

**24th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations
Advisers (#NDM-UN)
25-27 May 2021
*Perseverance, Partnership, Progress***

Overview

The 24th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN) was held from 25-27 May 2021 with the generous support of the Federal Republic of Germany. The United Nations Mine Action Service convened and coordinated the meeting with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) and with support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Feedback from the post-conference survey shows that 80% of responders rated the logistical and organisation arrangements of the meeting between excellent and good.

Over 920 participants attended the meeting, comprising National Directors of mine action programmes, representatives of Mine Action Centres, United Nations advisers, donor representatives, academics and civil society from more than 105 countries and territories. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted in a virtual format, allowing for inclusive participation of stakeholders from across the sector – and globe - and enabling discussion on challenges and progress, exchange of best practices and lessons learnt under the over-arching theme *Perseverance, Partnership, Progress*. The online nature of the meeting resulted in a significant increase in participation, up from approximately 500 participants at previous years meetings in Geneva.

At the opening ceremony, German Minister of State Mr. Niels Annen spoke about Germany's own history with legacy contamination and its commitment to a world free of mines. This was followed by a message from Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Chair of the IACG-MA, who underscored the importance of maximizing mine action efforts and praised the sector for its perseverance. The opening segment concluded with an inspirational speech from the President of the Association of Survivors of Antipersonnel Mines of Nariño's Pacific Coast, Ms. Luz Dary Landazury. She called for continued support for all survivors, concluding "*it is possible for us to live in a world free of mines if we persevere*".

The organizers prioritised gender and geographical balance for the 95 speakers that presented in plenary and side event panels. Women represented 50 % of plenary session speakers, while seven representatives of affected countries and territories, including National Directors, were panellists across the six plenary sessions and many more spoke during the side events. This year NGO and civil society representatives were included as subject matter speakers during plenary sessions, which brought expanded perspectives to the conversation. Feedback from the post-conference survey indicated 80% of responders rated the plenaries as either good or excellent. The plenary on "*Inclusivity and Diversity: racial equity in mine action*" was the most appreciated with 96% of responders rating it either excellent or good.

Of the respondents, over 90% indicated the number of plenary sessions was "just right", while 75 % indicated the same for the side events, though 14% of respondents expressed a desire to see more side events in the future. From mental health to the environment, from cash and voucher assistance to demining in border areas, this year's side events presented a wide range of topics, which were rated as either good or excellent by 74% of the respondents or more. The best rated side event was "*Women Inclusion in Mine Action: Challenges and Change*" with 72% of respondents rating it excellent and another 22% rating it good.

Access to audio from plenaries is available [here](#).

Plenary I *Staying the course: mine action financing in times of scarcity*

This session discussed financing methods that could help sustain the mine action sector in financially challenging times, drawing from diverse experiences and perspectives to inspire participants in their resource mobilization efforts. The Chair stressed the importance of coordination – often deprioritized when funding is scarce – to deliver effective interventions. As explosive ordnance is a main driver for humanitarian needs and displacement, mine action adds enormous value in protection, peacebuilding and development interventions – an important message for donor advocacy. For affected states looking to build self-sustaining national mine action capabilities, political will and transparency, creating solid legal frameworks and strong partnerships were identified by Jordan’s key factors of success. The government of Japan explained that mine action’s contribution to facilitating the achievement of various Sustainable Development Goals was a compelling reason to maintain funding levels despite additional needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. On innovative financing methods, a researcher funded by the UK suggested that public-private partnerships, outcomes-based financing and front-loading facilities all have potential for application in the mine action sector.

Plenary II *Novel approaches in mine action*

Mine action has significantly evolved in the past two decades, as a result of the changing nature of conflict and the weapons used, and consequently, of the operational context. Innovation in technology and approach has been, and continues to be, essential to address the threats of explosive ordnance efficiently and effectively. Panellists discussed the role of new technologies such as thermo-imaging, useful in urban contamination situations where successful laying over of imagery and datasets had produced good results in pilot projects, and the use of Artificial Intelligence in detection. Further steps could include the use of 3D imagery. Incorporating technologies from other sectors or integrating new (IT based) technologies, could introduce demands for new competencies and skills in the mine action sector, requiring diversification in practitioners. Examples were shared on how novel approaches to reach mixed communities were made possible by acknowledging cultural and linguistic differences and taking into account traditions to transform communities from being “prevention recipients” to becoming “prevention actors”. The UN shared its innovations in M&E of its Mine Action Strategy, which included mixed evaluation methods, rigorous data quality assessment and the use of visual dashboards of major findings, increasing transparency data accessibility and accountability. Germany highlighted a number of innovative activities it has been funding, including the use of a country coalition concept and the funding of regional/cross-border projects and concluded that cooperation and coordination could enhance innovation and shape future mine action; conferences such as the NDM-UN were important incubators for information exchange and common understanding.

