



Gender in Mine Action: Perspectives from the Women of HALO Ukraine

Svitlana Arutiunova,
EORE Senior Supervisor

Rachael Rosenberg,
Deputy Head of Partnerships



Women operational staff profiled in the paper



Valeriia
(Ops Management)



Svitlana
(EO Risk Education)



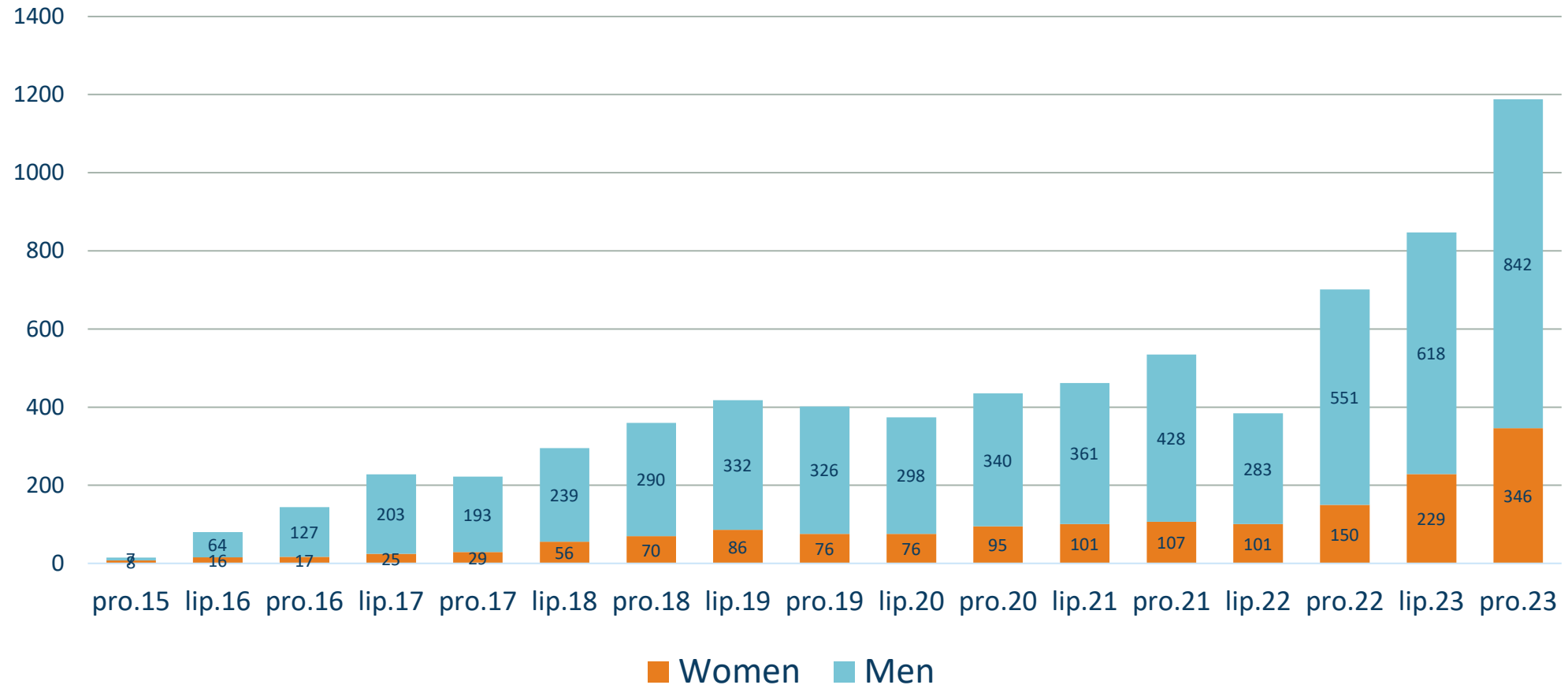
Daria
(Explosive Ordnance Disposal)

Background

- In 2017 HALO became the first operator in Ukraine to train women as humanitarian deminers
- The organisation now prioritises training women in advanced technical and operational roles (e.g. EOD Team Leader) and promoting women to management roles
 - hosting advanced training courses to build the next generation of leadership, sending trainees to other HALO programmes for specialised training
 - currently 217 Ukrainian women hold supervisory positions



HALO Ukraine staff gender distribution, 2015-2023



*Typically, 75-80% of total women employed are in operational roles

- Mixed-gender NTS, clearance, EORE and data collection teams bring a diverse range of skills and perspectives to the field.
- This diversity allows for a more holistic approach to problem-solving and decision-making, leading to more comprehensive and effective outcomes.
- In environments where gender norms may restrict access or communication with certain groups, having both male and female team members can help bridge cultural and social barriers.
- Mixed-gender teams helps challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality within the mine action sector.
- Merely adding more women is not enough, however—these aspects need to be included in training for all staff, and pre-/post-assessments and other data collection should adopt a gender lens.



We should not be content simply to «add women and stir»; mainstreaming requires a more holistic approach.



СТОП! МИНИ!



DANGER MINES!

DRC Ukraine's report, *Gendered Perceptions on Participation in the Mine Action Sector*, highlights gender disparities, motivations, satisfaction levels, and barriers to career development in the mine action sector in Ukraine, emphasising the importance of addressing gender stereotypes and promoting inclusivity for a more gender-balanced workforce. HALO's efforts aim to address these issues as the largest humanitarian operator and a major employer.

