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New Directions for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Connecting Victim Assistance with the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

BÉNÉDICTE SANTOIRE

1. Introduction

For many years, researchers and practitioners in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and disarmament fields have made the case for further synergies between mine action and the WPS agenda. Thus far, the focus has been primarily on women's *participation* in mine action, particularly in survey and clearance operations, as this sector traditionally has been male-dominated.² However, the WPS agenda goes beyond the

issue of participation and also encompasses the goals of protection from gender-based harms, prevention of those harms, and relief and recovery in conflict and post-conflict settings. As such, there is much more that can be done to connect this policy area with mine action,³ since they share common goals, such as civilian protection and conflict prevention.⁴

¹ The author wishes to thank Renata Hessmann Dalaqua (UNIDIR), Erin Hunt (Mines Action Canada) and Dominic Wolsey (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining) for their help in reviewing this paper.

² Bénédicte Santoire, "Women's Employment in Mine Action by the Numbers 2023" (Mines Action Canada, 2023), <https://www.minesactioncanada.org/bythenumbers2023>; Salomé Aguirre et al., "Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in Mine Action: Where Are We in Colombia?", *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction* 27, no. 1 (28 February 2023): 50–56.

³ Anna De Courcy Wheeler and Delphine Valette, "From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance" (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2025), <https://unidir.org/publication/from-casualties-to-care-implementing-age-and-gender-sensitive-victim-assistance>

⁴ UNIDIR and Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, "How Do Gender and Diversity Relate to Mine Action?", 4 April 2024, <https://unidir.org/publication/how-do-gender-and-diversity-relate-to-mine-action>; Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Paula Jou Fuster, and Hana Salama, "Beyond Oslo: Taking Stock of Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention", 21 November 2023, <https://unidir.org/publication/beyond-oslo-taking-stock-of-gender-and-diversity-mainstreaming-in-the-anti-personnel-mine-ban-convention>

A new opportunity emerged as States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) adopted the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan in November 2024, along with a political declaration, to reaffirm their commitments to the Convention and its implementation. In both documents, States Parties explicitly recognized, for the first time, the importance of synergies between mine action, notably victim assistance,⁵ and the WPS agenda.

To support States Parties in their efforts to integrate victim assistance and the WPS agenda at a practical level, this paper identifies potential actions that would align victim assistance with each of the four pillars of the WPS agenda. It draws on a literature review and analysis of ongoing victim assistance programmes to show that greater synergy between these policy areas is not only possible but highly desirable, as it can strengthen the implementation of both the WPS agenda and the APMBC.

2. What is Victim Assistance under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention?

The APMBC, also known as the Ottawa Convention, adopted in 1997, is the first disarmament convention requiring State Parties to take responsibility for mine action, including through a victim assistance provision, marking a turning point in multilateral disarmament diplomacy and law. By banning anti-personnel landmines, the supporters of the Convention aimed to prevent suffering and casualties, which were estimated at 26,000 lives in 1997 alone, when the Convention was negotiated.⁶

As demonstrated by researchers who investigated the origins and influence of the victim assistance norm over time, “while previous weapons treaties were driven by national security concerns, the [APMBC] adopted a humanitarian

approach to disarmament”, focusing on the human consequences and suffering of such indiscriminate weapons, among other things. This shift from national security concerns to humanitarian concerns also “recognized the importance of including civil society and affected individuals in decision-making”.⁷

The solidification of victim assistance as a core principle of humanitarian disarmament is not only the result of the APMBC alone, but exists in synergy with other treaties, such as the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. Researchers note that while the APMBC introduced the victim assistance concept, “the [Convention on the Rights of

⁵ The term ‘victim’ refers to persons who have been killed, injured or directly or indirectly impacted by the use explosive weapons, including families and affected communities. Although the term ‘survivor’ is generally preferred over the term ‘victim’, notably to emphasize the agency of survivors, many of the key international instruments use the latter (e.g., victim assistance). In this article, the term ‘survivor’ will be preferred over ‘victim’ wherever possible, unless quoting directly from treaties or other sources using the latter.

⁶ Jody Williams, Stephen D. Goose, and Mary Wareham, *Banning Landmines* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), p. 5.

⁷ Bonnie Docherty and Alicia Sanders-Zakre, “The Origins and Influence of Victim Assistance: Contributions of the Mine Ban Treaty, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Convention on Cluster Munitions”, *International Review of the Red Cross* 105, no. 922 (2023): 252–277, 254.

