

Mine Action Fellows Report: **2025 Activities**



The Mine Action Fellows delivering their statement to the Convention on Cluster Munitions 13th Meeting of States Parties.

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Part 1. Summary of Activities

The Mine Action Fellows are a network of dedicated and experienced youth leaders who Mines Action Canada (MAC) supports in various capacities. The program is open to any youth who are working, volunteering, or interested in mine action,¹ with a particular focus on young women from landmine and/or cluster munition affected countries. The Fellows receive monthly capacity building emails which keep them engaged and learning about disarmament, diplomacy, and leadership. Beyond these emails, the youth have opportunities to apply for small grants and participate in Forums which MAC organizes alongside relevant international meetings. The Forums give the Fellows the opportunity to learn how international meetings function, so that their valuable input can be heard by decision-makers. In 2025, Mines Action Canada hosted two Mine Action Fellows Forums in Geneva, Switzerland.



The Mine Action Fellows outside of the United Nations during the December Forum alongside the Mine Ban Treaty Meeting of States Parties.

“One key lesson I learned is that civil society’s influence is real and tangible, through sustained advocacy, coalition-building, and credible expertise. The ICBL and its member organizations play a decisive role in pushing states to act, comply, and lead (something we particularly saw on the issue of suspension). Also, I got to see and understand the power of how we tell the story of the legacy of landmines and survivors.

Part of the challenge the Treaty faces today is that many have forgotten why these weapons were banned in the first place, so our voices are needed to bring that memory back through more creative ways of telling the story.”

¹ Mine action comprises of 5 pillars of action to implement the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions or to address the harm caused by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war: victim assistance, clearance, mine risk education, advocacy, and stockpile destruction.

Part 2. September Forum

From September 14-20, five² of the Mine Action Fellows participated in a Forum held alongside the Convention on Cluster Munitions 13th Meeting of States Parties. During this week, the Fellows met with the Swiss delegation and the Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service, participated in leadership training sessions convened by MAC, observed Plenary sessions, and learned from civil society experts in clearance and monitoring. These activities gave the Fellows the opportunity to gain confidence and knowledge, as well as to share their valuable on-the-ground experience with State delegates.

The theme in the sessions outside of plenary was “No Excuses” and Mines Action Canada chose this theme for two reasons. First, we are living in a time when states are challenging the international laws and norms that have been around for decades, like the prohibition on landmines and cluster munitions. We need to remind them that there is no room for excuses in the Convention on Cluster Munitions and other international humanitarian disarmament treaties. Second, there are no excuses for not including young people in the decision making of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Young people will have to live with the decisions made by States Parties, so youth have the right to be heard - no excuses.

“Meeting other activists who share your beliefs and fight for the same things as you in other parts of the world is always invigorating. Speaking with States representatives helps us understand their logic and consequently helps us to have more confidence in lobbying in our own country. Furthermore, the learning sessions teach us even more about the world in the fight for disarmament; how such experienced people got to that point, and how we can work our way through it. In weeks like this, we can meet people we would hardly meet elsewhere.”



The Mine Action Fellows with the President of the 13th CCM Meeting, H.E. Ambassador Carlos D. Sorreta of the Philippines.

² The five Fellows were from Bosnia and Herzegovina (M), Brazil (F), Cambodia (M), the Philippines (F), and the United States (F).

Major Activities in the Agenda

Please refer to Appendix 1 in the annex to see the exact agenda the Fellows followed in September for the Convention on Cluster Munitions 13th Meeting of States Parties, including when they attended plenary sessions. Below is a detailed list which outlines the major activities that the Fellows took part in every day, aside from attending plenary sessions and side events.

“I believe the most valuable part of this experience is not just living it, but having ways to share it with others when we return to our countries and transform it into action. Contacts become partnerships: exchanges become ideas that become projects. It is in these spaces that we see that our work at home is not small and that every effort is important and can make a difference if we are committed.”

Tuesday:

- Introduction to the Forum and Lobbying: The Fellows learned about the week ahead and became familiar with how best to lobby government officials.
- Reception: The Fellows attended the reception at the end of the day along with government delegations and civil society experts, providing an excellent opportunity for networking.

