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Impact evaluation

Comprehensive Mine Action in five municipalities of Putumayo:
Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán,
Puerto Leguízamo, and San Miguel.

NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Impact Evaluation

Comprehensive Mine Action in Five Municipalities of Putumayo

Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Leguízamo, and San Miguel

December 2021 – November 2023

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Introduction



The following report summarizes the main findings of the impact evaluation of the Comprehensive Mine Action project implemented in five municipalities of Putumayo (Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Leguízamo, and San Miguel), co-financed by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA), the United States Department of State, and the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO).

Through this impact evaluation, CCCM was able, on the one hand, to document the changes generated by the project within beneficiary communities regarding risk reduction related to the presence of explosive ordnance, land use for productive purposes, access to basic services, improvements in well-being and quality of life, and the mainstreaming of the gender approach.

On the other hand, the evaluation made it possible to determine the extent to which the relevance, impact, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the project's outcomes and CCCM's core processes were achieved in the municipalities intervened between 2021 and 2023.

These findings constitute an initial analysis of the causal link between Comprehensive Mine Action and improvements in the well-being of the population in the five municipalities of Putumayo.

The changes in the living conditions and capacities of the people participating in the project activities (both direct and indirect beneficiaries) made it possible to establish their relationship with the priorities and needs of the donors. At the same time, the organization expects to strengthen the design and implementation processes for future interventions.

To determine whether there is a causal relationship between the impacts and outcomes generated by the project, information was collected based on the perceptions of the participating community members. Although this represented a challenge due to its subjective nature, it was considered, within the creation of qualitative analysis categories, an opportunity to identify the extent to which Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) activities contribute to the project's objectives.

In this regard, five causal relationships were identified in the tools, based on the benefits perceived by the community, as well as five evaluation criteria.

Table 1. Categories for analyzing the causal relationship between the project's impacts and effects

Causal relationship (Project effects/impacts)		Benefits perceived by the community (hypothesis)
Contributions of HMA to improving living conditions and safety through land/property clearance	Safety	Mobility within the territory
		Reduction of risk in intervened areas
		Reduction of fear and uncertainty in the municipality, urban and rural areas
	Local development	Reactivation of individual or collective economies
		Generation of employment opportunities
		Implementation of public programs or policies (PDET, PNIS, Land Restitution, etc.)
Contribution to communities to mitigate risks and impacts related to the presence of explosive ordnance in the territory	Safe behaviors	Adoption of knowledge acquired through Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE)
		Coverage of activities and direct beneficiaries
		Strengthening territorial management
CCCM consolidates its gender mainstreaming strategy with an ethnic differential approach that can potentially be replicated	Satisfaction	Perception regarding the level of organizational participation in the actions
		Community satisfaction with the implementation of actions
HMA improves the institutional capacities of municipalities in action and response to contamination by explosive ordnance	Organizational learning	Comprehensive learning acquired by the organization
		Adaptation of activities and tools to the context and community

Table 2. Evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description
Effectiveness	The extent to which the technical and financial results of a project are achieved.
Efficiency	Analysis of results in relation to the optimal and timely use of project resources.
Sustainability	Capacity to maintain project results over a long period of time.

Relevance/Coherence	The project objective is consistent with the development priorities of the population and the mission and policy of the organization. It determines the validity of the project results as a contribution to the changes defined in the objectives of the development programs.
Impact	Results: condition for the expected change.

Methodology

According to the proposed methodology, five actions were carried out for the collection, systematization, analysis, and evaluation of information:

1. Review of project documentation (technical sheet, logical framework, financial reports, audit results, monitoring reports, among others).
2. Preliminary development of impact and benefit categories, as well as information collection tools.
3. Sample selection and application of perception tools, including semi-structured interviews with direct beneficiaries, the regional CCCM staff, and institutional actors.
4. Systematization and analysis of qualitative information.
5. Preparation of the evaluation report.

The guiding questions for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews were based on the four project outcomes and the guiding questions presented in

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted with community members to evaluate the quality, benefits, and opportunities provided by the project, as well as its effectiveness in responding to the needs, interests, and priorities of the population in the areas where CCCM activities were implemented.

Two additional sessions were held with children and adolescents in schools: one in El Progreso village and another in the Sitará Indigenous Council, where lessons learned were shared and safe behaviors were reinforced.

A focus group was also conducted with the Gender Focal Points (GFPs) from the Putumayo office to identify the relevance, impact, and sustainability of the gender mainstreaming strategy, as well as to collect lessons learned and good practices.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Four land release beneficiaries were interviewed to identify the impacts of the component and its sustainability strategies.

Regional team personnel were interviewed regarding the project's efficiency and effectiveness in terms of human, financial, and material resources.

The cabinet members and Government Secretariat of Puerto Asís were also interviewed regarding CCCM's actions and the coordination processes with local institutions to promote long-term outcomes.

Sample

The sampling method used was intentional non-probabilistic sampling, which allowed the selection of representative cases from the target population, limiting the sample exclusively to those cases. This methodology was particularly relevant in territories facing significant challenges, such as the persistence of armed conflict and the long distances required to access villages, townships, and rural areas. Consequently, the resulting sample was variable and limited.

Additionally, limited resource availability made it difficult to include populations from the most remote municipalities. It is important to note that this impact evaluation emerged as part of an organizational improvement plan; therefore, it was adjusted according to the conditions permitted by the available budget.

Information collection was conducted between July 22 and July 27, 2024, involving community members who participated in the project activities. This included the CCCM regional staff (local residents), local and ethnic authorities, as well as the population from the villages of El Progreso, El Jardín, Teteyé, and the Sitará Indigenous Council. During this period, a total of 46 direct beneficiaries were reached, of whom 41% identified as men and 59% as women.

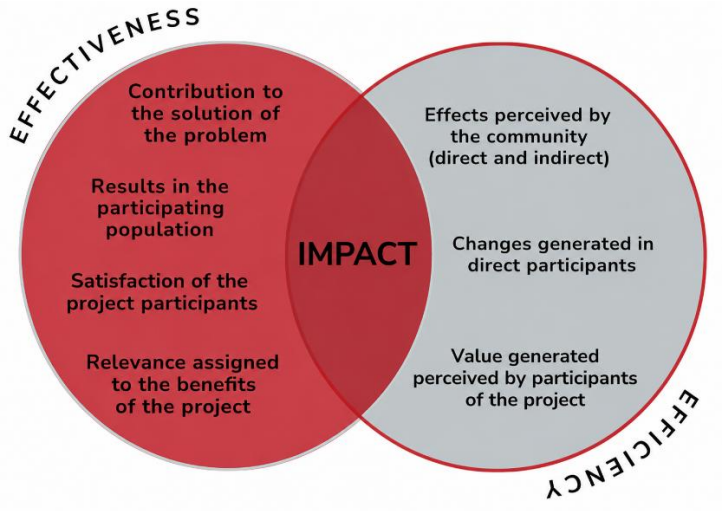
To expand the sample, field visits were conducted in the municipality of Puerto Asís, including visits to the mentioned villages and interviews with key actors in the municipal center, such as the Government Secretary and her team. Likewise, the local mayor of Puerto Caicedo was interviewed.

This impact evaluation represents the first internal exercise conducted by CCCM in the department of Putumayo, since previous evaluations in other municipalities had been carried out by external third parties.

Executive Summary

The completion of the Comprehensive Mine Action project in the municipalities of Puerto Asís (Zone 1 and Zone 2), Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, San Miguel, and Puerto Leguízamo represents an opportunity to understand both the possibilities and challenges faced by Comprehensive Mine Action in Colombia, particularly in the department of Putumayo. In this region, geographic, social, and armed conflict-related factors converge, requiring the adjustment and diversification of organizational capacities to achieve the projected objectives and meet donor expectations.

For this evaluation, the focus was placed on community perception, understood through four groups: direct beneficiaries of project activities, community members living in the municipalities, local authorities, and the CCCM regional staff. The evaluation variables were grouped under the criteria of project effectiveness and efficiency.



In terms of relevance, the project contributed to helping the population feel safer and make appropriate use of the territory they inhabit. Likewise, the adoption of safe behaviors was perceived as an effective measure to mitigate the risk of new accidents. The community expressed satisfaction with the project, highlighting CCCM's positive relationship with local residents and its respect for local culture.

Regarding the land release component, it was identified as a key action that allows cleared areas to be used for three main purposes: agriculture, transit and rural connectivity, and the recovery of ancestral territory while preserving the culture of ethnic communities.

Concerning Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE), the community valued its impact on accident prevention through learning about the identification and management of risks associated with explosive ordnance. Meanwhile, the Victim Assistance (VA) component was recognized for its support to explosive ordnance survivors and victims' families, especially in activating comprehensive assistance pathways at the municipal level.

Although the community does not perceive specific actions directly related to the gender approach, it recognizes a positive change in the distribution of roles within work teams, where both men and women have taken on functions different from traditional roles. In addition, since the teams are mainly composed of community members, they share the knowledge acquired during training in their daily lives, applying a do-no-harm approach. This change is especially noticeable in Indigenous communities.

Finally, the project's impact on the community is linked to the relevance of the benefits generated and the value assigned to them. The population stated that, thanks to the implemented actions, economic opportunities that had previously been limited by the presence of antipersonnel mines (APM) have been reactivated. For example, landowners have been able to resume productive projects such as cacao and pineapple cultivation and access government programs focused on promoting legal crops.

For ethnic communities, the project's impact is associated with enabling processes and government programs such as land titling, collective restitution, and the development of productive projects.

Although the evaluation included outcome indicators, it also expanded information regarding the capacities and conditions of beneficiaries, communities, and local authorities in relation to the project's long-term results. In the case of Putumayo, it was important to include in the analysis the security and access conditions in municipalities where the progress of Clearance and Non-Technical Survey (NTS) teams has been limited by external factors, such as the presence of and ongoing clashes between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) exercising territorial control.

Documenting these factors, which may increase or reduce the project's effects and consequently its impacts on communities, beneficiaries, local authorities, and CCCM itself, was important to support initiatives aimed at ensuring continuity and progress despite the fluctuating situation in the department.

This is directly related to the social impact of the project, since recognizing the factors that can be mitigated improves the design and implementation of future projects, while also contributing information to the sector regarding expected and unexpected changes in the lives of individuals and communities with whom the organization works.



Finally, CCCM recognizes that the sustainability of impacts in municipalities that have not yet been declared free of contamination is subject to the context. Although efforts focus on transforming the capacities and performance of beneficiaries, continuity in prevention and protection strategies is still required, expanding humanitarian action toward more comprehensive support strategies.

