



SPECIAL APPEAL 2025

WEAPON CONTAMINATION AND VICTIM ASSISTANCE



ICRC

THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF WEAPON CONTAMINATION

Both during war and long after the guns have fallen silent, civilians are at risk from mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Their presence – and the dangers they represent – is known as weapon contamination. It is a problem in many parts of the world, where civilians risk coming across unexploded bombs, abandoned stocks of munitions, landmines, and other hazardous materials (including those of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear nature). The exact nature of the risks posed by weapon contamination varies depending on the kind and length of the conflict and the types and amounts of weapons used. But as history has repeatedly shown, wherever armed conflict arises, weapon contamination will surely follow.

The human toll of weapon contamination

Civilians continue to face threats from landmines and ERW, including unexploded ordnance.

22% increase in casualties from 2022 to 2023⁴

Weapon contamination has a devastating impact on individuals and communities, hindering reconstruction, delaying recovery, and preventing the safe return of displaced populations. Even after conflicts end, the presence of landmines, explosive remnants of war, and other hazardous materials continues to claim lives and obstruct access to essential services, infrastructure, and livelihoods—in some cases, for years or even decades after the last shot was fired.

When conflict takes place in urban settings, the compound effects on urban services is significant, albeit harder to quantify. Not only do communities face the damage and destruction of critical infrastructure, but efforts to repair and reconstruct are hindered by explosive hazards.

The presence of weapon contamination in a conflict zone can impede relief efforts, depriving civilian populations of essential humanitarian aid.

The presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war as well as released chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials can have long-term effects on the environment, affecting biodiversity and disrupting ecosystems. This weapon contamination can also extend to water sources, posing a risk to health and agriculture and a barrier to recovery.

Challenges for victims, survivors and other persons with disabilities

Survivors of weapon contamination—those injured by landmines, ERW, and other explosive hazards—face profound challenges. These blast-related injuries often result in limb loss, severe burns, traumatic brain injuries, and permanent disabilities that restrict mobility, limit access to essential services, and reduce economic opportunities.¹ For many, the path to recovery is further obstructed by the destruction of health-care systems during conflicts. Medical facilities are often destroyed, critical infrastructure is left in ruins, and health workers are forced to flee, leaving communities with limited or no access to the care they desperately need.²

In many conflict-affected areas, people with disabilities – including victims of mines and ERW and those injured during fighting – face enormous barriers to accessing the services they need to rebuild their lives. As many as three out of four persons with disabilities in conflict zones

report report major obstacles in accessing food, water, shelter, health care, and other services.³ This underscores how conflict disproportionately affects people with disabilities, leaving them further marginalized and vulnerable. Without functional health systems or specialized care, survivors often struggle to regain mobility or independence, compounding the long-term impact of armed violence.¹

Families of individuals harmed by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) often suffer significant and long-lasting consequences. They experience emotional and psychological trauma from losing a loved one, as well as socio-economic hardships, particularly if the deceased was the primary breadwinner. The loss of income can lead to financial instability, forcing families into poverty, displacement, or increased vulnerability. In many affected regions, limited access to support services exacerbates these challenges.⁴

Additionally, the burden of caregiving often falls on the family members if the individual was injured rather than killed. In such cases, families must manage long-term medical care, rehabilitation, and the social stigma that sometimes accompanies disability.¹

The impact extends beyond the immediate family to entire communities, as landmine and ERW casualties can reduce workforce capacity, hinder economic development, and create long-term dependency on humanitarian assistance.

Despite the scale and long-term impact of weapon contamination, funding remains far below what is needed. While emergency responses and rapid interventions often receive substantial support, long-term mine clearance, survivor rehabilitation, and socio-economic reintegration efforts are consistently underfunded. In recent years, overall funding for weapon contamination efforts has declined in real terms, failing to keep pace with growing humanitarian needs.⁵ This disparity threatens the ability to provide sustainable solutions, leaving many communities at risk and survivors without the assistance they need to rebuild their lives.^{6,7}



From 2022 to 2023, weapon contamination casualties increased by 22%, compared to the previous year. Most victims were civilians. New types of explosive hazards are emerging in active conflict zones, while landmines and explosive remnants of war, also from past wars, continue to claim lives.

In 2025, the humanitarian impact of weapon contamination will likely continue to rise. The increased use of improvised explosive devices, shifting frontlines, and worsening security conditions will make survey and clearance efforts even more complex, and therefore leave communities exposed to greater danger.

