

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

# Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2016–22 **2021 Annual Report**



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# 1 Introduction

In most contexts affected by war, the suffering is not over even when the fighting has stopped. Anti-personnel mines, cluster munition remnants and other types of explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to kill and maim without distinction long after conflicts have ended. These weapons contaminate the land, hamper economic activities, instil fear and impede the return of displaced populations. In short, they hinder the return to normality.

Two international conventions, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention or APMBC) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention or CCM), aim to put an end to the era of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. They are among the most successful in the domain of humanitarian disarmament, with 164 and 110 States Parties respectively.¹ Their implementation has saved countless lives. Despite the important successes, more progress is needed in terms of universalisation, clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance. Particular challenges pose the increase in the number of new casualties, the recently reported use of cluster munitions and the use of improvised landmines by non-state armed groups (NSAGs).

In 2021, Switzerland continued to place a clear emphasis on increasing the safety and security of affected communities and the enabling role of mine action for humanitarian action, peace and sustainable development. The activities aimed at clearing mines and ERW, providing assistance, raising awareness and strengthening local capacities. At the political level, Switzerland concentrated its resources on ensuring compliance with and implementation of the relevant conventions, in particular in the framework of its presidency of the CCM.

Switzerland contributed some CHF 17 million<sup>2</sup> to mine action in 2021. This annual report presents an overview of the Swiss Confederation's most important achievements in the implementation of the Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2016–22 during that year.

<sup>1</sup> The Convention of 18 September 1997 on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention, SR 0.515.092) and the Convention of 30 May 2008 on Cluster Munitions (SR 0.515.093).

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) disbursed CHF 14 million, of which CHF 9.5 million was channelled to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) spent CHF 3 million on deployments and training.

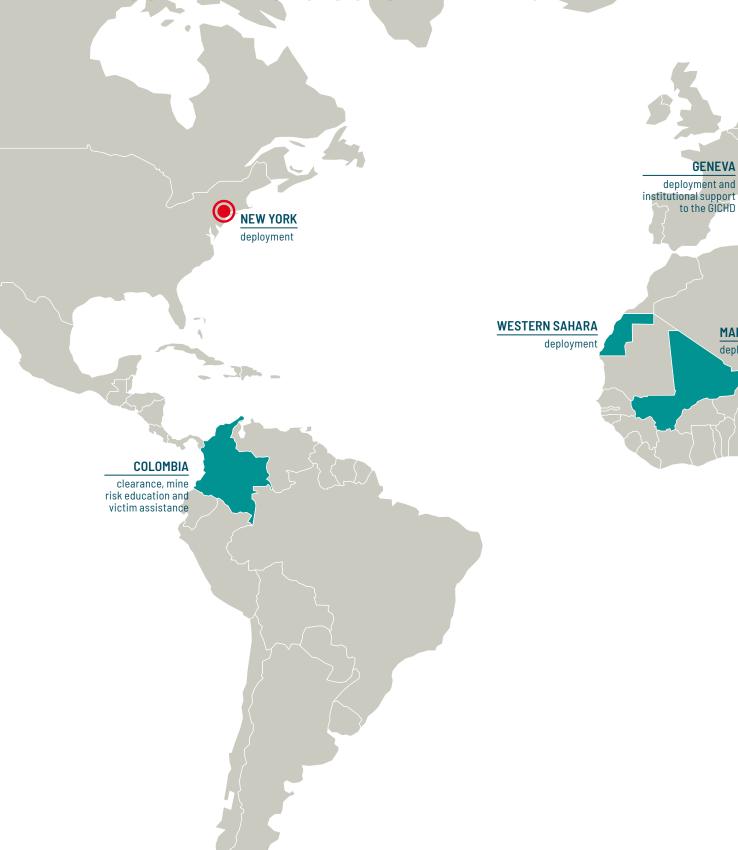
# Switzerland's commitment to mine action in 2021