Project Context

The Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas (CCCM) was assigned to conduct humanitarian demining operations in Puerto Asís (Zone 1 and Zone 2), San Miguel (Zone 2), and the full municipalities of Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, and Puerto Leguízamo on September 13, 2016.

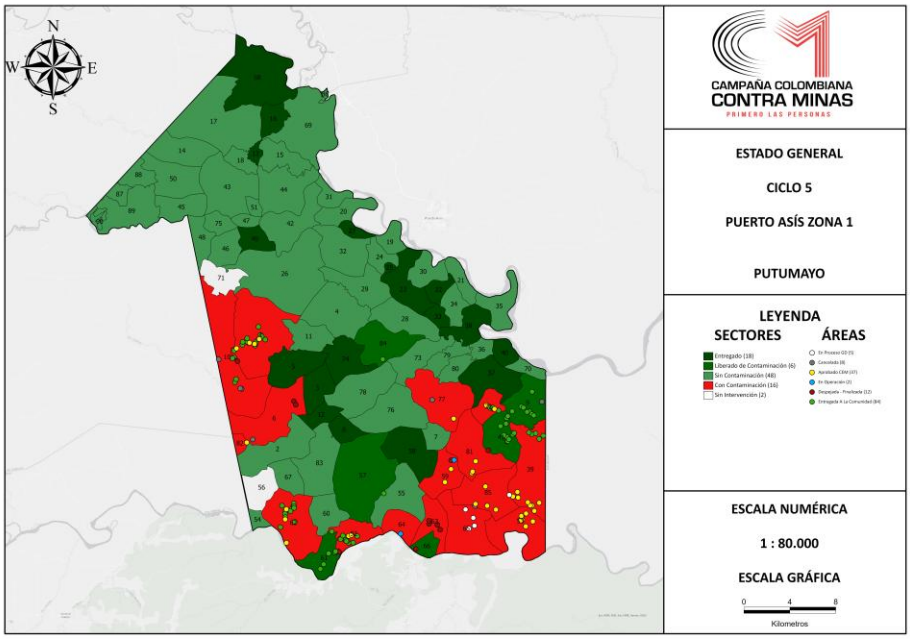
Operations began in Puerto Asís in 2017 with funding from the United States Department of State, and in the remaining municipalities in 2018.

Currently, humanitarian demining interventions are ongoing in five municipalities: Puerto Asís (Zone 1 and Zone 2), Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Leguízamo, and San Miguel, all of which are also part of the national PDET subregion (Development Programs with a Territorial Focus).

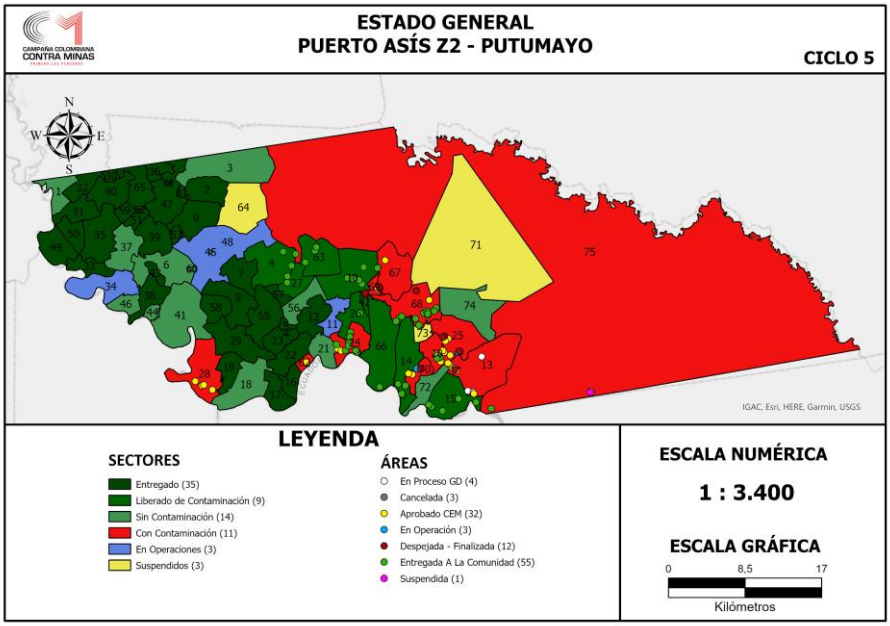
For the purposes of this evaluation, the fact that these municipalities are part of the PDET framework is important due to the concentration of State resources and efforts in these territories. The contribution expected from these programs is aimed not only at social and economic development, but also at strengthening guarantees for the population. Therefore, several elements from the national diagnosis are used to complement community perceptions and address the direct and indirect impacts of the project's benefits.

Currently, the status of land release operations in the municipalities is as follows:

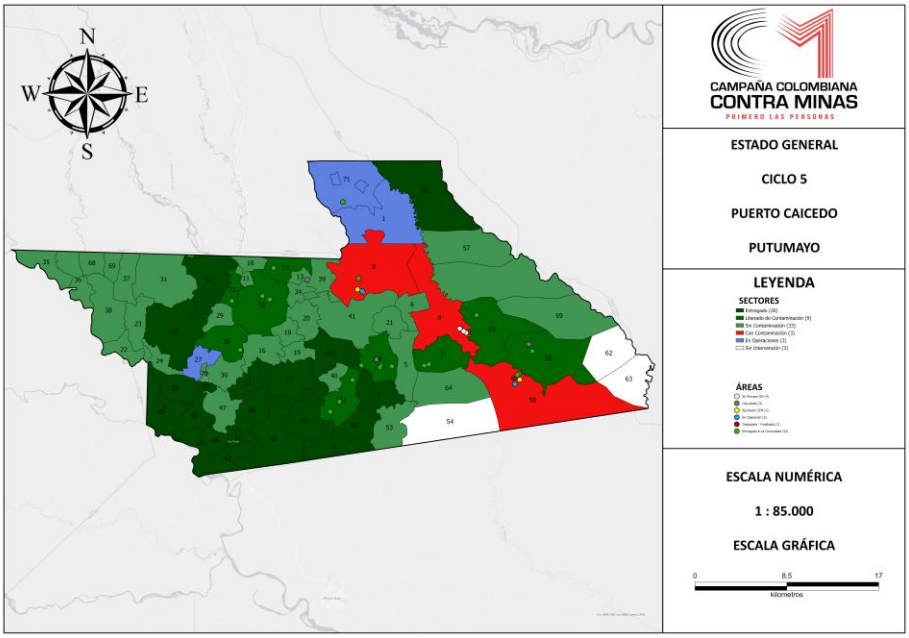
Puerto Asís (Zone 1)



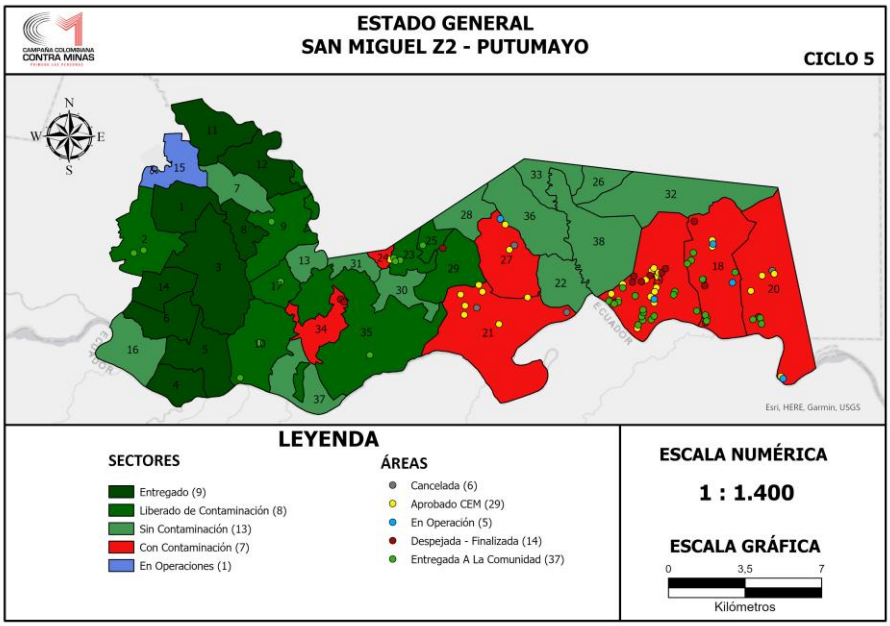
Puerto Asís (Zone 2)



