

Mine Action Programme of Guinea-Bissau

Mine Action in Guinea-Bissau: Challenges and needs in implementation

Wednesday, 22 June 2022

I. Introduction and participants

On 22 June 2022, Guinea-Bissau and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with the support of the Implementation Support Unit, invited states and civil society representatives to engage in an open and frank discussion regarding Guinea-Bissau's needs and challenges in implementing its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, focused in particular on Guinea-Bissau's current extension request and implementation efforts to complete its mine clearance commitments as soon as possible.

Participants received a package including an invitation and an agenda, together with Guinea-Bissau's presentation and a backgrounder on the status of implementation (attached). These documents will also be made available on Guinea-Bissau's country page of the Convention website¹.

The Individualised Approach was held in a hybrid format on the margins of the 20-22 June 2022 Intersessional Meetings.

II. Participation

States: Australia, France, Japan, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sudan, Thailand, United States

Organisations: European Union, GICHD, HALO Trust, Humanity, and Inclusion, ICBL, MAG, Mine Action Review, NPA

III. Overview of the Guinea-Bissau's remaining challenges and needs

Welcome remarks and an overview of the individualised approach was provided by **Ms. Nagai Nana**, First Secretary, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, and Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation. Following introductory remarks, **Mr. Nautan Mancabu**, Director of the National Mine Action Coordination Centre of Guinea-Bissau (CAAMI) provided a presentation on the situation in Guinea-Bissau concerning implementation of Article 5.

Presentation by CAAMI

Mr. Mancabu offered a historical timeline of contamination in Guinea-Bissau (presentation attached) indicating that the CAAMI was created in 2001, following ratification by Guinea-Bissau of the Convention, to address contamination. The CAAMI is under the Secretary of State of Fatherland Freedom Fighters and the Ministry of Défense and has 17 staff members. The Government of Guinea-Bissau provides CAAMI \$40'000 USD a year for its operations. This amount, unfortunately, is insufficient and the CAAMI is working with the government to explore the provision of additional funding. Overall, lack of resources is the greatest challenge faced by CAAMI.

Mr. Mancabu indicated that while in 2012 Guinea-Bissau declared completion of implementation of its Article 5 obligations, casualties continued to be reported following the declaration of completion

¹ <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/en/membership/guinea-bissau/>

including a total of 13 accidents with 73 victims in 7 administrative sectors of Guinea Bissau. In response to these accidents, HUMAID, the national mine action operator, carried out survey and recorded 9 confirmed hazardous areas measuring approximately 1'000'000 square meters, 43 suspected hazardous areas with a total unknown area, three spot clearance tasks that need to be address and 5 battle areas containing significant items of unexploded ordnance. Available information on contamination needs to be studies and resurvey needs to take place to ensure validity of the information.

Mr. Mancabu indicated that due to this situation, in 2021 Guinea-Bissau submitted a request for extension of its mine clearance deadline under Article 5 to develop a detailed plan and submitted a subsequent request. During the initial extension period, Guinea-Bissau requested support from the ISU who connected CAAMI with international organizations including MAG and HALO Trust. In 2022 Guinea-Bissau submitted a new extension request for 24 months until the end of December 2024 with the objective of preparing the groundwork for non-technical survey and subsequent survey and clearance activities as necessary.

Given that survey carried out by HUMAID was not carried out in line with the most up-to-date International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), there is a need to carry out Non-Technical Survey (NTS) to evaluate the extent of contamination and the type of contamination. To do this well, CAAMI will elaborate National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and will work to recuperate data which is currently locked in obsolete computers at the CAAMI to better understand the baseline of information available.

Mr. Mancabu indicated that in the next 6 months CAAMI will need to mobilize the resources to ensure necessary material and financial support for implementation, including an information management system to support an evidence-based and well documented process for implementation. The CAAMI will also carry out Mine Risk Education activities to reduce the risk of accidents. If necessary, Guinea Bissau will submit a new request for extension with a plan for completion by 31 March 2024.

Regarding funding, Guinea-Bissau indicated that in 2022 it will require a total of \$1,276,000 USD and for 2023 and 2024 Guinea-Bissau will need to mobilize \$4,412,000 USD. A more detailed budget is in the attached presentation. Guinea-Bissau highlighted that the biggest risk to implementation is political instability and lack of resources.