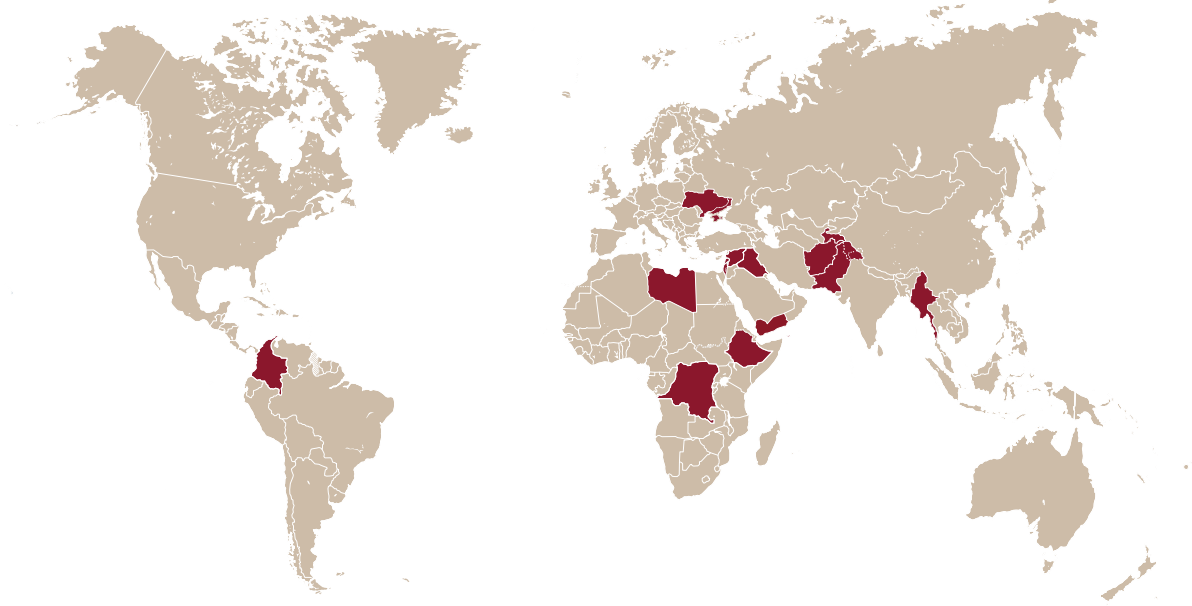
At the same time, the demand for rehabilitation, mental health support, and economic reintegration for survivors will continue to outpace available resources—unless urgent action is taken.

We have the knowledge, access, and expertise to scale our response. But, without sustained investment, thousands of people will remain trapped in a cycle of fear and uncertainty. The decisions made today will determine whether survivors receive the support they need—or whether they continue to suffer the devastating consequences of weapon contamination.

— **Erik Tollefsen**, Head of Weapon Contamination Unit, ICRC

WHAT SETS US APART: OUR HOLISTIC APPROACH

At the ICRC, our mission goes beyond emergency aid — we take a comprehensive and integrated approach to protecting and assisting people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence and this includes people affected by weapon contamination. With over a century and a half of experience, we have developed extensive expertise in assisting conflict-affected populations and that, coupled with our technical expertise in managing the risks arising from weapon contamination and in providing physical rehabilitation, ensures that our response both addresses urgent needs and builds national capacities to deliver sustainable services in the long term. Providing medical treatment to victims of war, including victims of mines and ERW, has long been a part of the ICRC’s work. Our efforts to address weapon contamination began in the mid-1990s, and we have been providing physical rehabilitation services since 1979.



- **Featured ICRC delegations and contexts:** Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan (under Tashkent regional), Ukraine and Yemen

The boundaries, names and designations used in this document do not imply official endorsement or express a political opinion on the part of the ICRC, and are without prejudice to claims of sovereignty over the territories mentioned.

What makes us unique is our ability to work across multiple dimensions: we promote and strengthen international humanitarian law (IHL), deliver life-saving assistance, provide protection to those most at risk, and collaborate closely with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereafter National Societies) and local partners to build sustainable solutions. Our efforts are guided by extensive expertise, informed by evidence, and tailored with affected populations to meet their evolving needs.

This section highlights the core elements of our approach, while a more detailed account of our methods is available in the section “Our comprehensive set of activities” (p. 11). Rooted in protecting the lives and dignity of conflict-affected people and focused on long-term impact, our work ensures that people in need receive not only immediate relief but also the support necessary to rebuild their lives.

A MANDATE ENSHRINED IN IHL, AND A COMMITMENT TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

We are entrusted by the international community with a unique mandate rooted in international humanitarian law. At the core of this mandate is our responsibility to protect and assist people whose lives have been torn apart by armed conflict. This entails taking action to prevent injury and the loss of life, as well as to uphold the dignity and well-being of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war. This responsibility is reinforced by key international treaties, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention⁸, Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapon⁹ and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.¹⁰

Our efforts align with international human rights law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹¹, ensuring a rights-based approach to our work. By prioritizing a protection-centered response, we strive to uphold the rights of victims and to address their needs comprehensively and effectively.¹²

WE PREVENT AND MITIGATE THE RISK OF WEAPON CONTAMINATION

We work to ensure the safety and dignity of civilians in weapon-contaminated environments, where mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to endanger lives, restrict movement, and obstruct access to livelihoods and other essential services. In 2023, over 5,700 casualties were caused by mines and ERW, with civilians accounting for 84% of the victims among those whose civilian status was known. Many of them were children.⁴

