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Finland's Humanitarian Mine Action Concept 2026–2029

This mine action concept paper provides guidance to Finland's support for humanitarian mine action (HMA). Finland's support to humanitarian mine action considers synergies across several fields: humanitarian needs, sustainable development goals, as well as foreign and security policy considerations and the wider arms control agenda.

The overall budget for humanitarian mine action during the period of 2026–2029 is 12 million euros. The support will be directed towards actions that have clearly defined goals and that complement Finland's other activities in the target countries and facilitate a comprehensive approach.

In 2026 Finland's support will be allocated on a one-year basis to International and Inter-Governmental Organizations. No call for proposals will be organized.

Subsequently for the period 2027 to 2029 funds will be allocated mainly to International Non-Governmental Organizations operating in Ukraine, Syria and Palestine. A call for proposals for humanitarian mine action projects will be organized in 2026, for projects starting in 2027.

1. Introduction

Finland has supported humanitarian mine action since 1991 approximately with 125 million euros. It is important to define a clear concept on mine action and to fit it within wider development and foreign and security policy perspectives. Finland has previously had mine action concepts for 5 years (2016-2020 and 2021-2025), to facilitate planning and predictability of funding.

This concept is for 4 years, to align humanitarian mine action support with other development cooperation related discretionary grants cycle. The reason for this is that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs reform working group recommended in 2023 that the administration of development cooperation-related discretionary government grants should be centralized. Therefore, fewer calls for proposals will be organized in the future. This makes the administration of the calls more effective.

The overall budget for humanitarian mine action during the period of 2026–2029 is 12 million euros. In addition, 3 million euros have been tentatively budgeted for 2030, but allocation of these funds will be covered by the next concept of humanitarian mine action.

The humanitarian mine action portfolio will be administered by the Department for Development Policy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, with the support of the Unit for Arms Control. This concept and its focus areas have been elaborated in close dialogue with the regional departments of the Ministry and, in consultation with Finnish embassies. Discussions with international partners and other HMA actors have also informed the concept.

2. Policy framework, objectives and basic principles

Landmines pose a significant threat to civilian populations in both active conflicts and post-conflict areas, impeding development, displacing communities, and causing long-term psychological and physical harm. Humanitarian mine action is **a long-term effort** often requiring sustained action for decades following the end of a crisis. It benefits the civilian population and their humanitarian needs. It is **an enabler for sustainable development** contributing to safe access to land and essential services and enabling affected communities to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. It also creates increased awareness of mine risks and safe behaviours and provides victim assistance for example in the form of physical rehabilitation and assistive devices.

During the past decades, the use of improvised explosive devices (IED) and explosive ordnances (EO) in global crises has grown exponentially. In some countries, IEDs already cause more casualties than conventional mines. **IED and EO clearance is an integral part of Humanitarian Mine Action.**

Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) is **an integral part of Finland’s foreign, security and development policies.** Finland’s foreign and security policy activities are founded on democracy, the rule of law, human rights, equality and non-discrimination. Finland’s development policy is based on the Sustainable Development Goals as well as widely shared priorities, such as strengthening the rights of women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, and climate action.

Humanitarian Mine Action is **a comprehensive effort to promote stability, peace, security, and sustainable development.** It protects lives, restores livelihoods, supports peacebuilding, recovery, and development. HMA is an important element in the continuum which flexibly combines crisis prevention, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development cooperation.

Humanitarian mine action **contributes to the achievement of sustainable development goals** both indirectly, by facilitating recovery and long-term structural changes, and directly, by ameliorating the lives of affected communities. HMA has an important role in facilitating stability and sustainable development through improving livelihoods. By removing mine contamination and educating people about the hazards associated with munitions, access to food and clean drinking water as well as arable land and forests can be increased. In addition to creating conditions for local agriculture and re-establishing infrastructure, mine action can support local communities by providing employment opportunities and skills training, thus contributing to long-term sustainable development.

