



© Sean Sutton/MAG
Demining team, Cambodia

About us

The **Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines** is an umbrella organisation composed of about 50 Swiss NGOs gathered around the common objective of banning anti-personnel landmines and similar indiscriminate weapons. The Swiss Campaign runs a programme on **Gender and Mine Action** to encourage and support the mine action sector to mainstream gender through its policy, programming and operations. The programme focuses on research and advocacy activities, with emphasis on making information on gender and mine action available to interested stakeholders.

Supporting documentation (non exhaustive)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 addresses gender in mine action by “[...] *emphasizing 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 issue is moreover specifically discussed in the **UN Gender Guidelines on Mine Action Programmes**, which is an important tool for mine action practitioners worldwide.

What can the Gender and Mine Action Programme offer?

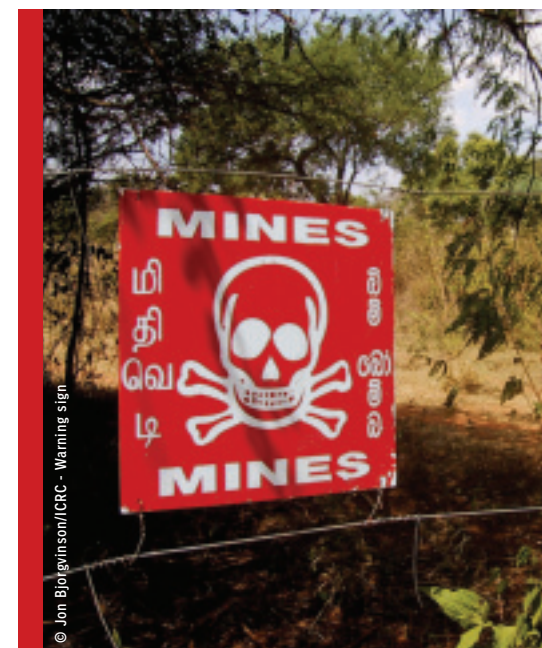
- A web portal with information on gender and mine action (www.scbl-gender.ch)
- A report on a compilation of case studies from mine affected areas analysing the issue of landmines from a gender perspective which can be downloaded on the web portal
- Advocacy material and tools
- Email- or telephone based consultancies on gender and mine action
- Expertise in the field of gender and mine action
- Review of documents and/or events from a gender perspective



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Gender and Landmines

from Concept to Practice

The publication “Gender and Landmines – from Concept to Practice”

As women and men are affected differently by landmines and need to be assisted in different ways, gender is an integral part of mine action that must not be neglected. In order to highlight this important issue further, the Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines has launched the report “*Gender and Landmines – From Concept to Practice*”, which studies gender mainstreaming efforts in mine action. It is developed for staff within the mine action sector, including policy makers, programmers, donors and implementing organisations, and supporting bodies, for example women’s grassroots organisations.

The report illustrates the issue of gender and mine action by presenting how gender mainstreaming is understood, recognised or rejected, implemented and achievable through five in-depth country profiles based on field research. The report discusses gender in four pillars of mine action (demining/surveying, mine risk education (MRE), victim assistance and advocacy), and provides good practices on gender initiatives from the field.

The main point of the report is that gender is not only about equality but also about quality. The results and the impact of mine action activities will improve greatly by integrating a gender perspective, and by taking all people’s needs and concerns into consideration.



Myths on gender mainstreaming in mine action

Myth 1: “Mainstreaming gender in mine action activities only targets and benefits women”.

The integration of a gender perspective in mine action targets and benefits all members of society: women, girls, men and boys. One concrete example is provided by an organisation gathering information from both women and men in the mine affected communities, and setting up survey teams made up of both female and male surveyors. Due to their different knowledge and experiences, women and men might identify different areas as contaminated by landmines. This example illustrates that valuable information would have been left out if the surveying had only involved one of the groups.

Myth 2: “Gender is complex and expensive to implement in mine action”.

Gender, despite its alleged complexity, is universally applicable in mine action, regardless of pillar, region or culture. Gender mainstreaming can be implemented by small means and with low cost implications. One example of having a gender aware approach is to develop MRE material ensuring that men, women, boys and girls recognise themselves in the pictures. This exercise is low cost and ensures that the material does not exclude any particular sex and reaches all members of the communities.

Myth 3: “Culture and traditions are the main obstacles to mainstream gender within mine action activities”.

Culture and religion are frequently used as arguments for not integrating a gender focus in mine action activities, referring to the “unique situation” in a particular country. Yet, where empirical research has been conducted, the results support the opposite. Actually, lack of knowledge and willingness seem to constitute the real obstacles. Worldwide, organisations have successfully employed female deminers in environments where other organisations stated that such operations would be “impossible”. For example, by addressing the recruitment process through a gender lens and challenging notions and ideas, these organisations found that the alleged obstacles in terms of culture and traditions actually were not there.

Myth 4: “Gender mainstreaming means simply employment of women”.

Many organisations are confident that they have integrated a gender perspective by employing women. It is true that employment of, for example, female deminers is an excellent way of ensuring female participation in mine action. This is done in Laos, Cambodia, Lebanon, only to mention a few places, where these women act as role models and source of inspiration for other women. But often employing women in mine action has reinforced stereotypes, as women have been hired for work in administration, education or rehabilitation rather than as deminers, a role traditionally perceived as being for men. Female employment is only one part of gender mainstreaming, but not enough to ensure both equality and quality.

Did you know that...

- in 2006, 5 751 casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war were identified, of which males constituted 89%
- due to gender inequalities in victim assistance, women receive less immediate health care, resulting in a higher fatality rate for females (43%) than for males (29%)?
- some studies indicate that the wives of landmine survivors face a greater risk of being exposed to domestic violence?
- men and women may have unequal access to land that has been cleared from landmines?
- despite men being the main group for casualties, mine risk education often targets women?
- the official definition of ‘victim’ not only includes direct survivors of landmines (the majority being men) but also those (mainly women) living with, depending on and becoming caregivers of survivors?