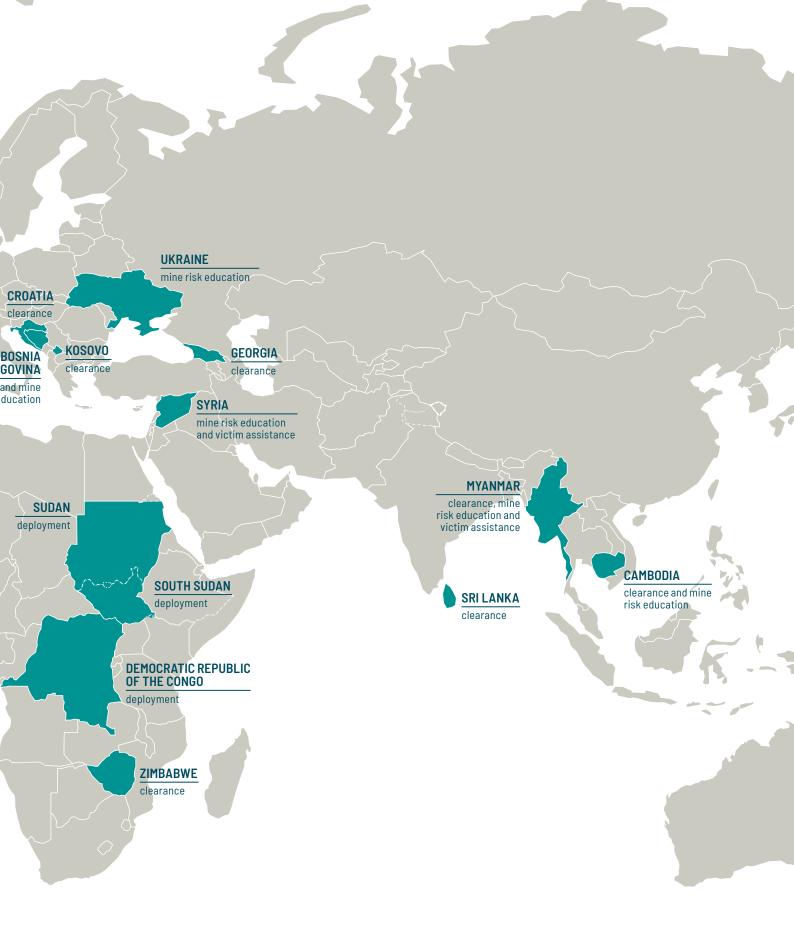
HERZE

clearance

MALI

deployment





Sources: Natural Earth Data, UN, FDFA, DDPS

The boundaries and names shown, as well as the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Switzerland.

## 2.1 Advocacy

Switzerland has promoted the universalisation of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions as well as compliance with these treaties by States Parties and NSAGs. It has also appealed to states not parties to abide by the basic principles of these treaties and supported efforts to clarify alleged breaches.

At the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties of the APMBC, Switzerland was elected as a member of the Committee on Cooperative Compliance for two years. In this role, Switzerland will provide support to the Presidency of the Convention towards clarifying questions of compliance

#### **CCM** and **APMBC**

Switzerland has presided over the Second Review Conference of the CCM during 2020 and 2021. The collective efforts undertaken by States Parties and coordinated by Switzerland resulted in the adoption of two important documents: First, a strong political declaration (<u>Lausanne Declaration</u>) and second, an ambitious and measurable action plan that aims to accelerate the implementation of the convention by 2026 (<u>Lausanne Action Plan</u>).

In the framework of its presidency of the Second Review Conference of the CCM, Switzerland promoted the Convention's universalisation. During this period, three additional States ratified the CCM, underlining the need to continue such efforts. Switzerland also raised awareness about alleged uses of cluster munitions, calling on all parties to stop using these weapons and on all states that have not yet done so to ratify the CCM.

Additionally, in an effort to raise awareness about the CCM, Switzerland, together with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), held a photo exhibition titled <u>Lasting Footprints</u> in several Swiss cities. It highlighted the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions as well as the objectives and achievements of the CCM.



