

MINE ACTION IN UKRAINE



BACKGROUND

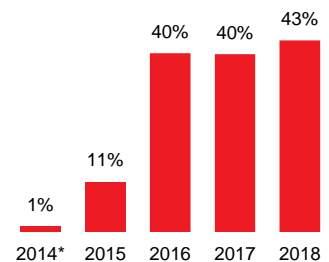
Ukraine is one of the most severely mine and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) affected places in the world, with the most recorded anti-vehicle mine incidents for three years in a row¹ and the third globally for overall casualties, behind only Afghanistan and Syria.²

It is estimated by national authorities that about 7,000 sq. km. in the government-controlled areas (GCA) of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast in eastern Ukraine are contaminated with mines and Explosive Remnants of War. The Ministry of Defense, in cooperation with humanitarian actors, has developed a [map](#) which shows surveyed areas where mine contamination has been confirmed. However, vast areas of land have not yet been surveyed so it is difficult to know the full extent of mine contamination. It is also difficult to assess the scale of contamination in non-government controlled areas (NGCA) as no coordinated mine action has been taken there, whilst the situation is understood to be acute.

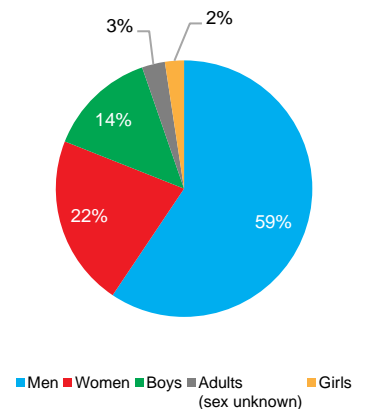
Over 1,000 casualties have been recorded as a result of landmines and other ERWs since 2014, as land mines continue to be planted in the ongoing conflict.³ In 2018, 43% of civilian casualties were attributed to mine and ERW-related incidents. Mine-related incidents remained the leading cause of child casualties in 2018.

Mine and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) contamination is a key protection concern. It puts vital civilian infrastructure facilities at risk as maintenance and repair is impeded or made impossible by the presence of mines and UXOs. Mines, ERWs and UXOs limit access to income generation, as civilians are unable to engage in farming and agricultural activities. Mine contamination limits freedom of movement and poses a serious threat to civilians crossing the contact line between GCA and NGCA. Access to some villages near the contact line is restricted as roads are contaminated by mines, leaving people cut off from essential services, while limiting recreational activities for children. Mine contamination also puts in danger people collecting firewood for heating. In addition, survivors of mine/ERW accidents continue to suffer as a result of limited availability of rehabilitation services and a lack of understanding of their needs.

Civilian casualties resulting from MRI and ERW incidents as a % of total civilian casualties



Civilian casualties resulting from MRI and ERW incidents, per sex and age, cumulative 2014*-2018



Source: OHCHR, Conflict-related casualties in Ukraine, February 2019

*From 14th of April to 31 of December 2014

¹ [Global Mapping and Analysis of Anti-Vehicle Mine Incidents in 2017](#), Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, May 2018.

² [Landmine Monitor 2018 Annual Report](#) placed Ukraine 3rd in the world for number of casualties behind Afghanistan and Syria in 2017.

³ OHCHR Statistics on civilian casualties.

●●●● CRITICAL ISSUES FOR MINE ACTION RESPONSE

MINE VICTIM ASSISTANCE: Ukraine has recognized that it has obligations to mine victims.⁴ While emergency medical assistance is provided in Ukraine, survivors often do not have full access to continuing medical care, rehabilitation and functional prosthetics. The problem of access to assistance is particularly acute for people residing in rural areas, as families often do not have the money to cover the cost of travel to urban centres or the capital. Psychosocial support for survivors, families and communities remains largely unavailable. Families of survivors often report substantial deterioration of their economic situation. According to DRC-DDG and UNICEF Child Mine Victim Needs Assessment Report there is a lack of comprehensive support (Mine Victim Assistance programming) to affected children, leaving the families often alone to deal with the consequences of the accident.

Presently, a number of governmental stakeholders collect data on mine/ERW casualties. There is a pressing need to aggregate this information in a central database, so that it can be readily updated, maintained and analyzed. This data could support a clear and transparent process for civilians to receive official status as having been injured in an armed conflict. Having a centralized database would allow the government to understand the scope of the problem and would help to inform victim assistance response.