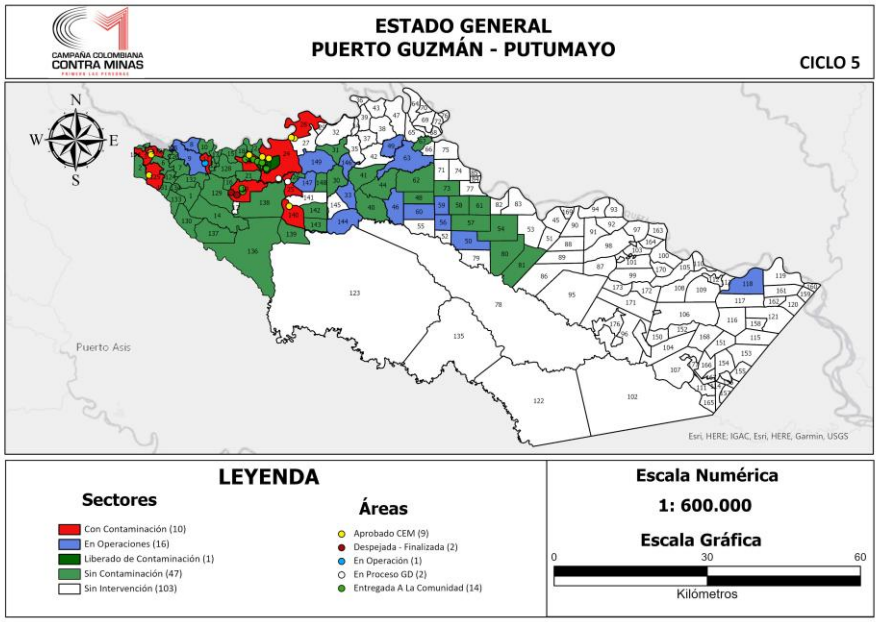
Puerto Caicedo



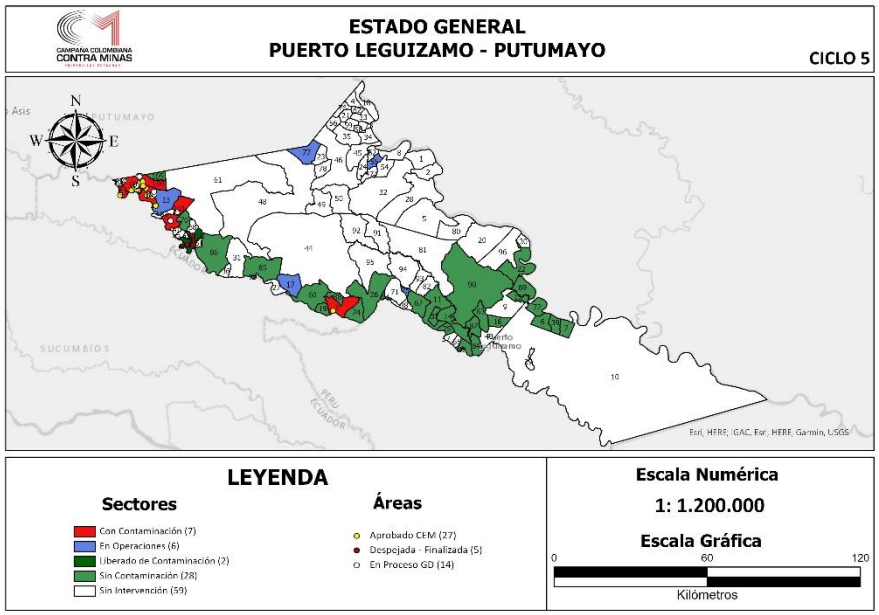
San Miguel (Zone 2)



Puerto Guzmán



Puerto Leguizamo



According to the project's logical framework, the impact aimed to reduce the risk of accidents caused by explosive ordnance in the communities of the municipalities of Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Leguízamo, and San Miguel (Putumayo) through four outcomes. Table 3 defines the scope of the evaluation based on questions related to relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and impact, which will allow for the verification of the hypotheses and the existence of causality between the outcomes and benefits listed in Table 1.

Table 3. Project's value chain

Does Integrated Mine Action in Putumayo address the problem? (Relevance)	IMPACT	Reduce the risk of accidents caused by explosive ordnance in the communities of the municipalities of Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Leguízamo and San Miguel (Putumayo).
To what extent do the beneficiary population consider that the project actions improve their quality of life? (Impact)	OUTCOME 1	The threat posed by the presence of explosive ordnance is reduced in the municipalities of Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Leguízamo and San Miguel, through non-technical survey (NTS) and manual clearance techniques.
How do communities use the knowledge provided by the project to mitigate the risk of accidents? (Efficiency)	OUTCOME 2	Communities mitigate the risks and impacts associated with the presence of explosive ordnance in their territory.
What effects did the implementation of the gender focal points strategy have on community participation, given their role as agents of their own change? (Effectiveness)	OUTCOME 3	CCCM strengthens its capacity for gender analysis and its capacity for gender-responsive work using an ethnic differential approach.
To what extent did the project complement and/or avoid duplication from the perspective of other actors of the State working in the same context? (Coherence)	OUTCOME 4	The municipality of Puerto Leguízamo improves its capacity for action and response to contamination by explosive ordnance.

This project is part of an effort to strengthen humanitarian demining activities in the department of Putumayo, which was launched by the SDC in the municipality of Puerto Leguizamo in 2021 and expanded to include the municipalities of Puerto Asís, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Caicedo, and San Miguel in 2022, with two extensions that ultimately consolidated the operation over a period of one year, eleven months, and twenty-nine days.

The following is a brief description of the demining phases in the five municipalities with the donor SDC:

Phase 1

Given that SDC and CCCM have been strategic partners since the organization began its humanitarian demining operations in the municipality of Algeciras, support was requested for the municipality of Puerto Leguízamo, consolidating the Comprehensive Mine Action project in the municipality, planned to be implemented between December 1, 2021, and November 30, 2022, with the components of Land Release, EORE, and Gender.

Phase 2

Taking into account that the security conditions did not allow the continuation of Non-Technical Survey (NTS) activities in Puerto Leguízamo due to the community's refusal to allow access to certain areas as a safeguard strategy against non-state armed groups, as well as the constant clashes between border groups, on February 25, 2022, CCCM requested a modification to the logical framework of Contract No. 81071893. The purpose was to relocate the NTS teams to the municipality of Puerto Guzmán and the Clearance teams to the municipality of Puerto Asís while civilian and military authorities reauthorized the deployment of land release operations in Puerto Leguízamo. This change did not imply any budgetary adjustment.

A second request was submitted on October 11, 2023, with the purpose of redistributing COP 793,000,000, which the organization estimated would remain unspent by December 31, 2022, due to lower transportation and operational costs (given the reduced presence in Puerto Leguízamo and the economies of scale achieved by the organization in Puerto Asís). Additionally, an extra COP 1,100,000,000 was requested, in accordance with what was discussed by SDC during a follow-up meeting and subsequent communications.

This request also included expanding the project's geographical coverage to include the municipalities of Puerto Caicedo and San Miguel, enabling activities to be carried out in the five municipalities of Putumayo assigned to CCCM. Furthermore, it allowed the extension of the project implementation period until September 30, 2023, increasing the targets for the following components: clearance, NTS, EORE, and gender.

Phase 3

Finally, a request for a time extension was submitted in August 2023, considering that savings had been generated during the same year, allowing the project activities to be extended until November 30, 2023. This did not involve any change to the total budget; however, it made it possible to clear additional square meters, hand over more land areas, and conduct additional EORE workshops.

Analysis of Results



According to the methodology, this section evaluates the four axes of causal relationship: the first, the contributions of HMA to improving living conditions and security through land release; the second, related to supporting communities in mitigating risks and impacts associated with the presence of explosive ordnance in the territory; the third, addressing the gender mainstreaming strategy with an ethnic differential approach implemented by CCCM; and the fourth, concerning the improvement of institutional capacities in municipalities for action and response to contamination by explosive ordnance.

Contributions of Mine Action to Improving Living Conditions and Security Through Land Release

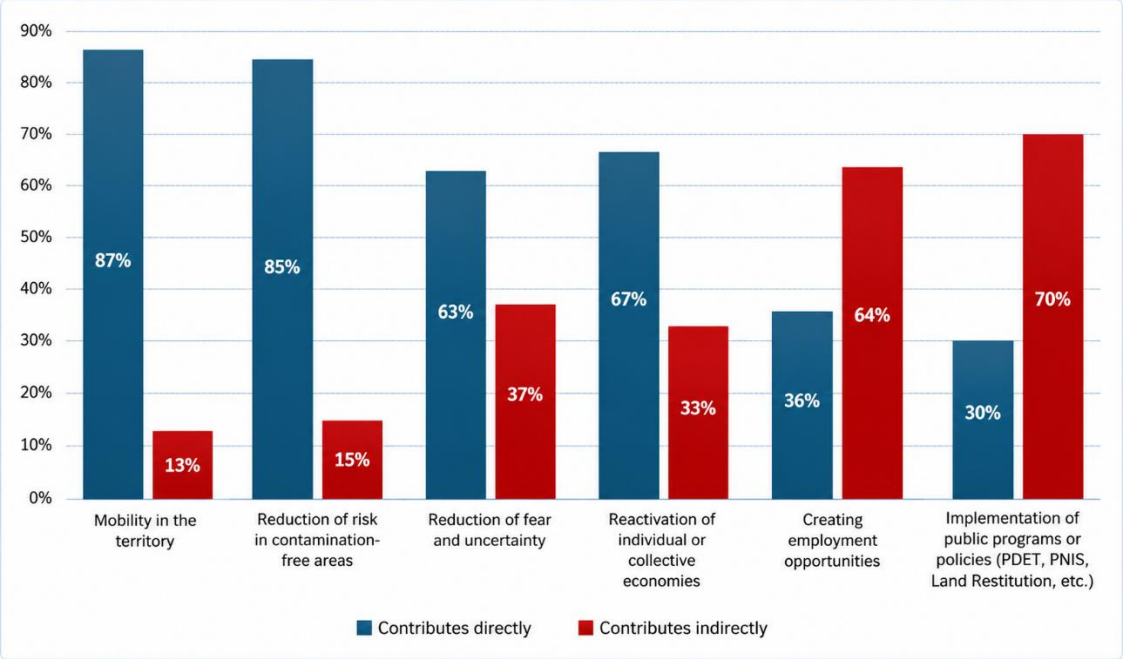
For Einer, the sense of security generated within the community by the land release and handover process carried out by CCCM brought benefits such as the enjoyment and use of the land. He considers that the possibility of developing new economic activities without fear of contamination from explosive ordnance offers the community new life perspectives that were previously not possible.

Additionally, the recovery of community trust in the territory was strengthened by the arrival of non-governmental organizations, which, according to community members, had never happened before and demonstrated support for territories historically abandoned by the State.

The population agreed that the project's main contributions were the reduction of fear and risk in the released areas, free movement and use of the land for individual and collective purposes, and, in specific cases such as collective ethnic territories, the implementation of programs and public policies.

Regarding the extent to which the responses and solutions provided by the project improved their living conditions, the following graph demonstrates this:

Figure 1. Improvements in living conditions and safety



Source: Compiled by the author based on perception surveys.

According to Figure 1, the average for direct contributions was 61%, and for indirect contributions, 39%. The highest averages for direct contributions were found in the following categories of benefits: mobility within the territory, reduced risk in released areas, followed by the revitalization of individual or collective economies, and, finally, reduced fear and uncertainty.

In contrast, regarding the creation of job opportunities and the implementation of public programs or policies, the indirect rating was higher, indicating that the causal relationship with the project's actions cannot be attributed to them alone; therefore, the convergence of other external factors associated with the State's role is required to ensure the sustainability of the benefits generated by the project.

The evaluation of direct contributions shows that, at various levels, the Comprehensive Mine Action (AICMA) has significant advantages over other strategies aimed at reducing or eliminating explosive ordnance, such as prevention campaigns or road restrictions. This is mainly due to the importance the population places on the ability to travel safely and without fear, reduce the risk of new accidents, revitalize individual and community economies, resume livelihood activities, and take advantage of the employment opportunities the project generates in the regions. In addition, one of the most highly valued benefits, which is generating great expectations, is the implementation of public programs and policies focused on land formalization and utilization.

