A person wearing a blue uniform, a white helmet, and a purple headscarf is using a metal detector in a field. The person has a German flag patch on their chest and a 'H&O' patch on their sleeve. The background shows a rural landscape with trees and a blue sky.

# *Federal Foreign Office Humanitarian Mine Action Strategy within the framework of the humanitarian assistance of the Federal Government*

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2024 – 2028



Federal Foreign Office



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# Table of contents

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Our Vision: A mine-free world	3
Our Goal: A life in safety and dignity – Nine steps towards a mine-free world	5
Our Anchor: Strong international norms	12
Our Commitment: Effective, innovative, people-centred, in a spirit of partnership – We combine political action with project funding	15
Implementation of the Strategy: Continuity and aspiration to shape future developments	20
Annex: List of priority countries for humanitarian mine action (2024 – 2025)	22



Deminers of the Danish Refugee Council release land in Kyiv Oblast, Ukraine, © Oleksandr Ratushniak



MAG delivers explosive ordnance risk education sessions in Moli village, South Sudan, © Sam Mednick/AP

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## Our Vision: A mine-free world

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Humanitarian mine action allows people to live in safety and dignity and prepares the ground for reconstruction, stabilisation, post-conflict peacebuilding and sustainable development. For more than two decades, Germany has been an advocate of humanitarian assistance and – as one of the first States Parties – cooperation within the scope of international humanitarian arms control conventions. As the **second-largest bilateral donor** in the field of humanitarian mine action, Germany plays an active part in shaping the international agenda. We implement needs-based humanitarian mine action efficiently, innovatively and in a spirit of partnership.

**Our vision is a mine-free world in which all people, in particular vulnerable groups, are protected from the risks of explosive ordnance (EO)<sup>1</sup> and where their humanitarian needs are met.**

In the past few years we have seen **significant progress**. Twenty-five years after the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention (APMBC), the ban on these mines has been recognised by most of the world. For example, refugees and internally displaced persons in Iraq and Sri Lanka have been able to

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- 1 For the purposes of this strategy, explosive ordnance is understood to mean the following forms of ammunition as defined in the International Mine Action Standards 04.10: mines, cluster munitions, unexploded ordnance, abandoned explosive ordnance, booby traps, other devices (in line with the CCW APII definition) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Note: IEDs which correspond to the definition of mines, booby traps or other devices are considered relevant to mine action if they are cleared for humanitarian purposes and situated in areas in which there is no longer combat.

return to areas that used to be contaminated; during Germany's Presidency of the Ottawa Convention in 2023, progress was made in dealing with improvised anti-personnel mines; and work to clear cluster munition remnants in Bosnia and Herzegovina was completed in 2023. The Federal Foreign Office has continually increased its commitment to humanitarian mine action and has thus contributed to innovation in the sector, strengthened local capacities and helped women to develop careers in mine action. Victim assistance has enabled a large number of people to return to leading self-determined lives.

However, these achievements are not the full picture – despite the efforts of affected states and the international community, many places are still afflicted by high casualty rates and far-reaching restrictions on people's lives. This is due to old mines and EO from past conflicts that have not yet been cleared or to new contamination as a result of current wars and conflicts, which are becoming increasingly complex, intense and protracted. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has caused contamination with EO on an unprecedented scale. Improvised anti-personnel mines are today a widespread and lethal weapon used by many non-state armed actors. They create considerable

challenges for states whose territory was previously not contaminated or had already been cleared.

The climate crisis and more frequent extreme weather events are fuelling an increasing number of overlapping crises in which EO creates an additional layer of threat for the affected populations.

Meeting the diverse needs of those affected in a sustainable manner, necessitates **flexibility in tandem with continuity of commitment, as well as innovation and partnership**. In the present strategy we lay down these and other principles underpinning Germany's work in the field of humanitarian mine action and regard them as guidelines for our work.

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## *Our Goal: A life in safety and dignity – Nine steps towards a mine-free world*

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In order to achieve our vision of a mine-free world, we have set ourselves nine objectives against which we aim to measure our engagement.

### *Strategic objectives:*

#### ***Objective 1: Accidents and casualties caused by mines and other explosive ordnance are reduced.***

Through EO risk education and adapted behaviour, affected populations are immediately becoming safer and more resilient. This process takes due account of societal diversity. Affected communities are empowered to protect themselves, for example through training for multipliers or peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Good relations with affected groups

are leveraged to collect data on sources of risks. Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) spot tasks help to eliminate acute risks. Meanwhile, surveying and clearing of hazardous areas compliant with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) reduces the risk of accidents in the long term.

