

UKRAINE

Jointly with the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, the GICHD co-organized the Mine Action Donor Coordination workshop in Ukraine in mid-April 2024 gathering stakeholders from the humanitarian demining sector at both national and international levels. The participants discussed strategic outlook and operational context in the mine action sector, progress in dealing with extensive explosive ordnance contamination, risk management and innovation, funding mechanisms and innovative finance for mine action, and approaches towards efficient international cooperation and coordination in Ukraine. The Donor Coordination Workshop is part of the “Road to Lausanne” where conference on Humanitarian Demining will take place in October 2024.

The GICHD continues strengthening and professionalising existing national capacities to deal with explosive ordnance contamination through delivering training courses to national authority staff. The GICHD has delivered Non-Technical Survey and Quality Management courses tailored to the local context in the spring of 2024, aiming at strengthening efficiency and effectiveness of mine action operations. Further, the GICHD support included assistance with developing Ukraine’s first National Mine Action Strategy. A workshop on Strategy Implementation Plan was organised together with the Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv in March 2024.

The GICHD enhanced Ukraine’s mine action system through supporting the NMMA in updating and refining the existing NMAS and developing new ones. At the beginning of the year the GICHD finalized the revision of *Land Release with an Annex for Non-Technical Survey (NTS)* and developed *Mechanized Land Release* standards which are currently under the NMMA’s approval process. Work continues on developing the standard on Animal Detection Systems (Dogs) and codifying mine action terminology.

INNOVATION IN MINE ACTION

As the GICHD Innovation Conference in November 2023 demonstrated, there are currently varied and numerous innovative tools, processes and approaches emerging in the field of explosive ordnance risk reduction (EORR). However, considerable challenges to successful innovation remain. Some of these challenges have been described and highlighted during the conference, confirming previous desktop research: “silver bullet” bias, insufficient needs-based approaches, lacking collaboration and common legal/regulatory basis, reduced cost-effectiveness and limited funding, and resistance to change. It is unsurprising to find a very strong co-relation between these and those identified in other “humanitarian innovation” systems.

Good practice within other humanitarian sectors suggest the need for institutional collaborative arrangements capable of convening the diverse stakeholders in an integrated platform. Such platform would be a place where new knowledge is shared and disseminated, needs-based approaches are promoted, efforts prioritized, and the establishment of collaborative partnerships facilitated. It is therefore GICHD’s intention to facilitate the creation of such space in the form of an EORR innovation hub, a collaborative space and a set of initiatives that foster evidence based problem-solving and inclusive partnerships in innovation for EORR. Such undertaking is being discussed internally as well as in consultation with key stakeholders. It aims at enhancing the generation, dissemination, and adoption of innovation while ensuring it is sustainable and addresses evidence-based problems, thus contributing to safer, more efficient and more effective management of the threats of EO. In this context, a preparatory meeting to pilot a Mine Action Innovation Technical Group is planned to take place on 23 May 2024.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SUPPORT TO SRI LANKA AND SOUTH SUDAN

GICHD's strategic planning collaboration with EO-affected countries is centred around the development, implementation, and review of national mine action strategies. The support is guided by ensuring broad and diverse stakeholder engagement, participatory context analysis, strengthened coordination and information sharing and reinforced national ownership.

Sri Lanka

Since late 2021, GICHD has supported the development of Sri Lanka's Completion Strategy, which will guide the implementation of Sri Lanka's completion process, its staff transition strategy and the completion of its survey and clearance obligations under Article 5 of the APMBC. GICHD's support with developing, piloting, and improving Sri Lanka's completion survey continued throughout 2023 and resulted in an evidence-based process that is anchored in IMAS and contextualised to Sri Lanka's unique operational challenges. This has ensured accountability, transparency, clarity and consistency among all actors. The completion survey information management system – developed by GICHD to support the completion process – is based on state-of-the-art GIS technology and allows for the visualisation, analysis and sharing of relevant data, facilitating transparency and reporting. GICHD also supports Sri Lanka's NMAC with organising regular coordination meetings with key stakeholders, which has resulted in greater clarity on progress and remaining challenges.

South Sudan

The NMAA requested GICHD's support with developing South Sudan's new mine action strategy in 2023. In response, GICHD facilitated a strategy stakeholder workshop in Juba in October 2023 that brought national and international stakeholders together to conduct participatory context analysis exercises to better understand challenges and opportunities. The workshop resulted in a Theory of Change that was the basis for South Sudan's new national strategy, which was officially launched in Juba on 4 April 2024. The strategic direction demonstrates the government's commitment to stronger national ownership, greater coordination, and strengthened national mine action institutions. Despite the grave challenges facing South Sudan, mine action continues to provide opportunities for collaboration, partnership, the achievement of concrete results, and an enabling environment for humanitarian assistance and sustainable livelihood activities.

GICHD STUDY ON MINE ACTION IN BORDER AREAS

The issue of explosive ordnance contamination along borders is mentioned in the extension requests under Article 5 of the APMBC by most States Parties currently implementing their clearance obligations under the Convention. Challenges associated with border contamination, such as unresolved border disputes, lack of boundary delimitation or demarcation, the difficulty to determine the responsibility of the States for the areas to be cleared, security concerns and lack of access to or control over areas, are mentioned in extension requests among the circumstances impeding compliance with clearance obligations.

There is therefore value in exploring the role of joint efforts in demining, particularly across shared borders, and their potential for enhancing capabilities, streamlining resource allocation, facilitating information sharing as well as planning and execution of coordinated demining operations. These concerted efforts that transcend boundaries not only mitigate risks from explosive hazards for communities on both sides of borders, but also foster confidence-building, effective coordination in humanitarian efforts, sustained peace, and development.

To advance the comprehensive understanding of relevance of cooperation and assistance in addressing border EO contamination and the broader outcomes of such efforts, the GICHD initiated a study on “Mine Action in Border Areas. Advancing Humanitarian, Peace, and Development Efforts” in 2023. The publication and launch of the study are planned for the third quarter of 2024. Its objectives are as follows:

- I. Presenting the scope of the problem and associated challenges, including, but not limited to the challenges related to the fulfilment of clearance obligations of states under international law;
- II. Highlighting past and current cross-border collaboration aimed at reducing the risks faced by border communities resulting from EO, with the aim to contribute to relevant policy and operational discussions seeking to strengthen cooperation between relevant stakeholders working on effectively addressing EO contamination in border areas;
- III. Highlighting some of the linkages of addressing border EO contamination with broader humanitarian, peace, and development outcomes.
- IV. Exploring the potential role of international, regional, and bilateral cooperation and assistance to advance joint interventions in border areas and the efforts towards lasting peace and development.

The main findings of the study aim to contribute to a systemic understanding of the challenges associated with clearance of border areas, to showcase the potential of cross-border mine action and its linkages with broader efforts, along with the role of cooperation to advance these efforts. To this end, the study will provide concrete recommendations and suggested ways forward, based on lessons learnt, for bilateral, regional and international cooperation on mine action interventions in border areas.