Persons with Disabilities] created a framework of human rights that influenced its evolution [and] [d]rawing on its predecessors, the [Convention on Cluster Munitions] made victim assistance a robust and rights-based legal obligation”,⁸ thus all three Conventions mutually reinforce their mechanisms for implementation.

This comprehensive understanding of victim assistance encompasses the following elements:

- ▶ collection, analysis and sharing of data disaggregated by sex, age, and disability;
- ▶ emergency and continuing medical care;
- ▶ rehabilitation;
- ▶ psychological and psychosocial support;
- ▶ socioeconomic inclusion including education, employment, and housing; and
- ▶ domestic legal and policy frameworks that guarantee the rights of victims in line with international law.

Victim assistance activities are underpinned by a commitment to accessible, transparent and inclusive approaches that promote the active involvement of affected populations.⁹ This is evident in the fact that, in the last two decades, each action plan agreed at the APMBC Review Conferences (Nairobi 2004, Cartagena 2009, Maputo 2014, Oslo 2019, and Siem Reap-Angkor 2024) has discussed victim assistance and has advanced the inclusion of

gender-specific language, reflecting the recognition of the operational relevance of a gendered approach on the ground. Such approaches include not only the establishment of domestic legal and policy frameworks and the collection of disaggregated data, but also sustained and sufficient international cooperation and assistance. The progress observed in the agreed action plans is in part due to advocacy by practitioners, activists, scholars, survivors, and cross-organizational initiatives like the Gender and Diversity in Mine Action Working Group.¹⁰

2.1. Why is a Gender-Sensitive Approach to Victim Assistance Important?

Landmines are a deadly legacy, lingering on for decades after the conflicts that see their use. Civilians around the world continue to bear the brunt of active and past conflicts, and the scale of harm is staggering. Recent reports indicate that 84 per cent of direct casualties of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)¹¹ and 93 per cent of direct casualties of cluster munitions¹² are civilians; in 2023, children comprised 70 per cent of all ERW casualties where data was disaggregated by age.¹³

Even while suffering from the same injuries, survivors have different needs and face different repercussions.¹⁴ Decades of empirical evidence clearly demonstrate that women, men, girls, and

⁸ Docherty and Sanders-Zakre, 253. See footnote 7 for the full reference.

⁹ Convention on Cluster Munitions, art. 5(2).

¹⁰ See “Gender and Diversity in Mine Action Working Group”, <https://www.gichd.org/our-response/gender-diversity-equality-and-inclusion/gender-and-diversity-working-group/>

¹¹ “Landmine Monitor 2024”, International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition (2024), <https://www.the-monitor.org/reports/landmine-monitor>

¹² “Cluster Munition Monitor 2024”, International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition (2024), <https://www.the-monitor.org/online-reader/cluster-munition-monitor-2024?anchor=Major-Findings-115634>

¹³ “Landmine Monitor 2024”, International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition (2024), 44, <https://www.the-monitor.org/reports/landmine-monitor>

¹⁴ Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, “United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes” (2019), <https://mineaction.org/en/united-nations-gender-guidelines-mine-action-programmes-1>

boys are differently affected by the threats and consequences of landmines, cluster munitions, and other ERW injuries.

Although men and boys¹⁵ constitute the majority of direct casualties, women and girls often constitute a significant portion of *indirect* victims.¹⁶ When women and girls are indirect victims, they have to take on the financial burden of becoming a single parent or the sole breadwinner of their family, as well as managing households in precarious and insecure conditions to care for their injured male relatives. This can greatly change family dynamics and gender roles within the household.¹⁷

Research has shown that when family resources are scarce following a landmine accident, girls are more likely to be the first to be taken out of school or be married at an early age.¹⁸ In social contexts where women face systemic barriers in accessing formal paid work, or are unlikely to have the skills or education needed to find stable employment, women may turn to unsafe, vulnerable low-paid work, or begging, increasing the

likelihood of poverty and gender-based violence, for example.¹⁹

Evidence suggests that when women and girls are *direct* victims of an explosive incident, they often do not receive timely and adequate victim assistance in comparison to male victims,²⁰ and they have a higher mortality rate.²¹ In certain contexts, women and girl survivors face stigmatization, different forms of discrimination, and social and cultural barriers linked to gender, age, and disability.²² Due to gender roles and norms, women and girl survivors often face barriers in accessing appropriate, timely, and long-term medical care, psychosocial support, or economic reintegration assistance. This gap in emergency medical care provision may also be a contributing factor to the higher mortality rate for women and girls.²³