***Objective 2: In humanitarian crises, the affected population has safe access to humanitarian assistance.***

Humanitarian mine action ensures that affected populations have safe access to humanitarian services.<sup>2</sup> That includes relevant training for humanitarian workers. Humanitarian mine action measures should be agreed with in the local humanitarian system and

with relevant clusters and working groups, and, where possible, be aligned with the priorities of the UN-coordinated Humanitarian Response Plans. Project activities are planned, implemented and continually refined to be conflict-sensitive.

***Objective 3: All people in contaminated areas can lead self-determined lives in safety and dignity.***

Hazardous areas are efficiently and safely made hazard-free and declared as such through IMAS-compliant survey and clearance operations. Methods for non-technical surveys of suspected hazardous areas are used for land release wherever possible and appropriate in line with IMAS 07.11. This enables the protection of the civilian population,

the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons, the rebuilding of infrastructure and the resumption of economic and social life. Victims of accidents with EO are supported via rights-based victim assistance measures and empowered to participate fully in community life.

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2 In addition to this, and in accordance with its Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad, the Federal Foreign Office supports humanitarian diplomacy in order to establish secure access for humanitarian staff and the affected population.





Samira was injured by a cluster bomb in Syria, when she was 5 years old. Handicap International is fitting her prosthesis as part of their victim assistance work, © S. Khlaifat/Handicap International

Children receiving EO risk education at a school in Cumaribo, Vichada, Colombia, to help them stay safe, © Colombian Campaign Against Mines – CCCM



***Objective 4: Humanitarian mine action lays the foundation for post-conflict peacebuilding, stability and sustainable development and contributes to reconciliation.***

Land surveys and explosive remnants of war (ERW) clearance, and the resulting release of land facilitate the building or rebuilding of infrastructure and the safe use of the areas for productive activities, among others through inclusive and sustainable development projects. More effective coordination with the fields of post-conflict peacebuilding, stabilisation and development (nexus approach<sup>3</sup>) is achieved, where feasible and reasonable, through information

sharing, participation in cross-sectoral coordination fora and possibly cooperation with other stakeholders. Care is taken to apply a conflict-sensitive, inclusive approach and the “do no harm” principle to project activities in order to foster social reconciliation and reduce conflict potential. The latter includes reducing any negative environmental impact of mine action, particularly in the context of the climate crisis and extreme weather situations.

***Objective 5: National actors are empowered to achieve the goals set out in their national strategies and fulfil the obligations of international conventions and thus to protect their populations.***

Training opportunities, knowledge transfer, advising on national strategies and (inter)national regulatory frameworks, as well as other measures, support the development of sustainable national

structures. This empowers national actors to meet their national objectives and their obligations under relevant international conventions, or to move closer to these international standards and, as

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3 The nexus approach is elaborated in the Federal Foreign Office Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad, 2024.

duty bearers, to protect their populations.<sup>4</sup> Nationals actors are furthermore supported through capacity-strengthening in regards to managing residual risks after fulfilling their clearance obligations.

All activities are implemented in a spirit of partnership and are tailored to the needs of the states affected by contamination.

## Operational objectives:

### ***Objective 6: Planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian mine action projects are gender-sensitive and inclusive.***

All project activities address the specific needs of different age groups, genders, people with disabilities and marginalised groups and are based on the principle of non-discrimination.<sup>5</sup> All injured and impaired persons are guaranteed equal treatment, regardless of the cause of their injury or impairment. All data concerning the beneficiaries<sup>6</sup> of project activities as well as EO accident data

accident data are collected and analysed in a sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated manner to allow for detailed reporting and effective targeting of assistance and protection measures. The gender-age-disability (GAD) marker is applied seamlessly and comprehensively.

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- 4 The goal of the Federal Government's engagement for the universalisation and effective implementation of the relevant international humanitarian arms control conventions is for as many states as possible to adopt the prohibitions they contain. This will prevent future contamination and further suffering.
  - 5 The Federal Foreign Office's feminist foreign policy guidelines, the gender- and age-specific activities in the Ottawa and Oslo Action Plans and the associated reporting obligations, and the UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes must be taken into account.
  - 6 Cf. the principles for counting and reporting on beneficiaries set down in the publication Standardising Beneficiary Definitions in Humanitarian Mine Action, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-globalcwd/1481/>).