1. Traditional stereotypes: Women face stronger concerns about traditional stereotypes in the sector, including the perception that demining is a male-dominated field. This stereotype can create barriers to entry and hinder women's advancement in the sector.

2. Limited childcare: Female respondents expressed challenges related to limited childcare, with 16% highlighting this as a barrier. The lack of available childcare services, particularly in rural and frontline areas, can restrict women's ability to access and remain in the sector.

3. Physical demands of the role: Women reported concerns about the physical demands of the work more than their male counterparts, with 15% of women noting this as a barrier. The lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) specifically designed for female workers can make it challenging for women to perform their duties comfortably.

- 3. Gender composition of teams:** Female support services staff expressed concerns about the gender composition of teams, with 5% noting this as a barrier. Working in a predominantly male team environment can create challenges for women in terms of integration and feeling included.
- 4. Time away from family:** Women highlighted the issue of time spent away from family as a significant concern, with 43% of female respondents reporting this as a challenge. Balancing work responsibilities with family commitments can be particularly demanding for women in the sector.
- 5. Perception of suitable professions:** Women in the survey expressed challenges related to the perception of suitable professions, with 6% reporting difficulties working in a male-dominated sector and 5% noting concerns about the gender composition of their teams. These perceptions can impact women's confidence and sense of belonging in the sector.

Benefits

- Psychological support services
- Childcare support stipends and parental leave
- Relocation allowance (new)

Initiatives

- Gender Strategy under GMAP3 partnership (with MAG and UDA)
- Gender and Diversity Working Group, specialist being recruited (under Canadian PSOPs project)
- TRiM training for medical staff
- Uniform Working Group—trials new options for women
- Dedicated data collection teams (introduced 2023) increase capacity to pilot new types of assessments

Policies

- Gender policy; equality and diversity policy; equal-opportunity employer
- Zero tolerance for sexual misconduct/assault
- Safeguarding policy specifies multiple reporting options and reporting obligation
- Recruiting procedures, e.g. mixed-gender interview panels, to reduce barriers
- 2024 Country Plan: reach 35% women relative to total staff, facilitate advancement to senior and supervisory roles



Демінерка/демінер з виявлення вибухонебезпечних предметів в Харківській та Миколаївській області



37 950 ₪ з цієї суми будуть утримані податки

3 дні тому ♦ The HALO Trust ♦ Миколаїв

В офісі/на місці

Повна зайнятість

Компенсація навчання

Курси іноземної мови

Корпоративні заходи

Медпункт / корпоративний лікар

До уваги кандидатів! Подаючи заявку на цьому сайті, ви автоматично потрапляєте в базу кандидатів на позицію демінер в **Миколаївській, Херсонській та Харківській області**. Будь ласка, залишайте ваші заявки і наш рекрутер зв'яжеться з вами. У зв'язку з відкриттям локацій в різних містах України, прохання до кандидатів, вказувати місце вашого проживання!

Дана посада не вимагає попереднього досвіду роботи сапером та спеціалізованих технічних знань. Ми навчаємо спеціалістів «з нуля» відповідно до найвищих стандартів у галузі і працюємо відповідно до найсуворіших стандартів безпеки. Посада відкрита як для чоловіків, так і для жінок – у нашій команді вже працює значна кількість тренуваних спеціалісток із розмінування.

Жінки особливо запрошуються до конкурсу!

Example from recent recruitment announcement

**Female Deminer/Male Deminer for Kharkiv and Mykolaiv regions*

This position does not require any previous demining experience or specialized technical knowledge.

We train our specialists from scratch to the highest standards in the industry and operate under the strictest safety standards.

The position is open to both men and women - we already have a significant number of trained female deminers in our team.

Women are strongly encouraged to apply!

We should not assume men's bodies as the default in operational planning



- Do not take men's bodies as the default when designing operations—from uniforms to deployment schedules to where latrines on minefields are built.
- Men in management roles should not be squeamish about realities like menstruation that affect the staff for whom they have a duty of care.
- In 2023 HALO procured heavy PPE specifically designed for women's bodies to equip those deployed to sites closer to the front lines where this additional protection is required.



Collaborative efforts to educate stakeholders and the public inclusively



- Information about opportunities in all aspects of HMA — educate the public about what it is
- Government agencies need to be educated first so they can make better policy
- Utilise open-source info and various media for clear communication
- Joint effort led by mine action operators with government support ensures understanding and credibility

- Distinguish humanitarian demining from military demining to separate it from associations with military activities.
- Build an equitable and inclusive internal organisational culture to support this distinction.
- Recognise that humanitarian demining may always have some linkage to the military due to the nature of the work and cooperation with authorities.
- Acknowledge the changing perception of military service in Ukrainian culture post-invasion, which broadens the perception of military service but also contributes to societal militarisation.

- War, though never positive, may create opportunities for positive change amidst societal upheaval.
- Conscription challenges have obliged organisations to centre gender mainstreaming efforts, as they are now crucial to ensure the sustainability of operations.
- These changes are not happening in a vacuum—Ukrainian mine action therefore can play a broader role in fostering change more broadly.



How can mine action help to build a more inclusive and equitable post-war Ukraine and global HMA sector?

Key takeaways

Mixed-gender teams and training are essential to inclusive delivery.

«Add women and stir» is not enough.

We should not assume men's bodies as the default.

The sector should educate key stakeholders and the public.

Militaristic associations complicate efforts to change organisational culture.

The Ukrainian HMA sector is a site of opportunity within a tragedy.





Thank you for your attention!
We look forward to the discussion

photo credit: Oleh Tereshchenko