Women and girls face a range of barriers to accessing employment and educational opportunities after injury, increasing the likelihood of poverty, violence, discrimination, and isolation. Mine action operators have reported that

¹⁵ Literature on gender and mine action emphasizes addressing masculinities in victim assistance. Men make up the majority of landmine victims, often 85–90% in certain countries. In many mine-affected areas, men are the primary income providers, and their work frequently leads them into dangerous areas due to higher risks from their greater mobility. The impacts of landmine accidents on men are also distinctive, including economic hardship for families due to lost income and psychological distress from disabilities and loss of independence. See, for example, Arianna Calza Bini and Åsa Massleberg, “Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance”, *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction* 15, no. 2 (2011): 2, <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol15/iss2/14>; Anne-Sophie Duprat and Lusia Peçak, “Masculinity: The Unseen Barrier in Survivor Assistance”, *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* 17, no. 3 (2013): 18.

¹⁶ “Factsheet: Gender and the Mine Ban Treaty” (International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition, June 2024), 1, https://backend.icblcmc.org/assets/Resource-Hub/2024/Factsheet_Gender_June2024_Final.pdf

¹⁷ Calza Bini and Massleberg, “Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance”, 3.

¹⁸ UNIDIR and Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, “Gender and Diversity in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC)”, 20 November 2023, 1, <https://unidir.org/publication/gender-diversity-in-the-anti-personnel-mine-ban-convention-apmbc>

¹⁹ Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, “United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes”, 49.

²⁰ “Gender and Landmines from Concept to Practice”, Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines (2008).

²¹ Stacey Pizzino, Michael Waller, Vivienne Tippet, and Jo Durham, “Mortality from Landmines and Explosive Hazards: Findings from a Global Epidemiological Analysis”, *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 38, no. S1 (2023): s191–s191, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X23004934>

²² De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, “From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance”.

²³ The author wishes to thank Dominic Wolsey from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining for pointing that out.



A rehabilitation and prosthetics care foundation (CIREC) in Colombia, 2014. Credit: AP Mine Ban Convention.

women and girls not only “have more barriers to accessing rehabilitation” but they also have “worse rehabilitation outcomes [than men and boys], and in low and middle-income countries are less likely to have access to assistive devices, such as wheelchairs”.²⁴

In some countries, women and girl survivors may face greater challenges to access gender-sensitive medical care services and facilities after their injury, such as women-only medical staff and rehabilitation professionals, sexual and reproductive healthcare, appropriate support groups or overall inadequate health infrastructure and

equipment.²⁵ These difficulties have long-term consequences in terms of health and political and socioeconomic exclusion.

Understanding the intersections between gender and other characteristics such as age, disability, race, sexual orientation, or class is essential for providing appropriate and effective victim assistance that meets the diverse needs of all survivors and their families.²⁶ This necessitates a thorough understanding of local gender norms, along with the barriers to and opportunities for improved mobility and service access.²⁷

²⁴ UNIDIR and Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, “How Do Gender and Diversity Relate to Mine Action?”, 4.

²⁵ “Factsheet: Gender and the Mine Ban Treaty” (International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition, June 2024), 5, https://backend.icblcmc.org/assets/Resource-Hub/2024/Factsheet_Gender_June2024_Final.pdf; Laura Biscaglia et al., “Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action | Powerful Linkages for Progress across the SDGs”, in *Global CWD Repository*, vol. 12 (International Conference on Sustainable Development, Columbia University, New York, 2018), 8, <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-globalcwd/1249>

²⁶ UNIDIR and Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, “How Do Gender and Diversity Relate to Mine Action?”; Calza Bini and Massleberg, “Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance”.

²⁷ Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, “United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes | E-Mine”, 47.

Societal barriers related to gender hinder the involvement of women and girls in peace and security decision-making, impacting their active participation in post-conflict community reconstruction as well as their career choices. Additionally, such societal barriers restrict women's participation, which consequently hinder mine risk education or prevention actions that prioritize the voices, agency, and experiences of survivors.

2.2. What is Different about the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan?

The Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan (SRAAP) marks a clear shift in adopting bolder language and making more explicit connections with WPS. In the introduction, the SRAAP recognises that:

“implementation of the Convention contributes significantly to preventing and alleviating human suffering, creating the conditions for a life with dignity, supporting climate resilient and environmentally responsible land use and livelihoods, and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, the Women Peace and Security agenda (UNSCR 1325), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as other international frameworks and the commitment to leaving no one behind”.²⁸

These lines reflect strong political commitment and acknowledge synergies with other frameworks and conventions, at least textually. Then, article VII on victim assistance affirms that, **“to be effective and sustainable, victim assistance needs to be integrated into broader national policies, plans, budgets, and legal**

frameworks ... in support of the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Women, Peace, and Security agenda”.²⁹ To facilitate such integration, States Parties agreed to Actions 30 and 31 of the SRAAP, which focus on strengthening victim assistance through coordinated national efforts.

