

Meeting of the Environmental Issues in Mine Action Working Group (EIMA)

1 December 2020

Hosted on Zoom

Participants in attendance:

Callum Peebles (HALO) (Chair)

Linsey Cottrell (CEOBS)

Kristy Davies (HALO)

Kendra Dupuy (NPA)

Claude Peffer (NATO)

Marceau Guilbaud (independent consultant)

Sarah Njeri (ODI)

Cianna O'Connell (UNMAS)

Anda Riza (HALO Kosovo)

ACTION POINTS

- **ALL:** flag interest to LC on involvement in environmental awareness in EORE thought paper
- **LC:** begin investigation of possible partnerships in contamination methods and land remediation

MINUTES

Feedback from EIMA briefing to the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

- Presentation covered overview of the group, objectives and aspirations, past meetings, and topics being taken up in the group
- Thematic discussion was welcome
- Positive feedback from IACG
- EIMA may return in future for another update, to be discussed at a future date
- Had follow-up discussions with UNICEF on potential to include environmental awareness in EORE. Now plan to prepare a 'thought paper' for the forthcoming EORE-Advisory Group meeting in early 2021. Any members who wish to be involved, please contact Linsey Cottrell. *[Sarah Njeri offered her support with this. HALO also happy to support]*

Observations from 18MSP and 2RC

- Kendra summed up SDGs panel, link to video here: <https://youtu.be/7mxiY-K9V8Y>
- Links to other side events recordings provided:
Landmine Free 2025: <https://forms.gle/yB3SvKMTqKrEBRpF6>
Mine Action and the SDGs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mxiY-K9V8Y&t=368s>
HALO Trust: https://youtu.be/xNMY-m_9IVg
- HALO summed up the panel they hosted on environment which specifically addressed conservation issues. HALO also mentioned their new strategy, which includes links with mine

action, the environment and conservation: <https://www.halotrust.org/about-us/governance/reports-strategy/>

- Alternative financing side event was also relevant – potential for increased environmental requirements – HALO looking into the possibility of Development Impact Bonds, using a model similar to [IFFIM](#), which supports the Gavi vaccine alliance. The UK government has set up a working group to explore goals and outputs for investors.
 - Discussion of what donors might be prioritizing going forward
 - DG-ECHO has approach to reducing environmental impact of humanitarian aid
 - Available here: <https://youtu.be/13rkbPz2364>
- Question asked on any observations or insight from 18 MSP on how donors funding for 2021/2022 may be impacted by Covid and any trend in discourse with alignment to the SDGs and the environment initiatives as funding becomes more constrained. This could also perhaps open other opportunities for mine action or it may just be too early to tell. In the discussion which followed, suggested that funding situation is still unknown but link with sustainability development is now more on the agenda (e.g. included in the draft Lausanne Action Plan). Any re-calibration of funding and uncertainty ahead may mean a need to link mine action with other development outcomes. Also noted that ambition to embed environmental matters in mine action contracts/programmes may be limited by the bureaucratic structure of some donors who have multi-departments working in isolation.
- Point also raised on the importance of the role of local actors, with a need to provide resources to local actors operating as first responders, how to route response with local actors and centre discussions with these vulnerable communities. Need to find new audiences for these discussions to move it forward.

Discussion paper on munition disposal (see additional separate slides)

Discussion paper provided to summarise the key points from the white paper by MG, provide pre-meeting reading material and initiate some discussion. Recognise that this is just a starting point for further discussions on the topic, with the need to identify actions to move this forward.

Slide presentation by Claude Peffer on the main points, as follows:

- Environmental impact of open burning open destruction
- Two major goals: soil remediation after EOD action; adapting the work methods of EODs – bring together the IMAS on these
- Need to ensure alignments with the SDGs – but current EOD methods are often not in line with SDGs, have high impact on environment (in situ destruction, stockpile destructions, and burning)
- Low order methods can reduce impact
- For underwater disposal, use of bubble curtains to minimise impacts
- Phyto-remediation as a future method to address environmental damage
- US phyto-remediation trials have taken place and in Germany, research soil preparation prior to disposal to minimise environmental impacts (annual symposium held in Germany)
- Contents of weapons, and methods of disposal – impact
- Partnerships critical for improving environmental impacts – need to real-life trials carried out by certified bodies and partnerships between mine action organisations, evaluation bodies and donors

- Mobile solutions available – moderately expensive

Specific points from the discussion paper not covered in the meeting but wider discussion on the following took place:

- Effects of flails/crushers to detonate ordnance and residues explosives not specifically covered by the WP or paper by Roly Evans.
- Highlight the need to pursue 'all reasonable effects' to address the environmental concerns
- Need to balance these against security and safety reasons when in-situ disposal is necessary
- IATG guidelines suggests that for <1tonnes, alternative disposal methods to OBOD is not cost effective
- HALO are reviewing their global SOPs, assessing the handling of small arms munition slag, siting and remediation of central demolition sites after long-term use and looking to gain a better understanding of specific ordnance qualities and any environmental effects. Also liaising with a university into potential use of a chemical reagent to neutralise explosives.
- Important to continue discussions and seek better understanding of the issues
- Safety, environment and cost all must be considered in tandem
- Important to challenge some definitions which may have been longstanding – for example, does IATG definition of 'cost effective' correctly considers any future environmental remediation which may be required?
- As highlighted in the presentation, partnerships will be important.
- Linsey volunteered to start to investigate possible options for partnerships, starting with NICOLE which is European network for contaminated land and remediation.

Links to additional resources:

- Marceau Guilbaud's [White Paper: The environmental impact of an explosion](#)
- Roly Evans and Andy Duncan's article, published in the Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction [July 2020](#)
- [Research](#) into civilian exposure from military activities at a US military test area in Vieques, Puerto Rico

AOB

No other business raised

Agreed to send out Doodle poll in January for next EIMA meeting. Some effort needed to encourage more people to join the next meeting.