



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Federal Department of Defence,  
Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

# Mine Action Strategy of the Swiss Confederation 2016–22

## 2019 Annual Report



Mine risk education, Somalia. © Noe Nielsen / UNMAS

## 1. Introduction

In 2019, recognising the important contribution of mine action to human security, peace, humanitarian action and sustainable development, Switzerland contributed some CHF 17.6 million<sup>1</sup> to efforts to clear mines, raise awareness, strengthen local capacities and facilitate the implementation of existing international conventions.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 2019 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 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> The FDFA disbursed CHF 14.2 million, of which CHF 9.2 million was channelled to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The DDPS spent CHF 3.4 million on deployments and training.

<sup>2</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); the Convention of 30 May 2008 on Cluster Munitions (SR 0.515.093); the Convention of 10 October 1980 on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, with its Amended Protocol II on the Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as amended on 3 May 1996 and its Protocol V of 28 November 2003 on Explosive Remnants of War (UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons – CCW, SR 0.515.091, SR 0.515.091.3, SR 0.515.091.4); and the Convention of 13 December 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SR 0.109).

## 2. Overview and results achieved in 2019

In 2019 the mine action community celebrated the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention or APMBC). This convention, one of the most successful in the disarmament domain, has been translated into concrete action on the ground, improving the lives and protection of civilians living in conflict-affected regions and in contaminated areas in general. Vast areas of land have been declared free of mines and have been returned to local communities for productive use. Since the convention entered into force, 31 states parties have completed their clearance obligations and almost 53 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, preventing their future use. Furthermore, assistance to victims – although at times inadequate and poorly funded – has been recognised as an important international obligation.

Despite these positive developments, a number of challenges remain. The rate of accession of new states parties to the Ottawa Convention is lower than in the period immediately following its coming into effect and, regarding stockpile destruction, a small number of states parties have failed to meet the deadlines set. The issue of most concern, however, has been the recent increase in the number of casualties. After more than a decade of decline, from 1999 to 2013, there has been a worrying increase in the number of victims of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) since 2014. This can be attributed to the laying of new landmines in conflict-torn countries, including Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, Myanmar and Yemen. Also of particular concern is the use of improvised landmines by armed non-state actors (ANSAs). This phenomenon is not new, but has taken an unprecedented scale in recent years. 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 to promote the norm against the use of anti-personnel landmines and towards a universal ban on these weapons. It is with this objective in mind that Switzerland actively participated in drafting the key documents of the Fourth Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, during which states parties renewed their commitment to put an end to the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines as well as their aspiration to meet the objectives of the Ottawa Convention by 2025.

In the second half of 2019, Switzerland assumed the presidency of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The CCM promotes international humanitarian law (IHL) in important ways by banning an entire category of weapons which do not distinguish between civilians and combatants and by creating new obligations in relation to victim assistance. Despite the CCM being relatively recent, some progress – although irregular – has been achieved in the clearance of contaminated areas, and several states parties have met their stockpile destruction obligations, even ahead of the deadlines set in many cases. So did Switzerland, eliminating its stock of cluster munitions two years before its 2020 deadline. During its presidency, Switzerland will give new impetus to the CCM and emphasise its political importance, underlining its contribution to broader peace, humanitarian and development objectives. It will also focus on the universalisation of the CCM, as the rate of new accessions is too low, in particular among affected states.

In line with its well-established humanitarian tradition, Switzerland supports mine action by (a) emphasising the importance of respecting and promoting the 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 2019, Swiss political activities focused on 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, Libya, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Syria and Ukraine. 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 in relation to mine clearance.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thanks to Switzerland's contributions and engagement, 2.3km<sup>2</sup> of land was returned to local communities and 204 explosive devices were found and destroyed. This eliminated a direct threat for more than 10,000 people in nine municipalities. In its political dialogue with the local authorities, Switzerland advocated for the adoption of the new National Mine Action Strategy, one of the prerequisites for more effective mine action governance in the country and towards the fulfilment of international obligations. The international engagement yielded success and the new strategy was adopted in 2019.

### 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 2019, 9.67km<sup>2</sup> of land was handed back to local communities and 1,341 anti-personnel mines, 10 anti-tank mines and 1,368 ERW were located and destroyed, benefitting 6,980 households.



To date, all known minefields in the village of Ou Chheu Kram, Pailin Province, have been released and returned to the community, drastically increasing land available for development and agricultural activities. "There's a big change in people's livelihood compared to that time," said village elder, Thor Sokphan, referring to the period when the village was established in 1999. "They live without fear and restriction. In the past, we were afraid. We were afraid even to walk on the land, to cultivate the land."

### Colombia

Switzerland, in collaboration with Humanity and Inclusion (HI), the HALO Trust and Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas (CCCM), contributed to the clearance of more than 96,000m<sup>2</sup> of land. A total of 20 explosive devices were located and destroyed.

### Croatia

Switzerland contributed to the clearance of 1.7km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land and the destruction of more than 3,580 explosive devices.



