

GICHD Thematic Intervention at Mine Action Support Group (MASG) Meeting

10 April 2025

Distinguished members of the Mine Action Support Group,

Mine action funding has historically followed the news headlines; with reduced resources, mine action efforts are even more concentrated in high-profile conflict zones, leaving less-publicized countries and regions struggling to secure the necessary support. To protect livelihoods, provide a solid foundation for development and ensure no country is left behind, the mine action sector not only should but absolutely needs to find practical, sustainable solutions.

To this effect, the *Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)* emphasizes the continued urgency for **innovation** in the sector to help us collectively face and overcome these aforementioned issues, particularly on two fronts:

- **Stabilizing funding for the sector through the use of innovative financing mechanisms**
- **Improving overall efficiency for the sector through innovation**

1. Innovative Finance

As already acknowledged, the mine action community is at a breaking point; it risks falling irreparably behind unless we commit to substantial, sustainable support.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the GICHD published the study, "Innovative Finance for Mine Action: Needs and Potential Solutions" last year. The study explores the sector's financial gaps and how proven innovative finance mechanisms—particularly frontloading—can help bridge them.

What are the main characteristics and advantages of frontloading?

Already proven in the vaccination sector, frontloading leverages long-term government pledges to issue bonds, unlocking immediate funding while allowing donors to "act now, pay later." Applying this to mine action could fast-track demining efforts by ensuring upfront resources to tackle life-threatening contamination.

Beyond speed, frontloading enhances cost efficiency—just as the International Finance Facility for Immunization (IFFIm) has saved billions in healthcare and productivity costs. With USD 9.7 billion in pledges and USD 8.7 billion in bonds issued since 2006, this model equally operates at the scale mine action requires.

Most importantly, its inclusive governance ensures transparency, accountability, and predictable funding, which would further empower mine-affected countries to lead demining efforts and drive local development.

And what about...

- **Funding sources:** the traditional frontloading model uses donor government-allocated funds only. While these funds themselves may come from innovative financing sources, like France's use of a solidarity tax on air travel to contribute to IFFIm from 2006 to 2021, the GICHD recognizes the challenges related to the current funding landscape. Frontloading for mine action will likely need to incorporate diversified funding sources, including those from the private sector, for a blended financing mechanism.

- **Participation beyond direct funding:** not all mine action donors are able to make long-term, legally binding pledges. This does not prevent such donors to be invited to be actively involved in the frontloading path, particularly through inclusion in consultations during the structuring process as well as potential provision of non-financial support to the mechanism.
- **Traditional funding streams:** Frontloading is not intended to replace traditional donor funding streams. It is complementary and can be used to fill many gaps currently found within the sector. It can furthermore be complementary to other innovative finance-related initiatives, particularly those that may be very context/country-specific.

Next Steps

To take this work forward, the GICHD has committed to establish an **Innovative Finance Secretariat**. Although the terms of reference for this Secretariat have been shared with the MASG via its Chair, to summarize:

- The Secretariat will have the **overarching responsibility of coordinating the concrete design, advancement and implementation of frontloading for the mine action sector** as well as **support the advancement of other relevant innovative finance mechanisms for the mine action sector at a global/multi-country level**.

In parallel, the GICHD has committed to establishing, via this Innovative Finance Secretariat, a **Frontloading Technical Working Group**. Also in line with the shared terms of reference:

- Composed primarily of diverse financial experts, the primary objective of the Frontloading Technical Working Group is **to support the structuring of the frontloading mechanism for mine action**. This will largely focus on the financial structuring of the mechanism as well as the structuring of governance and oversight measures for the mechanism.

The GICHD remains ready to exchange on these next steps forward and collaborate with all those who are interested in taking this journey together to ensure a more stable, sustainable future for the life-saving work that makes up our sector.

2. Improving Efficiency through Innovation

Beyond funding, innovation is vital for improving cost-efficiency, effectiveness, and safety in mine action. It extends beyond technology to include processes, methodologies, standards, and partnerships.

Recognizing the need for coordination and knowledge-sharing, GICHD launched last year the Explosive Ordnance Risk Reduction (EORR) Innovation Hub to unite key players, drive innovation, and support the broader EORR system. The Hub facilitates research, development, and evaluation of new approaches.

While MASG has been previously briefed on the concept of the Hub, the GICHD reaffirms its importance in these challenging times and would like to share key updates on its progress:

- The **Innovation Technical Group (ITG)** has been established as an important operational element of the Innovation Hub, and its chairs have been elected – this includes the Serbian Mine Action Centre as well as the GICHD. The ITG has notably brought together a coalition of over 60 stakeholders willing to collaborate on the efforts to make Innovation more efficient and effective within the sector, ranging from

NMAA, Mine Action Organizations, Academia, Research and Technology organizations and UN.

- In terms of recent and planned innovation activities:
 - An **Innovation Session focused on Ukraine** was held in February, which built on the outcomes of the 2024 Innovation Session on AI held in Geneva.
 - The **Innovation Award** (Call for Papers) has been launched. The thematic focus for the 2025 call for papers is risk management in mine action.
 - The **2025 edition of the Innovation Conference** is planned for 28-30 October in Luxembourg. All MASG members are invited to join us in this important endeavour for the sector.

The GICHD will continue to develop the Innovation Hub and all of its diverse components to ensure the sector is supported with sufficient coordination mechanisms, tools and opportunities to collectively advance innovation efforts.

Conclusion

In the face of growing challenges, the urgency to secure sustainable funding for mine action has never been greater. Without immediate and innovative financial solutions, countless lives, livelihoods, and development opportunities will remain at risk. At the same time, it is equally crucial to pursue innovation that enhances the efficiency, effectiveness, and safety of mine action operations—ensuring that every effort delivers maximum impact. The GICHD remains committed to driving forward both financial and operational innovation through the establishment of the Innovative Finance Secretariat, the Frontloading Technical Working Group and the on-going implementation of the Innovation Hub. Now is the time for collective action—through innovation, collaboration, and commitment, we can build a future where no community is left behind.

Thank you for the opportunity to address some of these points in this very important forum.