As one of the few humanitarian organizations with access to active conflict zones, we are often among the first responders in weapon-contaminated areas, stepping in when broader mine action coordination is not yet established. We integrate mine action into humanitarian and emergency response programmes, ensuring that survivors receive urgent assistance while laying the groundwork for long-term clearance, risk education, and victim rehabilitation efforts.¹³

At its core, our work on weapon contamination seeks to reduce the devastating impact of conflict on civilians through clearance, risk awareness, and victim assistance. However, beyond these technical interventions lies a broader opportunity: engaging directly with parties to conflict to influence their understanding of the consequences of ERW, and other explosive hazards and advocating for IHL-compliant and less damaging conduct in warfare.⁸

We also play a critical role in managing risks related to explosive hazards and raising awareness of the long-term consequences of weapon use. By addressing the aftermath of war, we not only mitigate immediate dangers but also help shape less harmful practices in conflict settings. These efforts strengthen the protection of civilians, and encourage more deliberate, long-term strategies to reduce harm.

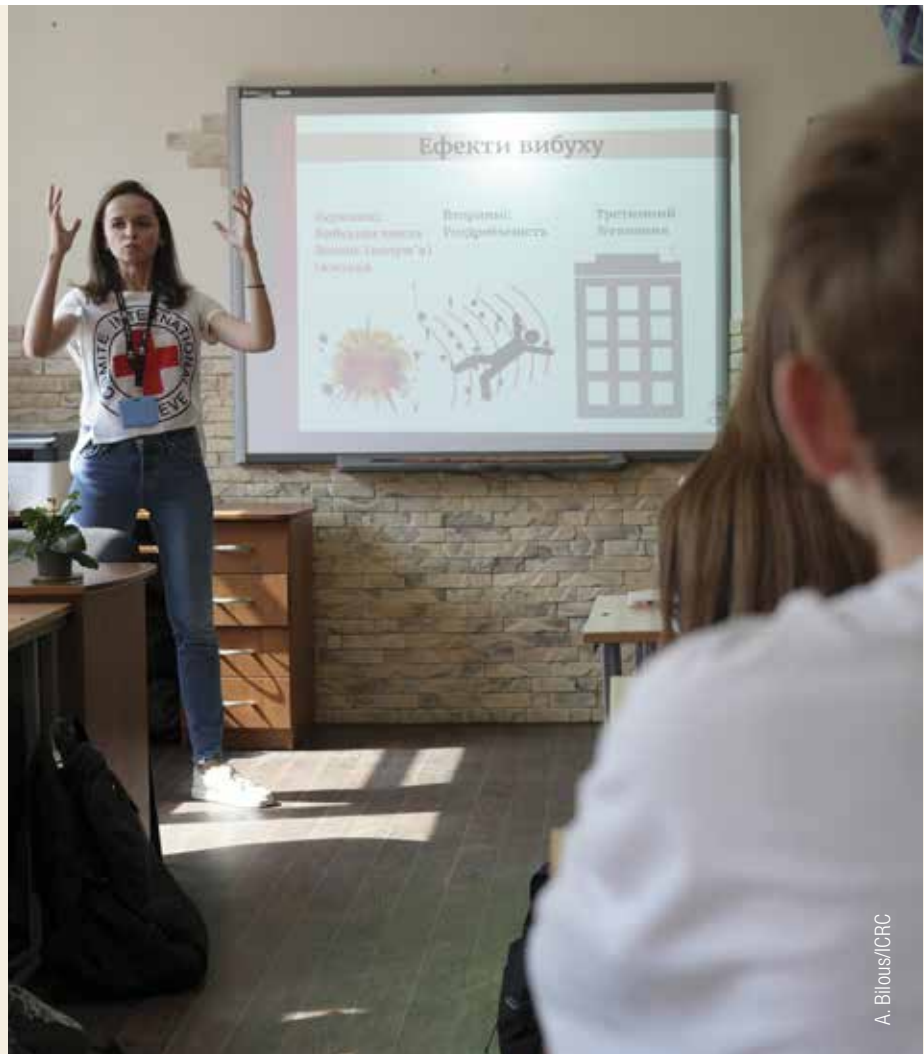
The presence of explosive hazards in densely populated areas poses severe risks to civilians and complicates mitigation efforts. Urban environments present unique challenges, as rubble and debris make detection more difficult, and the widespread presence of metal reduces the effectiveness of conventional clearance methods. The widespread use and complexity of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in certain contexts further increases the danger, requiring specialised expertise and adaptive approaches.¹¹

We engage in dialogue with authorities and weapon bearers to make them aware of the impact of weapon contamination on civilian populations and remind them of their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) to protect civilians from their effects. This includes urging parties to take appropriate risk-reduction measures, facilitating safe access to humanitarian aid, and securing safe passage for affected communities. We work with national mine-action authorities to assess contamination levels, conduct non-technical surveys, and mark hazardous areas to prevent further harm. In the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter Syria), nearly 500 staff and volunteers from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the ICRC have been trained to map and survey suspected hazardous areas and to manage the hazards, ensuring safer access to essential services like schools and hospitals.

