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Report

A mine-free world: challenges and opportunities in realising the 2025 aspiration

Wednesday 16 – Friday 18 May 2018 | WP1616

In association with:





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The 2025 aspiration: state of play and challenges to come

1. In the 2014 Maputo Declaration, States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention committed themselves: ‘to intensify our efforts to complete our respective time-bound obligations with the urgency that the completion work requires...We aspire to meet these goals to the fullest extent possible by 2025’. The workshop began with an assessment of the current state of play with that aspiration, and in particular the challenges to be faced over the next few years. In which states or regions does it look feasible to achieve the aspiration, and how? Where are the states or regions facing the most significant challenge, and why? What is the most likely forecast for the global picture in 2025?
2. Many participants argued that the aspiration remains an achievable one, despite the challenges to be tackled, many centred around funding. Neither should we assume failure if some states are still clearing mines post-2025; political will must not be allowed to erode. Some 29 states have reached completion, leaving 62 to get there. The challenges that remain are significant, and the great majority of the 62 states are not currently on track to meet the 2025 date.
3. The picture of contamination has shifted since the Maputo Declaration, and certainly since the Convention was signed in 1998: new and extensive contamination in some states, particularly in the Middle East, has led to a shift in international attention and focus. Clearance of new mine contamination in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan may go beyond 2025 and will therefore need additional funding. Iraq, for example, has become the first country to set a target beyond 2025 (2028). This contamination should be treated under same frameworks as legacy contamination: the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), Convention structures, and recognised best practice. It will be necessary to keep incentivising completion, and developing practical ways to help states manage it, as well as avoiding the eclipse of legacy areas with new contamination.
4. The funding environment has similarly changed with the contamination one, shifting away from legacy contamination, so that for example while funding as a whole remains high, 30% now goes to Afghanistan and Iraq whereas Angola has seen a 90% reduction in funding in the last decade. Moreover, it is estimated that approximately \$100m dollars a year in additional funding is required to meet the 2025 aspiration in most locations: an increase of 20%. New contamination has its own dynamics and technical characteristics, but it is important to resist a temptation to regard it as completely separate to legacy contamination. New landmine emergencies need to be recognised as such, but they affect only a handful of states, with the majority of contaminated states not affected. Keeping new and legacy contamination combined allows drawing on 3 decades of experience and systems, while separation risks measuring incorrectly what needs to be included in national plans and strategies. There is a further risk of ‘aid flight’ from legacy contexts where we could make significant progress with funding injections.

5. Establishing sustainable funding through to completion, particularly given competing foreign policy interests for donors, will involve shared responsibility amongst donors but also innovative methods and public-private partnerships. One example is to better explore and exploit the links to broader development goals (SDGs) to hook up mine clearance to other budgets, organisations and sectors.
6. Optimising funds by using both commercial and NGO capacity might be explored more creatively and proactively, by assessing the task in hand for each country, and the best combination of commercial, governmental and NGO activity that might be most effective. The requisite skill-set becomes more difficult in conflict zones, such as Iraq, and in some areas commercial actors may have better skills sets, which needs to be recognised.

Defining 'landmine-free': does a shared understanding exist?

