

“Why mainstreaming gender in mine action?” The Arguments

▶ **General argument:**

- ✓ Differential impact and different needs: women, girls, boys and men are affected differently by landmines and hence need to be assisted in different ways. Gender influences the likelihood of becoming a landmine victim, the ability to access medical attention and long term reintegration, or risk education and awareness.

▶ **International standards:**

There are international standards and guidelines stressing the specific need to implement gender perspectives and considerations in landmine programmes:

- ✓ The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on “Women, Peace and Security” specifically emphasises *“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 United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) published the Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes in 2005;
- ✓ The UN Department of Disarmament Affairs (DDA) has called attention to the need to take gender perspectives into account in landmine programmes; and
- ✓ Both the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the 1998 Commission on the Status of Women highlighted the special concerns of women in mine affected areas.

▶ **Equality and efficiency arguments:**

- ✓ **There is a need for a non-discriminatory mine action:** mine action does not happen in a vacuum. It takes place in a context where there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Consequently, mine action projects do not necessarily benefit women and men equally and mine action programmes and activities should be aware of neither sustaining nor exacerbating existing inequalities between women and men.
- ✓ **Equality leads to efficiency:** efficient and sustainable mine action is highly dependent on non-discriminatory procedures and practice. A gender perspective should be integrated from the beginning of the planning process, in order to ensure that mine action policies, operations and programmes will benefit everyone. This relies on equal consultation and involvement of women and men amongst stakeholders and beneficiary populations, throughout the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of mine action programmes and activities. It also requires that data disaggregated by sex and age is collected throughout all phases.
- ✓ **Diversity is crucial in improving mine action results.** Mixed teams, be they demining or surveying teams for instance, can be of advantage by emphasising the needs of target groups. Diversity will improve mine action activities through the incorporation of people with different perspectives, thinking and capabilities.

▶ **Quantitative argument:**

- ✓ Men are much more likely to be caught in a landmine accident (85-90% of landmine victims are boys and men) than women. Women, however, do face other types of vulnerabilities: due to inequalities in victim assistance, women receive less rehabilitation resulting in a higher fatality rate for females (43%) than for males (29%).

▶ **Development arguments:**

- ✓ Gender equality is a pre-condition for development. Using Action Aid's words: "*No campaign against poverty can be truly honest if it does not ensure that the rights, voices and choices of women are heard, promoted and protected.*"¹
- ✓ Mine action is not only an isolated technical area focusing on landmines removal from the ground; it is also an integral part of development relying on comprehensive reach out of all affected individuals, women, men, girls and boys.
- ✓ Mine action has developed from focusing on number of cleared square metres of land to analyses of who – women, girls, boys and men - will use the land and how. In this process, gender considerations become relevant and gender mainstreaming efforts have a natural position.

Why gender matters within the different sections of mine action

▶ **Surveying:**

- ✓ Implementing gender considerations is vital for the accuracy of data collection and for obtaining a comprehensive picture of contamination and priorities for clearance. Women and men hold different information about mine affected areas, due to their ascribed gender roles. Accurate and comprehensive information can only be gathered if both women and men are consulted by gender balanced survey teams. In cases where an inclusive approach has been adopted, the result has been a more accurate mapping, and hence more thorough clearing.

▶ **Clearance:**

- ✓ Clearance is an income-generating employment opportunity that allows women and men to provide a financial security for their entire family. Preventing women from accessing demining employment opportunities affects the well-being of families and consequently, entire communities.
- ✓ Female deminers not only actively take part in improving their communities' daily living, but also become role models, inspiring other women in the mine affected communities to take up paid positions or engage in local politics, social work or other activities.

▶ **Prioritisation of the land:**

- ✓ When only men are being consulted about the lands to be cleared from landmines, lands specifically used by women, such as routes to collect water and firewood, risk being left out from the prioritisation process.

¹ Action Aid "Women's rights facts sheet": http://www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/womensrightsfactsheet_a_w.pdf

▶ **Hand-over of the land:**

- ✓ In contexts where women face discrimination in land ownership, a non-gender sensitive hand-over that doesn't take into account who has access to the cleared land might put women at risk of losing the right to use the land.

▶ **Access to Mine Risk Education (MRE):**

- ✓ Women are less likely to have good understanding and access to MRE due to female illiteracy rates, absence of radio/televisions, lack of understanding of their rights, mobility restrictions, absence of sex-segregated meetings, childcare responsibilities and household duties.

▶ **Content of MRE material:**

- ✓ Women and men have different at-risk behaviour and exposures in relation to landmines. In that respect, MRE material should be tailored according to those distinct vulnerabilities, which relies on a proper gender analysis of women and men's respective experience to landmines.

▶ **Landmine survivors, landmine victims:**

- ✓ The majority – some 85-90% – of the direct victims (injured or deceased) of landmines are men. Important to remember is that a majority of these injured men live with, or are connected to a woman (wife, sister, daughter, mother, other female family member, friends or neighbours) who will provide care to these direct victims. This situation may have tremendous consequences for women, putting them in an even more vulnerable position.²
- ✓ The definition of a landmine “victim” includes those – mainly women – living with, depending on and providing care to survivors (mainly men).

▶ **Victim assistance and reintegration:**

- ✓ Women are less likely to receive medical care and prostheses in societies where resources are limited and controlled by men. The cost of investing time and money in extensive rehabilitation programmes for women or girls may appear to outweigh the perceived benefits.³
- ✓ In some cultural contexts women face difficulties in receiving adequate health care and rehabilitation as they can only, according to traditions and perceptions, be treated by a same sex medical staff. In areas where there are only few or maybe even no female doctors, women do not receive the health care they need.
- ✓ Women and men tend to react differently to rehabilitation, hence the medical response needs to be adjusted according to who is treated. For example, some studies show that men require longer time for rehabilitation after an injury and that they face greater difficulties than women to adjust to the fact that they are living with a disability.
- ✓ In terms of social consequences, injured women and men are differently treated after an injury. Whilst injured men are generally supported by their family (including female members) married women are confronted to greater risk of being divorce and

² Examples: Women and girls who have to take care of an injured family member may be hindered from having access to education or undertaking paid employment. In traditional patriarchal societies, changes of roles might trigger stigmatisation, isolation, destitution of women. Relying on their wives for a living, men might move from depression to aggression, leading to domestic violence against women. The loss of the husband's salary in societies where women encounter difficulties to work might lead to extreme poverty and/or prostitution.

³ ICRC, Landmines and explosive remnants of war, in Women and War, Feb. 2008, p.16

single women risk being deemed unmarriageable. Abandonment, stigmatisation, isolation and economic deprivation of injured women lead to extreme poverty⁴.

- ✓ Women are discriminated against when it comes to income generating activities because they are usually not perceived as being the main economic provider of the family. However, the loss of a male relative or husband has severe economic consequences for women in affected countries. A woman might find herself suddenly becoming the sole provider for her household in a society where some or all forms of employment are forbidden to her, or where she does not have access to safe or fairly paid work. Hence the need to give women priority to reintegration programmes so that they can economically sustain their family.

⁴ Unemployment rate for disabled women in developing countries is virtually 100% (WILPF, Women and Cluster Munition)