

Country Coalitions

to promote the implementation of the
Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)



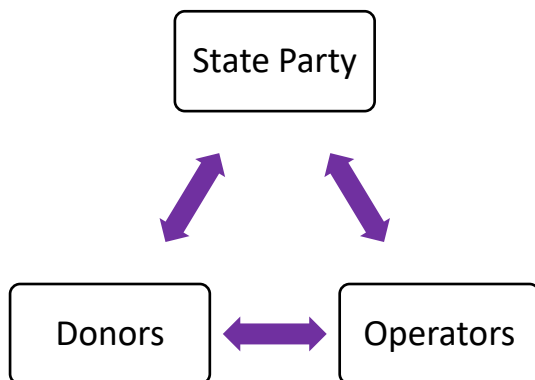
**CONVENTION
ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS**



A key component of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is the commitment to international cooperation and assistance and the effective implementation of Article 6. Matching needs of affected States Parties with offers from donor States requires effective coordination amongst donors, operators and the affected State Party. To enhance this coordination, the Country Coalition Concept was introduced during the Seventh Meeting of States Parties in 2017 and has so far been successfully implemented in Botswana, Lebanon and Montenegro. This brochure provides an introduction to the Concept with the aim to encourage States Parties seeking assistance to consider setting up Country Coalitions and donors to act as 'Champion States' to support countries fulfilling their timebound obligations under the Convention.

Structure and advantages

The main aim of Country Coalitions is to enhance in-country coordination between the State Party with obligations that have specified deadlines under the Convention, donors and operators or other implementing partners. The Country Coalition is an institutionalised national platform for dialogue and coordination that brings together all stakeholders on a regular basis to coordinate their efforts in a voluntary and informal manner, discuss priorities and needs, and exchange information. An independent facilitator or moderator can be appointed to enable dialogue, in particular when addressing contentious issues. This trilateral relationship, in which all actors interact with each other, can be visualised in the figure below.



Country Coalitions are an ideal format to support States Parties in fulfilling their timebound Article 3 (stockpile destruction) and Article 4 (clearance and risk education) obligations under the Convention. Fulfilling these obligations often require a multitude of stakeholders working together for a prolonged period. The Country Coalition provides a platform for this multi-stakeholder and multi-year collaboration to achieve the timely, effective and efficient in-country implementation of the Convention. While Country Coalitions have thus far focused on the fulfilment of Article 3 and 4 obligations, the set-up of a Country Coalition can also contribute to enhancing the delivery of victim assistance in line with Article 5 of the Convention. Moreover, the format is flexible and can be tailored to the specific needs of the State Party and vary in size, as long as all relevant actors are at the table. A Country Coalition does not necessarily require extra funding to be successful; it is about using the available funds more efficiently and with better coordination, as a result of constructive involvement of all the key stakeholders exchanging information.

Fulfilling a timebound obligations: A perspective from Montenegro

On 21 July 2020, Montenegro and Norway successfully completed an international cooperation project under Article 6 of the CCM, through the establishment of a Country Coalition. At a conference held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, officials from the Directorate for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro (MOI) announced that the MOI had taken over the role of the National Mine Action Centre. Representatives of the Norwegian operator Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) begun intensive consultation with the MOI. NPA also organized training for the MOI officers on performing quality control in clearing terrain contaminated with cluster munition remnants. Communication continued between the governments of Montenegro and Norway which resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the MOI and NPA in 2015. As a contracting party, Montenegro committed itself, with the aim of co-financing, to fulfilling the obligation to destroy cluster munition remnants and perform external quality control. Other activities were conducted by NPA with the funding of the Norwegian Government. The purpose of such an arrangement was to reduction of donor's costs and to enable active participation and national ownership of the host country. In that regard, the MOI was obliged to conduct the final quality control and hand over the released land to civilians or enterprises for safe future use. The successful partnership between Montenegro and the Norwegian operator resulted in the completion of all operations within the set deadline and the fulfilment of all Montenegro's obligations under Article 4 of the CCM. This Country Coalition was characterized by mutual trust, national ownership, open partnership and transparency.

Experience shows that Country Coalitions are particularly useful for policy development and discussions on technical topics. Policy discussions could focus on the review or collaborative development of national mine action strategies or the preparation and implementation of extension requests, and donor coordination and tasks prioritization. Discussion on more technical and operational topics, such as survey and land release and national mine action standards, can also be held under the Coalition. Irrespective of the issue, open and transparent dialogue is crucial in identifying and overcoming obstacles and ensure more efficient and effective implementation of the Convention.

The advantages of a Country Coalition can be summarised as follows:

- Assists States in reaching their targets by supporting timely, effective and efficient in-country implementation of the Convention;
- Provides an effective platform for in-country coordination between donors, operators and the affected State Party;
- Functions as a 'feedback loop' for implementation and monitoring of the national mine action strategy and/or extension request
- Facilitates the exchange of operational experiences, sharing of country-specific information and relevant updates among all actors;
- Enhances national ownership and commitment to speedy completion;
- Increases transparency and efficiency, which is beneficial for donor trust;
- Allows for better monitoring of progress;
- Increases donor awareness and engagement;
- Encourages and coordinates resource mobilization; and
- Addresses legal and bureaucratic challenges faced by operators and donors can be addressed in a constructive manner.