We promote the development, universalization and faithful implementation of key international treaties, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War. These frameworks reinforce the legal responsibilities of states and parties to armed conflicts to protect affected populations from mines and ERW.^{8,9,10} We also work with National Societies to promote the life-saving humanitarian norms enshrined in these treaties and initiatives aimed at alleviating the effects of mines and ERW. Additionally, we advocate for stronger commitments under the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA PD)¹⁴ and align our work with the 2009 Movement Strategy on Landmines, Cluster Munitions, and ERW¹⁵.

By strengthening the capacity of local authorities to implement their obligations under the conventions related to clearance, risk reduction, and victim assistance, we ensure that such efforts are long-term, community-driven, and legally anchored.

Ukraine, 2024. As the new school year starts, now tragically one of the most weapon-contaminated countries in the world, the focus extends beyond academics. The pervasive presence of landmines and ERW pose a grave danger to children, making safety education a critical part of the curriculum.



A. Bitous/CRC

ASSISTANCE: SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF MINES AND ERW

An estimated 1.5 million people live with disabilities caused by landmines and ERW; many of them face barriers to accessing critical services.⁴ We address the immediate needs and support the long-term recovery of people with disabilities due to mines and ERW, as well as other causes, by offering emergency medical care, physical rehabilitation, and psychosocial support. For example, in Afghanistan, our physical rehabilitation centers provide free care to over 12,000 people annually, offering prosthetic limbs, physiotherapy, and mobility training to help them regain independence.¹³

Our efforts also focus on socio-economic reintegration, helping survivors rebuild their lives. In Colombia, we connect victims to vocational training programmes and provide financial support to help families recover.¹³

To address these gaps, we help strengthen national health systems, invest in training for prosthetists and physiotherapists, and support the development of inclusive policies¹⁴. In Afghanistan, our support includes funding scholarships for prosthetics and orthotics training programmes, ensuring that survivors have access to qualified professionals for years to come.¹



Ethiopia, 2024. Rural areas of northern Ethiopia that have experienced heavy fighting in the past years remain heavily contaminated by unexploded ordnance. Weapon contamination poses severe risks for civilians, especially children.

“She is traumatized by what happened. When she walks around, she does not go far. She is afraid because of the explosion,” says Tabir Gebreyohannes, whose eight-year-old daughter was injured after stepping on an unexploded device. “There is a real threat. It is difficult to leave children and do some work. You worry that one of them will pick or step on them. We are very worried.”

Millions of people live and work in these weapon-contaminated areas – mines and ERW put them at risk of death, or injuries that could lead to long-term disabilities. “We have served hundreds of victims of unexploded ordnance, and it is only the tip of the iceberg because there are people and injuries that are beyond the scope of our practice. Among the beneficiaries we have served, around 80 percent are children,” said Venkatakannan Packirisamy, who manages our physical rehabilitation programme in Ethiopia.

To help reduce casualties and the traumatizing effects caused by these weapons, we work together with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society to raise awareness and reduce the risk. National Society volunteers and our staff conduct sessions to inform children about the dangers of unexploded devices, the places they might be, and how to identify and avoid them.

A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration with other components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter the Movement) and other local partners is fundamental to our work. As part of this global Movement, we have access to a network that others would have to build from scratch. National Societies, embedded in their communities, understand the local context, customs, and languages and are often trusted by the people they serve.¹³ We – along with our Movement partners – often benefit from privileged access and acceptance among key parties, allowing us to be present where others may struggle and enabling rapid response in the interim, while other organizations mobilize for longer-term interventions. Our work extends beyond direct response—we also advocate for stronger integration of risk awareness and safer behavior (RASB) activities into mine action strategies. During the 5th Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, we worked with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to reinforce the importance of ensuring systematic planning, funding, and implementation of mine risk education, particularly in areas where clearance efforts are delayed.⁸

Through this combination of local presence, rapid response, and global advocacy, we work to save lives and prevent harm in places where other organizations may be unable to operate, such as Yemen, Myanmar, and Syria.

Within the Movement, we lead efforts to address the humanitarian impact of weapon contamination. We strengthen the capacities of National Societies by providing long-term support and technical expertise, enabling them to assess and respond effectively to contamination risks. This includes gathering and

analyzing casualty and incident data, conducting non-technical surveys, and raising awareness among local populations.¹³

Our approach goes beyond risk identification—by analyzing the root causes of risk-taking behaviors, we offer safer, sustainable alternatives that reduce exposure to danger. This includes improving access to secure water sources, creating economic opportunities, and fostering social reintegration for survivors.¹² Additionally, we mitigate risks through concrete actions such as marking, fencing, and the removal of explosive hazards, always adhering to international and national mine action standards.^{4,8}

A comprehensive response requires mobilizing accredited personnel for survey and clearance efforts while ensuring communities play an active role in prioritizing clearance operations. By integrating data-driven risk reduction, survivor support, and long-term behavior change, we enhance the safety and resilience of affected populations, with National Societies playing a key role in both immediate and sustained interventions.¹⁵