Ambassador Félix Baumann (right), President of the Second Review Conference of the CCM, passes the baton to Ambassador Aidan Liddle, President of the 10th Meeting of States Parties. The Second Review Conference concluded on 21 September 2021 with the adoption of the Lausanne Action Plan and the Lausanne Declaration.

#### Dialogue with non-state armed groups to promote compliance with the norms against the use of anti-personnel mines

NSAGs in at least six countries continued to use anti-personnel mines in 2021. A number of them have also used cluster munitions in the past. In order to implement fully the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, it remains essential to engage in dialogue with NSAGs. Their use of improvised mines in particular threatens the vision of a world free of mines and cluster munitions with no new victims. Switzerland therefore supports the activities of the non-governmental organisation Geneva Call, which engages with NSAGs in an effort to promote respect for international norms, including those outlined in the Ottawa Convention. In 2021, Geneva Call implemented targeted activities in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine. In total, 54 organised armed groups have publicly expressed their commitment to respect the provisions of the Ottawa Convention.

#### Commitment to research and transparency

In 2021, Switzerland supported research undertaken by the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor as well as by the Mine Action Review. Thanks to these products, the mine action community has access to comprehensive understanding of the progress, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions. The data and analysis produced by both the Monitor and the Mine Action Review ensure transparency in the sector and are key to devising policy based on evidence.

## 2.2 Clearance of mined areas

Clearing contaminated areas saves countless lives, allows access to resources such as water and land, and is a key component for the safe return of displaced populations. It has a positive impact on the safety and livelihoods of communities living in affected areas. The international community has made great strides in this area. However, the pace of clearance activities must accelerate to protect more people from the risks posed by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and ERW, to allow access to humanitarian operations and to make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mine contamination in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains an issue of serious concern, with more than 260,000 households directly exposed to danger. Since 2018, Switzerland has supported a project carried out by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) to clear land situated very close to a tourist resort on Vlašić mountain. The project, which ended in 2021, allowed the release of over 4.4 km² of land back to the communities for their safe and productive use. In addition, Norwegian People's Aid teams released a further 0.8km2 of land that was previously contaminated with cluster munition remnants.

An assessment conducted after the clearance activities showed that over 1,000 people have benefitted directly and over 13,500 indirectly. The released land is used mostly for agriculture, collecting firewood, foraging for forest fruits, farming, hunting and tourism. Switzerland remains engaged in mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will co-finance a demining project in the Brčko District, allowing for the clearance of the route of a new highway. This will help solve the mine contamination problem in the district by 2024 and contribute to the construction of essential economic infrastructure.



An operator clearing an area of cluster munition remnants in the vicinity of houses in the local community of Tojsici in north-eastern Bosnia.

#### Cambodia

Thirty years of conflict have left the Kingdom of Cambodia with extensive mine and ERW contamination. It is estimated that 3 to 4 million explosive ordnance items and an area of 835 km² remain to be cleared. Cambodia is thus one of the most affected countries in the world. Anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, cluster munition remnants and ERW have resulted in large numbers of victims. They continue to hinder access to key resources, preventing the development of economic opportunities. Switzerland supports Cambodia in making safe land available for agriculture and infrastructure development and in reducing casualties through mine risk education and mine clearance. Additionally, it supports participatory planning and activities to ensure effective mine clearance and post-clearance land use.

Together with other donor countries, Switzerland funds the HALO Trust's Humanitarian Mine Clearance project. In 2021 alone, 18.1 km² of land was released back to the population, benefitting nearly 34,000 poor families living along the Thailand-Cambodia border. This area still has a high concentration of mines and hence accounts for about 90% of the mine-related accidents in Cambodia. 2,834 anti-personnel mines were destroyed. More than 70% of the land cleared is now used for agricultural purposes.



ource: © HALO Trust

Sern Pheakddey Chao and his mother, Mrs Sern Socheat, in Oddar Meanchey Province.

"At the age of five, I learned that my family's farm was contaminated with landmines. From then on, for our own safety, we were only able to cultivate a fragment of our 4.5 hectares.