First female deminers and paramedic in Handicap International's team in Iraq, preparing themselves for a clearance operation in Salah Al Din, © N. Mandalawi/HI

***Objective 7: Women receive training and support in all areas of humanitarian mine action.***

An increased focus is placed on training, employing and supporting women in all areas of humanitarian mine action, particularly in technical fields.

Practical research, counselling and knowledge transfer lead to better application of gender-sensitive approaches in national mine action programmes and strategies.

***Objective 8: Implementation of humanitarian mine action projects is as local as possible.***

Assistance is provided based on needs and as inclusive, participatory, effective and sustainable as possible. Wherever feasible, partner organisations of the Federal Foreign Office involve local partners in the planning phase and the

entire project implementation and support targeted capacity strengthening in line with their needs. Local employees of the partner organisations receive further training and support in all areas and at all levels of responsibility.

***Objective 9: Conflict sensitivity and the “do no harm” principle guide the implementation of humanitarian mine action.***

For humanitarian mine action to successfully contribute to meeting humanitarian needs and promoting reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding, project planning, steering and implementation are conflict-sensitive, for example in land surveys, data management, clearance activities and risk education. Partner organisations regularly review and update conflict analyses over the course of the project. Conflict sensitivity also guides the understanding of the impact of contamination with EO and the resulting prioritisation. The project teams of the partner organisations, the local partners and national authorities receive basic and further training, and particular support is given

to innovative approaches focusing on conflict transformation. A conflict-sensitive approach with national project personnel may also involve, to a certain extent, staff transition measures, with the aim of ensuring that the conclusion of proactive mine action activities in countries nearing completion of their clearance obligations does not spark economic crises and renewed conflict in the project regions.

Partners whose activities are supported with funds from the humanitarian mine action budget of the Federal Foreign Office contribute to realising these objectives through their projects.

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## Our Anchor: Strong international norms

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The Strategy is in line with the Federal Foreign Office's overarching humanitarian and foreign policy objectives, as outlined in its Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad<sup>7</sup> and the German Government policy guidelines Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace<sup>8</sup>. The National Security Strategy<sup>9</sup> and the Federal Foreign Office guidelines Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy<sup>10</sup> are important reference frameworks. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>11</sup>, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda<sup>12</sup> and the Grand Bargain<sup>13</sup> also form crucial pillars of this Strategy.

The Strategy is based specifically on compliance with the following **international conventions** to which the Federal Republic of Germany has acceded:

- Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention, APMBC),
- Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention, CCM),

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7 Federal Foreign Office Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad, 2024.

8 German Government policy guidelines: Preventing crises, resolving conflicts, building peace, 2017.

9 Integrated Security for Germany – National Security Strategy, 2023.

10 Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy – Federal Foreign Office Guidelines, March 2023.

11 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015.

12 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and follow-up resolutions S/RES/1889, 2122, 2242, 2493, particularly also the German Government Action Plan implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda of the United Nations Security Council, as amended.

13 The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, 2016 and following documents of the Grand Bargain 2.0, 2021, and Grand Bargain 3.0, 2023.

- Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices (Protocol II), as amended, annexed to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW),
- Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW),
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Germany will continue to engage in advocacy to promote progress in the **universalisation and implementation of these international conventions**, particularly the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, and compliance with their prohibitions and standards worldwide, in order to also prevent further contamination. Together with our partners we

are working to align the implementation of the obligations set down in the conventions and the national political frameworks with the realities and humanitarian needs on the ground.

Safety, efficacy and efficiency in humanitarian mine action are based on the implementation of the **International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)** and their transposition into national standards (NMAS). The IMAS serve as the key point of reference for defining and implementing the mine action activities listed below and the terminology used in this document. Germany advocates for the ongoing development and promotion of the IMAS and NMAS as well as the sharing of best practices at an international level. Partner organisations of the Federal Foreign Office must fully comply with all standards for mine action programmes, including the land release approach.



First accredited mine detection dogs in Ukraine after successful training through Norwegian People's Aid, © Norwegian People's Aid



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*Our Commitment: Effective,  
innovative, people-centred,  
in a spirit of partnership –  
We combine political action  
with project funding*

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*We play an active role in shaping donor policy*

The international community must find a coordinated response to the EO contamination that affects so many regions. For us, this must include closer cooperation with affected states and bilateral exchanges with other donors. The Federal Foreign Office also aims to work towards improved coordination and cooperation in order to increase efficacy and efficiency in the field of humanitarian mine action. Gaps in international support are to be identified and, where possible, closed. Germany will thus also be contributing to the implementation of the Ottawa and Oslo Action Plans.

