

## **Intervention on Risk Education and the Impact of Funding Cuts in Lebanon**

*Convention on Cluster Munitions Intersessional meetings*

*Geneva, 7-8 April 2025*

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Thanks to the presidency and the General Status coordinators for including risk education among the key challenges of the day, and to GICHD and HI for their excellent presentations on the benefits and best practices of risk education. The CMC has a short statement on the impact of the reduction of funding for RE in Lebanon, which was prepared by the CMC campaigner from Lebanon but unfortunately, she had to leave early, so I will read it in her place.

As the previous speakers laid out, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) is a life-saving intervention, essential for protecting communities in post-conflict regions and more important than ever in the context of ongoing conflicts. It empowers individuals with the knowledge to avoid deadly hazards, empowers Communities in conflict-affected areas who are often the first line of defense in identifying and reporting UXOs, and supports long-term development. In countries like Lebanon—still grappling with the legacy of war—risk education is not optional. It is a necessity.

Lebanon's complex post-conflict environment has left vast areas contaminated by cluster munition remnants and other ERW, particularly in rural regions and zones affected by displacement. Children, returnees, and marginalized communities remain highly vulnerable, often unaware of the danger posed by seemingly innocuous objects. Effective risk education is their first line of defense, especially where clearance operations have slowed.

Despite Lebanon's well-established mine action sector and the dedication of national actors, significant challenges persist. Cuts in international funding—especially from key donors such as the United States—have disrupted long-term programs and placed an increased burden on local NGOs, which often lack the capacity to scale up or sustain outreach. As clearance operations decrease, the demand for targeted, adaptable risk education grows. In many regions, it is now the only available protection against daily threats.

The consequences of underfunded RE are stark: rising casualties, increased psychological trauma, and hindered economic recovery. Without sufficient investment, the most vulnerable—including displaced families and children in remote areas—will continue to be at risk. Existing infrastructure limitations and a lack of digital outreach tools in Lebanon further compound these challenges.

The way forward requires renewed international commitment. Lebanon urgently needs support to strengthen community-led RE initiatives, adapt strategies to evolving realities, and ensure coordination between national authorities, NGOs, and local leaders. Risk education must not be treated as an afterthought and should not be the first area cut when funding is reduced. It is a critical pillar of humanitarian mine action and a prerequisite for peace, safety, and sustainable development.

The cost of inaction is measured in lives. Let us act now—before more lives are lost to risks we already know how to prevent.

Thank you.