### Sri Lanka

Working together with the HALO Trust, Switzerland contributed to the clearance of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of land and the safe destruction of 121 anti-personnel mines, 23 items of unexploded ordnance, 264 items of small arms ammunition, and 3 improvised explosive devices.



As battle intensified during the 1990s, Mrs Jayakumar and her sister-in-law were displaced along with their entire village, which now sits at the heart of a large minefield. For 17 years, they were unable to return to their home due to the danger posed by landmines. Now they walk safely through their village without fear of injury or death. Thanks to clearance operations, land was released back to the community, allowing families to rebuild their homes and lives.

### International

In collaboration with the UNDP, Switzerland supported two states parties to the Ottawa Convention, Tajikistan and Yemen, in developing their Article 5 extension requests.

*Compliance with the legal framework is strengthened and the clarification of alleged breaches is promoted.*

### Multilateral

In 2019, as in the past, Switzerland supported the research 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 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 more than 50 ANSAs in an effort to promote respect for international norms, including those outlined in the Ottawa Convention. In 2019, two ANSAs signed the deed of commitment banning anti-personnel mines. In total, 54 organised armed groups have committed to respect the provisions of the Ottawa Convention.

## 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 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 of contaminated areas reduces the risks to populations and enables access to local resources.*

### 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 25 years, more than 3,000km<sup>2</sup> of land was cleared and returned to the population. However, an additional 1,018km<sup>2</sup> or 2.1% of the total country surface still remains to be cleared. Areas contaminated with mines and cluster munitions remnants still directly affect the safety of more than 500,000 people (around 15% of the total population) in 129 municipalities, hampering the country's development by blocking access to agricultural and pasture land, infrastructure and woods.

Switzerland's engagement helped to increase the security of the affected populations as well as their access to productive assets. In 2019, 2.3km<sup>2</sup> of land was handed back to local communities in nine municipalities and a total of 204 explosive devices were located and destroyed. In addition, Switzerland continued to raise awareness about the urgency of solving the problems posed by mine contamination in the country by, for example, promoting the exhibition '[Life of mine](#)', prepared by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland has been supporting Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) Humanitarian Disarmament Programme since 2003. Some 2.1% of the country's surface still remains to be cleared. Mines cover a bigger amount of land than all parks and protected natural areas combined. Many years after the war has ended, the land released can be used for pasture, cattle breeding, firewood gathering, picking forest crops and hunting.

### 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 (1,970km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land remains 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's support helps Cambodia to (a) develop key national documents, (b) develop a monitoring system for authorities to track evidence on the impact of mine action, (c) share experiences and knowledge with other countries, particularly within ASEAN, and (d) clear contaminated land. Swiss-funded interventions in

Cambodia contributed to the handing back of almost 10km<sup>2</sup> of land to local communities and benefited more than 28,500 people. Clearance operations 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 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. Switzerland's engagement in the mine action sector aims to bring peace, security and sustainable development to conflict-affected areas, where communities have benefited from the clearance of mines and other ERW. Mine action, and in particular clearance operations supported by Switzerland, had 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 local coordination, clearance operations, local institutional strengthening and the integration of ex-combatants in demining teams.



Angela Orrego (left) and Marcela Moreno (right) are founding associates of Humanicemos DH, a mine action organisation created under the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP. Mine action can ensure the economic and social reintegration of former combatants.

“As a survivor of a conflict lasting more than 50 years, I can reaffirm that the struggle for peace is worthwhile. Our contribution is to rebuild the social fabric of our country. Through clearance and mine risk education sessions we save lives,” says Marcela Moreno.

### Croatia

The 1991–96 war left a heavy and dangerous legacy. It is estimated that almost 300km<sup>2</sup> of land is suspected to be contaminated with more than 22,000 landmines, negatively affecting access to pasture and forestry resources. Switzerland supports the country's mine action efforts in the framework of its contribution to the enlarged European Union. A total of 1.7km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land was cleared and more than 3,580 explosive devices destroyed.

### 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 Myanmar has gradually enlarged the space for mine action activities in the recent past, the country can benefit from the experience of other mine action programmes to further develop its own national mine action structures. The first step of this process is to formally establish a national mine action authority within the structures of the government of Myanmar. To facilitate such a process, Switzerland, New Zealand and the Danish Refugee Council jointly organised a workshop in October 2019 with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to discuss possible ways forward in setting up a national mine action programme. Meanwhile, as part of a project with the Danish Refugee Council/Danish Demining Group, non-technical surveys were carried out in more than 48 communities, leading to the identification of several



hazardous areas. This improved the protection of the local population by helping to prevent future mine or ERW accidents.

#### 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 populations 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 contributed to the clearance of almost 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of land that will be put to productive use and the release of more than 36,000m<sup>2</sup>. A total of 121 anti-personnel mines, 23 items of unexploded ordnance, 264 items of small arms ammunition, and 3 improvised explosive devices were safely destroyed, no longer posing a danger to communities.

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

#### Colombia

After a downward trend in the number of victims of explosive devices, Colombia has been experiencing a dramatic increase since 2018. In 2019, although lower than in 2018, the number of victims of mines and other ERW remained high. The main cause is the laying of new devices, 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 78 victims benefited from medical assistance and more than 30 from income-generating activities (cattle raising, poultry and agriculture).