In 2020, HALO Trust came to our farm and destroyed two deadly anti-tank mines that they had found. By clearing the area, we now live without fear of accidents. My family can cultivate more rice and benefits from an increased income. The money is helping my brothers and me to attend schools and university. My family is relieved to work in a safe rice field.

Now I am 24 and study law at university. I wish to become a lawyer to help my community. I have big plans for the future. I also plan to grow cashew trees on our farm to help increase my family's income further."

#### Croatia

The 1991–96 war left a heavy and dangerous legacy. More than 300 km² of land may still be contaminated with more than 22,000 landmines, negatively affecting access to pasture and forestry resources. Croatia's national strategy aims to achieve a mine-free country by 2026. Switzerland supports the country's mine action efforts as part of its EU enlargement contribution. Thanks to this Swiss-Croatian funding, an area of 1.8 km² of the Kotar-Stari Gaj forest was cleared of mines and ERW. The area is certified as safe and can therefore be accessed by citizens for leisure and economic use. In 2021, Switzerland earmarked a supplementary budget together with a co-financing of Croatia for the demining of an additional 0.8 km² forest next to the already cleared area.

Furthermore, a major survey on mine victims was commissioned to update the national database and to understand the population's social and economic situation. Based on the findings, a support mechanism started in 2021, which provides mine victims with psychological support, integration into the labour market and financial support for the creation of an income-generating activity.



A deminer working in May 2021 in the Kotar-Stari Gaj forest, located 60 km south of Zagreb. Within the 1.8 km², over 2,700 anti-personnel mines and 830 unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO) were found, making the area one of the most densely contaminated in 20 years of mine clearance in Groatia. A large part of the remaining contamination by mines and ERW in Groatia is located in forested areas.

#### Georgia

In 2017, an ammunition store in the seaside town of Primorsky (Abkhazia) suffered an unplanned explosion, killing three people and injuring 64. Over 4.5 million square metres of residential, agricultural and forestland was littered with over 100,000 items of unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO), posing a huge risk to the security and livelihoods of nearly 6,500 local residents. Working in collaboration with the HALO Trust, Switzerland contributed to the clearance of over 0.3 km<sup>2</sup> of land and the destruction of over 1,400 items of UXO in 2021. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the project exceeded its clearance targets by almost 50%. As a result, land contaminated since August 2017 could be returned to the residents of Primorsky for safe, productive, and habitable use, increasing human security and furthering international efforts to stabilise a region still recovering from armed conflict. Swiss support also helped the HALO Trust to achieve gender parity in its clearance teams, with women making up 50% of deminers. By December 2021, the HALO Trust finalised the clearance of the crater area at the blast site.





ource: © HALO Trus

Crater, where the explosion happened – before and after the clearance activities.

© MRRFEL

#### Kosovo

Over twenty years have now passed since the end of the Kosovo War, and ERW continue to claim the lives of civilians in Kosovo. This compounds the already high levels of poverty by restricting access to land, which could be used safely and productively. In 2019, the Kosovo government released a strategy aimed at addressing the landmine and ERW threat by 2024.

Switzerland supported the HALO Trust in clearing over 80,000 m<sup>2</sup> in five different minefields in Kosovo. 122 people benefitted directly and 6,128 indirectly from the improved safety and living conditions.

Kosovo suffered heavily in the COVID-19 pandemic. However, thanks to well-established procedures to ensure the safety of the demining teams, the pandemic has had no significant impact on the project.



Korbliq village was mined during the war due to its location close to the border with North Macedonia. Once a village with a large population, there are only about 25 families left. Enver Samakova, father of five, left the village as well, but was confident to return and rebuild his house in Korbliq when he heard of mine clearance action: "I came back thanks to clearance from the HALO teams; I am hunting and using the land and its resources again. The villagers are moving freely, they have started cutting the trees to use for heating, and they are collecting mountain fruits to sell. We have gained economic and psychological benefits – a brighter future for all."

