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Federal Department of Defence,
Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2016–22 **2020 Annual Report**



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1 Introduction

In many contexts affected by war, the suffering is not over after the parties to the conflict have laid down their arms. 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, blocking economic activities, instilling fear and impeding the return of the displaced populations. In short, they hinder the return to normality.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention or APMB) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention or CCM) aim to put an end to the era of landmines and cluster munitions, and are among the most successful in the domain of humanitarian disarmament.¹ Their implementation has saved countless lives. Nonetheless, despite the important successes, the mine action community is still confronted with many challenges in terms of universalisation, clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance.

The concerning increase in the number of new casualties as well as the use of improvised landmines by armed non-state actors (ANSAs) underline the relevance of Switzerland's continuing engagement in this area, including the need to pursue advocacy efforts in favour of the implementation of the two conventions.

In 2020, Switzerland held the presidency of the Second Review Conference of the CCM, with the goal of giving new impetus to the CCM and emphasising its political importance. The collective efforts coordinated by Switzerland allowed the elaboration of an ambitious and measurable action plan and of a strong political declaration. The COVID-19 pandemic hindered the conclusion of the work of the Second Review Conference and obliged the Swiss presidency to change its original plans. These challenges were and are still being addressed together with the community of states parties, and Switzerland is confident that the substantial documents will be adopted in 2021 once the health situation allows face-to-face meetings to be held, successfully concluding its mandate.

COVID-19 has also proven challenging for operations on the ground. The implementation of mine action activities was affected by restrictions imposed to control the spread of the virus. In a number of contexts operations had to be suspended, resulting in delays. In other contexts, operations were allowed to continue, subject to compliance with stringent mitigation measures. In all contexts, the mine action community has shown remarkable resilience, remaining engaged in its fight against landmines and cluster munitions. Switzerland supported its mine action partners by enabling them to deploy their resources to national COVID-19 responses or by extending the duration of the projects.

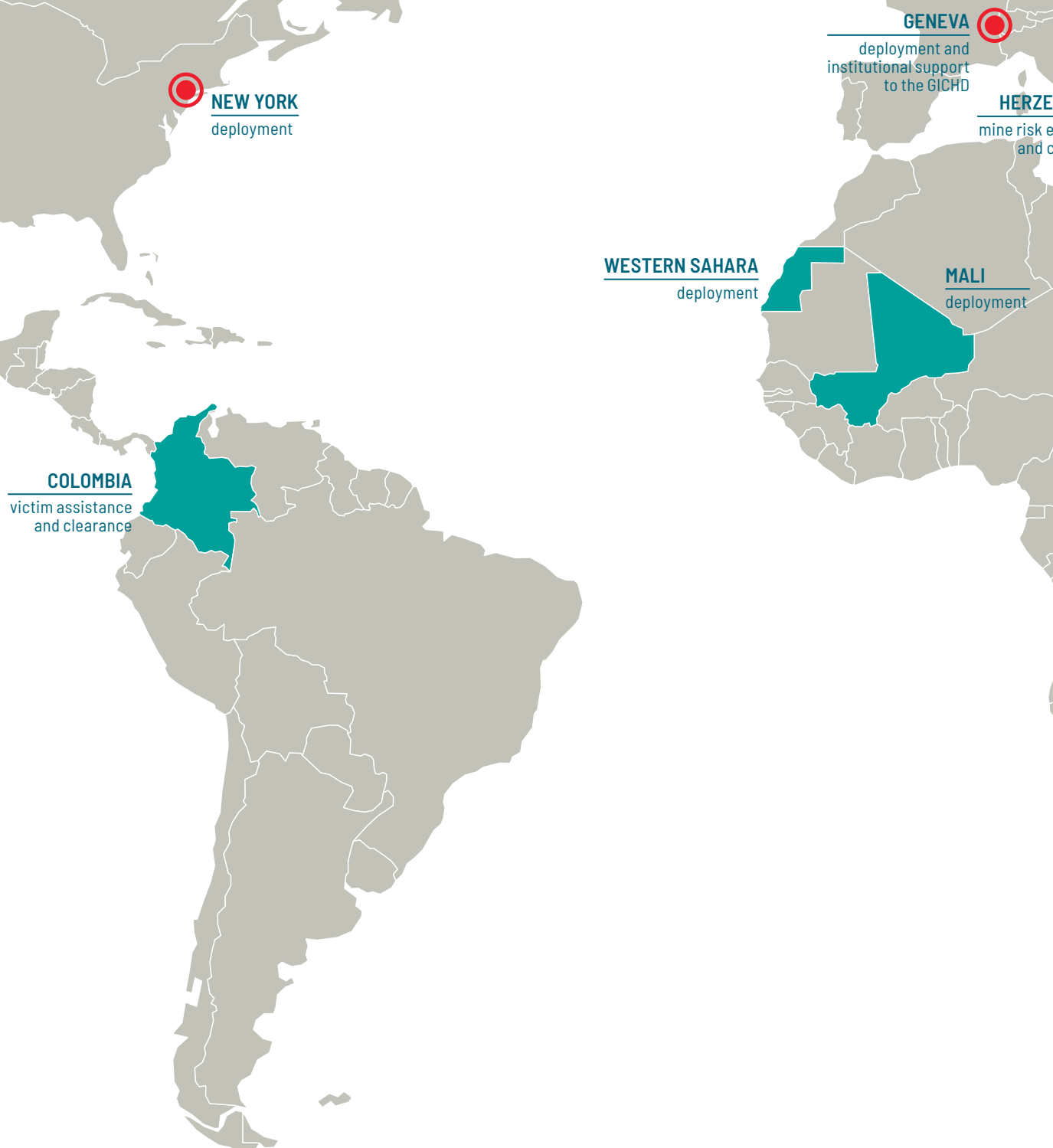
Recognising the important contribution of mine action to security, peace, humanitarian action and sustainable development, in 2020 Switzerland contributed some CHF 17 million² to activities aimed at clearing mines, providing assistance, raising awareness, strengthening local capacities and facilitating the implementation of international conventions.

