

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

16 December 2021

Hosted on Zoom

Participants in attendance:

Linsey Cottrell (CEOBS) (Co-chair)

Hilde Jørgensen (NPA) (Co-chair)

Lucy Reeve (HALO)

Miguel Pacheco (HI)

Martin Jebens (ICRC)

Kiona Bolt (ICRC)

Alberto Casero Gómez-Pastrana (ICRC)

Roxana Bobolicu (MAG)

Lucy Pinches (Mine Action Review)

Alex Frost (Mine Action Review)

Sarah Njeri (ODI)

Carlie Stowe (PeaceTrees)

Steinar Essén (UNDP)

MINUTES

Introductions and recap from previous EIMA meetings

Initial thanks to Mine Action Review (MAR), and particularly Alex Frost who authored MAR's [Environmental Policy Paper¹](#) – launched in October 2021. The launch has helped to re-start this group.

During a difficult year for many, it is good timing for the re-start of the EIMA group given the interest in the MAR policy paper, plus the COP26 Climate Conference last month.

A brief re-cap of aspects and some of the topics covered in previous meetings was given. To summarise:

- On convening of the first EIMA meeting in 2020, attendees were asked about their 'areas of interest'. A broad and wide range of environmental aspects were raised, including:
 - understanding of the environmental impacts in relation to use of EWIPA
 - raising environmental awareness with national authorities
 - mine action and climate change
 - alternatives to OBOD
 - easier steps for applying environmental management
 - operationalisation of IMAS 07.13
 - sharing of best practice and use forum as a learning platform
- There were several guest presentations, including:
 - MSc students from London School of Economics presented their findings on the status of environmental safeguarding across the wider humanitarian sector

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/3zn5nbr5>

- NATO Support and Procurement Agency gave an overview of their environmental management procedures on demilitarisation and contract management
 - Perspective on sustainability and mine action given in the context of UNMAS Afghanistan
 - Introduction on the [mineaction.net](https://www.mineaction.net/)² platform by Fenix and how it can be used to interrogate the IMAS for environmental obligations
 - Summary of earlier consultation carried out to map environmental policy across mine action orgs
 - White paper on the environmental impacts of explosives and bioremediation techniques
 - General feedback on observations from review conferences (e.g. 18MSP, 2RC) also given
- The group were reminded about the [Environment and Humanitarian Action Network](https://www.eecentre.org/partners/the-ehanetwork)³ (EHAN) set up by UNEP/OCHA – it is a useful platform and would encourage members to join for networking/resources/webinars. Organisations can also endorse EHAN but it is not a requirement to joining. CEOBS attends and can continue to circulate useful and relevant information for the EIMA group
 - Be useful to include in the future meetings more horizon scanning of upcoming events, look at opportunities for joint presentations, statements etc...
 - Previous feedback from the early meetings also suggested focusing on a specific topic at each meeting. The meetings had been broader, covering a range of issues.
 - This was taken forward by focusing on soil contamination from OBOD, remediation options to address contamination and OBOD alternatives.
 - This is complex topic and challenging topic – perhaps too difficult an area to start on.
 - Attendance had dropped - this was perhaps since we were discussing issues rather than offering practical steps and sharing lessons learnt or good practice.
 - Hopeful that moving forward, there will be more individuals within organisations with a dedicated role or responsibility for the environment
 - A rotating chair was tried previously. Suggest this should be fixed for say 6 months for future meetings

Terms of Reference

A copy of the current ToR was circulated prior to the meeting. The ToR was finalized by the group in Aug 2020 and developed on the basis that this is an informal working group, with individuals not necessarily representing their organisation.

Please note that currently there is **no** voting policy in the ToR. This was discussed at an earlier meeting, with a poll taken on whether a voting policy was needed. The poll as a 50/50 split. This was left as voting on items within meetings (as required), with a majority decision. May wish to have an opt-in/opt-out system for any future publications or decisions.

In the future, the group may want to become more formal – this can be reviewed at a later date.

² <https://www.mineaction.net/>

³ <https://www.eecentre.org/partners/the-ehanetwork>

No suggested changes to the ToR were nominated at this meeting. Attendees were asked to forward any proposed changes to linsey@ceobs.org and these will be covered at the next meeting.

Question asked: Who have been members of the group in the past and what are the intentions about membership going forward?

Response: Members have largely been INGOs. The ToR states that membership is open to humanitarian mine action organisations, national mine action authorities, donors and commercial contractors. It is intention to look to extend membership as wide as possible, and beyond INGOs. Outreach will be one aspect to discuss in the next meeting to broaden the scope of the current membership.

Meeting format and topics

As per the ToR, sharing lessons should be a key aspect of the group.

NPA now have policy and environmental procedures in place, with organisation-wide implementation now taking place. Topics covered by the group would ideally provide practical guidance and advice, where organisations can learn from one another.