#### Sri Lanka

Nearly thirty years of conflict have resulted in extensive contamination. Over a decade after the end of the conflict, mines and other ERW still cause fear and prevent the return to normality. They particularly hinder the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the resumption of socio-economic activities. Contamination, aside from being a physical threat, is also a constant reminder of the internal armed conflict. Clearance operations therefore also support the peace and reconciliation process. Collaborating with the HALO Trust, Switzerland is supporting Sri Lanka in transitioning from a heavily mined country to one in which mines are no longer a threat. Over the last year, it has contributed to the clearance of around 0.4km2 of land, which will allow hundreds of people to resettle once COVID-19 mitigation measures cease. The local population will use the released land for agricultural purposes, in particular crop cultivation and grazing of cattle, and will also have access to natural resources.



Source: © HALO Trust

Muniyandi Madaththi, aged 73, left her land in Muhamalai twice. "The first time was in 1995, and the second time was in 2009. After our first displacement, we rebuilt our house again in 2006. However, unfortunately, again, we had to leave in 2009. Our home and land were again destroyed as the conflict peaked." In November 2021, Muniyandi Madaththi received the formal handover certificate from the Pachchilaipalli District Secretary.

#### Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the countries worst affected by mines in the world. During the Liberation War in the 1970s the Rhodesian security forces laid 233 km of dense minefield belts known as the *Cordon Sanitaire* along the borders with Zambia and Mozambique. More than forty years later, vast tracts of unfenced land remain contaminated. The Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre (ZIMAC) reported over 34 km² of confirmed mined area remaining and estimates that landmines have killed over 1,500 people, 120,000 heads of livestock and thousands of wild animals since 1980.

Switzerland and the United States have been providing support to the humanitarian mine action organisation APOPO since August 2020 to clear the minefield located in the Sengwe Wildlife Corridor that connects the Limpopo (Mozambique), Kruger (South Africa) and Gonarezhou (Zimbabwe) national parks. Communities in the contaminated area have limited access to farming and grazing land and are forced to use long routes to access basic services. Moreover, the minefield blocks the free movement of tourists and endangers wildlife, hindering conservation and ecotourism opportunities that could benefit the regional economies.

Since the start of the project and as of July 2021, APOPO has cleared over 2,000 anti-personnel mines. APOPO estimates that it will clear 7.2 km<sup>2</sup> along the Sengwe Wildlife Corridor ahead of Zimbabwe's 2025 landmine-free deadline. Around 7,500 people benefit directly or indirectly through increased security and new economic opportunities thanks to the development of tourism between the three national parks.



Chilotlela resident Itai Chivambu and her family have been farming maize on a small plot of land adjacent to the minefield since the early 1990s. The presence of landmines used to make it impossible to farm on nearly half of the plot. Now that the mines are gone, Ms Chivambu is delighted to be able to increase the size of her plot in the next growing season. Doing so will allow her to better feed her family and sell left-over crops to pay for school fees and other critical needs.

## 2.3 Victim assistance

Anti-personnel mines, cluster munition remnants and other ERW still kill and maim too many innocent civilians – more than 7,000 in 2021 according to the Landmine Monitor. These weapons often threaten the most vulnerable segments of society, negatively affecting the livelihoods of entire families. To ensure that victims fully enjoy their rights and remain active members of the societies they belong to, victim assistance strives to provide healthcare, physical rehabilitation and socio-economic services.

#### Colombia

Colombia continues to be one of the most contaminated countries worldwide. The pandemic led to an escalation of the conflict and violence, and a deterioration of the humanitarian situation. While progress has been made, mines and explosive ordnance are still extensively used by NSAGs in rural and ethnic territories. The number of victims and gaps in victim assistance have recently increased. 141 new victims have been officially registered in 2021.

To address this, in 2021 Switzerland and its partners designed a specific mine action programme in Colombia in coordination with the government. The first phase until 2023 assists mine victims and affected communities with demining operations, protection measures and socioeconomic recovery. It also supports national organisations, including Humanicemos, a civil humanitarian demining organisation composed of former FARC-EP combatants and created as a result of the Peace Accord.