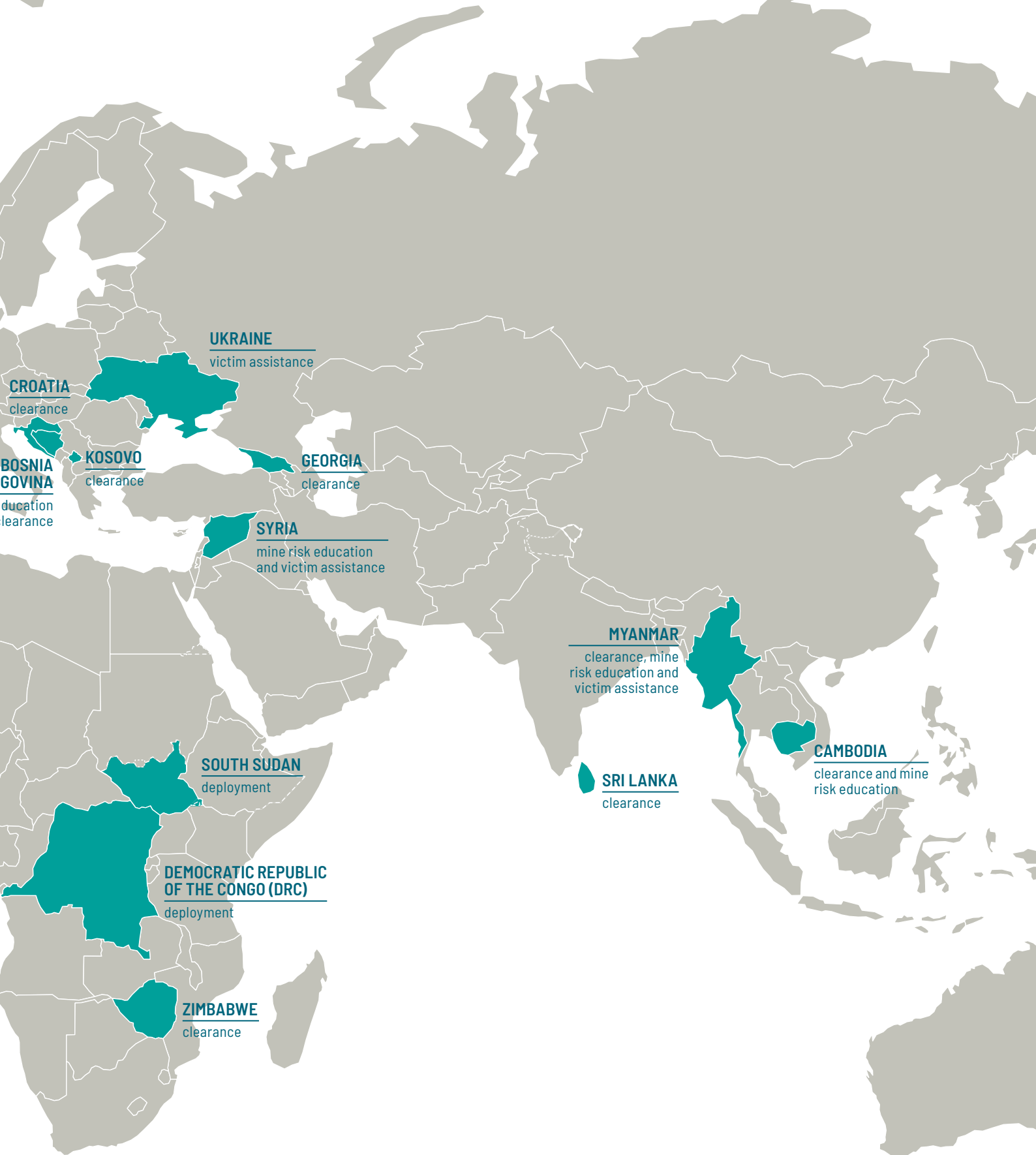
This annual report presents an overview of the Swiss Confederation's most important achievements in the area of mine action in 2020.