Suggested that the list of topics is revisited and reviewed, with members nominating areas of interest. This includes members sharing information on topics where they may have special experience or expertise, and whether they would like to present.

Invitations could also be extended to guest speakers on topics of interest to the group.

Current suggestions include: IMAS implementation, waste management, roles and responsibility of staff and training requirements, environmental monitoring and soil sampling, environmental assessment tools, working with the national authorities and scope for co-operation. Climate change and it's impact on mine action also nominated.

Beyond IMAS 07.13 and the impact of mine action operations on the environment, there is carbon emissions and accounting – fleet management and optimization, energy and use of renewables and solar panels, supply chain and procurement.

It was found when researching for the MAR Environmental policy paper, existing information on the environment and mine action was scattered. A central repository for the EIMA group and reference materials, including earlier presentations would be a useful move.

The group may also want to decide how much they engage with Treaties and future side events.

ToR states that the group does not intend to draft guidance but the group may wish to encourage updates to existing standards by the IMAS Review Board, such as IMAS 07.13 (2017) in either 2022 or early 2023. There has also been discussion on an IMAS technical note on climate change, so both are important to take forward as a group.

Updates on environmental activities within organisations from attendees

Brief updates were given by:

NPA – Some setbacks due to Covid but have now developed some systems, including sharing of NPA’s environmental assessment [tool](#)⁴ [*scroll to bottom of the webpage*]. Welcome other organisations using and amending, as required. In Q1 2022, NPA will be auditing their office-based activities initially and assessing how procedures can be integrated into existing systems, such as QMS.

UNDP - Energy and the environment are central to the new UNDP Strategic Plan. All in UNDP have to address the environment. UNDP have secured a grant for Azerbaijan from the UK’s FCDO to address the environment in mine action. This includes developing an environmental NMAS and working with the national mine action authority (also the largest operator) to develop environmental SOPs and processes. Emphasizes the importance of needing to engage with national authorities and development of NMAS.

Peacetrees – An article for the JCWD on climate change and extreme weather in relation to mine action programmes is due out shortly – [access here](#)⁵. Carlie’s MSc dissertation also looked at climate change impacts and has a lot of data from different mine action operations around the globe. Happy to share with the group at some point. Peacetrees is also developing an action plan on environment and climate change. A repository for best practices would be very helpful.

MAR – The Environmental policy paper was [launched](#)⁶ in October 2021 and a side event was held at the 19MSP. A copy is available [here](#)⁷ – it covers 4 sections – the environmental impact of EO, land release, norms and standards (including which countries have an environmental NMAS), environmental mitigation measures and thoughts on a way forward. The paper is designed to spark discussion, identify where the gaps are, including a lack of data and how better address this as a sector.

HALO – In 2021, HALO have been exploring conservation projects which complement the mine action work. Two current on-going projects; 1) mine clearance and planting endemic grapevines in Abkhazia; and 2) partnership with a local NGO, Candlelight in Somaliland, combining mine clearance with post clearance land restoration and includes digging soil bunds, replanting and beekeeping. HALO have also hired an environmental specialist who will be joining in January. HALO will then undertake a ‘roots and branch’ environmental audit and look to develop an internal assessment tool. HALO will also look to develop partnerships and further align their work with conservation projects. Particular focus in Angola and the Okavango delta, as well as in Afghanistan.

ICRC – Has developed an EO risk awareness guideline for natural disasters – e.g. after landslides and flooding. A pilot ‘train-the-trainer’ was undertaken in Vietnam and a booklet has been produced. ICRC have been raising environmental issues in the Mekong region where ICRC are active – Thailand, Lao, Cambodia and Vietnam. For example, in Vietnam, as a start VNMAC has now translated and reviewing IMAS 07.13. In 2022, ICRC want to continue to explore linking different mine action organisations with environmental NGOs and enabling a two-way exchange between them. Will be important to identify local and provincial initiatives, plus how this may be raised to a broader national level.

The importance of **linking up with other local environmental NGOs**, either through referral or formal collaborations, was again highlighted and a topic which should be explored by the group.

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/3zn5nbr5>

⁵ <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DbRzUNdTQQ>

⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/3zn5nbr5>

ODI – This point links well with the [work](#)⁸ of the Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI and the Danish Refugee Council on conflict, displacement and protection in climate related issues. Looking for opportunities to marry humanitarian policy and practice, with mine action and happy to collaborate on this.

Other information

A LinkedIn group has been set-up for environmental issues and mine action and includes links to articles and references - <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8933777/>. Please feel free to join.

Frequency and date of next meeting

Poll taken and a majority vote for :

- EIMA meeting every 2 months (can be reviewed at a later date)
- Chair to rotate every 6 months – Mine Action Review and CEOBS volunteered to co-chair from January 2022
- Next meeting **Wed 26th January 2022, 12pm CET**

Please forward suggestions for the **agenda** to linsey@ceobs.org

⁸ <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/DRC Climate change and protection web LN5Uggl.pdf>