Humanitarian mine action and human rights are deeply interconnected. Indiscriminately used landmines violate or obstruct several human rights. Humanitarian mine action reflects Finland’s obligations under international human rights law to respect, protect and fulfil universally recognized human rights, including the rights to life, health, education, non-discrimination and participation. Finland’s foreign and security policy is human rights based.

Humanitarian mine action **supports the implementation of the global arms control regime**. HMA is based on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (the Ottawa Convention). Finland's withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention, that shall take effect in January 2026, does not affect Finland's other obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. Finland will continue its support for humanitarian mine action and for the humanitarian goals of the Ottawa Convention.

Humanitarian mine action is **first and foremost a life-saving activity**. In addition, it aims to have a sustainable humanitarian impact by enabling the realization of fundamental rights and enabling long-term fulfilment of basic needs.

Finland's HMA is **implemented according to internationally agreed humanitarian principles** of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. While humanitarian mine action benefits everyone, our support is needs-based, impartial and focuses on protection of civilians and persons in the most vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities.

Safeguarding and upholding humanitarian principles in humanitarian mine action organizations is essential to enable assistance to cover also contested areas.

3. Finland's approach to Humanitarian Mine Action

Finnish support is guided by internationally recognized five core pillars of Humanitarian Mine Action: mine clearance, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy. According to the comprehensive approach of the HMA concept, Finland prioritizes projects combining several pillars of HMA. Projects designed according to this principle have the additional benefit of providing flexibility in uncertain circumstances. In addition, local capacity building is emphasized, with the aim of assisting host countries to develop capacity to tackle remaining contamination in the long term. Exploring possibilities for synergies and cooperation with other actors is also encouraged. The approach emphasizes strategic alignment with Finland's foreign and development policy priorities, administrative efficiency, and responsiveness to acute humanitarian needs.

Finland's support is extended to projects that have **clearly defined goals and objectives**, capacity to monitor and measure progress as well as report on achieved results. Finnish support complements other actions and form a seamless part of the broader international support to the humanitarian mine action.

Attention is paid to **effectiveness and the efficiency of the HMA**. To achieve maximum outcome and impact, support is channelled **through a limited number of implementing partners to a limited number of countries**, while retaining a viable scope for individual projects. Scaling up the size of individual interventions while reducing their number enables a better focus on selected priorities and greater efficiency in achieving the desired results and impact.

Finland requires that HMA implementing partners have **a result culture** that supports the effectiveness of development policy and enables effective monitoring and evaluation for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Results Based Management (RBM) is a tool to achieve intended changes that translate into long term positive impacts, RBM supports knowledge-based decisions to maximize the contribution to the intended change. It is important that implementing organizations understand and know the expected contribution to the desired change, use information, evidence and knowledge to achieve results. Results Based Management is an overall concept that involves shifting management approach away from focusing on inputs, activities and processes to focusing more on the desired results and impacts

In assessing the results of humanitarian mine action, **emphasis should be placed on long-term effects**. In addition to annual reports that enable the monitoring of individual projects and their outputs, the impacts of mine action should be assessed 10 or 20 years after inception of activities. HMA outcomes will also be included in measuring the impact of Finland's humanitarian assistance.

4. Implementation of Humanitarian Mine Action during 2026-2029

The implementation of the HMA during 2026-2029 is guided by the following principles:

- Urgency of humanitarian needs
- Support for international, inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)
- Fewer, larger projects to reduce administrative burden and to maximize results
- Country and project selection based on:
 - o Finnish foreign and security policy priorities
 - o Development policy objectives
 - o Possibility for Finnish diplomatic missions to follow the projects
 - o Humanitarian impact

Finland continues its commitment to humanitarian mine action for the 2026–2029 period, focusing on **comprehensive support for humanitarian mine action**. In line with the financial planning of the Ministry, 12 million euros have been earmarked for humanitarian mine action for this period.