¹ 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).

² The FDFA disbursed CHF 14 million, of which CHF 9.45 million was channelled to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The DDPS spent CHF 3 million on deployments and training.

2 Switzerland's engagement in mine action





Sources: Natural Earth Data, FDFA, UN

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

In the advocacy domain, Switzerland has been active in promoting the universalisation of the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions as well as compliance with these treaties by states parties and ANSAs. It has also appealed to non-states parties to abide by the basic principles of these treaties and supported efforts to clarify alleged breaches.

Switzerland's presidency of the Second Review Conference of the CCM

Within the framework of its presidency of the Second Review Conference of the CCM, Switzerland focussed its attention on promoting the universalisation of the convention. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was able to promote adherence to the CCM in several regions, including South-East Asia, where contamination by cluster munition remnants is still very prevalent and gaps in terms of universalisation need to be addressed. During the period of its presidency, three additional states ratified the CCM, underlining the need to continue to invest resources in this area of work.

Switzerland also expressed concern and raised awareness regarding 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.

Finally, in an effort to raise awareness about the CCM, Switzerland produced, together with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), the photo exhibition [Lasting Footprints](#), which depicted the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions as well as the objectives and achievements of the CCM. The exhibition was presented in several Swiss cities.



Source: © ISU CCM

A Swiss delegation, led by Ambassador Félix Baumann, President of the 2nd Review Conference of the CCM, accompanied by representatives of the United Kingdom, Germany and of the CCM's Implementation Support Unit, meets with representatives of Zimbabwe in Harare to encourage the country to accede to the Convention. The visit formed part of the Presidency's universalisation efforts aimed at increasing the number of states parties.

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

If the promises of the Ottawa Convention and the CCM – a world free of mines and cluster munitions with no new victims – are to be kept, it is essential to engage in dialogue with ANSAs. Their use of improvised mines threatens the vision of these two treaties. Switzerland therefore supports the endeavours of the non-governmental organisation Geneva Call, which engages with ANSAs in an effort to promote respect for international norms, including those outlined in the Ottawa Convention. In 2020, Geneva Call actively engaged with more than 15 ANSAs in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Philippines, Ukraine and Yemen. In total, 54 organised armed groups committed to respect the provisions of the Ottawa Convention.