Action 30 calls for appointing a relevant government entity to lead the integration of victim assistance into broader national frameworks, with indicators tracking the existence of such focal points, inclusive national action plans (considering gender, age, disability), victim participation in planning, and reporting on progress and challenges. **Action 31** emphasizes establishing inter-ministerial and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms, with indicators measuring the presence of such mechanisms and the inclusion of victim needs and rights in national policies, legal frameworks, and budgets.

Actions 30 and 31 and their related indicators represent positive steps encouraging coordination at the national level. It should be noted, however, that there are limitations in the current monitoring framework of the SRAAP, mostly related to the fact that indicators are quantitative and focus on percentages only; thus, they are unable to provide a situated perspective of efforts on the ground. It is a challenge to measure the qualitative changes that a WPS approach can bring to victim assistance.

If States would like to be more specific in their efforts to align victim assistance with the WPS agenda, they could also consider tracking the percentage of victim assistance programmes and action plans aligned with their WPS national

²⁸ “Draft Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan 2025-2029 Submitted by the President of the Fifth Review Conference” (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 25 November 2024), para. 3.

²⁹ Ibid., 11.



FAO and WFP join forces to clear agricultural land from remnants of the war in Ukraine, 2023. Credit: FAO/Viacheslav Ratynskyi.

action plans,³⁰ the proportion of budgets dedicated to gender-sensitive programming, and the percentage of staff trained on gender and WPS principles.

Additionally, States could consider the adoption of a qualitative approach to monitoring the change that a WPS lens can bring to victim assistance. The creation of policy guidance (e.g., training manuals, toolkits) that integrates WPS into victim assistance (and vice versa), the documentation of case studies/evidence of meaningful participation of women survivors in victim assistance programme design or WPS national action plans, and regular reporting showing how victim assistance contributes to the WPS pillars (through surveys or focus groups, for example) would be rich targets for qualitative evaluation. Such assessments would not need to be carried out at the national level by States necessarily; expert organizations, for example, might be

better situated and prepared to conduct them.

Beyond Actions 30 and 31, the SRAAP encompasses other actions relevant to victim assistance. These include collecting data on victims' needs and challenges (**Action 32**), ensuring that national emergency/humanitarian response plans integrate the safety of mine survivors (**Action 38**), establishing a referral mechanism for victims (**Action 34**), providing effective and inclusive emergency medical services (**Action 33**), ensuring access to rehabilitation and assistive technology (**Action 35**) and psychological supports (**Action 36**), and ensuring socio-economic inclusion (**Action 37**) for all victims. Additionally, **Action 39** aims to improve accessibility and remove barriers to ensure the full inclusion and participation of survivors and their organizations in all matters that affect them.

³⁰ National action plans are one of the primary mechanisms for States to cement and implement the WPS agenda into national contexts, laws, and policies. As of April 2025, 111 Member States have adopted at least one NAP. Peace Women, "1325 National Action Plans (NAPs) WILPF Monitoring and Analysis of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security", 2025, <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org>



Fifth Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention (Siem Reap-Agnkor Summit on a Mine-Free World), 2024. Credit: AP Mine Ban Convention.

3. A WPS Approach to Victim Assistance

Today, the WPS agenda represents a broad normative framework dealing with issues related to gender and international peace and security. It is rooted in the adoption in 2000 of Security Council resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on Women, Peace and Security — which, for the first time ever, recognized the differentiated and disproportionate impacts of armed conflicts on women and girls — as well as nine further resolutions.³¹

This section outlines possible actions that State Parties can take to implement a WPS approach in accordance with each of the four pillars of the WPS agenda. It also provides a non-exhaustive list of concrete examples of similar actions that have been (or have yet to be) documented. These suggestions also point to the corresponding SRAAP actions, where applicable.

³¹ S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), S/RES/1889 (2009), S/RES/1960 (2010), S/RES/2106 (2013), S/RES/2122 (2013), S/RES/2242 (2015), S/RES/2467 (2019), S/RES/2493 (2019).

WPS Pillar: Participation

The Participation pillar urges Member States, among other actors, to increase the inclusion, representation, and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of international and national peace and security decision-making, for example, in peacekeeping, the security and defence sector, and peace processes. When applied to victim assistance, this approach could lead to the following key actions.