Mobility within the Territory

The data collected, mainly from the 41 areas released under the project, show that regaining mobility within their territory was the main benefit that the population associated with land release. The presence of APM mines and other explosive ordnance had forced communities in 39 of the released areas to use alternative transit routes, which were more expensive and time-consuming. Additionally, in seven of the released areas in Puerto Asís (Zone 1), access to pathways was specifically restricted, while in three areas access to water sources was affected.

Another important aspect when analyzing mobility results is the geographic diversity and road conditions in the department, which can be affected by rainfall, river flooding, and other terrain-related conditions.

For Mr. Marcial, from La Esmeralda village in Puerto Asís (Zone 1), the installation of APM took away the peace of mind he and his family once had to work the land and enjoy the river. Once land release activities were completed, he was able to return to his two farms and move around safely again, although he still avoids going beyond the areas marked by the CCCM: *"You move around on your own land and that's it."*

Although he mentions having subsistence crops that he can reach on foot in less than twenty minutes, he explains that during periods of heavy rain and rising water levels, he must hire a boat for transportation.

Near this village lives Ms. Patricia, who resides with her husband in Los Álamos, upper sector. For her, the recovery of their land restored a sense of peace and security. Although their current crops are intended for illicit use, she stated that they are considering planting food crops for sale. However, profits remain low because access to their property is in poor condition, transportation costs are very high, and products may be damaged during transport.

Similarly, in El Progreso village, also in Puerto Asís (Zone 1), Ms. Rubiela and Mr. Libardo explained that the release of roads has created more opportunities to transport their crops to the river for distribution. Nevertheless, the high cost of boat transportation reduces their earnings.

This contrast highlights not only the opportunities generated through improved mobility and the resumption of daily activities in released lands, but also the importance of connectivity between villages, townships, and dispersed rural areas, which, as previously mentioned, require specific support to improve road and river infrastructure.

Reduction of Risk, Fear, and Uncertainty after Land Release

When community members were asked how they addressed fear, risk, and uncertainty after the handover of areas declared free from contamination, two different perspectives emerged.

For the teacher at the El Progreso school, the place where the APM exploded in the village remains impassable, despite clearance operations having been completed. She explained that she still feels afraid because the blast wave from the accident was so strong that it reached her, although she did not suffer physical injuries.

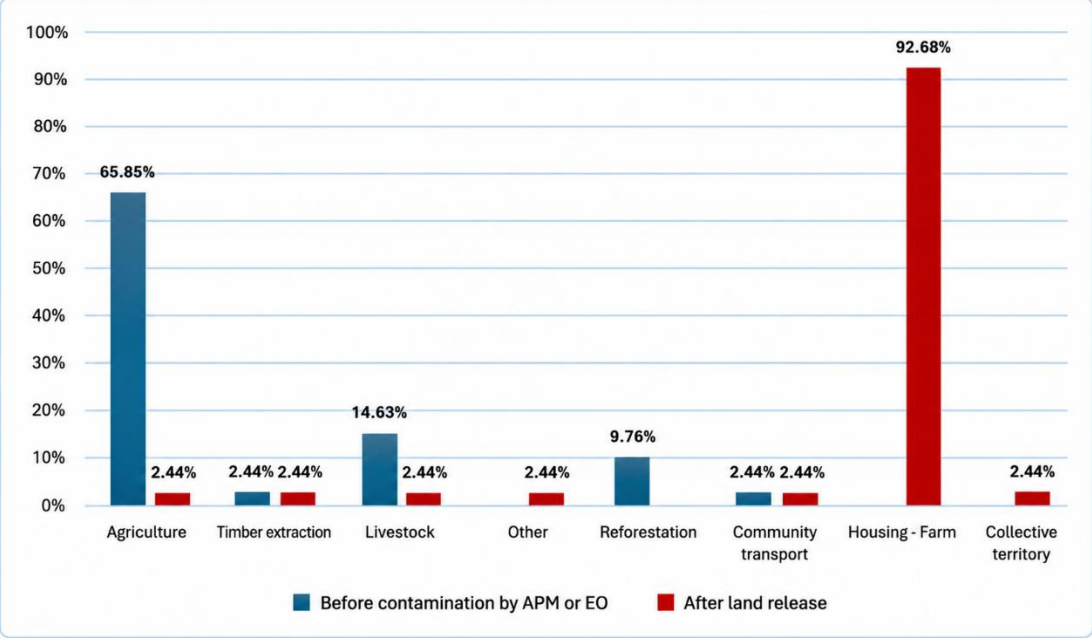
In contrast, the community action board's president of the same village stated that fear had significantly decreased and that she now moves through the roads with greater confidence. However, outside the areas where CCCM has carried out operations, uncertainty remains, as she does not know whether new APM may have been laid or whether river flooding may have unearthed previously buried explosive ordnance.

This uncertainty is more evident in areas where neither CCCM nor other humanitarian demining organizations are present. For the population, trust in the organization has enabled them to recover many aspects of their daily lives. At the same time, communities continue requesting EORE activities to help prevent new accidents, so that when traveling through territories other than their own, they remain alert to signs of possible danger.

Reactivation of Individual and Collective Economies

Following the completion of land release activities in the assigned municipalities of Putumayo, with a total of 44,392 m^2 cleared, it was possible to compare the previous use of the 41 areas delivered to the community before contamination and their current use after clearance operations.

Figure 2. Use of cleared areas handed over



Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the CCCM Information Management Department.

Two elements stand out in Graph 2: the reduction in potential land-use options after humanitarian demining and the increase in land use categorized as housing/farmstead.

Regarding the first point, direct landowners of released areas explained that diversification of land use and economic activities depends on external factors such as transportation, investment capacity, and the territorial control exercised by armed groups.

For Ms. Rubiela, as for other landowners, promoting crops such as cacao, plantain, and cassava represents a starting point for improving quality of life. However, the commercialization of these products depends on whether their farms are located near roads or rivers, whether transportation is available, and whether there are accessible markets to sell their products.



The increase in land use categorized as housing/farmstead is linked to the fact that the concept of "farmstead" includes small-scale agricultural activities intended for food security. Therefore, the community does not consider it necessary to further disaggregate this category when there are no indicators showing large-scale crop production, livestock, or other extensive economic activities.

Another important post-clearance land use relates to collective territories, which are especially relevant in the project municipalities due to the strong presence of organized communities through Community Action Boards (JACs), Afro-descendant community councils, and Indigenous reservations.

Finally, the change in government and the development of new municipal development plans represent an opportunity, as highlighted by the elected mayor of Puerto Caicedo, to support the economic reactivation of families that historically depended on coca leaf cultivation and trade.

"*It has now been two years (2022 and 2023) of the coca crisis, and in these municipalities that have depended on coca, this is the right moment to voluntarily abandon the crop because it is no longer profitable and cannot be commercialized.*"

Dependence on illicit crops for subsistence has decreased, and there is growing interest in promoting alternative livelihoods, such as food processing initiatives involving products like chontaduro. These alternatives are seen as opportunities to continue supporting crop substitution efforts outside the framework of the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops -PNIS- program, which, according to community perceptions, has not functioned effectively and has had more negative than positive impacts due to the presence of the Army in territories where several non-state armed groups operate.

Therefore, long-term projects are needed to restore food security and promote a cultural shift away from dependence on illegal economies. These projects should take advantage of the region's geographical conditions and the presence of companies such as oil firms, which support economic initiatives aimed at diversifying investment and achieving higher levels of productivity.

Employment Opportunities

The perception regarding this benefit is that it represents an indirect contribution, since the employment opportunities available in the municipalities are insufficient to meet the population's needs.

According to public officials, the main sources of formal employment are the municipal government offices and local hospitals, which across the project municipalities offer between 100 and 120 available positions. These are followed by oil companies, such as Gran Tierra, which provide between 20 and 30 vacancies, and finally by non-governmental organizations, such as CCCM, which offer between 30 and 40 positions.

For both the territorial teams and the community, the purchase of supplies required for humanitarian demining operations — including food, materials, fuel, and other goods — contributes to individual and collective incomes, although it does not represent a constant source of employment generation.

Finally, the interviewed population agreed that these contributions to employment generation are not sufficient to significantly change unemployment dynamics in departments such as Putumayo, which, according to DANE, reached an unemployment rate of 17.4% during the first quarter of 2023.

Implementation of Programs and Public Policies

Development Programs with a Territorial Focus (PDET)

According to Decree Law 893 of 2017, the Development Programs with a Territorial Focus (PDET) were created, prioritizing territories most affected by armed conflict, poverty, and state abandonment. In this context, 170 municipalities were identified and grouped into 16 PDET subregions.

The department of Putumayo was selected as one of these subregions, comprising nine municipalities, five of which are part of the project.

In line with its mission and the perspectives expressed by local populations, CCCM understands HMA as a contribution to human security and local development. Therefore, the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries are closely linked to the opportunities available within PDET municipalities, particularly regarding resource allocation, rural development, and the inclusion of rural and ethnic populations in development initiatives.

In this regard, Colombia continues implementing the Final Peace Agreement, which incorporates the PDET framework and its eight pillars as a mechanism to promote structural transformation of rural areas and improve the living conditions of rural populations.

The following section presents the projects under implementation, initiated in 2021 and completed as of 2023, by municipality.

Table 4. Public policy projects in the five municipalities

Proyectos	Puerto Asís	Puerto Caicedo	Puerto Guzmán	Puerto Leguizamo	San Miguel
In progress	701	727	394	240	625
Completed	11	8	14	9	14
Funding sources					
National General Budget (PGN)*[1]	4	3	4	7	2
SGR**	70	17	20	22	26
Territory***	937	715	384	220	611

Source: Compiled by the author using data from the National Planning Department/Investment Map, 2024.

Although it cannot be confirmed that the development and allocation of these projects are directly related to humanitarian demining, they are relevant when assessing public investment projects, whose criteria include regional impact, beneficiary population, and alignment with ongoing government priorities and policies.

However, according to the perception of local institutions, the PDET programs have not been implemented as expected, and the decentralization of responsibilities to municipal and departmental governments has not been accompanied by sufficient financial resources. An example of this was mentioned by a public official in Puerto Asís:

"There is a record of approximately 700 victims requiring immediate assistance, and the response capacity I have is only 20 million Colombian pesos."