Set up and roles

Setting up a Country Coalition requires first and foremost the full commitment of the State Party with timebound obligations under the Convention. Demonstrating national ownership is essential and critical, as the success of any Country Coalition is dependent on the national authority

of the State Party's willingness to engage in an inclusive and transparent manner with all stakeholders.

While the initiative of setting up a Country Coalition should be the State Party's, donors also play a key role. Thus far, all Country Coalitions under the CCM have greatly benefitted from a 'Champion State', in the form of a donor State that takes the lead in supporting the affected State Party with setting up the Country Coalition. Other donors should also actively contribute in support of the Country Coalition, by actively engaging in the meetings to coordinate their efforts and exchange information.

Operators active in the State party with time bound obligations under the Convention play a crucial role in a Country Coalition. Through their work in the field, they can provide a clear picture of the operational context, support the planning, help to identify land release options, commit to coordinate efforts, follow direction of the national authority, and provide resources to achieve national priorities.

A Country Coalition can benefit from a neutral and external facilitator. Expert organizations can encourage and ensure honest and open communication as well as contribute to informed and evidence-based discussions. The role of these facilitators can be instrumental to the success of a Country Coalition.

Location and frequency

Where possible (and where safety and security permit), a Country Coalition should take place in the country at least twice yearly, or, where needed, each quarter. Experience has shown that it can be beneficial for summary and action points from Country Coalition meetings to be circulated to all participants. National authorities may also choose to circulate updates on action points mid-term between meetings, especially if these are biannual. This can help demonstrate continuity and progress between the meetings of the Country Coalition.

The clearance operator perspective on Country Coalitions

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has actively participated in Country Coalition-style forums in several countries in which we operate, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Montenegro, and Tajikistan. As a non-governmental demining organization, we have seen progress in survey and clearance efforts benefit significantly from the establishment of such in-country coalitions.

Focusing on NPA's experience in Lebanon as an example, a "Mine Action Forum" (equivalent to a Country Coalition and addressing both cluster munition remnants and landmines) was established in 2018, in partnership between the Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC) and Norway. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) served as a neutral facilitator of the Mine Action Forum meetings, with UNDP designated as a secretariat to follow up and develop progress reports between forum meetings. Mine Action Review participated in the establishment of the forum and helped identify key challenges in survey and clearance to be collectively discussed. Mine Action Forums in Lebanon are attended by all mine action stakeholders, including LMAC, UNDP, national and international clearance operators, and donors.



The forum, which meets twice a year, has led to several positive developments, which clearance operators believe will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of land release efforts, including CCM Article 4 implementation. These include the establishment of quarterly Technical Working Groups (TWGs); enhancements to land release methodology, which have been enshrined in the revised National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and which include a focus on evidence-based survey, and the piloting and subsequent adoption of technical survey for cluster munition remnants. Like Country Coalition forums in other countries, the Mine Action Forum in Lebanon has provided an excellent vehicle for all stakeholders to collectively engage in open and honest dialogue, sharing information, learning lessons, and identifying and overcoming challenges together on the path to completion of clearance.

Other treaty obligations

The Country Coalition concept is closely related in concept and delivery to the Individualised Approach and most recently the National Mine Action Platform approach under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). These approaches seek to establish a framework for the exchange of information and effective coordination of affected States Parties, donors and operators, in order to advance implementation of relevant treaty obligations. States Parties with obligations under both the CCM and APMBC should therefore explore synergies in setting up a framework best suitable for their particular situation.

How to create a country coalition

Donors are well-placed to support the establishment of in-country dialogues. Embassies are the perfect convenors, and do **not** have to be mine action experts. A “champion donor” can contact the national mine action authority in a country where they are supporting mine action, and propose to bring together all stakeholders represented in the country (donor embassies, humanitarian demining organisations and national authorities) as a way to support national efforts. The purpose is to discuss common interests in increasing progress in clearance as well as experiences and remaining challenges in an open atmosphere. Demining organisations are well-positioned to point to the real challenges and barriers to progress in implementation in a particular country. However, since they depend on the goodwill of national authorities for tasking allocations, they may be reluctant to bring up sensitive issues. A third party may hence be needed to bring such issues to the attention of the national authority. In some countries, UNDP plays a coordinating role in the area of mine action and may be a co-convenor. It is vital that **all** stakeholders are represented in in-country dialogue, including the operators. Experience has shown that dialogue at “technical” level is most successful in order to avoid political ceremony and national prestige taking precedence. It is also useful to bring in a “neutral” moderator to lead discussions and formulate action points. The Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Disarmament (GICHD) is well-placed to perform such a role. Country Coalition meetings which take place in-country, for instance, twice a year, have great potential for creating win-win situations since 1) increased knowledge on the part of donors may translate into increased political and/or financial support, 2) enhanced status for the national mine action authority may improve its ability and willingness to perform according to international standards, and 3) obstacles to efficient use of resources by demining operators may be removed.



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