Commitment to research and transparency

In 2020, Switzerland supported the research undertaken by the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor as well as by the Mine Action Review. Through these two projects, the mine action community has a comprehensive understanding of progress, gaps and challenges in the fulfilment 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 precious resources, such as water and land, and is a key component for the safe return of displaced populations. It therefore has a positive impact on the safety and livelihoods of communities living in affected areas. Despite considerable progress in this area, the pace of clearance activities has to increase to protect people from the risks posed by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and ERW, allow access to humanitarian operations and proceed towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Cambodia

Thirty years of conflict have left the Kingdom of Cambodia with extensive mine and ERW contamination, estimated at three to four million explosive devices (1,970 km² of contaminated land including 835 km² of minefields to be cleared). Cambodia thus remains one of the most affected countries in the world. Anti-personnel mines, cluster munition remnants and ERW have resulted in large numbers of victims and continue to hinder access to key resources and prevent the development of economic opportunities. Switzerland aims to support Cambodia: a) to make safe land available for agriculture and infrastructure development in poor rural communities, in particular border communities that are expanding through internal migration, b) to reduce casualties by providing mine risk education (MRE) and by removing mines and other ERW where they pose the greatest threat, and c) to support participatory planning and prioritisation of mine clearance activities to ensure effective mine clearance and post-clearance land use.

Swiss-funded interventions in Cambodia contributed to the handing back of over 15 km² of land to local communities and benefited more than 116,900 people over the course of 2020.

Together with Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA, Switzerland funds the HALO Trust's 'Humanitarian Mine Clearance' project. In 2020, its efforts contributed to the clearance of 4.2 km² of minefields, providing over 14,730 households with safe access to farmland in five western provinces. Seventy per cent of the cleared land is used for agriculture. An estimated 1,500 people have been able to earn additional income from crop cultivation after their farmland has been freed from mines. Gender-specific mine risk education activities reached 1,131 people.



Source: © HALO Trust

Pay Chalie, 27, is a farmer and lives with his wife and three children in Ou Kokir village in the Oddar Meanchey province. With his family, he moved to the village in May 2019 to work as a farmer on behalf of the landowner, growing bananas and mangos to sell in local towns and villages. Two months after their arrival in Ou Kokir, the rear wheel of Chalie's tractor detonated a landmine just metres from his house while he was ploughing his land ahead of planting mango trees. Chalie was fortunate to escape with only minor injuries; however, his tractor was badly damaged. After hearing about the accident, the HALO Trust sent survey teams to assess the area and deployed clearance teams soon after. "I am so grateful to HALO for coming to clear my land. I feared losing my job. Moreover, I was most concerned about my children's safety. My wife and I know to stay clear of the minefield, but my children may find it exciting and walk onto it when we aren't looking."

Croatia

The 1991–96 war left a heavy and dangerous legacy. It is estimated that more than 300 km² of land may 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 contribution to the enlarged European Union. Thanks to this Swiss-Croatian funding, an area of 1.8 km² of the Kotar-Stari Gaj forest was cleared from explosive remnants of war: 2,751 anti-personnel mines, 7 anti-tank mines and 830 pieces of unexploded ordnance were found and destroyed. The forest was controlled and certified as safe by the responsible authorities in 2020, and can therefore be accessed by citizens for leisure and economic use.

In 2020, the same project commissioned a major survey on mine victims to update the national database and to understand their social and economic situation. Based on the findings, a support mechanism may be created in 2021.

Source: © CROMAC



Thanks to Swiss funding, 1.8km² of forest near Petrinja are now mine-free and accessible to citizens.

Georgia

In 2017, an ammunition store in the seaside town of Primorsky – under the control of the de facto military in the breakaway region of Abkhazia – suffered an unplanned explosion, killing three people and injuring 64. Over 4.5 million m² of residential, agricultural and forestland was littered with over 100,000 dangerous items of unexploded 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 0.2 km² of land and the destruction of 204 items of UXO, including one anti-personnel mine. In total, more than 2 km² of land contaminated by UXO at Primorsky will be cleared by May 2021.