KEY ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Ensure that women, particularly survivors, are included in shaping victim assistance policies, advocacy forums, and, broadly, in mine action programming (aligned with SRAAP Action 39)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ At the advocacy level, several organizations have the good practice of actively including landmine survivors in the APMBC Meetings of State Parties and the Review Conferences. For example, in Siem Reap in 2024, Humanity & Inclusion was joined by two Cambodian landmine survivors.³² ▶ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Landmine Survivors Initiatives implemented initiatives for empowering the wives of male survivors by creating women-only information-sharing meetings and peer-to-peer support networks, so they are included in the recovery and inclusion of their husbands.³³ ▶ The National Victim Assistance Plans and Disability Strategies of Albania, Chad and Jordan have included survivors at all levels of planning and implementation.³⁴
Support grassroots women organizations, survivor-led initiatives and community leaders in designing and implementing programmes for victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Actions could include the provision of financial resources, advocacy opportunities, and capacity-building. For example, the Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines developed a project to strengthen survivor-led organizations.³⁵ ▶ There is considerable evidence that grassroots women's organizations are often the first responders on the ground. As they are deeply embedded in their communities, they understand the needs and challenges of the people best.³⁶ Thus, including such organizations in designing and implementing programmes for survivors is not only desirable but also smart.
Provide professional training to women so they can pursue employment opportunities in areas connected to the victim assistance sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To counter a shortage of women physiotherapists, the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee has trained women physiotherapists to meet the specific needs of women survivors and people with disabilities.³⁷ This good practice also can help to provide positive role models for girls and young women.

³² Humanity & Inclusion, "Landmines: 22% More Victims in One Year", 20 November 2024, <https://www.hi.org/en/news/landmines--22--more-victims-in-one-year>

³³ Wanda Muñoz, "Factsheets - How to Implement Victim Assistance Obligations? Under the Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions" (Humanity & Inclusion, August 2013), 16, https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/va_factsheets_all_en.pdf

³⁴ Ibid., 24.

³⁵ Author's email exchange with Natalia Maria Morales Campillo from the CCCM.

³⁶ Radhika Coomaraswamy, "A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325" (New York: UN Women, 2015), 204, <https://wps.unwomen.org>

³⁷ Ayanle Ali, "A Breath of Fresh Air in Physiotherapy: The Arrival of Female Physiotherapists", Afghanistankomiteen, 5 February 2024, <https://afghanistankomiteen.no/en/a-breath-of-fresh-air-in-physiotherapy-the-arrival-of-female-physiotherapists>; De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, "From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance", 32.

WPS Pillar: Protection

The **Protection pillar** addresses the gender-specific dimensions and consequences of armed conflicts for women and girls and ensures that their needs and vulnerabilities are central to protection efforts. When applied to victim assistance, this approach could lead to the following actions.

KEY ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Conduct a gender-sensitive needs assessment of victims to serve them better (aligned with SRAAP Action 32)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Nigeria has created an injury surveillance system to gather gender- and age-specific data on victims of explosive ordnance, aiming to better understand the needs of survivors. ▶ Viet Nam established a coordination mechanism to incorporate gender-sensitivity to the needs of victims into mine action services and programming.³⁸
Ensure legal protections and access to justice and reparations for women victims of mines and ERW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Actions could include engaging with the security sector and first responders and train them on gender-sensitive and trauma-informed victim assistance (aligned with SRAAP Action 38). ▶ Another action could be to legally protect women survivors from economic exploitation and land grabbing by strengthening associated legal frameworks and access to legal services.³⁹
Fund research to better understand how different types of violence intersect with social norms and practices around gender, disability, class, race, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a need to develop research on the intersections between ERW injuries and conflict-related sexual violence. Concretely, such research should be participatory and carried out in close partnership with women's rights, disability rights, and ERW survivor organizations, from co-design to implementation.
Address gender-specific risks, including stigma and gender-based violence faced by survivors (aligned with SRAAP Action 32)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In partnership with local NGOs in Cambodia, Humanity & Inclusion delivered a project for men and women victims, with particular attention to reproductive health and domestic violence prevention.⁴⁰ ▶ In Colombia and Jordan, humanitarian organizations like Humanity & Inclusion and Un Ponte Per have created referral processes, partnerships with local organizations, and Protection Officers positions in charge of identifying and reporting cases of sexual and gender-based violence.⁴¹

³⁸ For both examples, see Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, "Victim Assistance for Survivors, Family Members and Communities Affected by Explosive Ordnance the Cases of Nigeria and Vietnam" (n.d.), https://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/iacg-ma-me-targeted_study_on_victim_assistance_.pdf

³⁹ The author wishes to thank Dominic Wolsey from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining for pointing that out; see Norwegian Refugee Council, "Displaced Women's Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights", <https://www.nrc.no/what-we-do/speaking-up-for-rights/housing-land-and-property-rights/displaced-womens-hlp-rights>

⁴⁰ Muñoz, "Factsheets - How to Implement Victim Assistance Obligations? Under the Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions", 17.