Presentation by HUMAID

The Director of Operations of HUMAID, **Mr. Marcos Aurelio Jose Gomes**, offered a presentation on HUMAID, a national organization created in June 1998/99 to support the clearance of mined areas in Guinea-Bissau. Mr. Gomes indicated that until 2012 HUMAID had a total of 62 people including demining technicians, EOD experts, Community liaison officers and administrative staff. The organization was funded by the national government and supported by international partners, including the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, UNDP, United States, and the United Kingdom. Over the period of 2000-2012, HUMAID addressed over 4 million square meters and destroyed over 3,560 anti-personnel mines, 163 antitank mines, 146 sea mines, 48'225 unexploded ordnance and 111,079 small calibre ammunitions. In total, HUMAID was able to address a large area benefiting approximately 350,450 children, women and men and providing safe areas for hospitals, agriculture, energy, schools, and access to water.

Mr. Gomes indicated that they retained a lot of experience and have human resources and capacity as well as context specific knowledge concerning the remaining threat. Mr. Gomes indicated that their main challenge is the lack of financing and they require both material and financial support including for demining, EOD, GIS equipment and vehicles (spare parts) as well as resources to train new technicians as well as to carry out refresher training for existing staff.

Presentation by Mines Advisory Group

Ms. Melanie Broquet, Regional Humanitarian Mine Action Manager – Sahel and West Africa of Mines Advisory Group (MAG) indicated that MAG is currently supporting Guinea-Bissau in the implementation of the plan presented by Guinea-Bissau in their extension request. In 2022, MAG carried out a technical visit to learn more about the context of contamination being faced by Guinea-Bissau. The visit helped determine two key aspects of the situation in Guinea Bissau, the level and type of contamination and the capacity required to address it.

- Concerning contamination there are still questions that need to be answered concerning the remaining threat. Acquiring greater clarity on the remaining contamination is fundamental for the development of a national strategy and to fully understand the necessary resources to address it.
- Concerning capacity, since declaring completion in 2012 much of the equipment has become obsolete including vehicles and the information managements system. Today the CAAMI does not have internet and lacks other resources to implement its mandate. Nonetheless, the centre and its national partners do have human resources which require refresher trainings to ensure they are up to date with new developments in the sector.

Ms. Broquet indicated that at the moment resources are limited with contributions from SIDA and Norway which has supported the visit by MAG technical experts. At present a small project has been launched to look more closely into the information on casualties that have been registered since 2012. This effort includes supporting CAAMI in recuperate important data from old computers. To date, MAG has not been able to identify a technician in Guinea-Bissau that can provide this support.

Ms. Broquet indicated that it held discussions with national partner HUMAID to discuss the methodology applied to carry out prior surveys which led to the identification of mined areas and that a visit was carried organized by CAAMI in June to visit previously cleared battle areas and previously cleared mined area to gain a greater appreciation for the context of contamination. MAG is also currently supporting CAAMI in securing support for the implementation of the plan developed by Guinea-Bissau.

Ms. Broquet indicated that the first step is to mobilize resources and that project proposals have been submitted to SIDA and Norway MFA. MAG is also supporting CAAMI in networking at the international level to increase the visibility of the challenges faced by Guinea-Bissau. Likewise, MAG will support CAAMI in lobbying the government of Guinea-Bissau to provide additional support. The second step is to support the development of capacity in terms of the national authorities, a strategy, development of NMAS in line with IMAS, the carrying out of evidence-based land release processes, and particular an NTS, and support the establishment of an appropriate information management system. MAG will support CAAMI in carrying out an of priorities.

Ms. Broquet indicated that through their support CAAMI could take a step-by-step approach in building a capacity which can increase depending on the results of the survey.

IV. Summary of interventions and discussions

HALO Trust indicated that it has been working in Guinea-Bissau for a number of years on weapons ammunition management. HALO's understanding is similar to that presented by CAAMI and the plan presented by Guinea-Bissau seems sound. HALO Trust is ready and willing to support CAAMI in whatever way it can including in a logistic, technical, or quality management capacity working with MAG and other NGOs in country. We will continue our discussion at a national level with CAAMI and partners. The plan looks tangible and achievable and is a great starting point.

The Sir Bobby Charlton foundation asked a question concerning the provision of Victim Assistance in Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau indicated that after 2012 there has been no support to victims. In 2021

the ICRC left Guinea-Bissau where it support the only rehabilitation Centre in Guinea-Bissau which supported mine survivors and persons with disability in Guinea-Bissau as well as survivors from neighbouring Senegal. Guinea-Bissau indicated that it is in the process of seeing who can support the centre in place of the ICRC. There is also currently no support for victim assistance at the national or international level.