Plenary III *Community engagement matters*

The 2020 United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace define community engagement as “*a strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making and implementation to strengthen local capacities, community structures and local ownership as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings*”. Several international agreements in recent years (e.g., the Grand Bargain; the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness) have highlighted the need for improved practice, coordination, integration and measurement of community engagement (CE). Panellists notes to improve engagement, practitioners should use the minimum quality standards that ensure CE is meaningful. Moreover, care should be taken to ensure CE is always a two-way communication. Technical solutions,

were identified as a means of increasing reach and impact, provided the right questions are posed. Panellists also shared their experiences with CE, including in Cambodia, where sustainable community networks have been built up. To carry out effective CE, speakers stressed the importance of allocating sufficient resources and the opportunity provided by non-technical survey to assist in the community mapping process. Afghanistan presented on behaviour change communication – using improved methods of asking questions – as part of a holistic approach to reach communities and understand their needs and motivations.

Plenary IV *Localizing mine action – how to improve*

At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, a group of donors and humanitarian organizations committed to the localization of humanitarian assistance including by channelling 25% of funding directly to national NGOs to improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transactional costs. This initiative represented a commitment to support national responders on the frontline.

Speakers in this plenary presented initiatives underway to localize mine action and identified factors or challenges to adapt mine action programming and make it *as local as possible and as international as necessary*. In South Sudan, where 63% of local organisations were part of national coordination structures, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility established language-specific helpdesks to overcome language barriers and collaborates closely with local partners. In Yemen, Local/National Authorities are encouraged to use a self-assessment capability maturity model to ensure that requirements and responsibilities of national mine action programmes are met.

The session also included interventions from local and national NGOs, who emphasised the need to provide technical support and capacity building to NGOs on thematic areas (i.e survey and clearance) and ensure the participation of local actors in decision making. A poll carried out during the plenary highlighted that lack of trust from the international community towards local actors, political will and limited resources were the major challenges hindering successful localization. The session concluded with recommendations encouraging the donor community to support local responders and trust in their capacities as local actors bring cultural, historical knowledge and credibility, access to local networks and affected communities as well as an understanding of political and social dynamics

Plenary V *Capacity development: opportunities and impact*

This panel addressed ways in which capacity development can be tailored to specific national contexts and needs; it examined the underlying conditions that are necessary for capacity development to be successful; suggested ways to measure impact and progress; and provided insights on ensuring robust exist strategies that allow national institutions to maintain critical capacities and skills to address outstanding challenges.

Speakers shared various best practices that contribute to sustainable national capacity development. These included first and foremost flexible funding and long-term commitment. Data management and the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure progress were shown to create trust and demonstrate the level of self-reliance achieved by national authorities. Finally, when it came to the important question of devising exit-strategies to avoid donor dependence, the following measures were identified as factors contributing to success: inclusion of mine action in the (cycles of) national development plans; localisation efforts; and finally ensuring national authorities that set the agenda of mine action discussions.

Plenary VI *Diversity and inclusion: racial equity in mine action*

Inspired by the call of the United Nations Secretary-General for global engagement to understand and address the way racism and discrimination manifest themselves in the work environment, this plenary

offered a space for an initial exchange and open dialogue on inclusion, diversity, and racial equity in the mine action sector.

The discussion focused on racial discrimination in the workplace within the mine action sector, firstly by introducing the concept of intersectionality to demonstrate how diverse factors can contribute to different forms of discrimination, secondly by taking stock of the situation through an exchange of experiences as well as by sharing some data on staff demographics, and finally by proposing good examples and concrete initiatives to foster inclusivity and diversity. A UN Under-Secretary-General, who was a panellist during the session, acknowledged that "Institutional racism exists also within the United Nations workplace, [...] we have to work on the policies, and it's a long way to go".

