



## Policy Paper

# Harnessing the Youth Dividend in Resolving the Intersecting Mine and Climate Change Action



**MINES  
ACTION  
CANADA**



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# Harnessing the Youth Dividend in Resolving the Intersecting Mine and Climate Change Action

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## OVERVIEW

In the face of global challenges such as climate change, conflicts, and landmine contamination, it is essential to explore innovative approaches that integrate efforts to address these issues. This policy brief outlines strategic recommendations that leverage the role of youth in mine action and climate security in Africa. This policy brief is a product of a groundbreaking virtual webinar convened under the Climate Security (CLIMSEC) Africa initiative that spotlighted the complex intersection of climate change, mine action, and peace in Africa in January 2025. Hosted by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) in collaboration with Mines Action Canada (MAC), the event fostered an intergenerational dialogue that underscored the importance of unified action to confront cascading environmental and security challenges across the continent.

Africa faces a perfect storm of challenges, where climate change acts as a “threat multiplier,” exacerbating resource conflicts, displacing communities, and threatening livelihoods. These issues are further complicated by the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance, which not only endanger lives but also hinder development and peacebuilding efforts. This policy brief summarizes the interconnected issues of mines and climate change, highlighting the role of young people and why Africa and indeed other parts of the world are yet to reap the youth dividends in climate and mine action and offers recommendations that can foster integrated and inclusive approaches for transformative action.

*“When climate change meets Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), it creates another layer of vulnerability for communities that are already suffering. This underscores the urgent need to address these compounded challenges holistically – **Dr Joyce Takaindisa ~ East Africa Climate Security Hub Lead – Alliance Biodiversity-CIAT***

## NEXUS ISSUES BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND MINE ACTION

The interconnectedness between climate change and mine action creates a complex web of challenges that must be addressed holistically. As climate-related events intensify, regions already afflicted by landmines face heightened vulnerabilities and cascading effects. This nexus encompasses several critical issues:

- 1. Increased Vulnerability:** Climate change exacerbates the risks associated with landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs). Floods, droughts, and other severe weather events can displace communities and alter landscapes, potentially exposing previously hidden mines or making them more accessible. Displacement often leads to the movement of populations into mine-affected areas, increasing the likelihood of injuries.
- 2. Environmental Degradation:** Demining activities can result in environmental impacts, such as soil degradation and loss of biodiversity. Conversely, climate change and its effects on ecosystems can disturb minefields and exacerbate pollution from remnants of war. Climate-induced environmental degradation may also hinder the capabilities needed for effective mine action.

- 3. Cumulative Impact on Security:** The combination of climate-induced displacement and landmines intensifies security risks. In regions where both issues are prevalent, communities face higher rates of violence and social unrest as the struggle for resources and safety becomes more pronounced.
- 4. Resource Scarcity:** Climate change leads to resource scarcity, as water, arable land, and other essential resources become increasingly limited. This scarcity can create competition among communities, potentially leading to conflicts in mine-affected regions. Moreover, the focus on immediate humanitarian needs may detract from investment in comprehensive mine action programs.
- 5. Impact on Local Economies:** The interplay between climate change and mine action adversely affects local economies as land contaminated by mines remains unutilized, halting agricultural and economic activities that are essential for community resilience.

*“Climate-induced displacement intersects with the presence of landmines, creating heightened security and human rights issues. We must integrate mine action and climate adaptation efforts to holistically address these compounding challenges.”*

**Walter Kasempa ~ Migration Youth Ambassador Southern Africa with African Union (AU)/International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

## **WHAT WOULD AN IDEAL ROLE OF YOUTH IN MINE ACTION AND CLIMATE SECURITY LOOK LIKE?**

There is a general observation that de-mining action is a preserve of the military and other expert groups. Equally, in many parts of the world, demining actions are devoid of youth participation and contribution. However, Africa's youth are increasingly recognized as vital stakeholders in addressing the challenges of climate change and landmines. Young people represent a significant portion of the population and possess unique insights and capabilities that are essential for sustainable solutions. Youth engagement can drive innovative approaches to mine action and climate adaptation, creating a shared vision for a peaceful future. Young people's insights are instrumental in:

- a. Providing education and training programs equips youth with the knowledge needed to understand the complexities of mine action and environmental issues.
- b. Leading in innovations by leveraging technology, such as drones and mobile applications, to enhance demining efforts and improve safety.
- c. Effective leadership in policy advocacy requires ensuring the voices of most affected communities are heard in decision-making processes. This involves actively working to ensure that solutions reflect the realities and aspirations of these communities.
- d. Youth have played a demonstrated critical role in fostering community resilience to climate change and conflict, addressing vulnerabilities through local engagement and initiatives. These contributions need to be reflected in reality and practice

But the above roles of youth on these nexus issues are not hypothetical, there is deeply seated evidence of the transformative work of youth, a demonstration of the potential that remains untapped

- In **Azerbaijan**, the youth leading Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban LandMines (ACBL) demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of environmental impacts from landmines, including soil contamination, water pollution from non-decomposing mines, and air pollution from demining activities. Their advocacy has led to the inclusion of environmental issues in the Fifth Review Conference on Mine Action.
- In **Colombia**, the Colombia Campaign to Ban Land Mines highlights the intersection between mine action and indigenous communities' access to resources, particularly medicinal plants and agricultural land. While this shows an understanding of environmental implications, the focus remains predominantly on peace-building and justice rather than comprehensive environmental or climate security strategies.
- In **Ghana**, the Foundation for Security Development in Africa (FOSDA) demonstrates the potential for youth engagement in prevention and advocacy, but funding limitations and a lack of specific climate security initiatives restrict the scope of environmental considerations in their programs.
- In **Afghanistan**, the Development Ability Organization (DAO) shows tangible results in environmental recovery through the restoration of agricultural land in specific regions like Kunar and Uruzgan. This experience directly links mine clearance to improved food security and agricultural productivity.