Beyond the Movement, we work closely with national actors, including civil-defence or mine-action authorities and health ministries. These partnerships are crucial for supporting the national response, bolstering clearance efforts and improving people's access to physical rehabilitation, as they run many of the centers that we support, such as in Afghanistan and in Iraq^{1,13}. These institutions play a critical role in providing prosthetics, physiotherapy, and mobility assistance to survivors of weapon contamination. Additionally, we assist national health authorities in developing long-term strategies for sustainable rehabilitation services, ensuring continuity of care beyond our direct intervention.¹²

2025 TARGETS FOR PRIORITY CONTEXTS

Weapon contamination



14 delegations in conducting activities to address weapon contamination



around 157,500 people to be reached by capacity-building efforts



over 1.9 million people to benefit from risk awareness and safer behaviour activities

Physical rehabilitation



154 physical rehabilitation projects being supported by 14 delegations



more than 213,000 people to benefit from rehabilitation and social integration initiatives

OUR COMPREHENSIVE SET OF ACTIVITIES

We recognize the immense challenges faced by individuals, families and communities trying to return to areas affected by weapon contamination. Communities cannot return to a normal life because of the presence of weapon contamination. When prevention fails, we recognize that survivors of mines/ERW and people with disabilities in conflict-affected areas often endure profound physical, emotional, and economic hardships that demand urgent and multifaceted responses. To address these consequences, we implement a comprehensive and holistic approach that prioritizes prevention, response, and advocacy. This approach ensures that we adapt our actions to the unique circumstances of victims and their families, while promoting their protection, safety, and dignity.

Other ICRC programmes also play a role in supporting victims/survivors of mines/ERW and individuals with disabilities. Through initiatives like first aid, hospital assistance, and economic support, these programmes help ensure a well-rounded response that extends beyond the scope of this special appeal.

WE PREVENT AND MITIGATE HARM

Our efforts focus on preventing harm before incidents occur through explosive ordnance risk education—known within the Movement as risk awareness and safer behaviour activities (RASB). This Movement-wide approach goes beyond raising awareness; it enables the development of tailored, evidence-based activities that address the root causes of risk-taking behaviour and promote safer alternatives.¹⁵ RASB lays the foundation for clearance activities and provides critical data to inform action.⁴ By aligning with international standards, we prioritise saving lives, reducing injuries, and minimizing suffering in conflict-affected communities.⁸

Our activities include:

Data collection and mapping

Gathering and analysing casualty and incident data helps us identify high-risk areas and determine which demographics are most vulnerable. This enables us to understand the specific threats they face and the reasons behind their exposure.¹³

First, we seek to assess community knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors related to explosive hazards. We then look at local resilience and coping strategies to design tailored risk awareness interventions that equip affected groups—especially children and other vulnerable populations—with the skills to recognize and avoid explosive hazards.¹² Evidence shows that engaging communities in the design of these initiatives leads to more effective risk reduction and greater acceptance of interventions.¹⁵



Colombia, 2023. In 2022, there were 30 municipalities that recorded incidents involving explosive hazards where the local population also had to deal with mass displacement or confinement. Cases like this also occurred in areas that recorded no direct victims but in which the presence of explosive hazards has had devastating effects. This shows the size of the issue and the scale of human suffering. It is crucial that armed actors, state institutions and wider society are made aware of what these communities are going through, a daily reality that is not normal and should not be normalized.



Afghanistan, 2024. With our support, an Afghan Red Crescent Society volunteer conducts an RASB session for children in a weapon-contaminated area in the Narai district of Kunar province.



Colombia, 2024. Community members attend an ICRC training session on blast-trauma care.

Promoting risk awareness and safer behaviour

In collaboration with National Societies and local mine-action partners, we work directly with affected communities to promote safe practices around mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Through information sessions and community workshops, we educate people on how to recognize and avoid these hazards, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, particularly children – who, in 2023, comprised 37% of all civilian casualties (among those whose age was known)⁴, highlighting the need for targeted risk-education efforts. To broaden the impact of our preventive efforts, we employ various means, including radio spots, social media, leaflets, and, where appropriate, books and stationery for schoolchildren¹³.

Our efforts go beyond workshops and materials. By engaging National Society volunteers, religious leaders, teachers, and other trusted community figures, we extend the reach of these vital messages. This collaborative approach not only raises awareness but also fosters safer behaviors, significantly reducing the risk of mine- and ERW-related accidents¹⁴. For instance, in 2023, ICRC-supported risk awareness campaigns reached over 100,000 people globally, including vulnerable groups in conflict-affected areas such as Syria, Colombia, and Afghanistan¹³.

Blast trauma care training

To ensure the safety of those working in high-risk environments, such as local mine-action officers and National Society volunteers, we provide specialized training in blast trauma care¹³. These sessions equip participants with essential skills to deliver immediate medical assistance in the event of an accident during explosive ordnance assessments or disposal operations². First responders in mine-contaminated areas face significant risks, often working with limited resources and under

dangerous conditions⁴. By empowering them with the knowledge and tools to respond effectively, such as first aid kits and advanced trauma protocols, we help save lives and reduce the severity of injuries by ensuring that appropriate life-saving actions are taken in those precious minutes following an accident². In 2023, we conducted blast trauma training for over 1,500 participants globally, ensuring safer and more effective prevention efforts¹³.