Highly contaminated municipalities were prioritised during the implementation and received comprehensive support. Over 100,000 m² of land was cleared, improving safety and socio-economic conditions. Two municipalities supported by Switzerland became mine-free. 1,682 people gained access to protection services and 3,481 people, including migrants and refugees, received mine risk education. Half of all beneficiaries were female. Furthermore, the project promotes women's leadership and gender-sensitive responses.



Albeiro Urbano (left) fell victim to an anti-personnel mine in the municipality of Tumaco (Nariño) in 2014. He has received assistance from the organization Humanity & Inclusion and its local partners Pastoral Social and Flex.

Albeiro Urbano has become a community leader and a symbol of perseverance. Nowadays he leads a local Flex Zonal Center in Nariño – a space focused on inclusive physical activity and healthy living habits – where he supports other people with disabilities.

#### Myanmar

Anti-personnel mines are still regularly used in the protracted conflict between the government of Myanmar and armed non-state actors, posing a serious humanitarian challenge. Furthermore, landmine and ERW contamination dating back as far as World War II continues to affect 9 out of Myanmar's 14 states. Due to the absence of a systematic and organised Victim Information System, the exact number of landmine and ERW victims in Myanmar is unknown.

In the recent past, Myanmar has been able to gradually enlarge the space for mine action activities and engage in a process of formally establishing a national mine action authority. However, the military coup in February 2021 forced Switzerland to put on hold its engagement with the government.

In 2021, Switzerland continued its support for mine risk education training and awareness sessions, rapid assessments and victim assistance in Kachin, Shan North and Rakhine. Assistance for landmine victims and their families includes financial support to access medical structures, food allowances, needs-based livelihood support and alternative professional activities as well as vocational training. In 2021, 28 victims received assistance. Furthermore, mine risk education sessions helped to improve knowledge at community level about the risks posed by landmines and ERW. By training civil society organisations to conduct mine risk education sessions, an additional 4,170 persons were reached.

### 2.4 Mine risk education

Mine risk education prevents new accidents and saves lives. Given the recent increase in new casualties, the importance of mine risk education remains crucial. Where relevant, it should be carried out together with clearance and victim assistance activities. It seeks to reduce the risk of injury from mines, cluster munitions and ERW by raising awareness and promoting behavioural change.

#### **Syria**

In Syria, mine risk education and support to injured persons are important components of humanitarian action. The aim is to increase protection for war-affected communities and reduce their vulnerability.

In 2021, Switzerland supported the delivery of 8,356 mine risk education sessions to particularly affected communities in Rural Damascus, Ar Raqqa, Deir ez Zor and Idleb governorates. These sessions reached over 50,000 individuals in Northern and Central Syria, of whom 54% were female. Through its contribution to the ICRC, Switzerland is also supporting the ongoing efforts to reduce the effects of explosive ordnance contamination on civilians.

Furthermore, victims of mines and people with disabilities due to the war were provided with a number of tailor-made services through a group of specialised professionals. Services included physiotherapy sessions, the provision of assistive devices and prostheses, and psychosocial support. In total, victim assistance reached 2,192 individuals in 2021. An additional 1,854 caregivers, especially for child victims, were also supported.

#### Ukraine

In 2021, the conflict-affected areas of eastern Ukraine were amongst the most mine-contaminated regions in the world, exposing around two million people to the threat of landmines and ERW. These pose a threat to civilians' physical and socioeconomic well-being for years to come. Residents had to live, cultivate their land and send their children to school in mine-contaminated areas.

During the reporting year, Switzerland began supporting the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) through a project aiming to reduce civilian casualties in eastern Ukraine by conducting mine risk education. Information on the dangers of unexploded explosive ordnance and ERW was disseminated to the affected population in both the government-controlled area and the non-government controlled area through personal interactions and social media. As a result of an analysis of previous casualty figures, male adults and boys were identified as a particular target audience. Often the risks of landmines and ERW are underestimated, neglected or not understood, leading to risk-taking behaviour such as travelling through mined areas for recreational or agricultural activities. Mine risk education activities seek to change this by raising the awareness of threats and encouraging safe behaviour.



ource: © FSD

Staff of the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action speaking with scrap metal workers in Mariupol, Eastern Ukraine, in September 2021. ERW were often found amid scrap metal, making a correct understanding of the dangers of explosive ordnance crucial. Male adults and boys engage disproportionally in risk-taking behaviour, such as attempting to dismantle explosive ordnance. The project focused specifically on these groups in its activities, raising awareness of the associated risks and encouraging safe behaviour.

