

Environment Issues in Mine Action working group
Minutes from virtual meeting on 18 August 2020
Compiled by Kendra Dupuy, Norwegian People's Aid (kendup785@npaid.org)

1) Welcome by facilitator – Linsey Cottrell, Conflict and Environment Observatory.
Linsey Cottrell briefly welcomed the participants to the meeting.

In attendance:

Linsey Cottrell, CEOBS
Callum Peebles, HALO
Kendra Dupuy, NPA
Kristy Davies, HALO
David Hewitson, Fenix
Marceau Guilbaud, Global EOD Experts – based in Luxembourg
Michael Boyce, MAG
Ruth Bottomley, ICBL
Claude Peffer, NATO
Cianna O'Connell, UNMAS
Ayub Alavi, UNMAS Afghanistan
Sandra Barrena, NATO
Steinar Essen, UNDP
Sarah Njeri, African Leadership Centre

2) Brief introductions for new participants.

- Asking for volunteers to facilitate/chair meetings in future to rotate the responsibility.
- Does the time work for everyone (12 noon UK time)? Please indicate suitable alternatives.
- New participants introduced themselves.

3) Notices for the Working Group: - LinkedIn page set up, joining EHAN

- Linsey Cottrell has set up a LinkedIn page for the group, please join. It's a group called EIMA. Use the page to share links to useful resources, post resources directly (papers, training materials, etc.) (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8933777/>)
- Environment and Humanitarian Action Network (EHAN) set up by UNEP/OCHA – useful platform and would encourage members to join for networking/resources/webinars. Organisations can also endorse EHAN but a requirement to joining. CEOBS/HALO/NPA already members and will circulate useful and relevant information to EIMA (<https://www.eecentre.org/partners/the-eha-network/>)

4) Agree whether a voting policy is needed or is to be kept to poll/vote on items within meetings

- Poll taken – 50/50
- Could also note objections to publications, decisions in writing
- Opt-in system for publications or decisions could be an alternative; informality preferred
- For now, agreed that we keep things informal and return to the issue

5) Discuss invitation for Working Group to brief the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) on a quarterly basis. Agree whether an informal initiative or need to add to the TOR.

- Cianna O'Connell provided details on this invitation
- This group consists of UN agencies, chaired by UNMAS, meetings are quarterly
- Invitation to EIMA co-conveners to present the group and its origins and objectives at next meeting (15 September), sensitize UN partners to environment as an issue
- Share the presentation role among group members
- How regular the updates, and how work with a rolling chair and who should do the updates: meetings are informal, mostly about information exchange – we can discuss and decide after 1st briefing about regularity, not sure about the issue of the rolling chair – most important is a focal point to connect with on setting up future meeting presentations
- What kind of feedback could the EIMA group expect from the IACG?
- Format: NGO briefing is at beginning (max 15 minutes), then UN meeting afterwards is closed
- IACG issues statements, for instance on Covid impact, treaty processes

6) Agree and finalise TOR, including definition of membership topic and discussion items

- Poll taken, results: 90% approved (1 abstention), 90% agree update every 12 months

7) Introduction to mineaction.net platform, followed by brief Q&A - David Hewitson, Fenix Insights Ltd.

- www.mineaction.net
- David Hewitson provided a quick introduction to the mineaction.net site
- It is a quick searching tool for the IMAS standards and what is “should” do or “shall” do or “may” do – different degrees of compliance, for different stakeholders
- Can filter topics such as environment by degree of compliance, stakeholder – search engine pulls up relevant IMAS text – can run cross cutting searches
- Basic system is free and open to public
- Fenix is conducting outreach Zoom sessions to introduce people to the system
- Environmental standard (7.13) and appendices are searchable
- Allows access to IMAS, brings up normative standards

8) Brief summary of findings from NPA/CEOBS consultation, followed by open discussion - Linsey Cottrell, Conflict and Environment Observatory.

- Online consultation on environmental issues and mine action among key mine action stakeholders – March 2020
- 11 respondents
- Asked if organizations had environmental policies, most said yes
- But whether organizations report on environmental performance – much less frequent
- Important environmental issues:
 - Vegetation clearance
 - Pollution control
 - Post clearance land use
 - Waste management
 - Location of CDS
- Lower ranking topics included climate change adaptation and soil erosion
- Monitoring common practice: waste, soil/land quality, habitat/ecology, impact screening, and noise (didn't ask for monitoring methods and formats)

- Not common practice: meteorological, dust and air quality, water quality
- Some reported doing no monitoring at all
- CEOBS website has a summary of these results: <https://ceobs.org/survey-of-environmental-practices-in-mine-action/>
- Would be great to do more surveys, get more in-depth information to encourage people, learn ideas and practices
- Would be good to involve national authorities in such surveys
- Will circulate future surveys around to the group

9) Presentation by Ayub Alavi, Afghanistan UNMAS on Environmental Sustainability and Mine Action, followed by open discussion.

- Impacts of mine action on environment, not only social impact – environmental impact could be negative when open up areas that were protected by presence of contamination
- Survey of environmental safeguarding policies in mine action in Afghanistan:
 - Pre-operational safeguarding measures
 - Preliminary site assessments
 - Field operations
 - Beneficiary impacts
 - Implementation monitoring
- Need to move beyond where environmental safeguard policies currently stop to address/ consider what happens after land is handed back to beneficiaries, communities:
 - Relation between people and ecosystem – environmental sustainability of cleared lands – need an integrated landscape approach
 - Important to consider released land as part of the wider landscape
 - Trying to do more about this in Afghanistan – work closely with local communities
 - Possible interventions: ecosystem disaster risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation measures, environmental rehabilitation measures, sustainable land use, ecosystem perspective, providing small scale environmental grants and other funding mechanisms
 - Afghanistan: new projects require community livelihoods to be addressed
 - Funding a challenge to taking a broader perspective on post-clearance land use and environmental sustainability
 - This thinking already connects to what already occurs in mine action process in engaging with local communities, doing environment assessment
 - Two examples of planned projects on wider land management schemes - both currently await UNDP funding

10) Any other business

- Marceau Guilbaud: has written a paper about environmental impact of explosives – this will be circulated to members for discussion at next meeting of the working group, ask questions – agenda item for next time
- New IMAS 10.6 – incident reporting and investigation, can be useful for environment – also includes near misses (useful for learning)
- 2nd review conference for CCM Rev Con – position statement submitted on the Lausanne Action Plan highlighting need for attention to environment – trying to plan a side event – climate change adaptation and post-clearance land use as possible topics, but open to further suggestions
- Ideas for future agenda items:

- General awareness raising i.e. surveys
- Role of governments
- Where liability, residual risks lie

11) Agree to date of next meeting and next facilitator.

- Cianna O'Connell: UNMAS needs to confirm facilitating next meeting
- Others are welcome to volunteer to facilitate
- Dates: end of November or early December
- We will send out suggestions on dates and times of day via a doodle poll