

Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Gender & Diversity Mainstreaming Progress Under the Oslo Action Plan and Looking Ahead to the Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan

Working Paper Submitted by Japan, The Netherlands, Peru, and Thailand

Introduction

1. The Oslo Action Plan has delivered significant progress towards more effective and inclusive mine action over the past five years, and the draft Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan (SRAAP) builds on this progress. This working paper, presented by the current Convention Gender Focal Points, takes stock of this progress and looks ahead to the opportunities and remaining challenges relating to gender equality and inclusion in mine action over the next five years.
2. By adopting gender equality and inclusion of the diverse needs and experiences of affected populations as a best practice in the Oslo Action Plan, creating a specific action of the need for mainstreaming of gender and diverse needs, and mainstreaming these points throughout much of the Plan, States Parties underscored the significance of gender and diversity considerations for effective mine action to all stakeholders.
3. Mine action donors, affected states, operators, and other actors in the sector have taken forward these principles and made progress towards more effective and inclusive mine action over the period of the Oslo Action Plan, summarised below.
4. Rightly, the SRAAP renews these commitments and incorporates lessons learned from the Oslo Action Plan by strengthening the synergies between the APMBC and international frameworks such as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), World Health Organization (WHO), and the 2030 Agenda, recognising and highlighting mine action's contributions.

Progress Made During Implementation of the Oslo Action Plan

Employment

5. Since gender mainstreaming was adopted as a best practice in the Oslo Action Plan, the number of women working for international mine action operators has more than doubled from 3,099 to 6,447, often in environments with high barriers to women's labour participation.¹ In percentage terms, women made up just under 30% of staff in international mine action operators in 2023, up from just under 20% in 2019, which means the sector is now more than halfway towards full gender balance. Encouragingly, this period saw increased growth amongst women deminers.

¹ Gender and Employment in Mine Action by the Numbers: an Update, Mines Action Canada, 2023, p. 5

6. This is a huge achievement, which should be celebrated by the mine action sector, and is the result of collective efforts across a wide range of stakeholders, from donor states, affected states and most of all the women and men working for operators themselves.
7. It contributes directly towards the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 5.
8. The employment of women in operational roles has also helped to break down negative stereotypes about the capacity of women to do certain types of typically ‘masculine’ roles such as demining, as demonstrated by a range of studies interviewing women and men deminers.² This challenging of negative stereotypes contributes directly towards SDG 5 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.
9. The employment of women also contributes greatly to economic and social empowerment, as well as SDG8, more so than only employing men, as demonstrated through a wide range of impact assessments conducted by mine action operators.³

Policies

10. Over the course of the Oslo Action Plan, there has been widespread adoption of Gender and Diversity Policies by operators and, to a lesser extent, amongst National Mine Action Authorities. In a recent study of international mine action operators, the vast majority of NGOs reported having gender and diversity policies and 73% reported having reviewed Action 3 of the Oslo Action Plan and used it to inform their implementation of gender and diversity mainstreaming policies.⁴
11. These policies have helped to mainstream gender and diversity in several areas by:
 - a. Setting requirements to design gender and diversity sensitive and responsive projects
 - b. Helping to address barriers to accessing the workplace for women and vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities.
 - c. Raising awareness on gender equality and non-discrimination and empowering vulnerable groups.
 - d. Introducing policies and guidelines to prevent and address sexual harassment and abuse. These policies have been introduced as a requirement by most donors and operators in recent years and are vital to ensuring that mine action creates a safer workplace for everyone, including women and vulnerable groups.
12. In many cases, National Mine Action Authorities have also developed policies. For example Cambodia, which holds the Presidency for the 5th Review Conference, actively promotes the meaningful participation of women in its prioritisation system as part of the Cambodian Mine Action Authority’s (CMAA) 2021-25 Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan (GMAP). The CMAA has a well-established Gender Unit which is responsible for implementing the GMAP, which demonstrates a commitment to implementation of mainstreaming in practice, not as a box-ticking exercise.
13. More widely, the number of affected states that report incorporating gender and diverse needs into their strategies and workplans increased between 2020 and 2022, contributing towards

² The Socio-Economic Impact of Employing Female Deminers in Sri Lanka, GICHD, 2017, p. 30, Afghanistan’s First Female Deminers: An Analysis of Perception Changes among Deminers, Families, and Communities, GICHD & UNMAS, 2019, p. 27, Baseline Study of the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through Mine Action in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq, UNMAS, 2021

³ For example in the case of MAG and UXO Laos in Laos PDR, Employment Case Study: Laos PDR, Monitoring & Evaluation of Gender Equality and Inclusion in Explosive Ordnance Risk Reduction, ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre & GICHD, 2023, pp. 50-58

⁴ Gender and Employment in Mine Action by the Numbers: an Update, Mines Action Canada, 2023, p. 6

Action 3 of the Oslo Action Plan on integrating gender and diverse needs and experiences into national work plans and strategies.⁵

Disaggregated Data

14. The collection and use of sex and age disaggregated data is now firmly established as an expectation in the sector through IMAS, national standards, and organisational standard operating procedures, and is reflected in many states' national mine action strategies.
15. This is less true of disability disaggregated data, though this is now more established than at the start of the Oslo Action Plan implementation period.
16. Boys and men continue to be the most vulnerable to death and injury from anti-personnel mines and more detailed disaggregated data helps operators tailor their risk education responses to reach the most vulnerable groups, as well as tailoring victim assistance responses to the specific needs of women, girls, boys, and men. The development of the IMAS on Explosive Ordnance Risk Education during the Oslo Action Plan implementation period supports use of disaggregated data for targeted and gender and diversity sensitive risk education approaches.