Wednesday:

- Conflict Styles: The Fellows completed a reflective exercise on which conflict style they are more likely to use and how to navigate this type of conflict style.
- Statement drafting: The Fellows collaboratively worked on the youth statement to be delivered at the end of the week.
- Clearance Operations: Demining organizations shared their expertise on survey and clearance which was followed by a Q&A.

Thursday:

- Meeting with United Nations Mine Action Service Director: The Fellows learned from the Director and shared their key messages based on their on-the-ground experience.
- Meeting with Switzerland: The Fellows shared their key messages with the Swiss delegation.
- The Cluster Munition Monitor: The Fellows heard from the researchers behind the Cluster Munition Monitor.

Friday:

- Difficult Conversations: A session on how to have effective conversations and how this can apply to lobbying and leadership.
- Statement Delivery: The Fellows addressed the Meeting of States Parties with the statement they drafted all week.

Part 3: December Forum Alongside the Mine Ban Treaty Meeting

From November 30-December 5, 17³ of the Mine Action Fellows participated in a Forum held alongside the Mine Ban Treaty's 22nd Meeting of States Parties. During this week, the Fellows presented at a side event hosted by Mines Action Canada, participated in leadership training sessions convened by MAC, observed plenary sessions, and learned from civil society experts in clearance, victim assistance, and monitoring. These activities gave the Fellows the opportunity to gain confidence and knowledge, as well as to share their valuable on-the-ground experience with State delegates. Like the September Forum, the theme in the sessions outside of plenary was “No Excuses”.



The Mine Action Fellows delivering their statement to the Mine Ban Treaty 22nd Meeting of States Parties.

Major Activities in the Agenda

Please refer to Appendix 2 in the annex to see the exact agenda the Fellows followed in December for the Mine Ban Treaty 22nd Meeting of States Parties, including when they attended plenary sessions. Below is a detailed list which outlines major activities the Fellows took part in every day, aside from attending plenary sessions and side events.

³ The 17 Fellows were from Argentina (F), Colombia (2 M, 2 F), Belgium (M), Brazil (2 F), Cambodia (F), Kenya (M), Nigeria (F), Norway (F), Tajikistan (F), the United States (F), Sri Lanka (F), Syria (M), and Zambia (M).

“The forum provided an excellent platform to engage in direct lobbying with state delegates, exchange ideas, and discuss key aspects of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, including universalization, transparency, clearance, risk education, victim assistance, and gender and diversity in mine action.”

Monday:

- Introduction to the Forum and Lobbying: The Fellows learned about the week ahead and became familiar with how best to lobby government officials.
- Meeting with Ireland: The Fellows met with the Irish delegation to share their key messages and expertise.
- Photography for Advocacy: The Fellows learned from photojournalist Giovanni Diffidenti on using photography to advance campaign goals.
- Reception: The Fellows attended the reception at the end of the day along with government delegations and civil society experts, providing an excellent opportunity for networking.

Tuesday:

- UNODA Meeting: The Fellows met with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to learn about their work and initiatives.
- The Landmine Monitor: The Fellows heard from the researchers behind the Landmine Monitor.

Wednesday:

- International Red Cross Committee: The Fellows met with the ICRC to learn about how they contribute to humanitarian disarmament from their unique position as a neutral party.
- Statement drafting: The Fellows collaboratively worked on their youth statement.
- Conflict Styles: The Fellows completed a reflective exercise on which conflict style they are most likely to use and how to navigate this type of conflict style.
- Difficult Conversations: A session on how to have effective conversations and how this can apply to lobbying and leadership.

Thursday:

- Hosting a Side Event: The Mine Action Fellows helped Mines Action Canada host a side event which featured four Fellows speaking to their expertise on implementing the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Clearance Operations: Demining organizations Mines Advisory Group and the Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines shared their expertise on clearance which was followed by a Q&A.
- Storytelling for Advocacy: The Fellows learned from the Director of Broken Courage, David Peck, about how to use storytelling to advance campaigning goals.