⁴¹ Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, "Operational Guidance – Victim Assistance Responsive to Gender and Other Diversity Aspects" (1 November 2018), 28, <https://www.gichd.org/publications-resources/publications/operational-guidance-victim-assistance-responsive-to-gender-and-other-diversity-aspects>

WPS Pillar: Prevention

The Prevention pillar seeks to prevent gendered harms from occurring, notably through strengthened justice and accountability mechanisms, as well as the long-term prevention of conflict, for example by noting the importance of women's roles in mediation and peacebuilding. When applied to victim assistance, this approach could lead to the following actions.

KEY ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Deliver survivor-led mine risk education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Involve survivors themselves in mine risk education and training sessions. By sharing personal stories and experiences, survivors provide real-life examples of the dangers posed by mines and ERW. This is currently occurring in various locations; however, it is not always formally documented.⁴²
Integrate gender perspectives into national action plans or strategies on mine action and/or victim assistance, as well as survivors themselves into the development of those plans (aligned with SRAAP Action 39)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Several countries, such as Angola, Cambodia and Colombia, have integrated gender perspectives into their national mine action strategies.⁴³
Collect disaggregated data to better understand the needs, barriers, and risks that mine victims face (aligned with SRAAP Action 32)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The National Mine Action Strategies of Cambodia, Iraq and Zimbabwe recognize the importance of disaggregated data collection and use.⁴⁴ ▶ Large mine action operators in Ukraine such as the Danish Refugee Council, the Mines Advisory Group, Norwegian People's Aid and the Halo Trust collect data disaggregated by age, gender and disability.⁴⁵ ▶ A systematized and centralized data collection, analysis and dissemination mechanism has been developed in several mine-affected countries, in collaboration with international organizations.⁴⁶ ▶ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Humanity & Inclusion developed a data-collection template for recording survivors' information, such as health situation, social participation levels, and access to services.⁴⁷
Fund research on victim assistance to build knowledge of data trends that inform practical action on the ground, like survivor-centred service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Disaggregated data collection, sharing and analysis is essential to delivering inclusive victim assistance. Several organizations and research institutes focus on gender and mine action, including UNIDIR, UNMAS, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Mine Action Review, among others. Such research should be participatory, with findings translated into practical guidance to support needs-based programming and policy decisions.

⁴² The author wishes to thank Dominic Wolsey from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining for pointing that out.

⁴³ De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, "From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance", 24.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Muñoz, "Factsheets - How to Implement Victim Assistance Obligations? Under the Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions", § 10.

⁴⁷ Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, "Operational Guidance – Victim Assistance Responsive to Gender and Other Diversity Aspects", 24.

WPS Pillar: Relief and Recovery

The Relief and Recovery pillar applies a gender lens to humanitarian crises, including wars, forced displacement, post-conflict reconstruction, and other disasters, to ensure that services delivered are gender-inclusive and appropriate to the diverse needs of populations. When applied to victim assistance, this approach could lead to the following actions.

KEY ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Provide gender-inclusive healthcare, including urgent medical care, rehabilitation, mental health, and psychosocial support, tailored to the needs of women and girls (aligned with SRAAP Actions 33, 35, 36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In Afghanistan and Iraq, Humanity & Inclusion have gender-balanced teams to make sure that women health professionals are available for treating women survivors. Cultural norms around gender in certain contexts can hinder access to rehabilitation services.⁴⁸ ▶ Medical Aid for Palestinians and the Palestinian Medical Relief Society provide mobile health clinics in the West Bank which include women doctors to offer culturally- and gender-sensitive medical services.⁴⁹ ▶ In Chad, Humanity & Inclusion established gender-separate psychosocial support groups to encourage women's participation. Similarly, in Mozambique, they organized man-to-man activities to challenge harmful masculinities norms and increase men's participation into those support groups.⁵⁰
Promote socioeconomic empowerment programmes for women and girls survivors and affected communities (aligned with SRAAP Action 37)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A United Nations Development Programme project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic delivered vocational training, jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for women survivors, including young women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.⁵¹ ▶ UN Women and the Lao Women's Union conducted a cooking and food preservation training in Xieng Khouang, a heavily landmine contaminated province, for women affected directly and indirectly.⁵² ▶ In the mine-affected region of Casamance in Senegal, Humanity & Inclusion delivered a project to support the access of survivors, especially women affected by poverty or disability, to waged employment in local cashew production.⁵³ ▶ In Jordan, the organization Un Ponte Per provided capacity-building and paid traineeships for women survivors with disabilities, offering financial training courses and microbusiness development assistance.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, "From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance", 32.