7. What are the legal definitions regarding implementation? What needs to be considered to make a definition for the 2025 aspiration practical/pragmatic? What is the understanding(s) of landmine-free for donor states and affected states, and how might differing views cause difficulties for the Convention? What are the implications for information management and national reporting, in light of recent developments?
8. Although the Convention contains very clear definitions of a mine and of mine destruction, it only states that States Parties must make 'every effort' to identify contaminated areas rather than requiring them to search every last metre of their territory. Nor do terms such as mine-free, impact-free, or mine-safe exist within the convention and its obligations. Hence those terms are a matter for standards and guidelines, and while they can be used as milestones, they should not be confused with the end state. In this respect, there are two aspects to the Convention: the preventative norm against the weapons, where the term mine-free is most relevant for upholding the norm. The second aspect is responsive, involving the response to when weapons are deployed; here, 'impact-free' is probably a better term. 'Mine-free' is the state when all reasonable effort has been required in line with standards. What might remain is 'residual contamination'. Some donors use 'impact free' to drive their policies, but this should not be confused with obligations under the Convention.
9. For some participants, the Landmines Convention is the first humanitarian disarmament convention, and better integrating victim assistance into its obligations is a natural part of its remit. The Maputo Declaration cited obligations to victims, and developing new but still common agreements on how we interpret the convention can be pursued further. Clearance has a tangible end-state, but mine victims often need support for life. It is therefore important to ensure sustainable support to victims/survivors as part of planning for completion of clearance.
10. Article 5 (destruction of anti-personnel mines in mined areas) and Article 7 (transparency reporting) do not have victim assistance written into their provisions. States are integrating it into their own initiatives, and there appears to be an evolving voluntary machinery on victim assistance principles. There is also specific provision in the Cluster Munitions Convention.
11. The Maputo Declaration had a politically-driven motive. The clearance effort had plateaued and donor fatigue appeared to be setting in. The mine clearance enterprise needed reenergising, and the Declaration achieved that. Expectations need to be managed, if it becomes apparent that a completely mine-free world will not be achieved by 2025. The idea of meeting that deadline 'to fullest extent possible' by 2025 is a very subjective one. Moreover, the convention is about future prevention as well as immediate prevention and clearance, and some argued that the need to incentivise national capacity-building may not be helped by the 2025 campaign: if a mine-free world is something that can be achieved in 7 years, what is the incentive to build capacity beyond that?

Finishing the job: legacy contamination

12. A key challenge of legacy contamination is capacity-building in affected states, with some suggesting that 'capacity support' is more conducive to encouraging national ownership. How should studies of the impact of ageing of landmines inform approaches to clearance? How do we build national capacities, including for residual risk, and so reduce dependence on donor supported activity/third parties?
13. In Angola, 60% of affected areas identified in 2007 have now been cleared, and 90% of areas formerly identified have been cancelled through improved survey and data management. Information management has improved with the contribution of GICHD, Halo, and MAG, with GICHD supporting on building national action plan. However the economy is struggling due to a fall in price of oil, and future funding remains an issue: some commitments from donors have been secured, but no funds secured post-2018. This poses a significant risk to Angola's programme. Part of the issue with funding is a feeling amongst donors that Angola was a middle rather than low income country and also and was affected by corruption. Dealing with these perceptions to ensure continued donor support involves an anti-corruption strategy to build greater transparency into the system, and working with international organisations to become a middle income country.
14. Legacy contamination, of its nature, involves aged devices that may have been in place for some considerable time. There is a difference in the speed of ageing between factory manufactured mines and IEDs, with that process measurable in years and decades for factory-built mines, but can be days, weeks, or months for IEDs. Decision-making on clearance must be driven by an understanding of the reality of risks. An analysis of the implications of legacy contamination should look at the nature of ageing, and avoid misconceptions. For example, it is often believed that devices become progressively more dangerous as they get older, but this is not always or even often the case. All devices die – which is to say, they become inert – in time, and we need to understand how long that takes, how the functions of a weapon change over time, and the links between each step in the sequence. Ageing also has implications for our ability to identify mines: they look different over time and hence it is important to understand that part of the ageing process along with its impact on their dangerousness.
15. How do we build national capacities, including for residual risk, and so reduce dependence on external donors? Viewing the clearance of mines through the lens of capacity development produces valuable insights into how to sustain capacity. Ideally, national ownership of the clearance process increases over time and mine action becomes increasingly reactive. It is at the latter stages that challenges can be identified. As the process continues, contaminated areas tend to become more remote, inaccessible and less obviously important for land use. They are likely to be less well defined, data quality will be poorer, and fewer mines will be detected. Maintaining funds becomes increasingly difficult at the latter stage of a project
16. In building national capacity, it needs to be recognised that national ownership, when effectively done, is by far the less expensive and more sustainable model, but that ownership is often left too late in terms of the cycle of projects. Building the capacities to support reactive elements of cycle needs credible baselines, and capacity development plans with roadmaps, timelines, benchmarks etc. This is not a straightforward endeavour and it can be hard to measure progress. Many trained staff leave national authorities, and military personnel programmes often have high turnover, which combined make it difficult to establish a trained cadre. Maintaining strong leadership is difficult as the urgency of clearance declines, and communication with donors has weakened as international presence is downscaled.
17. Announcing completion must also entail recognising that residual risks remain, and residual contamination should be expected and planned for. A reactive strategy is needed, which might involve police, military, and the national commercial sector: one