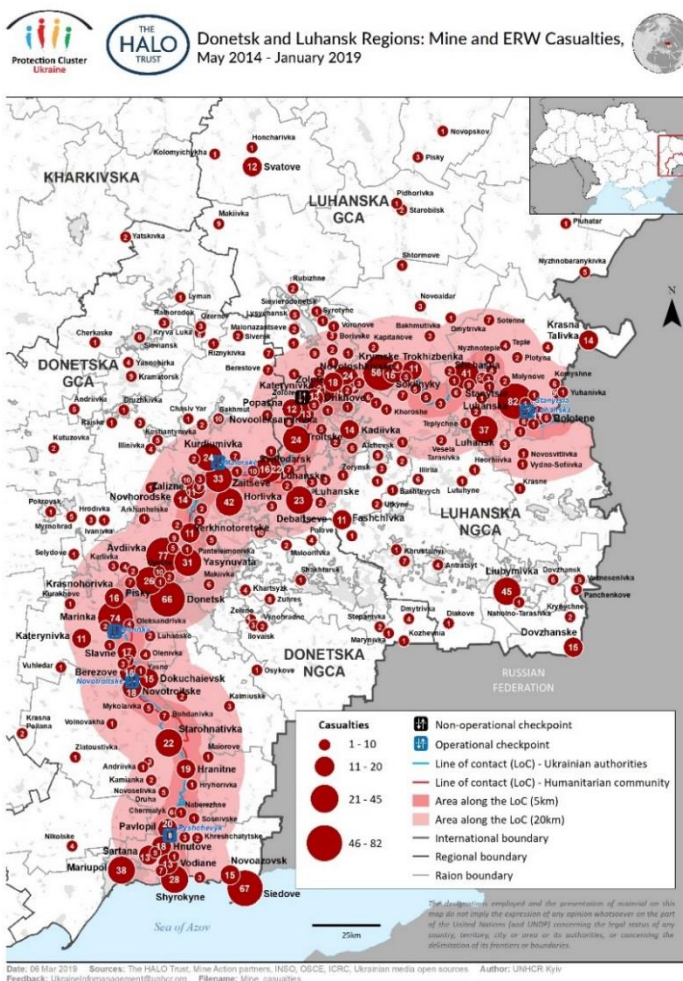
MINE RISK EDUCATION COVERAGE: A trend has been observed in funding being directed towards the area within 5 km of the line of contact in government-controlled areas. While MRE provision is critical in these areas, there is a risk that communities with a mine/ERW threat outside this area will be neglected. Since the breakout of hostilities in 2014, 17% of casualties related to mine/ERW incidents have been recorded in areas outside the 5 km area.⁵ 20% of households in the 5-20 km area from the contact line state that mine/ERW contamination 'severely affect everyday life'⁶.

CAPACITY AND FUNDING: Although the scale of mine and UXO contamination is very large in Ukraine, it ranks 14th in terms of donor support,⁷ which is very low considering the scale of mine and ERW contamination. Not enough financial, human and technical capacity is currently directed to humanitarian mine action. National actors lack up to date technical equipment for mine clearance, which is necessary to conduct quality control before handing over land back to communities.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE INCLUDES:

- Data collection, including context analysis and needs assessment for services referral, as a starting point to understand the extent of the problem and the challenges ahead;
- Emergency and continuing medical care, including emergency first aid to the victim of the explosion and ongoing medical care other than physical rehabilitation;
- Physical and other rehabilitation, including physiotherapy, as well as assistive and mobility devices;
- Psychological and psycho-social support;
- Social and economic inclusion, inclusive education, as well as access to basic services and disability awareness;
- Establishment, enforcement and implementation of relevant laws and public policies.

The United Nations Policy on Mine Victim Assistance in Mine Action, 2016



⁴ Maputo Action Plan at the Mine Ban Treaty Third Review Conference, held in Maputo in 2014.

⁵ Data according to DDG's casualty database, compiled from cross-verified open source media and field reports from organizations such as INSO and OSCE.

⁶ REACH, Analysis of Humanitarian Trends, Government Controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, June 2018, p. 27.

⁷ Landmine Monitor 2018.

STANDARDISATION: In November 2018, the National Bureau for Standardization adopted the National Mine Action Standards, which have been developed with the support of international humanitarian mine action actors. The Standards will come into effect on 1 April 2019 and will ensure that all actors are conducting mine clearance operations according to a set of minimum standards, based on international mine action standards (IMAS). All actors will be required to pass an accreditation process and subsequently be monitored for quality and consistency by a national body, in a transparent manner, to ensure accountability.

LAW ON MINE ACTION: In December 2018, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted the *Law of Ukraine on Mine Action*, providing the institutional structure for the mine action sector. The law includes provisions for establishment of the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) and the procedure for accreditation of mine action actors in Ukraine. As the law was passed after the *Law on State Budget for 2019* was adopted in November 2018, there are no funds allocated in the 2019 budget for the establishment of the NMAA, recruitment of personnel and mine victim assistance. Until amendments to the *Law on State Budget* are passed allocating sufficient funding, it will not be possible to implement the *Law on Mine Action*.

NATIONAL MINE ACTION CENTER: In February 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine tasked the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs to lead the implementation of the Law and to establish the Mine Action Centre.

