

## **GICHD UPDATE – MASG MEETING – 28 MAY 2021**

### **GICHD/ICRC ONLINE WEBINAR ON THE USE OF REMOTE SENSING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN MINE ACTION**

The ICRC and GICHD firmly believe that the integration of remote sensing and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in mine action will enhance evidence-based decision making and inform priority setting for survey and clearance. It also has the potential also to support the mine action sector in articulating the positive impact of its work on development.

To discuss this issue, the two organizations organized a two half-day webinar on 20 & 22 April 2021 with the participation of over 300 people from mine action authorities, operators, academia, and manufacturers. This joint ICRC/GICHD webinar benefitted from the insights of speakers external to the mine action sector who have been doing research and field work on remote sensing technologies. The Webinar report is now available and the GICHD plans to follow-up on these issues at the GICHD Mine Action Technology Workshop which will take place in Switzerland in Q4 2021. The Centre is also working with the ICRC on setting up a Discussion Forum on remote sensing. The webinar provided a medium to exchange views and encourage collaborations among and outside the mine action community on the possible benefits and limitations of remote sensing and deep learning as well as perspectives on the way forward. This engagement will be kept alive through this forum.

### **GICHD's AMMUNITION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY TEAM MISSION IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

On 7 March 2021, a series of explosions occurred in the city of Bata, Equatorial Guinea. The explosions took place at the ammunition storage area and resulted in a high number of death casualties. On the following day, the Minister of State of Equatorial Guinea requested assistance from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) who responded by activating the UN SaferGuard Programme quick response mechanism. As the operational arm of UN SaferGuard Programme and the manager of the SaferGuard roster of experts, the GICHD's Ammunition Management Advisory Team (AMAT) immediately deployed to Bata to conduct a post-explosion investigation and risk assessment in accordance with the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG).

The assessment mission lasted 12 days, identifying the cause of the explosions and key factors that contributed to the sequence of tragic events on 7 March. Moreover, it provided insights into the state of ammunition and explosives safety and security in Equatorial Guinea, including the capabilities and needs of the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces. Whilst in Bata, the assessment team offered advice to the local authorities and UN agencies for immediate risk reduction measures and recommended the development of localised explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) programme for the civilian population. A comprehensive assessment report was submitted by the UN SaferGuard Programme to the government of Equatorial Guinea, including recommendations to reduce risks of further explosions and to ensure safe and secure stockpile management in the future.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING IN IRAQ**

With its current strategy ending at the end of this year, Iraq's Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) requested GICHD's support with developing its next strategy. The strategic planning process started in early 2021 with an assessment of the implementation of Iraq's current strategy. Online meetings with all relevant national and international partners provided clarity on achievements and challenges, a critical step to ensure that good practice and lessons learnt inform the new strategy.

The process continued with strategy stakeholder workshops in Erbil and Baghdad in March 2021. These brought together all relevant Iraqi Ministries, DMA, IKMAA, UNMAS as well as national and international operators. The workshops resulted in clarity on the Iraqi context, achieved through a series of participatory context analysis exercises. This in turn allowed for the participatory development of a context-specific Theory of Change that comprises a vision, mission, objectives, risks and assumptions.

GICHD has received positive feedback from IKMAA, DMA, UNMAS and operators, who underlined that the workshops and subsequent consultations brought both mine action authorities firmly together, which has resulted in greater collaboration and strengthened communication. The Centre continues its collaboration with DMA and IKMAA, including by facilitating a series of consultative stakeholder meetings and drafting the strategy, with the hope to return to Iraq in June to convene a strategy validation workshop with the national authorities.

## **MISSION TO UKRAINE**

The GICHD attended in March 2021 the regional round table "Strategic Planning and Development of National Mine Action Program in Ukraine", organised by the OSCE and attended by around 35 participants. The Centre also participated in the mine action sub-cluster meeting and in the "Introduction session on results of KAP Survey around Mines and Explosive Ordnance". This meetings offered a great opportunity to learn on the recent legislative and operational developments in Ukraine, and to provide a introduction on the new IMAS 12.10 on Explosive Ordnance Risk Education.

Further discussions with Ukainian authorities and OSCE representatives took place regarding GICHD's support to Ukraine on strategic planning and capacity development activities for 2021-2023. The national strategic planning process might be formally engaged from 2022. In the meantime, the GICHD will continue working with Ukraine on several fronts, including on national standards, NTS training, EORE and Gender and Diversity support and training.