Source: © HALO Trust



Valeria Otyrba was visiting her family in Primorsky for the holidays in August 2017 when a nearby ammunition store suffered an unplanned explosion, shattering the tranquillity of the sleepy seaside village off the Black Sea coast. “The walls shook and the windows of our house shattered. The blast was so strong we thought we were being bombed”, Valeria recalls. “I joined the HALO Trust because I wanted to give something back to the place that raised me. When I heard HALO was hiring women I didn’t hesitate to apply.” Now, Valeria is a member of a team of deminers. One of five women working in Swiss-funded teams, Valeria represents a shift in local societal attitudes towards women in demining.

Kosovo

Over twenty years have now passed since the end of the Kosovo War, and explosive remnants of war continue to claim the lives of civilians in Kosovo, compounding 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 has been the HALO Trust’s longest-standing donor in Kosovo. With Switzerland’s support, HALO conducts clearance in four of the last remaining minefields in the country. With operations starting in November 2020, HALO has already begun clearance of a minefield in the village of Jasiq. The objective is to clear around 0.2 km² of land, improving the safety and living conditions of 52 direct and 6,344 indirect beneficiaries.



Source: © HALO Trust

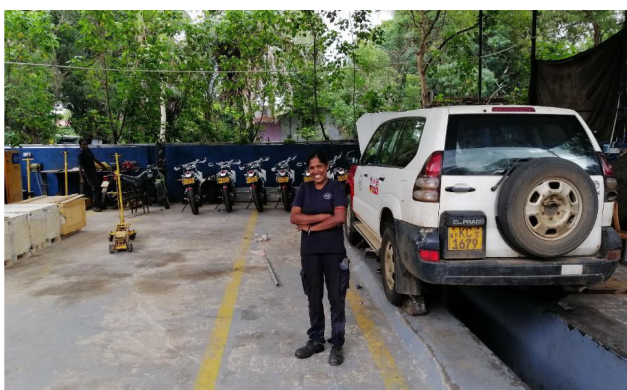
Jasiq village was mined heavily throughout the war given its strategic location. Today, only one minefield remains. Among those still affected are Hysen Jasiqi (52) and his family, who were displaced during the war, and returned to find their home destroyed. Having resettled elsewhere with international aid, Hysen wishes to return and rebuild his old home. Hysen and his family still live in fear, and are not comfortable returning yet: “It’s the best place in the municipality to live, but we are better off here at the moment,” says Hysen. Clearance of the last minefield in the village will enable the whole village to feel safe, to access their houses, and to earn a living safely.

Sri Lanka

Three decades of conflict have resulted in extensive contamination. Ten years after the end of the conflict, mines and other ERW still cause fear and prevent the return to normality. They remain a high priority with a major impact, hindering the return to safety of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the resumption of socio-economic activities. Contamination, aside from being a physical threat, is also a stark reminder of the internal armed conflict. Clearance operations therefore also support the peace and reconciliation process. Collaborating with the HALO Trust, Switzerland supports Sri Lanka

in progressing from one of the most heavily mined countries in the world to one in which mines no longer represent a threat. Over the last year, it has contributed to the clearance of around 0.1km² of land that will be put to productive use and have allowed for the return of more than 100 IDPs. More than 500 explosive items were safely destroyed, no longer posing a danger to communities. The clearance of one of the minefields has allowed the implementation of a long-term development project aimed at making agricultural systems more resilient by reducing the risks of droughts and flooding thanks to irrigation systems.

Source: © HALO Trust



“My family went to the IDP camp with only our bare hands. Now from my income we have built our house,” says Vikneswaran Thavaransini, the first female mechanic working for the HALO Trust in Sri Lanka. Thanks to her new job and newly acquired skills, her family’s economic situation has improved as well as her children’s education. The mine action sector overall is helping to change gender norms and expectations about women’s roles in general.

Zimbabwe

Anti-personnel mines still heavily affect Zimbabwe. The Rhodesian Security Forces laid mines along Rhodesia’s (now Zimbabwe) borders with Zambia and Mozambique during the Liberation War in the 1970s. Forty years later, vast tracts of unfenced land remain contaminated. As of September 2018, the Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre (ZIMAC) confirmed the contamination challenge to cover over 66km² in five of Zimbabwe’s 10 provinces and 12 of the 59 districts. ZIMAC further estimates that landmines have killed over 1,500 people, 120,000 heads of livestock and thousands of wild animals since 1980.

