Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2016–2019

2018 Annual Report
1. Introduction

In 2018, recognising the important contribution of mine action to human security, peace, humanitarian action, and sustainable development, Switzerland deployed some CHF 18.4 million\(^1\) to efforts to clear mines, raise awareness, strengthen local capacities, and facilitate the implementation of existing conventions at the international level.

Switzerland’s national strategy underlines its aim to help create a world without new victims of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war (ERW) – a world in which sustainable development progresses smoothly and the needs of affected communities are adequately met. With this mission in mind, Switzerland has set itself three objectives:

1. The relevant treaties\(^2\) are fully implemented and universally applied;
2. Safety from mines, cluster munitions and ERW is increased and the conditions for sustainable development improved;
3. Ownership of mine action rests entirely with those affected on the ground.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) adopt a whole-of-government approach to the implementation of Switzerland’s mine action strategy. To end the scourge of mines, in 2018 these two federal departments also collaborated with other governments, international organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil society.

This annual report presents an overview of the Swiss Confederation’s most important achievements in the area of mine action in 2018.

---

\(^1\) The FDFA disbursed CHF 14.8 million, of which CHF 9 million was channeled to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The DDPS spent CHF 3.6 million on deployments and trainings.

2. Overview and results achieved in 2018

Twenty years have passed since the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention) entered into force in March 1999. This Convention, one of the most successful in the disarmament domain, has translated into concrete actions on the ground, which have improved the protection of civilians living in conflict-affected regions. Vast areas of land have been declared free of mines and have been returned to local communities for productive use. Millions of stockpiled mines have been destroyed, preventing their future use. And assistance to victims, although at times inadequate and poorly funded, has been recognised as an important international obligation.

At the political level, although at a slower pace than in the past, the universalisation of the Convention has steadily increased, reinforcing the norm against the use of these indiscriminate weapons.

Nonetheless, despite these positive developments, a number of challenges remain. After more than a decade of decline in the number of casualties, there has been a worrying increase since 2015. This can be attributed to the new use of landmines in conflict-torn countries, including Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Myanmar. Of particular concern is the increasing use of improvised landmines by armed non-state actors (ANSAs). The vast majority of victims are civilians, with children often the most vulnerable and worst affected. These developments underline the relevance of Switzerland’s continuing engagement in this area, as well as the need to pursue advocacy efforts towards a universal ban on these weapons.

In line with its well-established humanitarian tradition, Switzerland is involved in mine action through (a) emphasising the importance of respecting and promoting relevant international instruments, (b) clearing contaminated areas, conducting mine risk education (MRE) and providing victim assistance and (c) building local capacities to strengthen local ownership. These constitute Switzerland’s three lines of engagement.

In 2018, political activities focused on the observance and implementation of the relevant conventions, whereas projects on the ground, which absorbed the majority of the resources invested, concentrated on integrated mine action in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, Croatia, Myanmar and Syria. Twelve Swiss experts were deployed abroad to support United Nations mine clearance programmes.
2.1 Strategic objective 1: the relevant treaties are fully implemented and universally applied

Under this objective Switzerland aims to promote compliance with the relevant international treaties by states parties and ANSAs. It also appeals to non-states parties to abide by the basic principles and supports efforts to clarify alleged breaches. The following activities and projects have contributed to the attainment of this objective.

The deadlines stipulated in the conventions are respected
Switzerland supported projects which helped affected states parties to fulfil their international obligations, most importantly those linked to their mine clearance obligations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Thanks to Switzerland’s contributions and engagement, 4.4 km² of land were returned to local communities and 202 explosive devices were found and destroyed. Switzerland also engaged in a dialogue for the adoption of the revised National Mine Action Strategy, one of the prerequisites for more effective mine action governance in the country and towards the fulfilment of international obligations.