The panellists agreed that it would be important to work on changing relevant policies, as well as ensuring accountability. Next steps should include continuation of this conversation, updating of outdated language, increasing localisation and joint implementation efforts, as well as anti-racism and anti-bias trainings. Feedback from the survey circulated during and after the session would be used to inform in next steps.

Side Events

- **Standardizing Beneficiary Definitions in HMA in practice - HALO, MAG, NPA, H&I, DCA, DDG, FSD:** This event discussed the importance of standardizing beneficiary definitions (SBDs) in humanitarian mine action and what progress and challenges are encountered in adopting and implementing them. It sought to advocate for the IMAS Review Board to adopt revised and new beneficiary definitions.
- **Environmental Assessment in HMA - NPA & CEOBS:** This hands-on workshop provided mine action stakeholders with guidance on how to build and use environmental assessment tools; it also presented examples of such tools from both mine action and the broader humanitarian sector.
- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in mine action - Netherlands, H&I:** This event focused on the importance of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Victim Assistance and mine action at large as well as its place in the APMBC and the Oslo Action Plan. Panellists zoomed in on best practices of peer-to-peer support, and efforts to count stigma.
- **Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for Clearance, Land Release and Survivor Assistance – GPC:** This side-event presented findings from research into the extent to which CVA is being leveraged in support of mine action outcomes and identified key gaps and opportunities.
- **Women Inclusion in Mine Action, Challenges and Change - DMAC Iraq, UNMAS Iraq, UNMAS Nigeria:** This event showed the impact of mine action employment in Iraq on women's social and economic empowerment, as well as the achievements of the Directorate of Mine Action of Iraq (DMA) Gender Unit in promoting gender mainstreaming across mine action. Additionally, findings were discussed on the impact of explosive ordnance threat-mitigation capacity development activities of female security officers in northeast Nigeria.
- **State of play: Linking MA and the SDGs - GICHD, UNDP:** Panellists shared national experiences regarding the role of mine action in SDG-policy making processes at the national level. They also discussed how the sector generates, measures and communicates its impact on sustainable development, creating new synergies for sustainable, efficient and effective activities.
- **Demining in border areas – enhancing cross border Cooperation & Assistance. – ANDMA:** panellists took a deep dive into the challenges and opportunities presented to minimize conflict-related deaths and disabilities through the cross-border demining efforts, through the use of case studies to expose the problems faced and the solutions identified.
- **Managing Uncertainty in Southern Tripoli - UNMAS Libya, LMAC:** After the withdrawal in May 2020, of forces aligned to the Libyan National Army, the landscape of southern Tripoli was littered with explosive hazards exhibiting a level of sophistication beyond the training and experience of many clearance organisations, resulting in casualties. The event explained the process survey, prioritisation and clearance to facilitate safe and dignified returns.
- **Impact of explosive ordnance on vulnerable people in Syria, specifically children - UNMAS, UNICEF:** This event highlighted the impact of landmines and explosive ordnance on children as well as people across Syria, and discussed challenges faced in the implementation of mine action activities, highlighting the efforts of volunteers, and risk education in the areas difficult to reach.
- **Doing it right, doing it better: EORE voices from the field - EORE Advisory Group:** This event spotlighted experiences and innovations of practitioners at the forefront of explosive ordnance risk

education. The joint UN initiative in Lebanon to provide EORE for Syrian refugees in the context of return was one of the case studies presented.

- **Approaches to counter the threat posed by IEDs – Examples from Yemen and the Sahel region. - UNDP, UNIDIR, Germany:** This event discussed the challenges posed by improvised explosive devices in the Sahel region and Yemen and demonstrated novel human-rights based capacity development interventions based on the UNIDIR C-IED model and how similar interventions could be implemented by other Member States.
- **Long term impacts of explosive weapons in populated areas - implications for the mine action sector - MAG, NPA, H&I:** Urban conflicts have singular consequences for civilian populations which the mine action sector seeks to mitigate. Panellists drew on their extensive experience and various programming approaches in urban settings to highlight good practices in clearance, survey, VA and EORE.