Zimbabwe has eight minefields located in the north-western, north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the country. Communities in the contaminated areas have limited access to farming and grazing land, use long routes to access basic services and generally live in fear.

Switzerland and the United States are providing support to APOPO to clear the dense and deadly Cordon Sanitaire (CORSAN). In addition to its impact on communities, the

CORSAN minefield also blocks the free movement of wildlife within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), hindering conservation and ecotourism opportunities that could benefit the regional economies.

APOPO has already uncovered 43 South African-made R2M2 anti-personnel mines since the start of the project. It is estimated that 15,300 anti-personnel landmines will be found and destroyed and that around 7km² along the CORSAN corridor will be cleared ahead of Zimbabwe’s 2025 landmine-free deadline. APOPO’s intervention will have 7,968 direct beneficiaries in Zimbabwe as well as 17,734 direct beneficiaries in Mozambique. Clearing landmines will improve the affected communities’ access to basic services, increase agricultural output and cross-border trade as well as open opportunities for conservation and ecotourism.



Source: © APOPO



Source: © APOPO

“Working as a female deminer has made me feel equal to my male counterparts. This project will help me continue with my studies, so that I build my future since I was unemployed for years after finishing high school. I will also help members of my family to complete their studies with income from my job.” Nedly Tembo (24), an APOPO female deminer in Zimbabwe seen here excavating towards the signal of an R2M2 anti-personnel mine.

2.3 Victim assistance

Anti-personnel landmines, cluster munition remnants and other ERW still kill too many innocent civilians, more than 5,500 in 2019 according to the Landmine Monitor. These weapons often touch 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 as well as socio-economic services.

Ukraine

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), eastern Ukraine ranks amongst one of the most contaminated areas in the world. Although the Mine Action Act, enacted in December 2018, provided for the establishment of special government agencies to lead the national mine action response, no such agencies have been created and the law remains unimplemented, as it conflicts with other legislation. The Act also had certain gaps in terms of victim assistance and the safety and efficiency of mine action operators. On 17 September 2020, Parliament introduced amendments to the Mine Action Act, which were aimed at optimising and operationalising the national mine action response by handing over the leading role to the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior. The amendments also addressed the concerns relating to victim assistance and mine action operators' safety and efficiency, although the separate by-laws are still required to put the respective procedures in place.

In 2019, Switzerland started a pilot project together with the then Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs in the domain of victim assistance. This project has been running successfully; within its framework, 13 applications from mine victims have been approved and funds disbursed to cover the cost of orthopaedic care and prosthetics.



Source: © Protiska



Source: © Protiska

Oleksandr Nebera, a tractor driver born in 1971, was severely injured in 2018 while working in the fields on his tractor and lost a lower limb due to the explosion of an anti-tank mine. The poor quality prosthesis initially fitted resulted in the decay of the limb. Due to the accident, Oleksandr lost his job, as he was unable to continue working as a tractor driver. Thanks to the assistance provided through the project, Oleksandr has received a good quality prosthesis and prosthesis liners to prevent the decay of the limb. The treatment has enabled him to go back to work.

Colombia

Decades of conflict with ANSAs have resulted in vast areas contaminated by mines, which significantly affects rural and ethnic communities. This isolates communities, prevents the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) to their places of origin, hinders access to land and reduces access to services.

During 2020, Switzerland adapted its interventions to the ongoing conflict dynamics, humanitarian access constraints and the state of emergency declared due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (for example COVID-19 prevention sessions and online mine risk education activities were introduced). Switzerland's engagement in the mine action sector continued with the objective of bringing peace, security and sustainable development to conflict-affected areas. It enhanced regional coordination as well as the local implementation of the National Mine Action Plan and of the Peace Agreement.

Following a downward trend in the number of victims of explosive devices, Colombia has been experiencing a dramatic increase since 2018. The number of victims of mines and other ERW was higher in 2020 than in 2019, with civilians representing the majority of casualties. Through its contributions, Switzerland ensures that the victims are socially and economically reintegrated into their communities. The projects it financed supported 560 victims and their carers who benefited from medical assistance and income-generating activities.