Guinea-Bissau indicated that while we are here speaking primarily about mine clearance, it is critical that we pay attention to assistance to victims. While there are mines in the ground there will always be victims and survivors in need of support to be reintegrated into society. In this regard, mine clearance needs to be accompanied by victim assistance.

To be reintegrated into society we need rehabilitation and for rehabilitation we need equipment and technology. Until 2021 we had support from the ICRC but we want to appeal to everyone to support our victim assistance effort for survivors and all person with disability in Guinea-Bissau.

Norwegian People's Aid thanked Guinea-Bissau for their presentation and asked Guinea-Bissau is there was a national mine action law in place for mine action in Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau indicated that there is a national mine action law in place with the CAAMI having been created through a presidential decree.

GICHD thanked Guinea-Bissau for its transparency and asked if Guinea-Bissau had the type of training and a budget for training. Guinea-Bissau indicated that they had developed a detailed budget which included training.

Norway thanked Guinea-Bissau for the detailed presentation and transmitted their deepest sympathy for the current situation, having identified new contamination following their declaration of completion. Norway indicated that it was encouraged by Guinea-Bissau taking the opportunity presented by the Individualised Approach. Norway indicated that it has recently decided to support MAG's Sahel programme including the programme in Guinea-Bissau and want to simply commend Guinea-Bissau and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance for the hosting of the individualised approach and hope this is the beginning of greater donor engagement

Netherlands thanked Guinea-Bissau for an insightful presentation and asked why it too so much time after the initial accidents were reported following completion for Guinea-Bissau to submit an extension request. Guinea-Bissau indicated that after 2012, there was no international support and that the Director at the time, as well as the one that replaced him, abandoned the centre. The Director indicated that when he arrived there was nothing and that he had to restart everything again. CAAMI staff had told him that it would be difficult to re-establish CAAMI but he has been doing his best to raise awareness to garner national and international support for the programme.

Thailand thanked the director for his presentation. Thailand indicated that through bilateral cooperation it has established a prosthetic and trauma clinic in Senegal and that this could be an opportunity for synergies. Thailand indicated that Guinea-Bissau could contact them and the Embassy of Thailand in Dakar to see what is possible and in what way Thailand could support Guinea- Bissau in victim assistance. Thailand further indicated that the challenge in Guinea-Bissau seems to be systemic and there seems to be a need for strengthening capacity. This seems not to be just in demining but also with development issues and Thailand in our capacity as a developing country we can share with you some of our lessons in how to build domestic capacity and how to sustain the efforts and self-strengthening. Thailand committed to put Guinea-Bissau in touch with the Embassy of Thailand in Dakar.

Mine Action Review asked Guinea-Bissau if there was any data concerning the size of the areas discovered by HUMAID. Mr. Mancabu indicated that, as indicated in the presentation, the 9 confirmed hazardous areas measure approximately 1'000'000 square meters and the 43 suspected hazardous areas need to be revisited to assess the extent of the challenge.

V. Closing remarks

In closing, **Mr. Mancabu** expressed his thanks to the Chair for her facilitation of the event, the ISU for its support and all the participants for their attendance. He thanked the donor countries and organizations for their engagement and expressed the hope that they can continue their support. Mr. Nautan Mancabu reaffirmed the commitment of Guinea-Bissau to work with donors and partners and all those willing to support. Mr. Mancabu encouraged participants to support Guinea-Bissau in carrying out their survey plans.

The Chair thanked Mr. Nautan Mancabu and participants for their active engagement and expressed the hope that the Individualised Approach meeting will help Guinea-Bissau in further implementing its work.

The Chair mentioned that a report of the meeting will be shared with all participants aiming to provide further impetus for engagement and follow-up on the discussion held at the meeting. The report will also be posted on Guinea-Bissau's country page on the Convention's website.

The Chair thanked all those who attended and encouraged participants to look at all areas in which they can support the efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

For further information or clarification on the Mine Action Programme in the Guinea-Bissau please direct all queries to: **Mr. Nautan Mancabu**, Director of the National Mine Action Coordination Centre of Guinea-Bissau (CAAMI) at caami1792001@gmail.com .