Cambodia
Together with Australia and Canada, Switzerland funds the UNDP project Clearing for Results, which is implemented through the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA). In 2018, 17.21 km² of land were handed back to local communities and 1,803 anti-personnel mines, 17 anti-tank mines and 2,994 ERW were located and destroyed.

Farmers in the mine-affected areas of north-eastern Cambodia can safely work on their land without fearing landmines thanks to Clearing for Results – Mine Action for Human Development, a programme of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority. The programme promotes sustainable development by providing safe land that has been cleared of mines for families to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

“At first, I was scared to live in this area because of the mines. We burned them, but this caused more danger. Now, I can finally harvest my crops without any fear.” – Hem Reth, a citizen from Battambang province, Cambodia.

Colombia
Switzerland, in collaboration with Humanity and Inclusion (HI), Halo Trust and Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas (CCCM), contributed to the clearance of 0.1 km² of land. A total of 178 explosive devices were located and destroyed.

Croatia
Switzerland contributed to the clearance of 1.8 km² of contaminated land and the destruction of more than 3,500 explosive devices.

International
In collaboration with the UNDP, Switzerland supports six states parties (Ukraine, Angola, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Zimbabwe) to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and/or the Convention on Cluster Munitions in developing their mine action strategies and/or developing their Ottawa Convention Article 5 extension requests.
Compliance with the legal framework is strengthened and the clarification of alleged breaches is promoted

Multilateral
In the framework of its duties as President of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation of the Ottawa Convention, Switzerland successfully engaged in talks with Ukraine, which, after a delay of two years, submitted an extension request.

In 2018, as in the past, Switzerland supported the research work undertaken by the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor. In so doing, Switzerland promotes transparency and the identification of possible violations of the treaties’ provisions.

Dialogue with non-state actors aimed at compliance with the ban against mines is promoted

International
If the promises of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Cluster Munitions Convention – a world free of mines and cluster munitions with no new victims – are to be kept, it will be essential to engage in dialogue with ANSAs, whose 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 more than 50 ANSAs in an effort to promote respect for international norms, including those outlined in the Ottawa Convention. Since 2016, three ANSAs have signed the deed of commitment banning anti-personnel mines.
2.2 Strategic objective 2: safety from mines, cluster munitions and ERW is increased and the conditions for sustainable development improved

Under this strategic objective Switzerland emphasises three of the five core pillars of mine action: clearance, victim assistance and MRE. By engaging in these areas, Switzerland facilitates the delivery of humanitarian goods and services, lays the ground for reconstruction, and contributes to paving the way for sustainable development. The focus is on projects on the ground, embedded in the local reality and linked to Switzerland’s broader peace, development and humanitarian objectives. The following projects and activities have contributed to achieving this objective.

Clearance operations reduce the risks to populations and enable access to local resources

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Switzerland’s engagement in mine action is aimed at contributing to sustainable livelihoods and improved socio-economic development for the communities affected by mines, cluster munitions and other types of ERW. Security for affected populations has increased as well as access to productive assets. Switzerland’s engagement has also helped to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector, making mine action less resource-intensive. In 2018, 4.4 km² of land were handed back to local communities in four municipalities, allowing 125 households to benefit from the direct use of land. A total of 202 explosive devices were located and destroyed.

**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. The highest contamination was recorded along the northwestern border, thought to be one of the largest high-density minefields 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 supports Cambodia to (a) develop key national documents (such as the National Mine Action Strategy 2018-2025), (b) develop a monitoring system helping authorities to track evidence on the impact of mine action and (c) clear contaminated land. Swiss-funded interventions in Cambodia have benefited more than 59,000 people. They have resulted in enhanced land use and economic opportunities, notably with improved agriculture and infrastructure.