Switzerland, with its partners Humanity and Inclusion (HI) and Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas (CCCM), also contributed to the clearance of 0.4 km² of land in 12 municipalities. Ninety-four explosive devices were located and destroyed. Moreover, more than 6,900 beneficiaries attended an online mine risk training course to improve their knowledge of managing mine-related risks.

Finally, Switzerland also contributed to the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), which in turn supported clearance operations, mine risk education and victim assistance.



Source: © HI



Source: © HI

Switzerland supported the organisation Humanity & Inclusion in designing protection and self-protection strategies for community leaders, indigenous and peasant guards who are involved in mine action. Such interventions in Cauca, one of the most affected departments of the country, allowed communities facing risks related to armed conflicts and mines to remain in their territories despite the intensification of armed violence and the constraints on humanitarian access.

2.4 Mine risk education

MRE prevents new accidents and saves lives. Given the marked increase in new casualties, the importance of mine risk education cannot be underestimated. Where relevant, it should be carried out together with clearance and victim assistance activities. Its objective is to change the behaviour of individuals towards the threats posed by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and ERW, so that they can manage the risks these weapons pose.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

From 1992 to 1995, warring factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina laid a huge number of minefields throughout the country. After the war ended, more than 1,700 people were injured in mine accidents. Over the past 26 years, more than 3,800 km² of land has been returned to the population. However, an additional 975 km², or 1.97% of the country's total surface area, still remains to be cleared. Areas contaminated with mines and cluster munition remnants still directly affect the safety of more than 500,000 people (around 13% of the total population) in 118 municipalities, hampering the country's development by blocking access to agricultural and pasture land, infrastructure and woods.

Despite a three-month operational shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, important results were reached in both MRE and mine clearance. MRE activities reached 1,222 people (including 506 women and 137 children) living close to affected areas. Through these activities, people have adopted safe behaviours and, over the course of 2020, no new victims or mine incidents were recorded in the country.

Thanks to Switzerland's contributions and the dedicated engagement of demining teams in the field, 2.24 km² of land was returned to local communities and more than 300 explosive devices were found and destroyed. This eliminated a direct threat for inhabitants in nine municipalities and enabled them to access productive assets.

In its political dialogue with the national authorities, Switzerland continued to advocate for the urgent and complete implementation of the National Mine Action Strategy adopted in 2019, insisting, in particular, on full local ownership and proper planning of resources towards the fulfilment of international obligations.



Source: © NPA

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland has been supporting the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) Humanitarian Disarmament Programme since 2003. Some 1.97% of the country's surface area remains to be cleared. Mines are sometimes still very close to inhabited places. In the picture on the left, a mine detection dog marks the spot of a mine found close to the returnee village Šehovci in northern Bosnia. In the picture below, an NPA cluster munition remnants operator works on the Swiss-backed assignment in the vicinity of houses in Sapna in north-eastern Bosnia.

Myanmar

Anti-personnel landmines are still regularly used in the protracted conflict between the government of Myanmar and armed non-state actors, posing a serious humanitarian challenge. Nine out of Myanmar's 14 states are contaminated with landmines and ERW dating back as far as World War II. Due to the absence of a systematic and organised Victim Information System (VIS), the exact number of landmine and ERW victims in Myanmar is unknown. Combatants belonging to Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) do not report accidents to the national authorities.

In the recent past, Myanmar was able to gradually enlarge the space for mine action activities and engage in a process of formally establishing a national mine action authority. To facilitate this process, Switzerland, New Zealand and the Danish Refugee Council joined forces and engaged with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to discuss possible ways of setting up national mine action structures.

In April 2020, Switzerland engaged in a second project phase with the Danish Refugee Council/Danish Demining Group (DRC/DDG) focussing on 1) MRE training and awareness sessions (online and face-to-face), 2) rapid assessments and non-technical surveys, and 3) victim assistance in Kachin, Shan North and Rakhine. MRE sessions helped to improve knowledge at community level about the risks posed by landmines and ERW.