⁴⁹ Medical Aid for Palestinians, "Mobile Clinics in the West Bank - Supporting Healthcare Access for Marginalised Communities in Area C" (April 2023), <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/reports/prms-map-booklet---mobile-clinics-in-the-west-bank.pdf>; De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, "From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance", 36.

⁵⁰ Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, "Operational Guidance – Victim Assistance Responsive to Gender and Other Diversity Aspects", 34–35.

⁵¹ Suzette Mitchell and Noimaniphone Lorbliayao, "Gender Analysis and Action Plan for the Government and UNDP UXO Programme in Lao PDR", UNDP, <https://www.undp.org/laopdr/publications/gender-analysis-and-action-plan-government-and-undp-uxo-programme-lao-pdr>; De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, "From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance", 39.

⁵² "Empowering the Invisible Mine Victims in Lao PDR", UN Women – Asia-Pacific, 16 April 2019, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/04/empowering-the-invisible-mine-victims-in-lao-pdr>

⁵³ Muñoz, "Factsheets - How to Implement Victim Assistance Obligations? Under the Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions", 21.

⁵⁴ Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, "Operational Guidance – Victim Assistance Responsive to Gender and Other Diversity Aspects", 41.

WPS Pillar: Relief and Recovery (cont.)

KEY ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Support survivor-centred organizations and organizations that work at the intersection of WPS and mine action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ WPS issues are integral to the activities and programmes of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, for example.⁵⁵ Such work is ongoing in various locations, but it is not always formally documented.
After conflict, land release initiatives could promote gender equality and housing, land and property rights by establishing conditions that allow for a reassessment of land ownership laws in countries where women are currently barred from owning land (aligned with SRAAP Action 37)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Women face systemic barriers to accessing housing, land, and property, which are exacerbated in conflict settings, where discriminatory inheritance laws, lack of documentation, and heightened vulnerability (especially for widows, single women, women with disabilities, illiterate women and women-headed households, undermine their economic security and safety).⁵⁶ Success stories showing a direct correlation between land release and clearance as an entry point to changes in women's rights to land ownership are yet to be documented. ▶ There is evidence pointing to the benefits of integrating a gender approach to land release activities and women's participation in land clearance activities and land rehabilitation.⁵⁷ It allows conflict-affected women to return to their farms and livelihoods, thereby contributing to women's economic empowerment and equal access to and ownership of resources. For instance, in Azerbaijan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Ukraine, these practices are essential for fostering sustainable development and community recovery.⁵⁸ In addition, such efforts can facilitate a return to educational activities and reduce mobility constraints, thereby increasing women's autonomy, as documented in South Sudan.⁵⁹ ▶ There are countries, like Angola, Colombia and Sri Lanka, where women were significantly involved in land release activities after conflict.⁶⁰ In Colombia, for example, the 2016 peace agreement addressed land access by rural women, and demands gender-sensitive land-ownership formalization and sex- and ethnicity-disaggregated data in the cadastral land information system.⁶¹

⁵⁵ "Women, Peace & Security (WPS)", Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), <https://cmac.gov.kh/what-we-do/women-peace-and-security>

⁵⁶ Norwegian Refugee Council, "Displaced women's Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights".

⁵⁷ Jon Unruh and Alexandre Corriveau-Bourque, "Landmines and Land Rights in Conflict Affected Contexts" (GICHD, December 2010), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/128176/Landmines-LR-Policy-Brief-Dec2010.pdf>; Marie Nilsson, Virginie Rozes, and Julianne Garcia, "Gender and Land Release: The Responsibility of the Mine-Action Community", *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction* 13, no. 2 (2009), <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol13/iss2/6>

⁵⁸ UNDP, "The Work Might Be Hard, but I Do It Willingly.", 1 April 2024, <https://www.undp.org/stories/work-might-be-hard-i-do-it-willingly>; Biscaglia et al., "Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action | Powerful Linkages for Progress across the SDGs", 6.