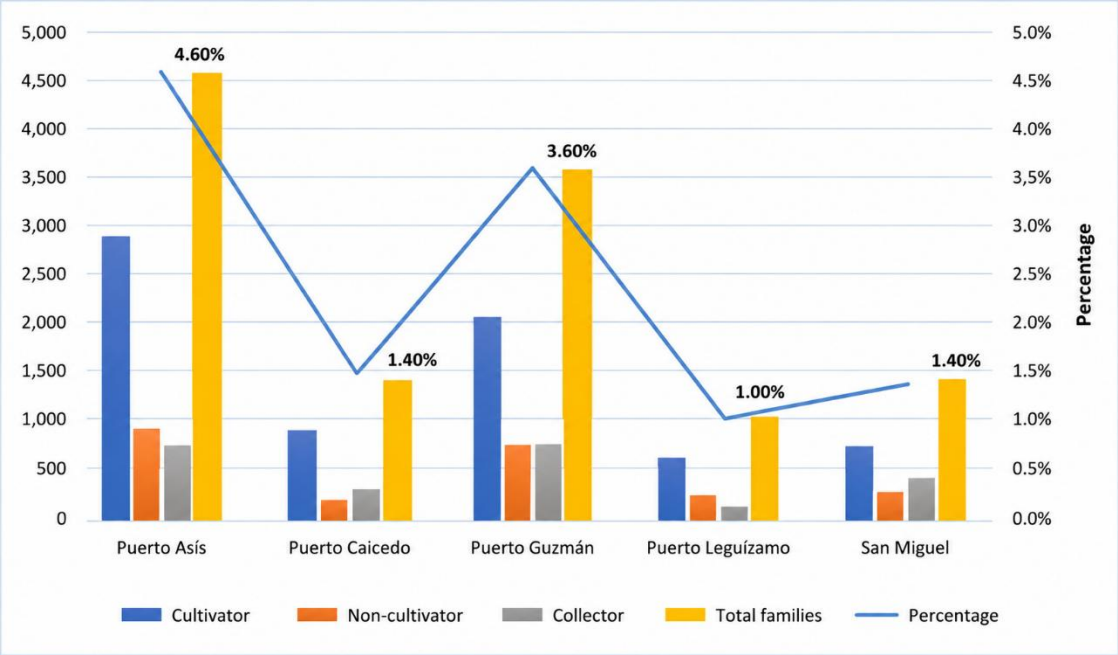
This situation is recurrent across the other four municipalities, where local institutional capacity remains insufficient to adequately respond to social and economic development programs, and where projections regarding municipal-level implementation remain unclear.

[1] * Presupuesto General de la Nación
** Sistema General de Regalías
*** Recursos propios del municipio o departamento.

National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS)

For most of the population, the implementation of the PNIS has not been adequate and is perceived as a risk both for communities and organizations carrying out humanitarian action, due to the levels of violence generated around these interventions.

Figure 3. Percentage of families enrolled in the PNIS by municipality



Source: Compiled by the author using data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2022.

Across the five municipalities, it was identified that most of the population linked to the PNIS are coca growers, representing an average family participation rate of 2.4%. Among the owners of released areas who joined the PNIS, two cases were identified: one in La Esmeralda village and another in Teteyé.

Both have experienced losses in their agricultural activities due to the absence of an efficient commercialization chain capable of providing fair economic conditions for farmers. In this regard, Mr. Marcial commented:

"Coca is what provides livelihoods here. I once planted around 2,200 pineapple plants, and I ended up giving everything away here on the roadside."

The so-called "coca crisis," as described by some sectors in Putumayo, has weakened the use of land for illicit crops; however, it has not yet generated a significant impact on the economic reactivation of legal crops that contribute to food sovereignty. According to the community, cultivating legal crops remains unstable due to falling prices, climatic conditions, and the lack of commercialization chains reaching villages and rural areas.

In contrast, at El Naranjal farm, Jesús Olmedo is awaiting approval to begin planting rubber and cacao crops. He explained that one month ago he submitted the required documentation to access a productive project and believes his chances of being selected are high. He expressed great satisfaction in having his land available again, not only for new crops but also for recovering his agricultural traditions.

In Puerto Guzmán, the Indigenous reservation of La Aguadita expects that, following the release of the area, the National Land Agency (ANT) will implement actions to strengthen their community life plans.

Based on the above, the community expressed that rebuilding trust in public institutions requires sustainable actions in dispersed rural areas. Therefore, they requested that the implementation of programs and projects be linked to areas where humanitarian demining activities are carried out in order to sustain the benefits already achieved.

Community members also consider that the use of released areas for economic activities will be directly proportional to the level of support they receive, whether from public institutions or other organizations present in the territory. In the meantime, clearing and burning vegetation and fencing areas have become community strategies to reduce the risk of new explosive ordnance installations. However, the current situation of territorial disputes and illegal economies controlled by armed groups continues to limit future security guarantees, both inside and outside the areas where Humanitarian Mine Action activities are implemented.

Contribution to Communities in Mitigating Risks and Impacts Related to the Presence of Explosive Ordnance in the Territory

The previous section presented the direct and indirect contributions that communities perceive because of HMA in improving living conditions and security.

The Comprehensive Mine Action project implemented in five municipalities of Putumayo proved to be a relevant response to the humanitarian crisis faced by populations affected by APM and other explosive ordnance. The project has restored community confidence and safety to move throughout the territory, enabled communities to safely and dignifiedly use their land again and encouraged institutions to strengthen coordination with communities to reactivate social and economic development initiatives.

The positive impact on the daily lives of families and communities living in released areas is reflected in the recognition of humanitarian demining as a protection strategy and in the search for opportunities to enhance indirect impacts on economic development.

These are some of the impacts the project has generated for direct beneficiaries through the land release component. However, what impacts did the implementation of EORE have on direct and indirect beneficiaries in their role as agents of their own change? How are stakeholders using the knowledge transferred and the exchange of experiences provided by the

project to strengthen safe practices and ownership of risk prevention measures? These questions will be addressed in the following section.

Ownership of Learning EORE



During the project period (December 2021 to November 2023), workshops were conducted with communities, local authorities, and educational institutions. Although EORE targets between 2021 and 2022 were initially focused exclusively on Puerto Leguízamo, the urgent protection needs in the municipality led to EORE being used as one of the key strategies to mitigate the risk of accidents and promote a culture of safe behaviors, particularly in territories where land release processes could not progress as expected due to security conditions.

During the second project amendment, the EORE target was expanded to cover all five municipalities of intervention. As a result, the projected target was exceeded by more than 400%, and according to evaluation results, 81.3% of participants adopted safe behaviors in response to the threat posed by APM and unexploded ordnance.

For the participating population, the impacts of the workshops are direct and lifesaving. The safe behavior messages promoted through visual materials generated interest among both children and adults, encouraging participants to share experiences about how people in their communities respond when encountering explosive ordnance in their daily lives.

As part of the evaluation process, two schools were visited: El Progreso School and the Sitará Indigenous Council School, where reinforcement workshops were conducted and referral pathways were reaffirmed.

For children, adolescents, and youth, the experience was positive, and they demonstrated strong awareness of warning signs related to possible contamination. Teachers were also identified as key actors with strong potential to become knowledge multipliers within their communities.

In dispersed rural communities, the educational community — including teachers, families, and students — promotes safe behaviors and strengthens collective protection strategies. For example, within the Indigenous council, there is an expectation that younger generations will remain in the territory and preserve their traditions. However, security conditions and employment opportunities remain determining factors for ensuring generational continuity.

On the other hand, peasant communities consider continuous prevention efforts essential for carrying out their agricultural activities and therefore requested additional reinforcement

workshops throughout the territory, recognizing that the changing dynamics of non-state armed groups continue to expose them to new risks.

According to the CCCM regional staff, communities demonstrated a positive change in their willingness to publicly discuss contamination caused by explosive ordnance. Initially, people were reluctant to speak about the issue and did not participate in workshops. Later, through the community liaison strategy, the organization gained a deeper understanding of the impacts faced by communities, and participation increased significantly. In educational institutions, large-scale workshop sessions were organized in response to urgent protection needs.

Additionally, the territorial team highlighted the community's strong capacity to replicate and disseminate protection messages. Direct beneficiaries also positively valued the prioritization of workshop locations and emphasized that public information dissemination strategies have a broader and longer-lasting impact when coordinated with local radio stations in rural areas.

Territorial Management Strategies

Coordination with institutional actors and humanitarian response mechanisms has proven especially valuable in contexts where humanitarian access and operational space are limited. Through participation in Local Coordination Teams (ELC), Transitional Justice Committees, Security Councils, and other coordination platforms, CCCM has promoted collaboration among territorial stakeholders and supported actions aimed at bringing existing services and assistance closer to remote communities.

In this context, the implementation of service brigades in villages and rural settlements — where EORE workshops are conducted and referral pathways for accidents or explosive ordnance reporting are reinforced — has generated a positive impact and strengthened CCCM's relationship with local communities.

Another important impact related to territorial management has been the inclusion of actions aimed at strengthening HMA within the municipalities where the project is implemented. In particular, the Puerto Asís Municipal Development Plan 2024–2027 included the following:



"*There is a need to deliver messages through community radio stations and to allocate resources for victim assistance and mine risk education. Support is also required to access areas where the campaign has not yet been able to operate. It is necessary to create installed capacity for specialized rehabilitation and care services due to the profound life changes faced by survivors, the*

procedures required to obtain prosthetics, and the need for resources to support survivor assistance." (Puerto Asís Municipal Government, Municipal Development Plan, 2024)

Although not all advocacy actions were incorporated into municipal development plans, both Puerto Asís and Puerto Caicedo included measures aimed at integrating EORE and Victim Assistance into the service offerings available to communities.