Coordination and partnership

We work closely with national mine-action centers and other stakeholders, such as civil defence, to ensure a sustainable national capacity to address the risks posed by weapon contamination to conflict-affected communities. By emphasizing the urgency of mitigating these threats, we aim to protect lives and foster safer environments⁴. Our collaboration includes bolstering local technical and material capacities to gather, manage and analyse information on mine/ERW-related incidents. These efforts are critical for identifying hazardous areas and ensuring effective planning for prioritizing clearance operations and risk awareness initiatives¹³. For instance, in 2023, we supported mapping and data-sharing efforts in several mine-affected countries, enabling more targeted and impactful interventions¹¹.

Additionally, we provide technical assistance to state authorities for ammunition safety management in select situations when the site is in close proximity to civilians and we assess that the potential risk of an incident would be severe⁴. This support ensures the safe and effective disposal of explosive ordnance, reducing the risk of accidents and minimizing harm to civilian populations⁸. By building the capacity of local and national institutions, we contribute to the development of sustainable mine-action strategies that address both immediate and long-term risks¹⁰.

Ethiopia, 2023. In Tigray region, ICRC delegates identify and informally mark explosive remnants of war to minimize the risk of accidents.



J. Fuhmwi/ICRC

Mine clearance and technical interventions

Our primary objective is to strengthen sustainable national capacity to support the safe removal and disposal of explosive ordnance⁴. These types of capacity strengthening engagements often include training on surveying, marking, detecting, identifying, evaluating, and disposing of hazardous materials, as well as assessing and managing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats¹³. The presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) continues to affect over 60 countries and territories, leaving millions at risk⁴. In exceptional circumstances, where we have exclusive access to areas affected by weapon contamination, we undertake these activities directly to reduce humanitarian risks and protect vulnerable communities¹⁴. For instance, we have led clearance efforts in hard-to-reach areas of Syria and Yemen, ensuring safer conditions for affected populations¹³.



Laos, 2014. Even after the guns fall silent, a deadly threat remains. In many parts of the world, ERW litter landscapes that are no longer battlefields and continue to kill and maim thousands of civilians during and long after active hostilities have ended. A large proportion of victims are children. Under IHL, states and parties to an armed conflict that use explosive munitions or are in control of areas affected by ERW have an obligation to take measures to minimize the risks and effects of ERW both during as well as after the end of hostilities, in order to protect the civilian population.

WE RESPOND TO THE CONSEQUENCES

Our goal is to ensure that victims of landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW), and other conflict-affected individuals receive timely and effective health care. This care includes immediate treatment following accidents – the need for which is evident, as 2,100 weapon-wound admissions related to mines/ERW were recorded at ICRC-supported hospitals around the world in 2024 – and ongoing support throughout their recovery and rehabilitation¹³. Physical rehabilitation is central to our mission, helping individuals regain mobility, independence, and dignity¹.

Beyond medical care, we address the far-reaching socio-economic consequences that victims and their families often face. This includes improving living conditions and providing much-needed economic support¹². Access to basic services and specialized care remains a major challenge for people with disabilities in crisis settings, leaving many unable to meet their fundamental needs or receive the support required for their well-being³. To address these challenges, we work to reintegrate people with disabilities into society by supporting initiatives that promote access to income-generating opportunities and education and participation in disability sports¹². For instance, in Afghanistan, we organize vocational training and disability sports programmes, benefitting thousands of participants annually¹².

Our activities include:

Physical rehabilitation

We provide vital rehabilitative care to people with disabilities, particularly those whose disabilities result from clashes or mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)¹. In hospitals and in the physical rehabilitation centers we support – or in some cases, directly manage – patients receive comprehensive services, including early rehabilitation, long-term post-hospital rehabilitative treatment, the provision and fitting of assistive devices, physiotherapy, and more¹¹. In 2023 alone, we supported over 277,000* people globally through its physical rehabilitation programmes¹³.

*Based on aggregated monthly data, which include repeat users of physical rehabilitation services.

Iraq, 2024. A patient receives treatment at the physical rehabilitation centre in Erbil.



To ensure access for economically vulnerable individuals, we offer transport and accommodation subsidies, enabling them to reach the centers and receive the care they need¹. Many survivors face significant barriers to accessing rehabilitation services, especially in rural areas where facilities are scarce². Beyond direct services, we focus on strengthening the capacity of these centers to deliver high-quality care. This includes constructing or renovating facilities, providing specialized training for personnel, supplying essential components and materials, and offering technical guidance on managing patient records and logistical operations³. For instance, in Afghanistan, we train prosthetists, orthotists, and physiotherapists to ensure long-term sustainability of care¹. Our goal is to ensure that these centers are equipped to meet the needs of patients effectively and sustainably⁴.