These cases collectively indicate that while youth involvement in mine action is strong in areas like awareness and education, climate security remains an underdeveloped aspect of the field. Common challenges include limited funding for environmental initiatives, restricted ability to influence state-controlled operations, and few specific strategies for post-clearance environmental restoration. The examples suggest the need for greater integration of climate security considerations into mine action work, along with increased training and resources for environmental aspects of mine clearance and restoration.

The above roles can only become apparent through the establishment of formal intergenerational dialogue and capacity-building platforms at local and national levels combining traditional and modern environmental practices, e.g., Mine Action Canada (Mine Action Fellows program) and the Nairobi Summer School on Climate Justice (NSSCJ). These intergenerational dialogues must prioritize to providing gender-sensitive risk education that recognizes the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in mine and climate change action, complemented by exchange programs across regions for experiential and technical skills transfer between youth communities.



*“Drones play a vital role in enhancing demining efforts by improving safety, efficiency, and accuracy. By empowering young innovators and integrating advanced technologies, we can address these global challenges more effectively.”*

**– Joshua Tetteh Ayayi, Programmes Director Love Aid Foundation**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ADDRESSING THE NEXUS ISSUES OF MINE ACTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

To address the critical nexus between climate change and mine action effectively, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Integrated Policy Frameworks:** Develop comprehensive policies that address both climate change adaptation and mine action simultaneously. This integration can ensure that climate risks are considered in demining processes and that demining efforts account for environmental and climate considerations. More so, these national and regional policies related to mine action and climate security should explicitly include youth representation in policy formulation processes.
- 2. Data Collection and Research Initiatives:** Support youth led processes to conduct extensive research to map the impacts of climate change on mine-affected regions, focusing on vulnerable communities. Data collection should include the environmental impacts of both climate change and mine action. Establishing disaggregated data can help create targeted responses informed by specific community needs.
- 3. Community Resilience Programs:** Implement youth-led, community-based resilience programs that incorporate both mine action and climate adaptation strategies. These programs should focus on enabling communities to reclaim and restore land affected by both mines and climate change, providing a dual benefit of safety and sustainability.
- 4. Multidisciplinary Approach in Training:** Implement comprehensive training programs that equip youth with skills necessary for effective engagement in mine action and climate security. This entails engaging youth and community members in training that spans both environmental management and mine safety, advocacy, and use of technologies for monitoring and policymaking equipping them with diverse skills that will foster a comprehensive understanding of the links between climate resilience and mine action.
- 5. Collaboration with Environmental Organizations:** Forge partnerships between mine action agencies and environmental organizations to develop integrated frameworks that leverage expertise from both sectors. Collaborative efforts can foster community-led initiatives that address the dual challenges effectively.
- 6. Resource Allocation for Climate and Mine Action Linkages:** Allocate funding towards youth-led initiatives that highlight the interplay of climate change and mine action. Optimizing on

youth leadership in AI and digital world, this can include support for innovative technologies that facilitate both demining operations at grassroots level and environmental monitoring, ensuring more sustainable practices.

- 7. Community Engagement in Mine Clearance and Climate Vigilance:** Prioritize community engagement in discussions around mine action and climate change. Empowering local populations to identify and advocate for their needs ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate and contextually relevant.
- 8. Promotion of Gender-Sensitive Approaches:** Formulate gender-sensitive policies that recognize and address the unique roles of young men and women in mine action and climate initiatives. Strategies should aim to empower young women and ensure their participation at all levels.
- 9. Establishment of Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing Platforms:** Create structured platforms for dialogue that allow for the sharing of experiences and knowledge between young people and senior practitioners. Programs like the Nairobi Summer School on Climate Justice (NSSCJ) and Mine Action Fellows (MAF) can serve as models for these initiatives to foster collaborative problem-solving while advancing cross-regional sharing.

*The recommendations we generate today will be relevant if we are clear on where the mine and climate security hotspots are located and we are intentional in customizing solutions that respond to a diversity of scenarios, **Charles Mwangi, Head of Programs & Research, PACJA***

## CONCLUSION

As Africa contends with the dual challenges of climate change and mine contamination, the call for comprehensive, inclusive and integrative approaches becomes increasingly urgent. By leveraging the unique capacities of youth and addressing the nexus between climate action and mine clearance, stakeholders can forge pathways toward sustainable development. It is imperative to invest in the strengths of young people, encourage intergenerational knowledge exchange, and engage communities in proactive solutions—ensuring a secure and thriving future for all.

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