size does not fit all. The move towards residual risk and hence reactive strategies at the end of the cycle is a sustainability issue: victim assistance must be integrated into mainstream agendas, such as helping people with disabilities and national and international health programmes. Risk education should be proactive and attuned to the realities of the risk. State Parties to the Convention are integrating victim assistance into wider frameworks and agendas, e.g. CRDP. This takes time and there are gaps that need to be filled.

New contamination since the declaration of the 2025 aspiration

18. What are the implications of new contamination for budgets and capacity in affected states? How is new contamination being recorded, and is recording being carried out consistently and effectively? What are the implications of new contamination by non-state actors, especially in semi-permissive or non-permissive spaces, or areas with poor or no government control? Is there an identifiable trend in donor funding scale and priorities?
19. New contamination and new trends in warfare are a strong factor in why it may be difficult for many countries to meet 2025. IEDs are likely to continue to figure in future conflicts and hence future contamination. Like factory-produced mines they are indiscriminate, can be laid in large numbers, have a predictable shelf life, and are capable of being mass-produced. Unlike landmines, however, IEDs create secondary and tertiary hazards as they have limitless payloads, and can be made easily by amateurs. It is important to remember that locally or informally-manufactured landmines have always been with us, and the rise in their use is, in part at least, due to the success of the Convention in destroying stockpiles.
20. The scope and scale of contamination increased sharply after 2014 with a rise in armed conflict. This had not been anticipated and produced a redirection of funding from legacy to new contamination. The fact that new contamination through IEDs is a recent phenomenon also means there is a limited evidence base to draw upon, and it is vital that practitioners are building this evidence base. Iraq and Syria are vital work for capturing lessons for future use.
21. This issue requires focused intervention from governments, as the progress towards the 2025 aspiration means that the IED threat overtakes that of 'traditional' factory-produced mines in terms of new contamination. New funding is needed, as conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen have added new contamination, and strategies for clearance will need to take account of the possibility that a semi-permissive environment may become the norm. This will require a set of capabilities from different actors: NGOs, international organisations, military and commercial.
22. The experience of Iraq may be positive here, albeit with a caveat that clearance of 'live' IEDs under a counter-IED strategy differs in several ways to humanitarian clearance of abandoned ones, including in aim, context and approach. In Iraq, counter-IED relies upon a broader range of information-sharing and cooperation with non-humanitarian stakeholders, and a variety of organisations have successfully worked together to tackle the problem. Governments need to lean in more, however: working to squeeze funding lines to terrorist organisations, for example. A more difficult challenge is also to, where appropriate, find ways of talking to the groups that are using IEDs. Such dialogue is extremely difficult and complex, and will not work in every context, but it may be vital for changing the way their conduct of hostilities.
23. It should also be possible to limit the use of precursor materials, for example through a more responsible management of the information that is available on the internet: a focused intervention in preventing the proliferation of ideas and information. [While beyond the scope of mine action and the Landmine Free 2025 aspiration], uniting industry and export controls to ensure commercial operators are aware of the issue, and can take precautionary measures to prevent use of precursor materials, is a further option.