**Colombia**

Decades of conflict with ANSAs have resulted in vast areas becoming contamination by mines, which significantly affects rural and ethnic communities. As a result, communities are isolated, the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) to their places of origin prevented, access to land is hindered and access to services reduced. Switzerland’s engagement in the mine action sector aims to bring peace, security and sustainable development to conflict-affected areas. More than 39,000 people have benefited from the clearance of mines and other ERW. Mine action has a positive socio-economic impact: many beneficiaries were able to resume economic activities in the agricultural sector and access to resources and services (education, health, water) was facilitated. Most of the activities had an important gender component, which is why, for example, women have been trained to lead demining teams and to complete demining tasks. Switzerland also contributed to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), which in turn supported clearance operations, local institutional strengthening and the integration of ex-combatants in demining teams.

**Croatia**

The 1991-1996 war left a heavy and dangerous legacy. It is estimated that more than 32,000 landmines still contaminate the land, negatively affecting access to pasture and forestry
resources. In the framework of its contribution to the enlarged European Union, Switzerland supports the country’s mine action efforts. A total of 1.8 km² of contaminated land were cleared and more than 3,500 explosive devices destroyed.

In Croatia, Switzerland supports mine clearance and victim assistance activities. The goal is to provide economic opportunities through clearance as well as to improve the living conditions of mine victims and their families. In 2018, 1.8 km² of land in the Kotar-Stari Gaj woods were cleared. This was a particularly dangerous zone due to its proximity to residential areas. After the war, more civilian casualties occurred than during the war itself.

**Myanmar**

Anti-personnel landmines are still being used in the conflict, resulting in an acute humanitarian issue. Switzerland’s engagement aims to alleviate the suffering of the affected communities and enhance the capacities of the national authorities in the humanitarian mine action sector. As part of a project with the Danish Refugee Council/Danish Demining Group, non-technical surveys were carried out in more than 100 communities, enabling the identification of several hazardous areas. This will increase the protection of the local population by contributing to the prevention of future mine or ERW accidents.

**Victims receive medical care and are integrated into society and the economy**

**Colombia**

In 2018, the number of victims of mines and other ERW significantly increased due to new contamination, with civilians representing the majority of the casualties. Through its contribution, Switzerland ensures that the victims are socially and economically reintegrated into their communities. A total of 184 victims benefited from medical assistance and more than 100 from income-generating activities (cattle raising, poultry and agriculture).

More than 600 people in the municipality of Algeciras can work and walk without fear. The danger posed by explosive devices has in fact been eliminated. This was possible thanks to the mine action programme carried out by the CCCM with the support of Switzerland. Women are leading the CCCM demining teams in Algeciras. One of them is Briyith Estrada Montaño. She started to work for CCCM as a deminer in 2017 and became a clearance supervisor in 2018. She says: “I feel very proud to be part of the CCCM staff because the organisation gives women the opportunity to take on leadership positions. Thanks to this job I am helping prevent more people getting injured or dying because of explosive devices.”

**Myanmar**

As part of its integrated approach, Switzerland supports surveying as well as MRE and victim assistance activities. A total of 72 victims received rehabilitation support and benefited from
income-generating activities (cattle raising, animal breeding, handicrafts, agriculture and vocational training), which improved their well-being.

Syria
The mine contamination resulting from the war has caused many casualties among the civilian population, threatening livelihoods and representing a significant risk in term of protection. Switzerland aims to increase protection for the conflict-affected population and reduce their vulnerabilities by focusing on victim assistance and MRE. Up to 18,000 people with injuries, including victims of ERW, have benefited from physical and functional rehabilitation services and/or psychosocial support services. Moreover, training courses in physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support were given to 100 Syrian health staff.

International
At the global level, Switzerland supports the ICRC’s Programme for Humanitarian Impact Investment, which also assists the rehabilitation of mine victims.

The affected communities are educated on the handling of existing risks

Bosnia and Herzegovina
As part of its integrated approach, Switzerland also supported MRE activities and the strengthening of local capacities. MRE activities reached around 600 people living close to affected areas, including children, sporting and hunters’ associations, but also public companies. Thanks to these activities, people have adopted safe behaviours and over the course of 2018 no victims were registered in these areas.