Myanmar, 2024. Ma San San Maw lives in Kawkaraik in Kayin State, and works as a repairperson. In 2016, Ma San San Maw started voluntary work with the Myanmar Disability Society. In 2017, she participated in a two-week training programme, organized by the Hpa-An Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre, which gave her the necessary skills to help those who need small repairs to their prosthesis or orthoses.

Mental health and psychosocial care

People affected by conflict, including victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), as well as other patients in ICRC-supported health facilities, need access vital mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)². This support is provided by medical professionals and other personnel that we train to address the psychological and emotional needs of individuals impacted by violence and trauma¹³. In 2023, we helped to provide MHPSS to some 35,000 people around the world, helping them cope with the devastating effects of conflict¹¹. Research indicates that survivors of mine-related incidents often face long-term mental health challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, underscoring the critical importance of psychosocial support in recovery³.

Financial assistance

Victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), along with their families, often face significant financial challenges in the aftermath of an accident⁴. Moreover, as many as three out of four persons with disabilities in conflict zones report major obstacles in accessing food, water, shelter, health care, and other services.³ To help them meet their immediate needs, we provide cash grants or other forms of financial support. In 2023, we provided direct financial assistance to thousands of individuals in conflict-affected areas, including Afghanistan, Yemen, and Colombia¹³. Additionally, we refer them to relevant authorities and service providers that can offer further assistance, such as compensation programmes or livelihood initiatives¹². Through this support, we aim to ensure victims and their families receive the comprehensive assistance necessary for their recovery and well-being¹.



Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2024. Grace, who was shot in the head, is cared for after surgery by his brother James. Grace has been unable to speak since he was injured.



Myanmar, 2024. Ko Aung Myo Htut, a landmine survivor, received support for his medical costs and then underwent physical rehabilitation. It included receiving a prosthetic at the Hpa-An Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre in Kayin State, which the Myanmar Red Cross Society operates with our support.

Social and economic reintegration

We support people with disabilities, including those injured by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), in rebuilding their lives and participating more fully in society¹². Through initiatives such as disability sports, vocational training, and cash grants to start small businesses, we empower individuals to regain independence and contribute to their communities. For example, in Afghanistan, we support vocational training programmes and organize disability sports events that benefit thousands annually¹³.



Ethiopia, 2024. An ICRC staff member talks to a child taking part in tennis lessons as part of the inclusion program for people with disabilities.

WE ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGES

We collaborate closely with authorities and relevant national and local actors in mine action and physical rehabilitation to strengthen these sectors' ability to address the needs of mine/ERW victims and people with disabilities. Our advocacy focuses on raising awareness of the challenges faced by these individuals while promoting policies, programmes, and mechanisms that improve their circumstances and reduce the risk of future casualties. We work to ensure the effective implementation of international legal frameworks, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which are critical to advancing victim assistance and reducing the impact of weapon contamination^{8,9,10}.

Through these efforts, we aim to foster systemic change that guarantees long-term support and protection for affected communities. By addressing root causes and barriers, we ensure that affected individuals and their families can rebuild their lives with dignity, access essential services, and participate fully in society¹².

Our activities include:

Collaboration with local authorities

We collaborate closely with national mine-action authorities, security forces, and relevant stakeholders to ensure the safe removal and disposal of explosive ordnance, preventing further harm to civilians and facilitating the recovery of affected communities¹³. Our efforts go beyond technical operations—we advocate for stronger national policies, provide expert guidance on risk mitigation, and strengthen local capacity to address contamination sustainably¹⁴.

This collaboration includes comprehensive surveying, marking, detection, and disposal of landmines, ERW, and other hazardous materials, as well as assessing and managing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats where relevant¹³. Given that over 60 countries and territories remain affected by ERW, with millions of people at risk, our work remains essential to reducing casualties and ensuring safe access to land, homes, and critical infrastructure¹⁴.



C. Von Toggenburg/ICRC

Colombia, 2010. Humanitarian law includes a number of corollaries to the principle of distinction in order to secure the protection of civilians and civilian objects. For example, combatants in an international armed conflict are required to distinguish themselves from the civilian population (normally by wearing a uniform) while they are engaged in an attack or in a military operation in preparation for an attack. To comply with the restrictions on targeting, all parties to an armed conflict must take specific precautions.

Capacity building for sectors in mine action and physical rehabilitation

We provide ongoing capacity-building support to institutions in mine action and physical rehabilitation, aiming to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of these critical sectors¹³. To ensure a steady pool of skilled professionals, we offer training and education opportunities tailored to their specific fields¹. For instance, prosthetists and orthotists working in physical rehabilitation centers refine their expertise through organized programmes, while humanitarian deminers receive specialized training to safely mark and clear weapon-contaminated areas⁴.

Beyond technical training, we engage in the formal education of rehabilitation professionals to ensure sustainable, long-term services. In Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, we support or run bachelor's degree programmes for prosthetics and orthotics, building local capacity to provide rehabilitation services independently¹².