24. As elsewhere, national capacity is at the heart of sustainable success, underlining the need to assist with legislation, facilitation, and access in affected countries. It is vital to use the terminology used within the Convention, in order to bring coherence to the debate and support states in reporting. Using the Convention definition of an anti-personnel mine allows States to hold each other to account, and allows the mine action community to measure progress and plan to support needs based on states' reporting. The 2019 Review Conference is an opportunity to redraw the narrative and develop strategies to deal with new contamination.

Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of donor support to mine and ERW clearance

25. With many different donors involved in the clearance of mines and ERW, effective ways to streamline and coordinate efforts, as well as how to pursue matchmaking between donors and affected states, become significant. Three such initiatives are the country coalition concept developed by German presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the country-specific or individualised approach led by the Dutch MFA under the Landmines Convention, and the Mine Action Support Group which is currently chaired by the US.

26. The country coalition concept ascribes a key role of a coordinating committee in the coalition, aiming to facilitate victim assistance, mobilising additional donors, and underlining national ownership as critical. The individualised approach provides a platform for individual affected states to provide detail on their challenges and needs across the convention. Again, national ownership is underlined as critical, and the approach is driven by need to move towards individualised approach and go beyond 'one size fits all' approaches. The Mine Action Support Group is a forum for information exchange and a way for donors to coordinate and harmonise their programmes, with the aim of avoiding duplication of programmatic activity, cover more ground and complement each other's work.

27. These take place in the context of possible donor fatigue beginning to set in, particularly for so-called 'legacy contexts'. The current system which has five major donors may not be sustainable in the medium to long run: it's not just necessary for those donors to increase funding, but less active states in and out of the MASG need to provide more funding. This will entail leveraging the international community beyond the mine action community to get mine clearing on the agenda of various different initiatives. For example, in Colombia, fund-raising and drawing attention to the issue laid the ground for private sector donors to enter and support. It is also important to keep the links to the SDGs: they are a mechanism for driving political mobilisation, private sector engagement, etc

28. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), both in terms of practice by donors but particularly in terms of sharing M&E information collectively, is not something that is currently done well or effectively. The MASG is working on measuring improved efficiency of donor support, but data is not always easy to obtain and analyse. Finding better techniques and formats to collect and use M&E data, and conduct impact studies that are valuable to donors, is a vital area for improvement. Increasingly, donors and implementers are having to justify the funding received from governments.

29. As well as offering the chance to maximise efficiency and effectiveness of donor programmes, M&E can also help tell a powerful story of what mine action is actually doing and achieving. This can have impact beyond the donors, as part of the motivation for states to join the Convention is the commitment of donor support.

30. Directing funding to implementing partners and operators ensures the most efficient use of funding and helps to maximise capacity in delivering that funding. Some participants questioned how far it helps to build national ownership if that country's national authority is bypassed in how funding is delivered directly to operators, but others pointed out that there are good reasons to deliver funding to operators rather than authorities – transparency, anti-corruption, etc.

Beyond traditional funding arrangements: what role for public-private partnerships?