DATA MANAGEMENT: The Ministry of Defense collects mine action data from multiple actors onto a purpose-made database: the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). However, the system is not fully implemented, as some national actors do not provide data to the central system, resulting in parallel databases. There is also a need to launch and maintain a dedicated Victim Information System (VIS) of mine/ERW casualties and accidents. The Law on Mine Action defines a list of national authorities, which will be part of the board of the NMAA. Therefore, it is important to build the data management capacity of the NMAA so that it can provide technical support to national authorities tasked with mine action functions under the Law.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS: Access to NGCA is closed to all humanitarian mine action organizations. Access to conduct surveys or clearance in areas near the contact line in GCA is often not possible to obtain, due to the ongoing conflict.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON MINE ACTION

- Ensure direct donor funding to mine action operators is allowed. The law in its current form is ambiguous on the subject.
- Broaden the scope of state-supported Victim Assistance to all persons injured by mines/ERWs. Currently only children under 18 years are entitled to financial support.
- Include provisions on how the mine action sector should function in the transitional period until the new sector structure is put in place.
- Ensure clarity on the procedure for transfer of liability of released land from mine action operators to the state of Ukraine.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPAND MINE RISK EDUCATION ACTIVITIES: Mine risk education activities outside the 20km area from the contact line should be equally prioritized until the area has been fully cleared. Mine risk education should be expanded, including in NGCA if possible, to ensure that life-saving information is provided to all children and adults in eastern Ukraine.

PROVIDE MINE VICTIM ASSISTANCE: A mechanism for victim surveillance should be developed. Provide trauma care and rehabilitation services to ensure the capacity and capability are in place to respond to all victims. Address the longer-term needs of landmine survivors, their families and affected communities and generate national ownership over the issue.

ENSURE ACCESS: All parties to the conflict are called to recommit to the ceasefire agreements and allow access of international humanitarian mine action actors to conduct mine risk education, victim assistance and mine clearance activities to facilitate recovery efforts. There is a need to allow access of mine action actors to all areas along the contact line where the presence of landmines and UXO serves zero tactical value.

PRIORITIZE CAPACITY BUILDING: Training and support in the areas of data collection and management, coordination and quality management should be prioritized. The provision of specialist demining equipment, if supported by sufficient training is also relevant and needed.



© OCHA Ukraine/2018/O. Gaskewych, mine sign in Stanytsia Luhanska, Luhansk (GCA)

●●●● HUMAN COST OF MINES

- 23 February 2019, **two people were killed and one injured at the checkpoint** in Olenivka (Donetsk region, NGCA) when a minivan hit a mine.
- 23 October 2018, **two workers were injured** returning from repairing a damaged pipeline supplying clean water to 45,000 people near Zalizne (Donetsk region, GCA) when their truck hit a mine.
- 18 October 2018, **a man and a woman were killed** on a mine in the area **between the military positions** of parties in Zolote-4 (Luhansk region). The man was killed immediately, while the woman was wounded and called out for help. However, no one could reach her due to mine contamination in the area where she was lying, and she eventually died. Their bodies could only be removed 6 days after the tragedy, when a ceasefire was negotiated and a path to the bodies could be cleared.
- 17 October 2018, **a 51-year old woman was injured** after the detonation of a hand grenade, that was found at the **kindergarten area** 'Ivanushka' in Donetsk (Luhansk region, NGCA).
- 29 September 2018, **three children (12, 13 and 13 years old) were killed and one boy (10 years old) was injured** after an explosion, preliminary anti-personnel mine MON-50, in Horlivka (Donetsk region, NGCA) near EECF.
- 10 September 2018, a 55-year-old **man was killed as a result of trip wire detonation near the railway station** in Stanytsia Luhanska (Luhansk region, GCA).
- 25 July 2018, **two children (boy and girl) were killed** in a minefield blast in Horlivka (Donetsk NGCA). Although there were signs warning about mine contamination, the boys decided to play and started jumping across the field, the girl tried to stop him, but both of them died immediately when a mine exploded.
- 22 May 2018, **three children (16, 16 and 15 years old) injured and one boy (14 years old) killed** when the grenade one of the boys had in his school bag exploded in a public bus in Debaltseve (Donetsk region, NGCA).
- 7 April 2018, **a family of four was killed when their car exploded on** a landmine near Siverskyi Donets river bank in Pishchane (Luhansk region, GCA).

KEY CONTACTS

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Humanitarian mine action stakeholders:

National: Ministry of Defense, State Emergency Service, Special Transportation Service, Ministry for Temporarily occupied territories and IDPs, National Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. National Mine Action Authority and National Mine Action Center are being established by Cabinet of Ministers. Mine Safe Ukraine, Ukrainian Deminers Association.

International: Danish Refugee Council-Danish Demining Group (DRC- DDG), HALO Trust Ukraine, Swiss Foundation for Demining (FSD), OSCE, ICRC, UNDP, UNICEF and others.