We also advocate better integration of humanitarian mine action in the international humanitarian system, for

example within the framework of Humanitarian Response Plans coordinated by the United Nations and international humanitarian donor conferences. To implement the nexus approach, the Federal Foreign Office coordinates funding with other actors and initiatives in the fields of stabilisation, peacebuilding and development cooperation within the Federal Government and internationally. The aim is to work towards seeing mine action programmes taken into account at an early stage in the planning of measures for stabilisation, development, reconstruction, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

## *We promote flexible funding with a focus on impact*

We primarily fund humanitarian mine action projects in priority countries<sup>14</sup>, which are selected predominantly based on humanitarian needs and the potential impact of German support. In many places, regional and cross-border approaches offer potential for the long-term resolution of crises, for example by fostering reconciliation, post-conflict peacebuilding and cooperation. These approaches are therefore increasingly supported.

The Federal Foreign Office uses a flexible funding approach, which gives partner organisations greater planning security and flexibility, allowing them to work more strategically and deploy resources more effectively. With regard to project funding, we place particular importance on linking up individual measures in the best possible way in order to efficiently attain the objectives of our Strategy. The Federal Foreign Office's partner organisations should link their work to other humanitarian activities in meaningful ways and identify any nexus potential. We increasingly promote practical, evidence-based research on the impacts of humanitarian

mine action in the context of the nexus as well as (pilot) projects with a nexus approach. In this context, projects with a comprehensive approach to violence reduction by means of conflict-sensitive programme planning with the participation of the affected population are highly welcome.

The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence must be followed, promoted and upheld in the implementation of measures. Work in the field of humanitarian mine action must in particular be based on specific humanitarian needs, as well as being transparent and ensuring accountability.

All humanitarian mine action should be results-oriented, supported by effective quality management, recorded and tracked using appropriate information management and monitoring systems, and communicated through clear, fact-based reporting. External evaluations are beneficial here.

Good practice and lessons learnt should be documented and shared among

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14 The list of priority countries is regularly updated and is published as an annex to this Strategy.

stakeholders with a view to encouraging transparency, facilitating mutual learning opportunities, expanding the robust

evidence basis for the identification of measures, and accelerating progress.

## *We strengthen national capacities and promote national ownership*

Under the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, the primary responsibility for clearance programmes and assistance for mine and ERW victims lies with the affected states. For this reason, the extent to which the affected states are willing to assume responsibility for clearance programmes on their territory or to contribute financially also has a bearing on funding decisions. The Federal Foreign Office also engages in political efforts to promote national ownership and supports this in bilateral dialogues and within international fora.

Partner organisations are called upon to work with the affected states in a spirit of partnership and cooperation. National ownership and national capacities are to be both required and supported, including in order to empower national actors to provide the best possible enabling environment for humanitarian mine action projects. Relevant national strategies and plans are to be taken into account

in the implementation of all project measures in the field of humanitarian mine action. We expect our partners to explain clearly how project activities contribute to attaining the objectives set down in national strategies, insofar as they exist.

External assistance for mine and ERW victims can only be a short-term solution and should be implemented only until victim assistance is effectively integrated into the broader government healthcare systems, social protection systems and frameworks of affected countries, thus guaranteeing the support needed by victims over the long term. The ultimate goal has to be the full, equal, inclusive and genuine participation of mine and ERW victims in society. We therefore support capacity-strengthening and technical support for national agencies with regard to standard setting and stakeholder coordination for victim assistance.

## *We foster innovative approaches*

Innovative approaches such as the use of technical equipment, including drones and mine clearing machines, or new (online) methods of risk education, can do a great deal to increase efficiency, more effectively reach target groups, and reduce risks in the field of humanitarian mine action. In light of this, the Federal Foreign Office provides funding to research, pilot and scale innovative approaches. We support efforts to incorporate innovative, successfully piloted methods and techniques into international mine action standards or to update these standards.

Partner organisations are called upon to cooperate whenever this is possible and worthwhile, in particular when piloting innovative approaches, and to share their experiences of using new processes, techniques and methods. At the same time, we also engage in political efforts to promote innovative approaches, including innovative financing models.

