

GENDER AND THE MINE BAN TREATY

June 2022

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines-Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) and the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor (the Monitor) recognize that gender and diversity is an important factor in understanding and responding to the impact of mines, cluster munitions, and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).¹

The Oslo Action Plan (OAP) highlights the importance of gender and ensuring that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, men, and boys are considered and inform all areas of Mine Ban Treaty implementation and national mine action programs. Since 2020, each committee of the treaty has adopted a gender focal point in response to the need to ensure an inclusive approach as established by the OAP.² Action #29 of the OAP requires States Parties to report on risk education and other risk reduction programs in their Mine Ban Treaty Article 7 reports, including on methodologies used, challenges faced, and the results achieved; with information disaggregated by gender, age, and disability.

The focus on gender in the OAP coincided with the 20-year anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which emphasizes a gender-based approach to mine action. Adopted in 2000, UNSCR declares,

“... the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls.”

The UN's Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes were first released in 2005 and were updated with a third version in 2019. Concurrent with a broader trend in international law and policy, intersectionality has become an important aspect of analysis of gender and diversity considerations in mine action, taking into account intersecting factors related to inequality, such as age, ethnicity, social class, and disability.³

Among recent developments in the mine action sector to advance understanding and availability of information on gender perspectives is the 2021 release of UN Secretary-General biannual reports on assistance in mine action, which include an expanded section on efforts regarding the specific needs of women, girls, men, and boys from diverse groups.⁴

Measuring the Impact: Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD)

Consistent with multiyear trends, in 2020, men and boys made up the majority of casualties from mine/ERW,⁵ accounting for 85% of all casualties where the sex was known (4,583 of 5,391). Women and girls made up 15% of all casualties where the sex was known (808). Due to more casualties occurring during conflict, detailed reporting and the extent of disaggregation by sex of casualties decreased significantly in recent years; the sex was not recorded for about a third of casualties in 2015–2020, compared to just 12% ‘unknown’ during the previous period from 2010 to 2014.

¹ For definitions of gender and explanations of the differences between use of the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ relevant to the impact of mines, see, Gender and Diversity Working Group (GDWG), “Gender language,” bit.ly/GenderLanguageGDWG; and World Health Organization (WHO), “Gender and health,” bit.ly/GenderAndHealthWHO.

² See, GDWG webpage, bit.ly/GenderAndDiversityWorkingGroupGDWG.

³ The GDWG “Gender language” paper notes that “Intersectionality is a concept that captures the various layers of advantages and disadvantages everyone experiences based on societal and structural systems. Women, girls, older persons, minorities, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups tend to experience reduced access to opportunities. When several of these factors overlap, they can cause increased discrimination, leading to exclusion. Intersectionality should be taken into consideration from identification and design to implementation, and in monitoring and evaluation, in order to address the needs and protect the rights of marginalized communities.”

⁴ UN General Assembly, “Assistance in mine action: report of the Secretary-General,” (A/76/283), 10 August 2021, bit.ly/AssistanceinMineActionUNSGAug2021.

⁵ Landmines of all types, including antipersonnel mines, antivehicle mines, and improvised mines, as well as cluster munition remnants and other ERW.

Gender in Mine Action Programs

In 2020 and 2021, a dozen States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty incorporated gender as a component of their national mine action strategies, including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, and Zimbabwe.

Many states have increasingly greater numbers of women working in the mine action sector, including in mine clearance teams. Mixed or all-women clearance teams have been reported in at least 20 of the 33 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty with remaining antipersonnel mine contamination.⁶

Women from the all-women clearance team in **Afghanistan** reported being subjected to intimidation and harassment in 2021, following the Taliban takeover. Many women deminers fled their homes to go into hiding in remote districts. One was quoted as saying “this situation has killed us alive; our dreams and hopes are dead, we do not have any goal for our lives anymore.”⁷

Gender in Responses to the Impact of Mines

Risk education

Effective risk education needs to be tailored to the threat and sensitive to gender, age, disability, and other factors of diversity that may influence people’s exposure to mines and ERW.

According to data available for 2020, half of all risk education beneficiaries were women (18%) and girls (32%). Boys accounted for 36% of the annual total and men 14%. States and operators were beginning to collect data on persons with disabilities who receive risk education and to design appropriate delivery methods to reach them better.