Inclusive Community Engagement

17. Diversity factors such as age, gender, language, ethnicity, displacement status, and others are critical in ensuring effective communication with mine affected communities. Effective communication is necessary for a range of mine action activities including survey and risk education.
18. Inclusive approaches (as mentioned in Action 3 of the Oslo Action Plan) to community engagement which take into account these diversity factors, and seek to build these needs into mine action responses, help to make mine action more effective. This includes recruitment of community-facing staff from diverse backgrounds with appropriate language and communication skills for the area of operations.
19. The Oslo Action Plan implementation period has seen more training and deployment of mixed gender teams in Explosive Ordnance Risk Education and Non-Technical Survey activities. In overall numbers, international operators have reached gender balance in these areas, though these overall figures are not representative of every programme.⁶
20. This is helping to facilitate greater inclusion of the needs and priorities of women and girls in mine action operations on the ground including survey, mine risk education and prioritisation, as well as marginalised groups such as minority language speakers and indigenous communities.

Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in the Convention

21. The Oslo Action Plan saw the introduction of Gender Focal Points to the APMBC, one for each committee, each with the role to provide advice on gender mainstreaming and ensure that the needs of people from diverse backgrounds are taken into account.
22. Over the last five years, a range of states have taken up Gender Focal Point roles and have been active in promoting the importance of gender and diverse needs and experiences in the work of the convention, for example:
 - a. The Gender Focal Points have encouraged States Parties to include gender and diversity considerations in their article 5 and article 7 reporting and also encouraged exchange of best practices and lessons learned on gender and diversity mainstreaming in mine action

⁵ Beyond Oslo, Taking Stock of Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, UNIDIR, 2023, p. 6

⁶ Gender and Employment in Mine Action by the Numbers: an Update, Mines Action Canada, 2023, p. 4

23. Gender Focal Points have played a crucial and active role in convening stakeholders for discussion of key issues such as strengthening the links between mine action and other agendas such as WPS, through side events and cross-regional statements.
24. However, progress towards greater representation of women at Convention meetings remains slow, as women continue to constitute around a third of delegates to official meetings and only around half of delegations had at least one woman in 2023, falling slightly from 2020.⁷

Implementing the Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan

25. We are glad to see that the SRAAP maintains the strong commitments in the Oslo Action Plan on gender equality and inclusion.
26. The need for mainstreaming gender and the diverse needs and experiences of affected populations is maintained as a best practice, and mentioned specifically in relation to Survey and Clearance of Mined Areas, Mine Risk Education and Reduction, Victim Assistance, and International Cooperation and Assistance.
27. There is more work to be done to integrate the needs and experiences of persons with disabilities in the mine action sector and the SRAAP recognises this by emphasising the importance of Victims and Survivors Organisations' participation at the Convention level and in national planning.
28. The sector can do more to collect and use disability disaggregated data, as well as implementing a do no harm approach and inclusive data management practices.⁸
29. Whilst positive steps have been taken towards more equal employment by international operators, there is little data available on gender balance amongst local operators. Noting the emphasis on localisation, recognised as a best practice, the sector should aim to support local operators and National Mine Action Authorities to increase their gender balance and mainstream gender and diverse needs and experiences in their work.
30. For the first time in an APMBC action plan, the SRAAP recognises the contribution of mine action to the Women Peace and Security Agenda. The WPS Agenda itself already recognises the role of mine action: UN Security Council Resolution 1325 specifically calls for all UN Member States to “ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls”.⁹
31. This can be operationalised through better integration between mine action strategies and Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans.
 - a. Donor states should, as appropriate, include mine action in their WPS NAPs.
 - b. Affected states should include mine action in their WPS NAP, and WPS in their national mine action strategies, ensuring participation of women in these processes.
 - c. Efforts should be made by the international community to highlight mine action's contributions to WPS to demonstrate the sector's positive impact.
32. The SRAAP adds that cooperation and assistance should be responsive to gender, age, disability, and other diversity considerations. This incorporates a practice already adopted by many donors, but will further encourage more donors and other stakeholders to adopt gender and diversity responsive practices.
33. Practical steps can include:
 - a. Requiring that funding recipients conduct a gender and diversity sensitive context analysis.
 - b. Establishing markers or indicators to measure the extent to which projects are gender and diversity sensitive.

⁷ Beyond Oslo, Taking Stock of Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, UNIDIR, 2023, p.19

⁸ Inclusive Data Management in the Mine Action Sector, GICHD, 2024

⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), p. 2

- c. Providing specific funding support, where required and as appropriate, for gender and diversity mainstreaming activities.
34. Whilst efforts have been made to mainstream gender and diverse needs and experiences in community facing activities, there is a need to strengthen requirements in IMAS and national mine action standards on inclusive approaches to Community Liaison, Risk Education, Non-Technical Survey, and Handover, including the deployment of mixed gender teams.
35. Moreover, risk education could and should be more gender and diversity sensitive by more systematically targeting at risk groups, in line with IMAS, based on needs assessments, including a focus on boys and men where appropriate, as males continue to be most at risk of becoming direct victims.
36. Likewise, Victim Assistance services should be adapted to the different needs of women, girls, boys, and men, including services for both direct and indirect victims (who are often more likely to be women).
37. As Gender Focal Points we have also expressed an intent to develop an annual work plan in the future to address how best to support States Parties to mainstream gender and diverse needs and experiences of affected populations in future.

Conclusion

In short, there is strong evidence to indicate that the gender and diversity provisions in the Oslo Action Plan have helped to deliver more effective and inclusive mine action over the past five years. As the international community embarks on the Siem Reap Angkor Action Plan, we should take heart from this progress but recognise that the work is far from over. It remains vitally important that affected states, donors, operators, and the sector at large continue to work towards a more effective and inclusive mine action sector which benefits everyone affected.