31. The current and projected funding trends make it increasingly important to find additional sources and methods of funding clearance as 2025 approaches. Working with the private sector, and leveraging funding to amplify impact, offers a potentially productive way forward. The relationship has been mutually beneficial in other sectors: it supports corporate responsibility objectives in the private sector, while helping NGOs achieve their own objectives. It can also work to build relationships with the private sector and begin dialogues that influence private sector companies to work towards more responsible and sustainable business models, supply chains, etc. as well as funding NGO work, companies can also support in solving certain problems via innovation: this generates access to new markets for their innovations, while NGOs get technologies and knowledge that they do not have. The key is 'Know your audience', and their objectives in corporate social responsibility. In many cases, they may already be investing in states and specific territory where mines are an issue: hence it can be a question of how to incentivise private sector companies to become more involved in demining areas in which they are investing.
32. There are options here beyond, or in addition to, the standard model, allowing for more creative thinking about funding the clearance enterprise. For example, the development impact bond model, in which private sector risk capital is able to cover the risk of failure to shield the mine clearance funder and encourage investment, allows for greater flexibility in the model in which operations take place. Donors are 'de-risked' and private sector capital is much more comfortable with flex in terms of changes in the nuts and bolts of programming.
33. This model can be an opportunity to bring investors who are not interested in demining but are interested in, for example, agriculture. Clearance of mined land that can then be repurposed towards agriculture extends demining into broader initiatives might attract more and different sources of private funding. There can be time pressures on such models, as there needs to be a return on the investment the financiers are putting in.
34. The model used by the International Finance Facility for Immunisation, which established long-term funding commitments from governments and then used that to approach capital markets, issue bonds, and then used the funds to fund vaccination programmes, also has utility here. Its key innovation is front-loading funding, which allows accelerated programming and maximisation of positive benefits. In terms of how the model interacts with the governance of programming and prioritisation of programming, it does require robust programming structure in place with auditing etc. Through this model, significant funding commitments for demining could potentially be pledged, even small annual contributions over a longer period of time, to frontload immediate funding to reach the 2025 aspiration.

A fresh look at how to maximise donor effectiveness

35. A round of focused discussion in small groups, designed to draw out the implications of the preceding plenary sessions for how to maximise donor effectiveness, assessed which issues required further work to establish common understandings, the combination of mechanisms that offered best prospects for optimising funding, and how to strengthen international and national frameworks in the run-up to 2025.

Which of the issues discussed needs further work to establish a common understanding, and how should that be done?

36. Further work on better understanding the impact of funding, including modalities, and indicators of outcomes, in reporting to funders should add value. This should include how to measure results and be accountable for them, better impact assessments. Improved local ownership of, and input into, this reporting can also be developed. In assisting mine-affected countries on their strategies, learning from best practice is always valuable, and it is important to find ways of standardising, while avoiding a Western-dominated process.
37. A key theme throughout the meeting was the need to open up new funding schemes and innovative funding mechanisms. A further meeting, with the aim of road-testing some of the potential funding options, would offer the chance to develop this further. 'Blended funding', or a mix of traditional and non-traditional funding, offers a potential way to draw in new actors such as the extractives industry in a funding climate that is forecast to become more difficult.

What combination of mechanisms and frameworks could optimise efficiency and effectiveness in mine action funding?

38. In order for donors to better coordinate their efforts and ensure progress towards the 2025 aspiration, there needs to be clearer plans from mine-affected states and better communication of their mine action needs. This requires clear country-level work plans / road maps detailing what's needed in terms of survey and clearance, predicted costs, and estimated timelines. This ideally should form part of the national strategic planning of affected states, and should get input from all relevant stakeholders in-country.
39. APMBC Article 5 extension requests and Article 7 transparency reporting provides some information, but are not typically user friendly, and are not drawn together in one place. Furthermore, Article 5 extension request are often focused on technicalities and are not typically the principle reason what donors decide to provide funds, and are not always consulted. The APMBC coordination committees (such as the Article 5 Clearance committee and the Article 6 International cooperation and assistance committees) do an excellent job, but don't have the capacity to coordinate information.
40. Initiatives like the individualised approach are an excellent way in which affected states can clearly detail and communicate their needs to donors, and it is hoped that these this can serve as a springboard for states establishing country coalitions, and getting additional funding support and diversifying their funding. However, there is a limitation on the number of countries that this approach can cover in a year and not all donors attend the individualised approach meetings in the margins of the APMBC Intersessional Meetings and Meetings of States Parties. Potential new donors are often not present in the meetings.
41. Therefore, what is missing at present is a sector-wide mechanism or coherent plan by which to collate clear and user-friendly information on country-level survey and clearance needs and timelines to donors. This would enable donors to more easily identify where the funding needs and gaps are and what is needed to get countries to completion; and to better coordinate their funding efforts to help achieve the 2025 aspiration. It could also be used to help identify where economies of scale can be made, how funding can be used most effectively, and also identify where other forms of support, such as technical expertise etc. is needed.
42. The Fourth Review Conference of the APMBC in 2019 would be a good forum in which to present collated information, but work needs to happen now in order for this to be achievable. Preparation of country-level information on needs, timelines etc. should be a joint effort, involving all stakeholders in formulating – i.e. national authorities in affected countries, clearance operators and NGOs, expert international organisations, donors, treaty committees and leadership etc.