Consolidation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy with an Ethnic Differential Approach and Replication Potential

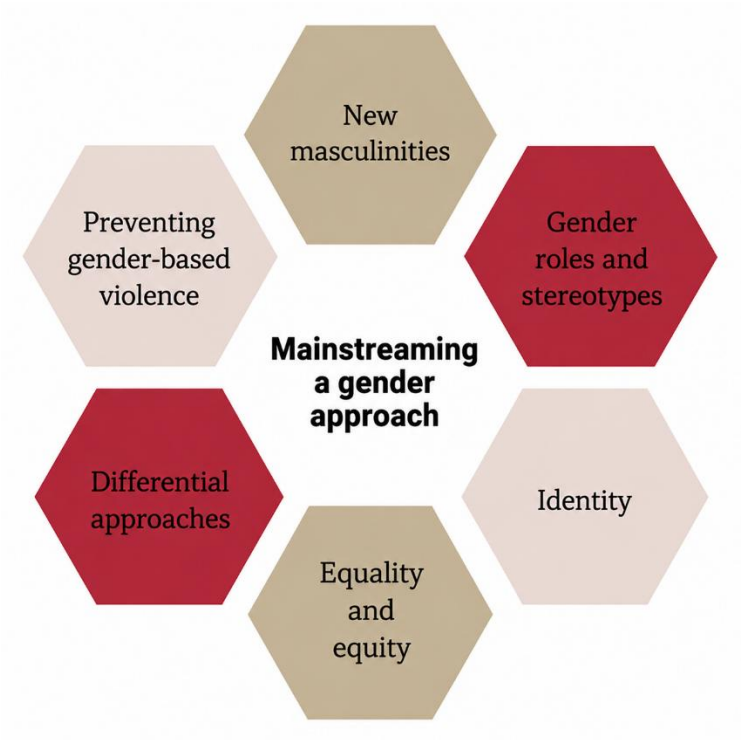
After addressing the contributions of HMA to communities and the direct impacts related to prevention, the following section seeks to evaluate the gender mainstreaming strategy based on both community satisfaction and the organization's perception. The purpose is to demonstrate the importance of the Gender Focal Points (GFP) strategy and the arguments supporting the inclusion of this component within CCCM projects.

Perception of the extent to which the organization participates in the activities

Supporting and sharing knowledge were two of the main motivations that led Diana, Alex, Diego, Sandra, Dani, and Katherine to become part of the GFP of CCCM. This organizational strategy seeks to mainstream gender both internally and externally by strengthening safe spaces and promoting the inclusion of all approaches.



The following graph presents the most recurrent concepts through which the team considers they have gained the greatest learning and those that they believe contribute to gender mainstreaming both internally and externally.



Initially, mainstreaming is understood as an opportunity to work with communities from an inclusion perspective. Transforming inequalities is considered the pathway forward, through actions such as preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV), promoting new masculinities, and deconstructing gender roles and stereotypes.

The GFP members consider that the organization's gender strategy has strengthened over time, to the point that it is no longer only appropriated internally but has also sparked community interest regarding equity. This is reflected in the composition of operational teams and the assignment of tasks during land release activities regardless of gender.

At a personal level, most participants expressed that they have contributed to their communities, ranging from replicating acquired knowledge to supporting people through GBV referral pathways.

This has generated a direct positive cultural impact, as most communities and team members previously did not recognize the different forms of violence or know how to address protection strategies for people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

The talks and workshops represent a significant opportunity for further development within ethnic communities, particularly in response to the increase in cases of femicide and persecution against the LGBTIQ+ population.

The Community and the Gender Approach

According to the information gathered through focus groups and interviews, the community does not explicitly recognize the gender approach as such. However, when the discussion

focuses on the composition of the teams and the tasks they perform, comments emerge regarding how "balanced" the situation appears and how "unusual yet interesting" it is.

Regarding this, Sandra shared:

"We arrived at a clearance camp. The people around us saw that both men and women were equally involved in tasks such as cleaning bathrooms and sweeping. Then, when I went to the store, a man told me: 'I had never picked up a broom before, but after seeing your colleagues, it now seems normal.' That creates a very important impact within the communities."

Discussions within the teams about gender-related topics also attract the attention of people close to them.

"One day we were giving a talk that had been shared with us through chat, and afterward the woman from the house approached me and said that one day she had seen a same-sex couple and had asked them to leave her home because for her that was not normal."

In these situations, the team recognized that observation and respect are often the best approach to avoid causing harm or affecting relationships with the community.

Finally, participants considered that the personal changes they have experienced have also had an impact on their families, communities, and work teams, contributing to the deconstruction of ideas related to sexual diversity, emotional expression, and the defense of equality.

Humanitarian Mine Action Improves Municipal Institutional Capacities for Response and Action Against Explosive Ordnance Contamination

The needs addressed by the project were classified into three categories: the first related to land release; the second focused on knowledge transfer for safe behaviors; and the third associated with territorial management.

The following section evaluates: To what extent does the HMA Plan of Puerto Leguízamo contribute to improving the municipality's response capacities? And how were territorial analysis strategies strengthened through the project's implementation and coverage?

Integrated Mine Action Plan: Puerto Leguízamo

Due to the absence of security guarantees, Humanitarian Demining operations were suspended in the municipality of Puerto Leguízamo. The limited Non-Technical Survey (NTS) activities conducted revealed two key issues:

- Reporting of accidents or the presence of APM and other explosive ordnance is not part of the community's risk mitigation strategies.

- The Public Force carried out 119 military demining operations between 2008 and 2022, creating additional risks for the civilian population's livelihoods in the municipality.

In this context, and in coordination with the municipal administration, the development of the Integrated Mine Action Plan for Puerto Leguízamo was promoted as a tool to strengthen municipal actions and response capacities regarding contamination by explosive ordnance.

The pillars of Humanitarian Mine Action — humanitarian demining, EORE, VA, and territorial management — were incorporated as specific lines of action to be articulated with Territorial Action Plans (PAT), Contingency Plans, and Prevention Plans, with the aim of mitigating the impacts caused by the presence of APM and unexploded ordnance.



Within the humanitarian demining component, the objective was to update the contamination status by encouraging institutions to complete tools that would allow the systematization of reported or known impacts.

For the EORE component, awareness-raising and dissemination of information about risks were integrated into different planning instruments, in addition to proposing the creation of a Rapid Response Guide for possible accidents. Regarding Victim Assistance, the plan highlighted the need to ensure comprehensive referral pathways for victims and survivors, including psychosocial support and activities aimed at identifying and characterizing the affected population at the municipal level.

Finally, the territorial management component sought to strengthen stakeholders involved in HMA and to create a unified matrix of institutional service offerings.

Considering that the dialogue and coordination processes for the plan began in 2022 and concluded in 2023 — the same year municipal and departmental government administrations changed — an update of the plan was requested from the municipal administration during the 2024 evaluation process. Through an official communication, the administration determined that updating the information contained in the Mine Action Plan was necessary due to the governmental transition, and that the proposed actions should align with the priorities of the current municipal administration and community needs.

CCCM subsequently informed the municipal authorities of the territorial team's availability to support the updating process, including discussions not only on planned activities but also on the budget allocations required for implementing the plan, since the preliminary version delivered did not include a defined budget line or funding source.

This situation reflects the absence of financial support for the Mine Action Plan within the municipal administration of Puerto Leguízamo. The response capacity the plan aimed to strengthen lacks an allocated budget and therefore cannot yet be considered an actual

improvement in municipal response capacity, especially given the difficulties in integrating the plan into the current Municipal Development Plan and the existing challenges related to Humanitarian Mine Action in the municipality.

Looking ahead, it is important to expand financing opportunities by engaging additional regional stakeholders, since, as demonstrated throughout the process, the administrations of the five prioritized municipalities lack sufficient resources to fully implement the planned actions. Consequently, immediate and comprehensive response capacity remains limited.

Territorial Analysis and Response Strategy

This section addresses four actions that have enabled CCCM to strengthen its territorial analysis capacity, promote the Do No Harm approach, and advance Humanitarian Demining processes through protection strategies based on community engagement and relationships.

Territorial Analysis

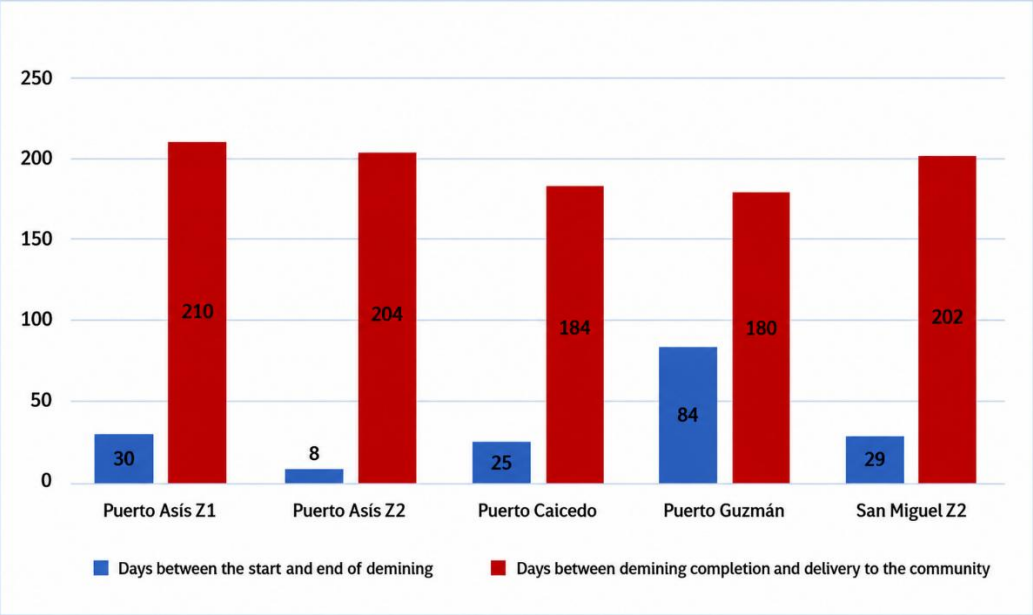
- The collection of 216 Needs and Capacities Assessments reports made it possible to establish more coherent prioritization criteria for EORE workshops. According to community perceptions, both the locations where the workshops were conducted and the participants involved corresponded to the actual needs of the territory. Additionally, communities positively valued CCCM's responsiveness in deploying facilitators or teams to provide reinforcement workshops when requested.

- Municipal capacities related to Public Information Dissemination have allowed safe behavior messages to reach broader audiences using tools such as WhatsApp, which has proven more effective in dispersed rural areas lacking electricity services or satellite connectivity.

- The gender strategy has contributed to improving territorial analysis and the inclusion of ethnic-sensitive approaches through intercultural encounters and knowledge-sharing dialogues. This has been facilitated by the incorporation of ethnic population members into the regional team, who, as reflected in the gender mainstreaming section, have assumed a commitment within their own communities to replicate and share the knowledge acquired.

- The following graph reflects the duration, measured in days, of clearance operations and the time required for the subsequent handover of areas to the community:

Figure 4. Time between the start of land release and handover to the community



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de gestión de información.