Colombia
More than 1,000 people, including teachers, students, public officers and members of the community, were taught about how to manage the risks posed by mines and other ERW.

Myanmar
Almost 12,000 people, including IDPs, benefited from MRE activities; their knowledge about the risks posed by mines and other ERW increased.

Syria
MRE is an important component of humanitarian action. It aims to increase protection for the war-affected population and reduce their vulnerability. Switzerland supported around 3,000 MRE sessions delivered to affected communities, where people learnt how to adopt safer behaviours.

Ukraine
The conflict is resulting in mine and ERW contamination, which poses a threat to the lives of civilians and their livelihoods. By supporting a pilot project addressing all pillars of mine action implemented by the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons, Switzerland helped to strengthen local capacities and increased the protection of the civilian population living in mine-contaminated areas along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. Four MRE trainers were trained and more than 1,800 participants benefited from more than 120 MRE events.
2.3 Strategic objective 3: ownership of mine action rests entirely with those affected on the ground

To be sustainable and relevant in the long term, the people who are the most affected should be empowered to carry out mine action. With this in mind, Switzerland stresses the importance of building capacities and strengthening the knowledge of state authorities and affected populations. In 2018, the following projects and activities contributed to achieving this objective.

Local authorities are able to take on responsibility for mine action themselves over the long term

Bosnia and Herzegovina
With the aim of increasing local capacities that will allow the country to manage the risks posed by mines more independently, Switzerland collaborated with the national Mine Action Centre and the Demining Battalion of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The resources of the Demining Battalion (mine detection dogs and equipment for manual demining) were strengthened. A total of 27 people benefited from the workshops and trainings (land release methodology and dog handler courses).

Colombia
Switzerland has been concentrating its efforts on the importance of having strong national capacities in the humanitarian demining sector. For this reason, Switzerland has been collaborating with Descontamina Colombia to support the implementation of the Mine Action Plan 2016-2021 and the Post Conflict Rapid Response Strategy.

International
The Swiss Armed Forces supported UN-led mine action programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Mali, South Sudan, Western Sahara and the UN headquarters in New York by deploying 12 military mine action experts.

The Support Service for the United Nations Mine Action Service is essential to improve the quality of life for millions of people in the DRC and South Sudan. Last year, my team and I had the chance to improve the logistics processes and warehousing to support the deminers in the field. With the standardisation of workflows, we could reduce the cycle time drastically and made sure that the lifesaving material reached the field projects in the best time possible. Within the team, which consisted of local staff members, a culture of performance was encouraged by optimizing the projects. This will generate a sustainable impact in the field. – Cedric Boesch, Logistics Advisor, Entebbe Support Base

In collaboration with several UN partners (UNICEF, UNOPS, UNMAS, UNDP) and the GICHD, Switzerland funded and participated in the organisation of 11 training courses aimed at improving the local experts’ knowledge of mine action tools, such as results-based management, information management, and the implementation of mine action standards.
Lastly, in 2018, Switzerland contributed CHF 9 million to the activities of the GICHD. The organisation improves the efficiency of mine action by developing capacities and knowledge, and promoting norms and standards.

3 The contributions to the GICHD are managed in the framework of the credit supporting the 3 Geneva centres.
3. Conclusion and way forward

Jointly, and 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. Furthermore, Switzerland will play an active role in countering the disturbing trend of not respecting deadlines stipulated in international obligations and accepting non-compliance with these obligations as normal.

As a result, Switzerland has placed clear emphasis on human security: projects were funded to assist victims and ensure that they receive comprehensive medical care and the necessary support for their social and economic reintegration. With its support to clearance programmes Switzerland contributed to reducing the risks posed by mines and to facilitating access to local resources.

As the objectives and analysis of the 2016–19 Swiss Mine Action Strategy remain relevant, the latter has been renewed and extended until the end of 2022.