Friday:

- Victim Assistance: The Fellows learned from Alex Munyamababazi, a medical professional, campaigner, and landmine survivor from Uganda, about the key elements of victim assistance and how best to advocate for it.
- Statement Delivery: The Fellows addressed the Meeting of States Parties with the statement they drafted all week.

Part 4: Small Grants

In 2025, MAC funded two small grants which gave Fellows based in Uganda and Egypt the opportunity to implement their vision. The small grant program is an opportunity for Mine Action Fellows to design and implement a project within their community using funding from Mines Action Canada. This program is useful because even if their application is not accepted, it is still a good training opportunity for Fellows to create a workplan, describe the impact of this plan, and develop a working budget. If their application is accepted, then they have the chance to take the lead on implementation. Fellows are already working or volunteering in their communities, so they have a great understanding of what activities are needed. It is a great opportunity for Fellows to develop their leadership skills and make a difference in their community.

In Uganda, Mine Action Fellow Flavia worked with her organization Explosive Ordnance Network of Survivors (EONS) to deliver a letter to government officials. The letter urged the government to uphold victim assistance obligations and was presented to senior government officials, who pledged to present an endorsement letter to the President of Uganda. The small grant also allowed for additional activities including a meeting with the youth athletes involved in EONS' amputee soccer program to gather feedback from the letter presentation, and the development of brochures to share with survivors across the region.



Landmine survivors and members of Explosive Ordnance Network of Survivors Uganda present a letter to government officials with a small grant from Mines Action Canada.

In Egypt, Mine Action Fellow Cheikh worked with Senghor University to organize a session for master's students on how to incorporate mine action into their future development projects. The event brought together 50 graduate students from more than 10 countries, all of whom are studying to be future African executives. The training event transformed the attendees' perception that landmines were only a military problem, into an understanding that mine action is a cross-cutting development and human rights issue that they will have to manage as future executives. Through this small grant Cheikh built a sustainable network by establishing an informal working group moving forward and achieved pan-African capacity building by training 50 students on the importance of mine action in development activities.

Part 5. Online Learning

In addition to the Forums and small grants, all Mine Action Fellows receive a monthly email from MAC that will either provide information on relevant mine action news, improve professional skills and leadership development, and/or give updates on the MAF program. The emails are divided into cohorts so that Fellows who joined the program in 2025 receive their first welcome email in April and occasionally receive basic training emails. The Fellows are given the chance to have input on the type of content they would like to see in the emails, ensuring that the emails stay relevant and interesting to them.

See below for what the different cohorts learned about each month:

- **January:** How to face eroding norms by addressing the threat of withdrawals from the Mine Ban Treaty.
- **February:** Updates and news from the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- **March:** The connection between Women, Peace, and Security, and mine action.
- **April:** An update on the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the 3rd Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The newest cohort of Mine Action Fellows received a welcome email giving them an orientation to the program.
- **May:** The activities and impacts of the Fellows who implemented small grants. The newest cohort learned about gender and mine action.
- **June:** An analysis of what an intersessional meeting is and how we can use them to our advantage as campaigners. The newest cohort learned about cross-cultural communication.
- **July:** Tips on how to campaign creatively. The newest cohort learned about sustainable development and mine action.
- **August:** An update on the challenges facing the Mine Ban Treaty. The two newest cohorts learned about divestment as a campaigning tool.
- **September:** An update on the Convention on Cluster Munitions MSP, and an overview of important information from the Cluster Muniton Monitor. The three newest cohorts learned about the UNIDIR Youth Disarmament Orientation Course.
- **October:** Resources for continued learning and an update on Ukraine's attempt to suspend the Mine Ban Treaty. The newest cohort learned about graphic design.
- **November:** All cohorts received advice on how to fundraise.
- **December:** All cohorts received an update on the Mine Ban Treaty MSP, and an overview of important information from the Landmine Monitor.