In 2023, we facilitated the training of more than 500 professionals globally, enhancing their technical skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality services¹³. These efforts help strengthen local capabilities, ensuring that affected communities receive long-term and sustainable support¹². Additionally, we collaborate with professional associations and academic institutions to ensure training programmes meet international standards, such as the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).



Syria, 2024. At the Health Technical Institute in Damascus, ICRC experts train second-year prosthetics/orthotics students in the proper use of polypropylene technology in lower-limb prosthetics.

Raising awareness on the plight of victims/survivors and people with disabilities

We actively engage with authorities and relevant actors through seminars, round tables, workshops, and similar events to emphasize the critical importance of mitigating the risks posed by explosive devices¹³. These engagements also shed light on the challenges faced by victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), as well as people with disabilities, while advocating for their needs and those of their families to be effectively addressed¹². In 2023, we facilitated over 50 workshops globally, fostering dialogue and raising awareness among key stakeholders about the importance of victim assistance and risk reduction¹³.

In addition, we run public awareness campaigns, often in collaboration with National Societies, to educate broader audiences. These campaigns are timed to coincide with significant occasions, such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December), to amplify key messages and foster greater understanding and support for affected individuals. For example, in 2023, joint campaigns reached thousands through social media, community events, and educational materials¹³.



Myanmar, 2024. An ICRC staff member teaches children in Kachin state about the danger of landmines.

Promoting action and accountability

We work with authorities to encourage the implementation of treaties to which they are party, particularly those related to victim assistance and the rights of people with disabilities. These include provisions under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of war, which reinforce states' legal responsibilities to protect affected populations and contribute to strengthening victim-assistance frameworks^{8,9,10}. Where appropriate, we support the authorities in developing national strategies to address the risks posed by mines and explosive remnants of war. This support includes sharing our expertise and providing technical guidance to help build effective and sustainable solutions. For example, in Colombia and Afghanistan, we have worked with governments to create comprehensive mine-action strategies that integrate victim support and risk reduction measures¹³.

Ensuring survivor inclusion in mine action and policy development

Survivors play a key role in shaping mine action policies and victim assistance programmes. Their participation strengthens advocacy efforts, informs national strategies under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Convention on Cluster Munitions, and ensures that the assistance given to them responds to real needs⁸. Encouraging governments to include survivor networks in decision-making promotes dignity, empowerment, and long-term inclusion. In Afghanistan, for example, we have supported survivors in advocating for better access to rehabilitation services and economic reintegration, ensuring their voices shape national policies on victim assistance¹³.

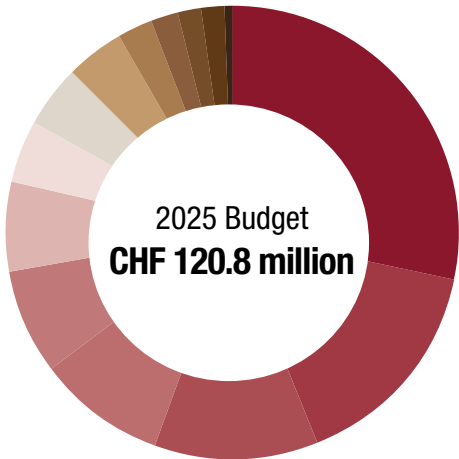
JOIN US IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Even after the guns fall silent, the threat of weapon contamination lingers, casting a long shadow over civilian lives. Landmines and explosive remnants of war don't vanish when fighting stops—they remain for years, even decades, injuring, claiming lives, and making daily life incredibly difficult. Today, civilians account for 84% of recorded casualties, with children among the most vulnerable.

But the impact goes far beyond physical harm. These hidden dangers cut communities off from essential resources like food, clean water, health care, and education. It creates great anguish, forces families to abandon their homes and fuels ongoing humanitarian crises. The ICRC's unique mandate allows us to operate in places others cannot, closer to those affected, to those most vulnerable. We are on the ground delivering mine risk education, providing emergency medical care and physical rehabilitation, and supporting survivors as they rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Addressing this crisis goes beyond responding to its consequences—it's about preventing them in the first place. Every landmine removed, every awareness session conducted, moves us one step closer to a world where people can live without fear. The challenge is immense, but with collective determination and sustained action, we can reduce the suffering caused by weapon contamination and ensure a safer future. The time to act is now.

– Pierre Krähenbühl, ICRC Director General



- 29% Afghanistan
- 16% Ukraine
- 11% Yemen
- 9% Syrian Arab Republic
- 8% Iraq
- 6% Israel and the Occupied Territories
- 5% Ethiopia
- 4% Myanmar
- 4% Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 3% Pakistan
- 2% Lebanon
- 2% Colombia
- 2% Libya
- 0.4% Tajikistan (under Tashkent regional)

Your support is vital to creating a future where communities are free from the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, and where people with disabilities can thrive and participate fully in all aspects of society.

Will you join us in turning commitment into meaningful, lasting change?

For more information or to make a contribution, please contact us at resourcemobilization@icrc.org.

Let's make a difference, together.

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Cover photo: A. Saboh/ICRC