# 2.5 Capacity building

For mine action to be sustainable and relevant in the long term, the people who are the most affected should be empowered to carry it out. With this in mind, Switzerland stresses the importance of local ownership by building the capacities and strengthening the knowledge of state authorities and affected populations. It deploys mine action experts within the framework of United Nations operations, supports training courses, promotes mine action standards, and sustains the activities of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

#### Courses/education

In collaboration with several UN partners (UNICEF, UNOPS, UNMAS, UNDP) and the GICHD, Switzerland funds and participates in the organisation of training courses aimed at improving local experts' knowledge of mine action tools such as results-based management, information management, and the implementation of mine action standards. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only a few face-to-face courses could be held, while one session was delivered online.

#### **Deployments**

The Swiss Armed Forces supported UN-led mine action programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, Western Sahara and the UN headquarters in New York and Geneva by deploying 14 military mine action experts. In the field of information management, experts supported their respective programmes by implementing the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). Logistics advisors were deployed to manage assets and supply chain processes. Specialists from the Swiss Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Centre made a particular contribution to capacity building. In addition, the Swiss Armed Forces deployed experts in the field of security and training.



Information management is an important resource for planning and prioritising the clearance of mines and ERW. It contributes to the safety of the local population and humanitarian actors. To improve efficiency, the Sudanese National Mine Action Center, with the support of both UNMAS and the GICHD, decided to introduce the new Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA CORE). Since summer 2021, a DDPS expert has been deployed to UNMAS Sudan to support the implementation. After the technical realisation, the existing data, originating from two different systems, must be reconciled in order to integrate them into the new database. In addition, local staff will be trained in the new system.

#### Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Switzerland maintains a long-standing and close partnership with the GICHD. In 2021, Switzerland contributed CHF 9.5 million to the activities of the GICHD, covering more than 50% of its budget.<sup>3</sup> The organisation improves the efficiency of mine action by developing capacities and knowledge, and promoting norms and standards. This benefits national and local authorities, donors, the United Nations, other international and regional organisations, NGOs, and commercial operators. By bringing together experts and practitioners, gathering and sharing knowledge, the GICHD acts as a central reference point in mine action and ammunition safety management.

<sup>3</sup> The contributions to the GICHD fall within the framework credit for the three Geneva centres.

# 3 Conclusion and way forward

Over the past year, Switzerland has focused on projects on the ground that are embedded in the local context and linked to peace processes and development goals. The majority of these projects adopt an integrated approach, combining several pillars of mine action, in particular advocacy, clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance.

At the beginning of 2022, the Federal Council adopted its first ever Arms Control and Disarmament Strategy. Conventional weapons represent one of the five areas of action, anchoring mine action firmly within this new strategy. Among the various concrete measures is the development of a new action plan on mine action, replacing the current strategy from 2023 onwards. The evaluation of the Mine Action Strategy 2016–22, carried out in 2021, will contribute to the development of Switzerland's mine action priorities after 2023.

In collaboration with other governments, international organisations, the ICRC, the GICHD and civil society, the FDFA and the DDPS will continue to pursue their long-term vision of a world without new victims of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other ERW. Switzerland will play an active role in promoting the universal respect and implementation of the provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

#### **Imprint**

Editor:

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA 3003 Bern www.fdfa.admin.ch

Date of publication: 01.04.2022

Design:

Team Audiovisual, FDFA Communication

Cover photo:

The last demining site in the area contaminated with cluster munitions, Sisak-Moslavina region, Croatia. © Civil Protection Directorate, MoD, Croatia

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