Part 6. Impact

The Mine Action Fellows program impacts youth around the world by providing them with the skills, support, and confidence to carry out activities in their home countries. In particular, after the Forums the Fellows are more motivated, better connected, and have increased knowledge to build upon what was learned at the Forums and apply this at home. The following quotes from Fellows who attended the Forums in 2025 demonstrate this impact:

“I will apply what I learned by strengthening how I communicate my research and advocacy work, especially through storytelling. Mobilization in Brazil can sometimes be more challenging due to our geographical distance from these conflicts, but well-told stories can help bridge this gap and engage Brazilian civil society in humanitarian campaigns.”

“I will be working with Zambia Mine Action Center in order to advocate for victim assistance for survivors through the art of storytelling, a skill I learned during the forum.”

“In the meetings we will have with the government, I will ensure that I advocate for the fulfillment of the extension request Colombia made, and promote awareness of, and compliance with, the Treaty’s obligations worldwide.”

“Following this experience, I decided to volunteer with the Sri Lanka Campaign to Ban Landmines. Overall, the forum contributed significantly to both my personal and professional growth. It also helped me strengthen skills such as communication, leadership, public speaking, and teamwork, which I will continue to apply in my work at Mines Advisory Group Sri Lanka.”

At the Forums, the Mine Action Fellows split into groups and lobbied a combined 50 countries in total with at least 75 conversations throughout the two Forums. Once again, many diplomats were impressed with the Fellows’ knowledge and passion, enjoying the chance to speak with them and learn from their experiences on the ground. In addition to their important work in lobbying, the Fellows actively participated in the Forums through delivering final youth statements, attending daily ICBL-CMC briefings, and speaking at a side event hosted by Mines Action Canada.



In a survey conducted after the Forum in which 17 Fellows from both Forums responded, 100% of respondents reported that their advocacy skills have improved significantly, 88% reported that their knowledge of landmines and the Mine Ban Treaty/cluster munitions and the Convention on Cluster

Munitions improved significantly, and 88% reported that their knowledge of victim assistance and clearance improved significantly. These numbers clearly demonstrate that the Forums have an impact on knowledge in mine action and advocacy skills which are crucial skills for campaigning for the Mine Ban Treaty and Cluster Munition Convention once they return home.

Beyond the conference room, the impact from the program is still felt. MAC frequently receives responses from our monthly emails, where Fellows express how the emails helped them learn something new. The Fellows were asked for the third time to contribute to the First Committee Monitor by creating weekly summaries on cluster munitions and landmines, which were published by Reaching Critical Will.

Part 7. Annex

Appendix 1: September Forum Agenda

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:00	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Youth Side Event	Morning Meeting
09:30				
10:00	<i>Opening Plenary</i>	Plenary	Plenary + UNMAS Director	Plenary
10:30				
11:00		Conflict Styles		
11:30		Introduction to the Forum and Lobbying		
12:00	Introduction to the Forum and Lobbying	Statement Drafting	Finalize Statement	
12:30				
13:00	Lunch and side events	Lunch and side events	Lunch and side events	Lunch
13:30				
14:00			Switzerland Meeting	
14:30				
15:00	Plenary	Plenary	Plenary	Difficult Conversations
15:30				
16:00	statement and lobbying		Monitor	Forum Closing
16:30				
17:00	End of Day Recap and Social Media	Clearance Operations	Plenary	Free Time
17:30				
18:30				

Appendix 2: December Forum Agenda

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:00	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting
09:30					
10:00	Opening Plenary	Plenary	Plenary	Plenary	Plenary
10:30					
11:00					
11:30					
12:00					
12:30					
13:00	Walkthrough Exhibition	Lunch and side events	Lunch and side events	Youth Side Event	Lunch and side events
13:30	Lunch and side events				
14:00					
14:30		UNODA Meeting			
15:00	Introduction to the Forum	Plenary	ICRC and Peer Learning	Clearance Operations	Victim Assistance
15:30	Meeting with Ireland		Statement Drafting		Forum Closing
16:00	Lobbying	Statement Brainstorming and Drafting	Conflict Styles	Storytelling for Advocacy	Plenary
16:30	Photography for Advocacy				
17:00		Landmine Monitor	Difficult Conversations	Finalize Statement	
17:30	Plenary				
18:30					