During 2026-2029 Finland's HMA will **be implemented in two phases**: Firstly, in the first year of the concept paper, in 2026, 3 million euros will be allocated to International and Inter-Governmental Organizations with a one-year funding commitment. No call for proposals will be organized.

Secondly, a **call for proposals for humanitarian mine action projects will be organized in 2026**, for projects starting in 2027. It will be a part of a centralized call for proposals, covering many areas for government grant allocation. The reason for this is that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs reform working group that issued its recommendations in 2023, recommended that the administration of development cooperation-related discretionary government grants is centralized under the Department for Development Policy. This makes administration of the calls more effective in times when public resources are scarcer than before. In 2027-2029 funds will be **allocated mainly to International Non-Governmental Organizations**. These partner organizations are financed through multi-annual Framework Agreements that improve the predictability of funding and decrease the administrative burden on both the implementing organizations and the MFA. In partner selection, possibilities for enhancing the effectiveness of action by e.g. tapping into Finnish expertise are considered an asset.

The humanitarian mine action portfolio will be administered by the Department for Development Policy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, with the support of the Unit for Arms Control. The funds are allocated from the Department for Development Policy budget. Close cooperation between the Political Department, the Department for Development Policy and the regional departments and embassies is essential for planning, implementation and monitoring of the projects. Possibilities for enhancing cooperation with the Ministry of Defence will be explored.

5. Beneficiary countries

Finland's Humanitarian Mine Action **focuses on least developed countries and on regions which suffer from conflicts or are in a post-conflict recovery phase following an acute conflict**. Conflict recovery often involves humanitarian assistance, early recovery and reconstruction, development cooperation, and concurrent activities associated

with security, peacebuilding and state-building. Depending on the context, mine action can be a means of stabilization, the first step towards development cooperation or an instrument for the promotion of employment and equality.

States which have undergone a violent external or internal conflict are in high risk of relapse into conflict. Donors must commit to a long-term presence to achieve sustainable results. It is also vital that the host government demonstrates ownership and willingness to cooperate. Developing local capacity is important and Finland encourages partnerships that strengthen local authorities and civil society.

Operating in fragile contexts and least developed countries comes with additional risks and challenges in comparison to other developing countries. At times, projects may even regress. Innovative and flexible practices that strengthen the resilience of operations are often required both from the implementing partners and from the MFA.

Finland concentrates its humanitarian mine action on countries where it can refer to complementarity between HMA and other portfolios, both in development and security policy fields. It is also important that there is a possibility to actively monitor the projects and to influence the operating environment in the region.

Based on previous experiences, consultations within the Ministry and discussions with other HMA stakeholders, **it is recommended that Finland continues its cooperation in Syria and Ukraine and allocates funds for mine action in Palestine.** However, given the constantly evolving situations, the possibility to support countries beyond this scope is reserved. In addition, through its global or thematic funding Finland will continue to support these and other countries.

All countries in question suffer from serious mine or unexploded ordnance contamination and the reviews of the preceding programmes have confirmed that Finnish support to mine action in these countries is efficient and relevant. HMA complements Finland's activities in the selected countries and territories from both a development policy and a foreign and security policy perspective, and in so doing, contributes to achieving Finland's long-term policy priorities.

Ukraine

Ukraine's needs in humanitarian mine action are immense. Ukraine is the most heavily mined country in the world with landmines and explosive remnants of war from the armed conflict that began in 2014 and escalated with Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022. Mine warfare is common on land and at sea. Needs are clear, although exact figures of contamination may vary according to sources. One third of the country may be in need of mine clearance. Clearance of agricultural land is particularly important, to increase food security and speed up recovery and economic activities and return of refugees. According to the *OCHA Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for the year 2025*, 5,4 million people are in need of Mine Action assistance. Areas close to the front line are the most impacted by dense explosive ordnance contamination. Explosive weapons remain the primary cause of harm to civilians, followed by unexploded ordnance and landmines. It is estimated that Ukraine's needs for HMA will continue for decades to come.