In many contexts, men are seen to be a primary risk group because of their roles and responsibilities. Risk education operators reported that men were often harder to reach through risk education as livelihood activities take them away from home. To better reach at-risk men, risk education sessions were held at places of work in 2020 and 2021—including bus stations, construction sites and in fields—and were targeting specific occupations—such as street cleaners, power-company employees, and shepherds.

Women and girls remain an important group to target in risk education as they can help promote safer behavior among men, and among children and peers.

In **Sri Lanka**, women and schoolgirls worked with national risk education organizations to reach out to families and act as peer group influencers.

Women and girls are often harder to reach for risk education in **Somalia**, where their social and economic roles are limited.

Children are vulnerable to mine/ERW risk, often because of limited knowledge of the dangers and natural curiosity. In particular, boys are known for engaging in higher risk behaviors, as well as activities which may take them into hazardous areas including outdoor play, looking after animals, and undertaking household chores such as collecting firewood.

Many risk education operators reported using mixed gender teams to ensure that all age and gender groups in the population were adequately reached. Often risk education is carried out as an integrated part of survey and clearance, such as in Mine Ban Treaty States Parties Afghanistan, Angola, BiH, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, the DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

⁶ Afghanistan, Angola, BiH, Cambodia, Colombia, Croatia, DRC, Iraq, Nigeria, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. All of which have declared clearance obligations under Article 5 of the Mine Ban Treaty.

⁷ Eugene Bingham, “Women who did dangerous work for New Zealand in Afghanistan are now threatened by the Taliban,” *Stuff*, 15 September 2021, bit.ly/Stuff15Sept2021.

Victim assistance

Reporting on sex and age disaggregated victim data is usually limited to statistical disaggregation of casualties and, less frequently, beneficiaries. Thus, statistical data tends to fail to represent the particular gender-related barriers faced by women and girls, men and boys. It is frequently reported that while men and boys represent the majority of reported mine casualties and face specific challenges, women and girls are likely to be disproportionately disadvantaged as a result of mine/ERW incidents, both due to multiple forms of discrimination as faced by survivors and hardships encountered when a spouse is injured or killed.

Gender is a key consideration in victim assistance programming. However, the challenges are great. Despite efforts of victim assistance providers and programs for persons with disabilities to promote the inclusion of women with disabilities, overall, they experience greater discrimination than men with disabilities, with more living in poverty and experiencing lower rates of employment.

In some countries, women face additional challenges accessing medical care due to the lack of gender-sensitive services, including a lack of women among trained rehabilitation professionals.

In **Afghanistan**, women have been adversely affected by restrictive measures introduced since the Taliban takeover. The healthcare system is reported to be collapsing, facilities are running out of medication and supplies, and most healthcare workers have not received salaries for months. Afghanistan had previously reported rehabilitation services with outreach programs that increase the number of women provided with transportation and accommodation at their facilities. Yet access to medical care was inadequate, especially for women. Women in Afghanistan are often not allowed to travel on their own, and there is a shortage of trained female healthcare personnel to respond to needs.

In **Ukraine**, the current conflict following the Russian invasion is reported to be denying women and girls to access healthcare. This has specifically been attributed to “the destruction caused by the conflict, particularly the use of explosive weapons in populated areas targeting hospitals and health facilities, as well as the presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war.” Numerous attacks on healthcare facilities, health workers, and ambulances have been recorded.⁸

Support has been given to the training of health professionals in order to raise awareness about addressing gender- and age-related needs of survivors, as reported in BiH, Cambodia, Croatia, Iraq, and Tajikistan.

In **Iraq** gender-sensitive services were available as women staff members were employed in rehabilitation and medical centers.

The needs of widows and female family members remain a key concern for providing assistance for indirect mine/ERW victims and survivors whose rights are also addressed by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Monitor reported that implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by States Parties should help ensure the rights of women and girls, as well as protect them from discrimination and exploitation. However, to date, most States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty need to significantly improve their reporting in order to demonstrate connections between the impact of mines and addressing gender perspectives in responses.

For more information:

www.the-monitor.org | [@MineMonitor](https://twitter.com/MineMonitor)

⁸ NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, “Gender Analysis of the Situation in Ukraine,” April 2022, bit.ly/GenderAnalysisUkraineApr2022.