⁵⁹ Biscaglia et al., "Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action | Powerful Linkages for Progress across the SDGs", 7.

⁶⁰ Marion Provencher and Laura Biscaglia, "The Socioeconomic Impact of Employing Female Deminers in Sri Lanka - Key Findings" (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, June 2020), https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/uploads/gichd/GDEI/2_The_Socioeconomic_Impact_of_Employing_Female_Deminers_in_Sri_Lanka.pdf; "Empowering Women in Angola with Skills & Opportunity", The HALO Trust, <https://www.halotrust.org/news/international-womens-day-women-empowering-women/>

⁶¹ Jen Ross, "Growing Rural Women's Land Ownership across Colombia's Countryside", UN-Women, 29 July 2024, <https://data.unwomen.org/features/growing-rural-womens-land-ownership-across-colombias-countryside>

4. Conclusions and Reflections

It is clear that the newly adopted SRAAP presents a vital opportunity for the mine action and WPS communities to enhance collaboration and synergies. This paper has provided guidelines and recommendations for actions that can support the implementation of commitments made by States Parties in the SRAAP, while also furthering the goals of the WPS agenda. This paper suggests that a WPS approach to victim assistance has the potential to foster a more holistic understanding of mine action by going beyond the widely-known Participation pillar.

It is important to note that while a WPS approach to victim assistance has multiple advantages, it can also have potential drawbacks and create tensions. The focus on women and girls can be seen as exclusive; therefore, it is important that a WPS approach to victim assistance be inclusive of people of all genders. With both WPS and APMBC norms facing pushback, applying a WPS approach to APMBC victim assistance might be seen as overly ‘political’, potentially hindering collaboration. A WPS approach to victim assistance must acknowledge these concerns and engage with its critics. Organizing side events at multilateral conferences, as well as developing joint research and capacity-building initiatives that bridge both WPS and mine action, could help build understanding, foster dialogue, and promote coordinated responses.

At the national level, WPS national action plans are good opportunities to nurture these synergies, solidify the SRAAP commitments into concrete actions and indicators, streamline efforts, and prevent duplication of efforts.

Developing national action plans and strategies on mine action that incorporate victim assistance with a gender lens, and WPS national action plans establishing clear linkages with mine action (and vice versa), are good starting points.⁶² Likewise, States could include a dedicated WPS focal point in the development and implementation of national mine action plans, for example.⁶³

Stronger WPS integration into victim assistance policies and bringing survivors’ voices to the centre of this advocacy also begin with fostering collaborative spaces between WPS and mine action communities, where ‘cross-pollination’ of good practices, lessons learned, and shared expertise can flourish. This could be through joint initiatives such as conferences, declarations, research partnerships with academia, and programmes that address both WPS and mine action issues. National dialogues on humanitarian demining and victim assistance, regional conferences on advancing victim assistance implementation and cooperation, and the global conferences on victim assistance under the APMBC could also include sessions and side events on WPS.

To ensure meaningful and sustainable integration, victim assistance efforts must embrace diverse gender perspectives, engage critics through dialogue and joint initiatives, and build bridges between WPS and mine action at the national and international levels. Fostering shared spaces for learning, advocacy, and coordination will be key to translating commitments into action and strengthening support for all survivors.

⁶² While many States have already developed national mine action strategies that are gender-sensitive and include gender mainstreaming, not many States have done it in the opposite direction, adopting NAPs on WPS that are streamlined with mine action efforts. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and Ukraine are good examples as such. De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, “From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance”; Aguirre et al., “Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in Mine Action”.

⁶³ De Courcy Wheeler and Valette, “From Casualties to Care: Implementing Age- and Gender-Sensitive Victim Assistance”, 49.

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The Gender and Disarmament Programme contributes to the strategic goals of achieving gender equality in disarmament forums and effectively applying gender perspectives in disarmament processes. It encompasses original research, outreach activities and capacity-building to support disarmament stakeholders in translating gender awareness into practical action.

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About the Author

Dr. Bénédicte Santoire is a researcher and independent consultant. She holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Ottawa. Her areas of expertise encompass the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, gender, peacebuilding, and humanitarian disarmament and action, with a particular focus on Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and the Balkans. Dr. Santoire has undertaken various consultancy projects with NGOs, civil society, international organizations, and United Nations agencies.

Notes

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Cover Image: Landmine survivors play a basketball match at the 2023 Third Global Conference on Victim Assistance for the Mine Ban Convention in Phnom Penh. Credit: AP Mine Ban Convention.



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Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva, Switzerland

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