Finland has supported humanitarian mine action in Ukraine since 2015. Our support has grown from early funding of 1.5 million euros (2017–2020) to comprehensive assistance after Russia's invasion, including 8.2 million euros (2022–2025) for humanitarian mine action, with major contributions to NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package and the Partnership Fund for Resilient Ukraine, as well as equipment, training, and safe accommodation units. Ukraine is also Finland's biggest single partner in development cooperation and recipient of humanitarian assistance. HMA initiatives play an important part in addressing humanitarian needs as well as supporting Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction

and development. In 2024, Finland and Ukraine agreed on security cooperation and long-term support, which includes Finland's commitment to support mine clearance, including humanitarian demining and capacity-building of Ukrainian actors in the field.

Syria

Syria's needs are also huge. Large parts of urban, semi-urban and rural areas remain un-cleared from mines and mines of an improvised nature used extensively by parties to the country's conflict from 2012. According e.g. to *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* and *Mine Action Review* full nationwide survey is lacking, but contamination has been recorded across the country. According to UNMAS, there is a lasting and widespread risk of explosive ordnance contamination. There has been the highest number of annual EO related casualties globally from 2020 to 2023 and currently, there is a growing trend of unexploded ordnance and mine related incidents across all of Syria. It is estimated that there are significant anti-personnel minefields along former front lines and military positions. EO contamination endangers civilians, obstructs humanitarian aid, and stalls reconstruction.

There is a pressing need for survey and clearance activities. This has gained more urgency with a large number of returns of displaced and refugee Syrians to their areas of origin. Surveying, marking and permanently removing explosive ordnances is a life saving measure as well as a prerequisite to recovery and reconstruction. With the new interim government in place, HMA actors have better access although the local technical capacities are low. Efforts are being made for better coordination, consolidation of existing data and mapping new areas, as well as technical capacity building of local actors. The newly established Syrian Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management is supportive of the international and local HMA efforts that are seen as a crucial step towards reconstruction overall.

Finland has supported humanitarian mine action in Syria since 2016. The regime change in Syria presents new opportunities for international cooperation and also for mine clearance. In line with its foreign and security policy, Finland has consistently supported UN agencies and NGOs in Syria and the neighbouring countries throughout the Syrian crisis between 2011–2024. Finland's humanitarian and development support has addressed processes toward sustainable peace, women's rights and the rights of children and people with disabilities. The thematic focus has been consistent, centring important elements for inclusive political transition and eventual reconstruction, and therefore, remains relevant in the changed political situation.

Palestine

Explosive ordnance contamination is significant in Gaza. EO have caused widespread injury, trauma and infrastructural devastation. For the moment the possibilities for large scale explosive ordnance clearance do not exist, but explosive hazard assessments, risk education and victim assistance are possible. If the war ends, possibilities for clearance increase. EO contamination affects vulnerable populations also in the West Bank.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is unprecedented, with extensive destruction and over 68,000 deaths and 170,000 injuries as of November 2025. Explosive ordnance contamination poses a major obstacle to recovery and reconstruction, requiring massive international clearance efforts. Increased Israeli military operations and settler violence have caused displacement, and augmented humanitarian needs also in the West Bank.

Finland's foreign, security, and development policies are deeply intertwined in Palestine, supporting a two-state solution and promoting stability in the Middle East. Finland bases all its activities on the promotion of a rules-based system and international law, including international humanitarian law. Its long-term development cooperation in Palestine is based on the premise that a functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and

a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable and peaceful development. The country programme for development cooperation includes both development and humanitarian funding and brings together various actors and stakeholders in accordance with the principles of the triple nexus approach.

6. Additional Global support

To broaden the scope of the support, **activities globally to provide e.g. victim assistance and risk education may also be supported.** In addition, **activities related to developing good mine action practices** may be supported, to complement support directed to designated countries. This work is important to reduce risks related to mines and explosive ordnances. It benefits a wide geographical area.