The DDG's victim assistance developed a specific referral protocol to assist landmine victims and their families. It included financial support to access medical structures and food allowances. Livelihood support was provided to victims based on their needs and included alternative professional activities as well as vocational training.



Source: © DRC

Hpaudut Tu Nan (in the picture with his wife) was injured by a landmine explosion in 2018. He says: “the DRC/DDG provided me with money for transportation to hospital and a food allowance for me and my wife while I was in the hospital. Once discharged, I found that all of our animals had been stolen from our small farm. We faced many difficulties in meeting basic needs.” Hpaudut Tu Nan applied for a cash grant to open a grocery shop. With the income from this new business, the family can now cover its needs and has been able to buy new animals for the farm. Hpaudut Tu Nan is planning to expand his grocery shop.

Syria

The mine contamination resulting from the war has caused many casualties among the civilian population, threatening livelihoods and representing a significant risk in terms of protection. Switzerland aims to increase protection for communities affected by the conflict and reduce their vulnerability by focusing on MRE and victim assistance.

In Syria, MRE is an important component of humanitarian action. It aims to increase protection for war-affected communities and reduce their vulnerability. Switzerland supported around 7,935 MRE sessions delivered to affected communities in Ar Raqqa, Al Hassakeh and Idlib governorates, reaching over 88,014 people, who learnt how to adopt safer behaviours. For example, risk education field teams in Al Hassakeh governorate carried out sessions in Al-Hol IDP camp, allowing displaced people to acquire the necessary information to adopt safe behaviours and reduce the threats posed by explosive items, cluster munition remnants and improvised explosive devices.

Switzerland was also involved in victim assistance. Around 15,200 beneficiaries (30% female and 70% male) with injuries and/or disabilities as well as their caregivers benefitted from adapted multi-disciplinary services, which included physical and functional rehabilitation sessions, psychosocial support sessions and the provision of prostheses and orthotics.

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 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 (DRC), Mali, South Sudan, Western Sahara and the UN headquarters in New York and Geneva by deploying 12 military mine action experts. In the field of information management, experts supported their respective programmes by implementing the Information Management for Mine Action (IMSMA) system. To manage assets and supply chain processes, logistics advisors were deployed. Specialists from the Swiss Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Centre strengthened the programme's capacities with their expertise. In addition, the Swiss Armed Forces deployed experts in the field of security and explosive ordnance risk education.



Source: © UNMAS

Edison Pineda was deployed by the Swiss Armed Forces to support UNMAS in its demining activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and can be seen here marking a reported unexploded ordnance. “The busy road from Goma to Rutshuru is regularly the scene of skirmishes between armed groups and government forces. Because our clearing teams have to travel long distances, cordoning the area off and warning the local community effectively is an important way of preventing accidents until it is possible to dispose of the unexploded ordnance,” says Edison Pineda, Operations Officer with UNMAS DRC.

GICHD

Switzerland maintains a long-standing and close partnership with the GICHD. In 2020, Switzerland contributed CHF 9.45 million to the activities of the GICHD, covering more than 60% of its budget.³ 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.

³ The contributions to the GICHD fall within the framework credit for the three Geneva centres.

3 Conclusion and way forward

Switzerland places a clear emphasis on increasing the security of affected communities and the enabling role of mine action for humanitarian action and sustainable development. At the political level, Switzerland concentrates its resources on ensuring compliance with and implementation of the relevant conventions.

Over the past year, despite the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Switzerland focussed specifically on projects on the ground, which are embedded in the local context and linked to peace processes and development goals. The majority of these projects adopt an integrated approach, combining clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance.

In 2021, Switzerland will develop a new arms control and disarmament strategy with a strong focus on the role of new technologies. An evaluation of the Mine Action Strategy 2016–22 will also be carried out in 2021 and will contribute to the content of the new disarmament strategy as well as 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 universal respect and implementation of the provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Finally, Switzerland remains engaged in its role as President of the Second Review Conference of the CCM, confident that it will successfully complete its mandate in 2021.

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Cluster munition remnants are very hard to see and pose a particular danger to children. © Paula Bronstein, Getty Images / ICRC

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