As can be seen, the time it takes to deliver the land to the community exceeds six months after clearance is complete in all cases. While responsibility lies with the approval timelines of the External Monitoring Component (CEM-OAS), two impacts on the project were identified. On the one hand, there is a risk to the effectiveness of the results, given that the communities prolonged wait for the areas, combined with the changing situation of the armed conflict, may expose them to new contamination. Therefore, and this connects to the second impact, the need for constant updates to these areas has made it possible not only to keep the documentation up to date but also to have an understanding of the context almost in real time and as expressed by the community.

CCCM Response to the Territorial Situation

Considering that the task order assigned to CCCM for the municipalities in Putumayo expires in 2025, and to avoid losing the progress already achieved through the NTS and Clearance stages, CCCM proposed a zoning model to the Mine Action National Authority for the areas already assigned. This proposal focused on sectors where, despite long periods of intervention and the application of all reasonable efforts, Humanitarian Demining operations could not be carried out due either to security concerns or the lack of community approval.

This approach was informed by lessons learned from the situation in Vista Hermosa, Meta, where operations had to be suspended for an extended period due to security conditions. As a result, several sectors expired, and new updates emerged within municipal records, ultimately preventing the work carried out years earlier from achieving the expected results.

The activities conducted to implement this zoning process included:

- Identifying sectors with access difficulties due to security conditions and/or lack of community approval.
- Reviewing community liaison records documenting the outreach and follow-up processes carried out by CCCM.
- Reviewing security monitoring reports from Security Councils and Early Warning System (SAT) alerts issued by the Ombudsman's Office.
- Reviewing the status of sectors that had been partially worked on but remained suspended, as well as sectors that had never been accessed.
- Analyzing the operational strategy to determine priority intervention zones.
- Grouping sectors already completed and declared free from suspicion of contamination together with contaminated sectors already included in clearance planning.

The main objective of this strategy is to finalize the assigned zones and proceed with partial handovers to prevent the expiration of completed work.

This process was implemented in the department of Putumayo, considering the previously described territorial characteristics, as follows:

Puerto Asís – Zone 2

The municipality was divided into two zones:

- **Zone 2:** sectors already worked on and completed, as well as contaminated sectors where authorization exists to conduct Humanitarian Demining operations and finalize activities.
- **Zone 3:** sectors that could not be accessed or remain suspended due to security concerns and/or lack of community approval for demining operations.

Puerto Caicedo

The municipality was divided into two zones:

- **Zone 1:** sectors already worked on and completed, as well as contaminated sectors authorized for Humanitarian Demining activities to complete operations.
- **Zone 2:** sectors that could not be accessed or remain suspended due to security conditions and/or lack of community approval.

Puerto Guzmán

Due to the escalation of conflict during the last four years, the Operations and Community Liaison areas decided to divide the municipality into three zones:

- **Zone 1:** sectors already worked on and completed, as well as contaminated sectors where Humanitarian Demining tasks can continue to finalize operations.
- **Zone 2:** sectors located along the Caquetá River, where security guarantees for the deployment of NTS and Clearance teams do not exist. Due to ongoing armed confrontations, safe access cannot be guaranteed.
- **Zone 3:** sectors bordering the municipalities of Puerto Asís, Puerto Caicedo, and Puerto Leguízamo. Security conditions in these areas are highly fluctuating because they constitute strategic corridors for armed groups and are therefore subject to constant territorial disputes. Additionally, the number of accidents reported in this zone continues to increase.

Puerto Leguízamo

In the case of Puerto Leguízamo, a zoning process was not implemented because CCCM continues coordinating efforts with the Mine Action National Authority to enable entry into the municipality under the National Humanitarian Demining Standard applicable to areas affected by security instability and specific security-related incidents.

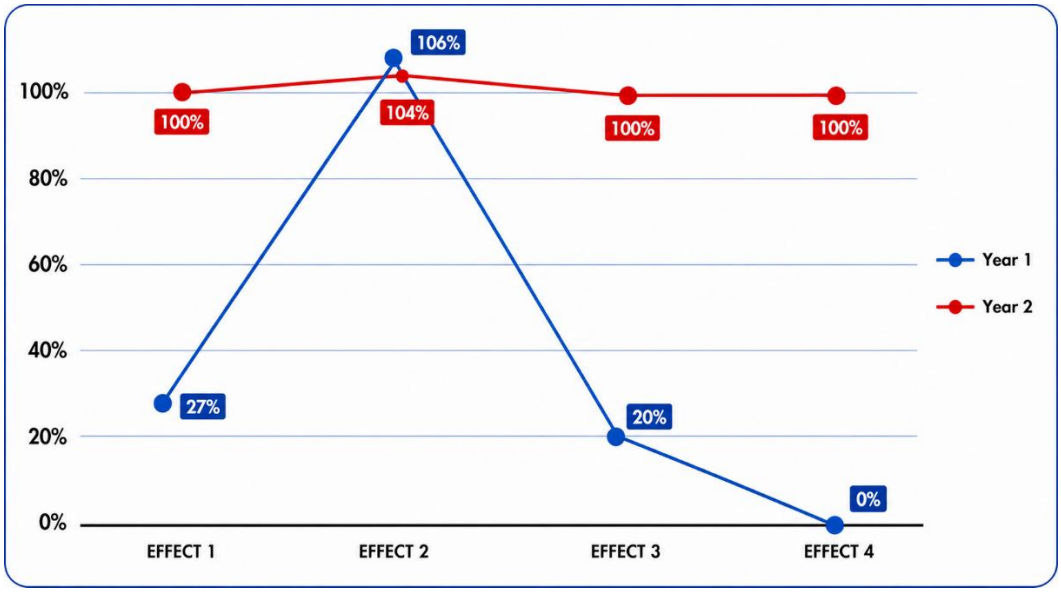
Finally, it is important to clarify that the zoning model does not apply to Puerto Leguízamo because operations have been suspended for more than three years. The handover of specific zones would require a new review and assessment of sectors already worked on, as well as areas where hazardous zones had previously been identified. For this reason, the continuation of operations in Puerto Leguízamo will proceed through actions implemented under the National Standard framework.

Efficiency Analysis

After discussing HMA's contributions in the five municipalities of Putumayo and its impact on community well-being and risk prevention, the following section analyzes the technical and budgetary implementation of the project outcomes.

According to Figure 5, technical implementation in the first year progressed at an average compliance rate of 38%, reporting results for outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

Figure 5. Technical Implementation



Source: Compiled by the author using data from the final technical report.

The performance of Outcome 2 is closely related to the contributions identified by the communities. The adoption of safe behaviors as a result of awareness-raising activities represents the most significant direct impact. Although the level of achievement decreased during the second year, communities still perceived positive behavioral changes that contribute to preventing new risks and strengthening safety within community self-protection strategies.

Although the project's final report indicated that the effectiveness of Outcome 1 was below 100% due to external challenges affecting the implementation of the NTS, the expected outcome was achieved not only through indicators associated with the full marking of areas and the improvement of living and security conditions through clearance operations, but also through the perceptions of the community and direct landowners. These stakeholders identified reductions in fear, insecurity, and threats caused by the presence of explosive ordnance.

Regarding Outcome 3, the assessment conducted with teams and some community members indicates that the organization has developed institutional capacity for gender analysis and work with an ethnic differential approach. However, these analyses require broader dissemination and promotion at both national and regional levels to consolidate a more comprehensive organizational implementation capable of influencing, to the greatest extent possible, the participation and advocacy spaces supported by the organization.

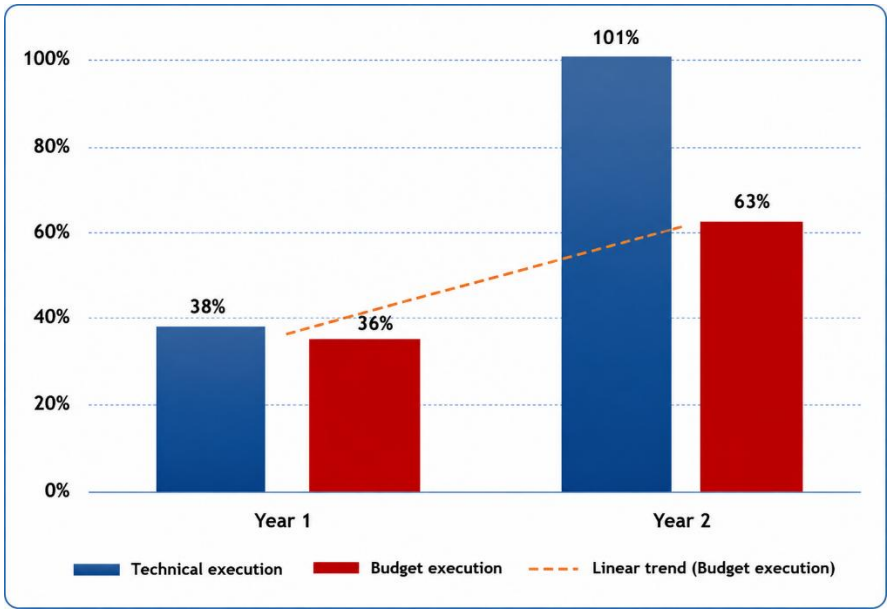
Finally, Outcome 4 was technically achieved according to the assessment of municipal capacities and needs related to explosive ordnance contamination and through the development of the Comprehensive Mine Action Plan (AICMA Plan). However, the plan has not

yet become an instrument capable of improving municipal response capacity due to difficulties related to funding and integration into public policy frameworks.

As an interinstitutional coordination initiative, the plan represents an opportunity for organizations and institutions operating in the territory to strengthen collective efforts and avoid duplication of actions.

Furthermore, the comparison between budget execution percentages and technical implementation presented in Graph 6 reflects the correlation between project expenditures and the achievement of project outcomes.

Figure 6. Comparison of implementation rates



Source: Prepared by the author using data from the financial report.

On the one hand, budget execution stood at 98.6%, and the project's impact achieved 100% effectiveness, suggesting that the Comprehensive Mine Action program in five municipalities of Putumayo was generally efficient. However, on the other hand, financial requirements must be considered to break down expenditures according to the project's impact and by the municipality. This is elaborated upon in the recommendations section.

Assessment of the Benefits Perceived by the Community

For CCCM, identifying the changes generated through the project is necessary to establish a causal relationship. In other words, are the benefits perceived by the community attributable to the organization? Or to what extent did the project's results contribute to these changes?

The following table reflects the contribution that the community considers the project has made in relation to security, local development, safe behaviors, community satisfaction, and organizational learning.

