families are fully integrated in protection efforts, so that women and girls are safeguarded from renewed harm, social stigma, and violations of their rights.

Employment protection action:

- ▶ Protection activities within the mine action sector are coordinated and aligned with national protection systems, including child protection services and mechanisms for the prevention of and response to sexual- and gender-based violence.



GICHD's visit to Kosovo, 2021 © GICHD / Giovanni Diffidenti

3. PREVENTION



Mine action plays a critical role in conflict prevention by fostering conditions for peace, stability, and inclusion. The survey and clearance of land contaminated by EO restores safe access to agricultural areas, infrastructure, and public spaces, and can reduce competition for scarce resources. When these activities are implemented in an inclusive, gender-responsive, and community-driven way, they help rebuild trust among diverse groups, addressing historical grievances, and promoting social cohesion—particularly in areas affected by displacement or ethnic tensions.

Ensuring the meaningful participation and leadership of women in mine action, peacebuilding, and recovery efforts not only helps dismantle gender-based barriers but has been shown to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of peace processes.⁹ Collectively, if mine action is performed in an inclusive manner, it can be a vital contributor to conflict prevention and long-term stability.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective

To leverage inclusive, gender-responsive mine action as a tool for conflict prevention and for addressing the root causes of insecurity, by reducing inequalities, mitigating land-related tensions, and strengthening community resilience—particularly for women and girls from EO-affected areas.

Priority actions

- ▶ Integrate conflict sensitivity and intersectional gender and diversity analysis in mine action planning to ensure that clearance and recovery efforts help address local tensions, including land disputes and unequal access to resources;
- ▶ Collect, analyse and utilise sex, age, and disability-disaggregated data to inform the development and monitor the implementation of mine action strategies;
- ▶ Develop and implement gender-responsive mine action policies and guidelines that prioritize conflict prevention and promote inclusion;
- ▶ Ensure the meaningful participation of women, particularly from marginalized groups, in mine action decision-making, clearance prioritization, and community engagement;
- ▶ Coordinate mine action activities with broader peacebuilding, land management, and social cohesion initiatives at local and national levels;
- ▶ Integrate mine action considerations in local development planning processes and early warning systems to enhance community safety and resilience;
- ▶ Provide training and resources for mine action personnel so they can recognize and address social inequalities and potential sources of insecurity in affected communities, especially those linked to land access and gender norms.

4. RELIEF AND RECOVERY



The final WPS pillar calls for inclusive, responsive approaches that meet the differentiated needs of the population affected by the conflict. Relief and recovery efforts following mine clearance provide an opportunity to mainstream gender equality and address persistent social and economic gaps. However, this is often where gender inequities are overlooked. Land release processes and post-clearance activities offer multiple entry points to promote inclusive practices and advance women's participation in land ownership, community leadership, and decision-making.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective

To integrate gender-responsive mine action in humanitarian response, reconstruction, and recovery efforts to ensure that women and girls from affected communities can safely access land, essential services, livelihoods, and support systems necessary for sustainable recovery.

Priority actions

- ▶ Provide legal protections that guarantee women's equal rights to own and inherit land that has been cleared of EO, ensuring that displaced and conflict-affected women can reclaim and retain ownership on their return;
- ▶ Facilitate the participation of women in land allocation committees and community leadership structures related to mine action and post-clearance recovery;
- ▶ Integrate gender-sensitive livelihood and economic support programmes for individuals and communities benefiting from released land;
- ▶ Ensure that state institutions provide victim assistance services for EO victims and survivors that respond to the specific needs of women and girls—recognizing that women are often both survivors of EO incidents and the primary caregivers of injured family members;
- ▶ Raise awareness of women's land rights and leadership opportunities within EO-affected communities by engaging local authorities, women's organizations, and relevant development stakeholders;
- ▶ Integrate mine action in national and sub-national recovery strategies and humanitarian response plans.

CONCLUSION

States developing or updating their Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan have a critical opportunity—and responsibility—to explicitly integrate mine action across all pillars of their plan. Mine action and the WPS agenda share common objectives: protecting communities, preventing violence, promoting inclusion, and enabling sustainable recovery. By integrating mine action throughout the WPS NAPs, states can ensure more inclusive, effective, and community-driven peace and recovery efforts. The recommendations provided offer a practical framework for states to align mine action with WPS commitments, and demonstrate transparent, measurable results for the advancement of women's rights and for lasting peace.

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Digital EORE Workshop, 2022 © GICHD

Endnotes

- 1 Out of 197 WPS NAPs adopted by 106 countries between 2005 and 2024, only 39 WPS NAPs referenced mines, mine action, cluster munitions, and explosive remnants of war. These include both explosive ordnance affected and unaffected countries; Workshop “Addressing weapons-related risks in the Women, Peace and Security agenda”, co-hosted by UNIDIR and Canada, 12 June 2025.
- 2 Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor (2023), *Landmine Monitor 2023*, <https://the-monitor.org/reports/landmine-monitor-2023>.
- 3 UNMAS (2019), *Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes* (Third Edition), https://www.unmas.org/sites/default/files/mine_action_gender_guidelines_web.pdf
- 4 GICHD and UNDP, *Leaving No One Behind: Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva: GICHD–UNDP, 2017), https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/uploads/gichd/Publications/Leaving_no_one_behind-Mine_Action_and_SDGs.pdf; Henri Myrtilinen, *Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2020), <https://unidir.org/files/2020-12/Connecting%20the%20Dots.pdf>.
- 5 Workshop “Addressing weapons-related risks in the Women, Peace and Security agenda”, co-hosted by UNIDIR and Canada, 12 June 2025.
- 6 GICHD and UNDP, *Leaving No One Behind: Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva: GICHD–UNDP, 2017), https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/uploads/gichd/Publications/Leaving_no_one_behind-Mine_Action_and_SDGs.pdf; Henri Myrtilinen, *Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2020), <https://unidir.org/files/2020-12/Connecting%20the%20Dots.pdf>.
- 7 Mines Action Canada (2019), “1325 – a tool to reach 2025”, <https://www.minesactioncanada.org/1325and2025>.
- 8 UNMAS (2019). *Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes* (Third edition), https://www.unmas.org/sites/default/files/mine_action_gender_guidelines_web.pdf.
- 9 UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/globalstudywps_en_web.pdf.

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.