#### Myanmar

As part of its integrated approach, Switzerland supports surveying as well as MRE and victim assistance activities. A total of 54 victims received rehabilitation support and benefited from income-generating activities (cattle raising, animal breeding, handicrafts, agriculture and vocational training), which improved their overall 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 terms of protection. Switzerland aims to increase protection for the conflict-affected population and reduce their vulnerabilities by focusing on victim assistance and MRE. More than 13,200 beneficiaries with injuries and/or disabilities, including some in IDP and refugee camps, benefitted from adapted multi-disciplinary services (more than 49,000), which included physical and functional rehabilitation sessions, psychosocial support sessions and provision of prosthesis and orthotics. Caregivers participated in psychosocial and education sessions. In addition, 880 beneficiaries received livelihood support.

#### Ukraine

The conflict is resulting in mine and ERW contamination, which poses a threat to the lives of civilians and their livelihoods. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eastern Ukraine ranks amongst one of the most contaminated areas in the world. So far, the legislation does not foresee specific State support for civilian victims of mine accidents in Ukraine. In this regard, Switzerland started a pilot project together with the then Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs in the domain of victim assistance. Until the end of 2019, 12 applications from mine victims were approved and funds were disbursed to cover the costs for orthopaedic care and prosthetics.

*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 1,000 people (including 681 children) living close to affected areas. Thanks to these activities, people have adopted safe behaviours and, over the course of 2019, no new victims were registered in these areas.

#### Colombia

More than 4,000 people, including teachers, students, public officers and members of the community, were taught how to manage the risks posed by mines and other ERW.

#### Libya

Large amounts of ERW resulting from repeated armed conflict since 2011 have affected many regions of the country. This results in a direct threat to local communities, prevents the safe return of a high number of IDPs, but also impedes reconstruction and early recovery efforts, which are key for stabilisation. By engaging in MRE, Switzerland aimed at increasing protection for conflict-affected populations, reducing their vulnerabilities and allowing a safe return to their areas of origin. In 2019, more than 1,500 people (49% women), across seven municipalities, attended MRE sessions to learn and adopt safe behaviours. MRE sessions were particularly beneficial for children, who form the most vulnerable segment of the population.

#### Myanmar

Over 9,300 people, including IDPs, benefited from MRE activities. This helped to increase their knowledge about the risks posed by mines and other ERW.

#### Syria

In 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 5,840 MRE sessions delivered to affected communities, reaching over 81,000 people, who learnt how to adopt safer behaviours. For example, in the Al-Hol camp in north-eastern Syria, over 1,000 MRE sessions were delivered to over 15,000 at-risk persons.

### 2.3 Strategic objective 3: ownership of mine action rests entirely with those affected on the ground

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 building capacities and strengthening the knowledge of state authorities and affected populations. In 2019, the following projects and activities contributed to achieving this objective.

*Local authorities take on responsibility for mine action.*

#### 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 capacities of the Demining Battalion were strengthened, with seven soldiers attending an 11-week mine detection dog handler course.

#### Colombia

Switzerland has concentrated its efforts on the importance of having strong national capacities in the humanitarian demining sector. For this reason, Switzerland, through the MPTF, has collaborated with Descontamina Colombia to support regional coordination and local implementation of the Mine Action Plan 2016–21 and the peace agreement.

#### International

The Swiss Armed Forces supported UN-led mine action programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya (based in Tunisia), Mali, South Sudan, Western Sahara and the UN headquarters in New York 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 training.



"Information Management is a key tool for the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the DRC, and for mine action in general. Data is key for effective decision-making, facilitating efficient operations in the field while allowing for accurate reporting for donors and other actors in this domain. During my two years in the DRC, my team had the opportunity to improve the quality of data collection and management by collaborating with the GICHD and UNMAS in the development of the new Information Management System for Mine Action, IMSMA Core. This system improves the quality of the entire information management cycle, and the team managed to overcome all the technical hurdles to help deliver a sustainable solution that is currently deployed within all UNMAS programmes." – Lionel Fragnière, IMSMA Expert, UNMAS DRC, Kinshasa.

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.

Switzerland has maintained a longstanding and close partnership with the GICHD. In 2019, Switzerland contributed CHF 9.2 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 organizations, NGOs as well as commercial operators.

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

### 3. Conclusion and way forward

Switzerland has placed a clear emphasis on human security and the enabling role of mine action for long-term stability and sustainable development. Through its support for clearance programmes, Switzerland has contributed to reducing the risks posed by mines and facilitating access to local resources. Through its engagement in victim assistance, it has helped to ensure that victims receive comprehensive medical care and the necessary support for their social and economic reintegration.

As president of the Second Review Conference of the CCM Switzerland will engage with signatory states as well as with states not parties to promote their accession to this convention. Furthermore, it will stress the importance of the CCM for the promotion of peace and sustainable development.

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 implementing the provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It will continue reaffirming the importance of respecting the deadlines set by these conventions and refusing to accept non-compliance with the obligations.