Table 5. Categorization of the project's direct and indirect contributions

Impacts	Benefits	The project contributes directly	The project contributes indirectly
Safety	Mobility within the territory	87%	13%
	Reduction of risk in intervened areas	85%	15%
	Reduction of fear and uncertainty in the municipality, urban and rural areas	63%	37%
Local development	Reactivation of individual or collective economies	67%	33%
	Generation of employment opportunities	36%	64%
	Implementation of public programs or policies (PDET, PNIS, Land Restitution, etc.)	30%	70%
Safe behaviors	Adoption of knowledge acquired through Mine Risk Education (EORE)	100%	
	Coverage of activities and beneficiaries	100%	
	Strengthening territorial management	53%	47%
Satisfaction	Perception regarding the level of organizational participation in the actions	100%	
	Community satisfaction with the implementation of actions	100%	
Organizational learning	Comprehensive learning acquired by the organization	93%	7%
	Adaptation of activities and tools to the context and community	87%	13%

The project contributed directly to 77% of the identified impacts. On one hand, the direct impacts relate to security, the adoption of safe behaviors, satisfaction with the activities carried out, and organizational learning. On the other hand, impacts on local development are indirect, as their sustainability depends on external factors.

In this sense, CCCM attributes the observed changes in the communities' perception of safety regarding mobility within their territories and the recovery of trust to the project's interventions. Additionally, the project contributed to changes in safe behaviors that have helped mitigate

risks and strengthen community-based territorial management strategies. Communities also highlighted the relevance with which EORE activities are planned and the appropriateness of the populations invited to participate.

Regarding community satisfaction with CCCM's work and organizational learning, the organization's strategy for engagement with communities and stakeholders across the municipalities was positively valued.

Externally, the organization has consolidated itself as a trusted and supportive actor for communities, as well as a strategic partner for institutions and humanitarian action actors. Internally, CCCM is undergoing a process of capacity strengthening aimed at contributing knowledge transfer strategies to other organizations.

Lessons Learned

This section presents the lessons learned from the Comprehensive Mine Action project implemented in five municipalities of Putumayo, particularly regarding its contributions and impacts on communities, operational teams, and direct beneficiaries of the activities.

Contribution of Humanitarian Mine Action to Improving Well-Being and Security

Through the project, CCCM has contributed not only to increasing awareness of the impacts generated by the presence of explosive ordnance, but also to promoting self-protection strategies within beneficiary communities.

Currently, the impact of EORE on the protection of life is reflected in its incorporation into municipal risk management plans and its inclusion within municipal development plans. Although these actions do not have direct funding, they form part of municipal response capacities and are strengthened when stakeholders integrate them into their service provision strategies.



For CCCM, one effective way to reach the most remote rural areas has been through participation in service brigades, where institutional and humanitarian service delivery is decentralized and brought directly to communities.

Another strategy has been prioritizing the implementation of EORE workshops in large educational institutions to reach the greatest possible number of children, adolescents, youth, and teachers. Teaching staff represents a key pillar within communities due to their educational role. Additionally, training NTS teams to replicate workshops whenever immediate action is required

has contributed to the relevance and sustainability of safe behavior messaging and public information dissemination.

Regarding the social and economic development of communities, CCCM promotes, within its interdependent role, communication and coordination between territories and public institutions, so that these families can be prioritized within local programs and projects during accountability and planning processes. However, according to public officials, available resources remain insufficient, and prioritization processes are not always equitable.

For CCCM, contributions to community development depend largely on the State's capacity to respond through two main pathways: the restoration of security guarantees and the implementation of programs and projects that respond appropriately to community needs through differential approaches.

Capacity Development

At the internal level, the organization is undergoing a process of internationalizing its experience through a knowledge transfer strategy. This process has led to the identification of opportunities for improvement in the way lessons learned are internally shared, ensuring that training processes move toward a more comprehensive approach that addresses not only operational capacities and technical standards, but also the transversal processes that the organization has strengthened over the years.



In this context, project management capacities were strengthened through the recruitment of a person responsible for organizational impact evaluation and another person responsible for the knowledge management strategy.

Through these new processes, the organization expects to address both its mission and operational methodologies from a capacity-building perspective, improving the efficiency of its operational and financial actions while generating conditions for sustainability.

The consolidation of a lessons learned repository, the evaluation of project results, and the involvement of communities in monitoring and evaluation processes are among the actions expected to strengthen the organization's response to humanitarian needs and to the Humanitarian Mine Action sector.

Finally, the organization's ability to adapt to new challenges proposed by international cooperation actors and humanitarian stakeholders has led CCCM to transform improvement plans into continuous improvement tools, enabling the organization to operate across three levels: strategic, tactical, and operational. This process strengthens its value proposition as an

organization that contributes to peacebuilding through community safety and the promotion of safe behaviors.



Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Improvement from the Project

The impact evaluation identified lessons learned that reaffirm the potential of this type of project, as well as internal opportunities for improvement aimed at strengthening existing processes and promoting new ones.

Lessons Learned

- The project demonstrated that contributing to community safety and improving well-being creates enabling conditions for the development of communities affected by explosive ordance.
- CCCM's strong relationship with communities has helped restore trust in organizations operating in the territory as well as in public institutions themselves.
- CCCM's participation and advocacy in local and regional spaces have positioned the organization as a strategic actor operating under principles of community protection.
- Providing additional EORE training to NTS teams increased the coverage of prevention messages and the promotion of safe behaviors among populations and territories, particularly in municipalities with higher levels of contamination and where security conditions do not allow Humanitarian Demining operations, such as Puerto Leguízamo.
- The Do No Harm approach has enabled CCCM to remain present in the territory through continuous context analysis. Community approval has been the primary tool for initiating activities, helping avoid risks to both communities and operational teams.

- Constant communication and activity reporting to municipal administrations have strengthened CCCM's security strategies, while support channels for responding to explosive ordnance accidents have proven effective.
- The Gender Focal Points strategy has achieved a broader impact when members of ethnic communities are involved. Through this approach, access to ethnic territories became more effective, enabling the implementation of more EORE workshops with these populations.
- The recruitment of local personnel as part of the organization's entry strategy has become the first link of trust with the territory, not only because of the employment opportunities generated, but also because communities trust local people to conduct NTS interviews, establish camps, engage with Community Action Board leaders, and deliver EORE workshops, among other strategic activities.
- The strong relationship between CCCM and the Mine Action National Authority facilitated the development of a strategy to mitigate difficulties associated with conducting humanitarian demining operations in certain areas affected by the escalation of armed conflict and instability caused by non-state armed groups. The proposed and approved zoning process is expected not only to facilitate access to these areas, but also to guarantee the delivery of territories free from contamination, ensuring that the efforts carried out are not lost and that communities can safely use these areas.

Opportunities for Improvement

In recognition of the challenges posed by Humanitarian Mine Action in the department of Putumayo and the five assigned municipalities, CCCM consolidated an improvement plan based on the findings of the COSUDE audit. This plan addresses not only elements related to the evaluation framework, but also broader organizational aspects such as financial monitoring, communication, and procedural workflows.

Within the framework of the impact evaluation, additional opportunities for improvement were also identified:

Organizational

- Ensure secure information storage and management through the implementation of effective systems for safeguarding, protecting, and managing collected information, ensuring its accessibility and responsible long-term use. It is recommended to acquire an organizational information management system (software) administered by the Information Management Department under a knowledge management strategy.
- Adapt training processes for operational, administrative, and logistics personnel based on experience exchange and identified needs. It is recommended to conduct periodic organizational refresher trainings addressing not only the pillars of Mine Action, but also lessons learned from project implementation, while creating spaces for feedback and reflection.

- Considering that the organization is finalizing the development of its 2024–2027 Strategic Plan, it is recommended to disseminate this plan through ongoing or recurring training sessions. Additionally, it is important for the operational staff of regional offices to be included in future planning and development processes.
- Organizational systematization is a practice that allows for the critical recovery of experiences and the generation of lessons learned. It represents a key strategy for the Do No Harm approach; therefore, it is recommended to promote within the organizational culture the documentation and dissemination of lessons learned, good practices, and opportunities for improvement across all departments.
- Monitoring budget execution requires continuous financial analysis. It is recommended to establish specific budget lines for each project component. This would facilitate cost-benefit analyses and help identify strategies to optimize resources.
- Consolidate a communication strategy based on tools that disseminate organizational experiences within the framework of good practices and lessons learned.

Implementation

- Strengthen territorial public information dissemination processes related to EORE and allocate specific budget lines for refreshments management. This recommendation arises from requests made by communities and local authorities.
- Strengthen the Victim Assistance component at the regional level by continuously training facilitators, coordinators, and managers in survivor and victim characterization and support processes.
- Processes such as Community Liaison and Victim Assistance require dedicated budgets to provide continuous in-person training for all office personnel. This contributes to team integration and improves relationships with communities regardless of staff roles.
- Strengthen accountability processes toward communities through audiovisual resources that can be disseminated through platforms such as WhatsApp.

Conclusions

The following conclusions derive from the medium-term outcomes of the Swiss Humanitarian Mine Action Program in Colombia, within the broader framework of COSUDE's intervention strategy.

The first significant outcome is the strengthening of the capacities of actors involved in Humanitarian Mine Action, which has had a direct impact on the organization responsible for implementing the project. As a result of this process, capacities for comprehensive territorial analysis have significantly improved. A clear example of this is the zoning proposal presented to the Mine Action National Authority. In addition, the lessons learned and identified opportunities for improvement have created a valuable internal and external learning opportunity for the organization.

Regarding the response to humanitarian and protection needs, CCCM has acted in accordance with the pillars of AICMA, continuously assessing the needs and capacities of communities under a Do No Harm approach.

The third outcome focuses on the recovery and improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of communities affected by the presence of APM, particularly through access to basic services and durable solutions. As previously mentioned, this process requires structural support from the State, not only in terms of investment and program development, but also through the provision of security guarantees.

The final outcome relates to the promotion of dialogue on public policy in coordination with partners and donors. This action forms part of the strategic lines of the organization's new Strategic Plan, which seeks to contribute lessons learned and experiences developed through humanitarian demining activities to the broader sector.

Finally, the project contributes to the restoration of rights and the effective enjoyment and use of territories, both of which are fundamental elements for peacebuilding. In this context, Humanitarian Mine Action in the department of Putumayo continues to be viewed as a viable experience, supported by communities and recognized as a successful intervention model within the region.

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Interviews

Einer. Secretario Vereda El Progreso, Puerto Asís Zona 1.

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