Humanitarian mine action measures should be as environmentally friendly as possible, in order to enable sustainable improvement of the affected population's living conditions and to avoid exacerbating climate change and crises

caused by extreme weather conditions and distribution conflicts. This is also a manifestation of the “do no harm” principle. Necessary land surveys and mine clearance activities that affect the environment should be supported by environmental impact assessments whenever this is possible and appropriate. Particular funding is provided for the piloting of innovative, environmentally friendly clearance methods. Furthermore, partner organisations are encouraged to enter into cooperation arrangements with relevant partners in order to facilitate nature restoration following successful land surveys and ERW clearance, and to foster the sustainable and ecologically valuable use of released land.

Increasingly frequent extreme weather situations such as heat, drought, flooding and landslides also influence the implementation of humanitarian mine action measures, for example by affecting the position of EO or making mine clearance work more physically challenging. The Federal Foreign Office therefore advocates for humanitarian mine action to be included in national disaster planning.

Meanwhile, partner organisations are called upon to ensure their project planning accounts for the effects of (extreme) weather conditions on mine

clearance workers and thus on the progress of clearance, insofar as these effects can be predicted.



Deminer from HALO Trust in Somaliland, © The HALO Trust

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## *Implementation of the Strategy: Continuity and aspiration to shape future developments*

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In order to achieve the objectives of this Strategy and fulfil our vision, we support numerous **humanitarian mine action measures**, ranging from prevention to rehabilitation. Activities include surveying suspected hazardous areas in compliance with the IMAS and locating and clearing a wide range of EO, including mines and improvised explosive devices. We also promote risk education<sup>15</sup>, victim assistance<sup>16</sup> and advocacy. Humanitarian mine action takes place both in contexts of legacy contamination and in acute humanitarian crises or situations where ERW contamination is growing. Project funding serves civilian purposes.

When implementing project activities, we cooperate closely with civil society **partners**<sup>17</sup> with specialist knowledge in these areas. These include humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the field of mine action, and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). Our partners also include the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and other relevant UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

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15 Cf. IMAS 12.10 on risk education.

16 Cf. IMAS 13.10 on victim assistance.

17 As part of the nexus and in the spirit of complementarity, additional partners, such as commercial providers, may in individual cases receive stabilization funding.

This Strategy builds on the previous strategies published since 2015 and the recommendations resulting from the external evaluation of the programme in 2022 – 2023. It therefore represents a **continuation** of our previous efforts as well as a **proactive approach** in a changing operational context and Germany’s **aspiration to shape future developments** in humanitarian mine action worldwide.

In response to the 2022 – 2023 external evaluation, we have used this Strategy to set out a more distinct profile and clearer **priorities** for ourselves: innovation, impact-oriented measures focusing on the individual, national capacity-building, nexus approaches and conflict sensitivity. At the same time, we are holding on to existing elements that have proven to be strengths. These include

in particular the close connection with Germany’s foreign policy goals and the alignment with obligations under international conventions and initiatives as well as the coherence between the Strategy and the established measures, principles and theories of change of the mine clearance sector.

This Strategy does not stand alone but is conceived as part of a **policy model** for humanitarian mine action measures of the German Government. The model also includes the **list of priority countries** for humanitarian mine action<sup>18</sup> and country-specific priorities, the funding guidelines for humanitarian assistance projects, and the logframe for humanitarian mine action projects.

This Strategy is to be evaluated in 2027 and updated in 2028 if necessary.

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18 The list of priority countries for humanitarian mine action supplements this Strategy and is updated every two years. The list is available on the Federal Foreign Office’s website.

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## *Annex: List of priority countries for humanitarian mine action (2024 – 2025)*

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On the basis of considerable humanitarian needs and anticipated humanitarian impact, operational requirements for the implementation of measures and foreign policy significance, in the 2024 – 2025 period, the following countries will be the focus of our humanitarian mine action funding:

- Afghanistan
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Cambodia
- Colombia
- Ethiopia
- Iraq
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sri Lanka
- Ukraine
- Zimbabwe

Depending on humanitarian needs and political developments, we support humanitarian mine action measures in justified individual cases in places other than the priority countries, especially within the framework of global, regional and transnational projects.



## Humanitarian mine action priority countries (2024 - 2025)

PREVIEW



Data sources: Federal Foreign Office, GADM (gadm.org). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the government of Germany.  
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Female deminer manually clearing contaminated land with a Minelab landmine detector in Thmada, Pursat Province, Cambodia, to ensure community safety and access to farmland, © The HALO Trust