43. Such an overview will also help ensure that affected states with legacy contamination are not left behind, while at the same time allowing donors to coordinate efforts to address new contamination and humanitarian crises resulting from it in certain regions.

How could existing national and international frameworks and mechanisms be strengthened to best achieve the 2025 aspiration?

44. An injection of leadership is required to bring together the positive developments that are happening and to better coordinate the donors. This might be done through the MASG, in the form of a small number of donors to lead on coordination for a short timeframe. Different ways of tailoring stakeholder diversity to different objectives and finding the best mix of civil society, public, private, etc should be developed. There are examples of good public-private partnership with oil companies in Iraq.
45. An honest conversation about expectations for 2025 and beyond, including expectation management, is still required. Ensuring complementarity of donor efforts will help, as will ensuring funds do not all go to new crises. All efforts on better donor coordination need to be about developing national ownership, including information and innovation. National authorities often act as a barrier to information-gathering, and the option of making this a conditionality of donor support can be developed.

Conclusions and next steps

46. Caution should be exercised in over-emphasising 2025: it is an aspiration rather than an absolute deadline. If it becomes seen as a cliff edge, either for national actors or victims, the consequences may be counterproductive for residual clearance and victim-assistance. Nonetheless, it is a useful accountability measure for states, and has a strong normative impact. Neither should it be forgotten that there are still states outside the convention, both donors and contaminated states.
47. Complexities in trends of new conflicts present challenges, especially in areas that are not governed by capital cities. It will be necessary to find new ways of both clearance and limiting supply to these non-permissive or semi-permissive spaces.
48. Leadership is required to inject energy, and this has to come from the donors and affected states rather than the UN: the required ownership and leadership is something which only the donors can provide. Top-down approaches, looking to maximise coordination and efficiency of funding, should be matched with bottom-up ones engaging contaminated countries and the operators there. The outputs of these approaches are to build towards accepted best practice and develop metrics for success. As well as leadership from the donors, we need to ask more of contaminated states, particularly on effective use of funding and information sharing. In assessing the best way to mix commercial and non-commercial operators, a country-specific approach would be most effective.
49. There is nonetheless a role for collective leadership from multiple stakeholders – NGOs, civil society, donors and non-donor states – in creating greater space for collective effort and roadmapping when it comes to reaching 2025. This can involve preparing now for completion: developing plans for it and supporting national authorities, since completion can only be sustainable if it plugs into national ownership
50. The wider issue of funding models needs concentrated work on new options. Governments can consider facilitating and underwriting insurance to get projects off the ground, and better coordination between large donors and smaller donors to breaking down barriers to entry for smaller donors can be fruitful. Attention to the issue of preventing further contamination should not be sacrificed in the focus on legacy and new. This could take the form of improving export and import controls, especially to those outside of the convention. It can be hard to make the case for more funding, while supply continues.

51. Across the board, it is important to continue to accelerate information sharing to donors through MASG and create a clearer picture of the landscape. Monitoring and evaluation is a key part of this, as it will improve coordination, efficiency and effectiveness across the sector. The next conversation to be had in a Wilton Park or comparable format can be a detailed exploration of innovative finance methods for mine action.
52. When developing national strategies, it is necessary to show how mine action intersects with a number of other developmental and humanitarian agendas. Doing so can avoid the silo of disarmament and branch out into development and humanitarian initiatives that may offer the most promising prospect for both new funding actors and models and for sustainable mine-free status after 2025.

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