

# Afghanistan Mine Action Standards - AMAS 05.04

Third Edition  
April 2011

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## Community Liaison

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## **Community Liaison**

### **1. Introduction**

Community Liaison is a “strategic principle” of mine action. Therefore, all mine action organisations working in Afghanistan shall use community liaison to exchange information between affected communities, mine action organization, Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) and other related development organizations. The information exchange shall mainly be focused on the presence of landmines and ERW and of their potential risk on the community. Community liaison enables communities to be engaged in planning process of mine action activities and being informed when a demining intervention is taking place. This includes the nature and duration of the tasks undertaken and the location of the areas that have been marked and or cleared.

Community Liaison creates link between the tasked mine action capacity and the communities affected by mine/ERW hazards, and helps an essential element in an integrated approach to mine action.

### **2. Scope**

This standard specifies the minimum requirements for Community Liaison in Afghanistan. Community liaison may be used throughout all stages of the mine action process to ensure that affected communities are fully involved in, and informed on, all mine action activities, and that the community is confident that the land or resources released for their use are safe. This standard guideline describes how community liaison can be implemented before, during and after mine and ERW clearance, stockpile clearance or demarcation.

### **3. Objectives**

The objective of Community Liaison is to obtain relevant background information on the communities in terms of population size, blockages and socio-economic concerns. This includes information about the type of landmines and ERW and their impacts on the communities.

Community Liaison also aims to ensure that community representatives including men, women, boys and girls are consulted and involved in planning of mine action activities both in humanitarian needs and development intervention. To provide accurate information to mine action teams to direct mine action operations effectively and to collect information that narrows the focus on specific at-risk groups in the community and identifies explicit humanitarian reasons for demining activities in specific areas.

### **4. The Roles of Community Liaison Personnel**

The following are some of the main roles of community liaison personnel:

- a) Implement relevant community data gathering tools in order to gather information for impact survey forms;
- b) Implement relevant community data gathering tools in order to gather information for post clearance surveys;
- c) Contribute their experience and knowledge of local cultural aspects and sensitivities that influence the data or the way data would be gathered, and use these to their benefit in

field work and liaison. Advise the mine action organisation as to how these should influence the design and implementation of all community liaison activities, so that the mine action organisations are able to make informed decisions;

- d) Demonstrate respect to community members and representatives in order to avoid creating conflict in sometimes tense environments.

Note: the demonstration of outward respect does not mean adhering totally to others wishes in circumstances where they may go against organisational objectives;

- e) Follow any requests from demining managers for community liaison assistance during the clearance process in communicating with the community;
- f) Inform the mine action organisation of any issues/concerns raised by community members or representatives during the clearance procedures; and
- g) Keep community members and community leaders informed at all stages of the mine action process.

Note: Community Liaison Personnel refer to MRE teams, survey teams, demining and EOD supervisors and team leaders and demining project managers who inevitably meet the community representatives for information exchanges.

## **5. The Role of Community Liaison in Mine Action**

Community liaison in mine action includes the following activities:

- 1) Data gathering on socio-economic impact, victims of mine/ERW incidents, and data on dangerous areas, prior to mine action activities. And information gathering on the socio-economic situation after demining activities, in order to measure humanitarian impact and changes; to learn from the mine action activities; and to encourage ongoing socio-economic development;
- 2) Liaison and support to the local community members and leaders in advance of, during, and after demining operations, to ensure that local needs are addressed and full consultation and dialogue is established;
- 3) Collecting information on dangerous areas, mapping and marking of dangerous areas (where appropriate) in order to help identify and prioritise demining activity;
- 4) Liaison with government bodies, NGOs, mine action organisations and UN agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to development;
- 5) Providing information to the community representatives including men, women, boys and girls on demining intervention planned to be undertaken and delivering MRE to at risk group within community.
- 6) Support for a local community in its developmental efforts, through liaison with development bodies, victim assistance programmes, advocacy programmes and community based demining or other community-led initiatives.

All the above activities should ensure that a mine action organisation will operate in the context of genuine, identified humanitarian needs, in full collaboration with the project stakeholders and beneficiaries.

## **6. Community Representatives**

Community representatives can usually advise mine action personnel on appropriate or traditional gathering places to meet community members, and appropriate times to meet them. These include a range of local constitutions as:

- a) Local community shuras;
- b) National Solidarity Programme members;
- c) Field based managers of national and international NGOs;
- d) Tribal leaders;
- e) Religious leaders;
- f) Health workers and manager; and
- g) Local government body.

The list may be added to depending of the differing social organisational structures within societies. Community representatives should be able to provide information on:

- a) Landmine and ERW incidents;
- b) Population size of the impacted community;
- c) Land dispute issues and history of the rural village, or urban neighbourhoods;
- d) Allow access to local communities, at-risk groups and victims;
- e) Access to buildings and geographical areas;
- f) Act as guides to the village/neighbourhood; and
- g) Serve as introductions to other resource persons and contacts.

### **5.1 Accessing Minority Groups**

In order to get representative views from a community, community liaison personnel need to acknowledge the different groups within a community who may not be automatically accessed through large community based meetings. These may include:

- a) Minority ethnic/tribal groups;
- b) Women, boys and girls;
- c) People with disability of the community;
- d) Nomadic people or people with partially nomadic lifestyles (such as shepherds); and

- e) People of different age groups (the elder and younger members of the community)

## **7. Community Liaison before Demining Operations**

### **7.1 Organising Pre-Clearance Data Collection**

Mine action organisations should collect basic data on mine action and the wider developmental needs of a community to allow it to prioritise tasks and decide on the humanitarian objective for demining operations

Before a mine action organisation begins to collect primary data it should collect all available secondary data, in order to confirm the need and priorities of the community and or update current data as per their current requirements and needs. Such data should be obtained from DMAC/IMSMA hazard list.

Community liaison personnel may collect information from communities using survey procedures, such as the IMSMA impact survey forms.

Community liaison personnel should create a “community log file” to which information is added by the community liaison personnel as the mine action progresses. The community log file may include the following:

- 1) The action plan for development of cleared land;
- 2) Key decisions that result from the survey;
- 3) Details of follow-up mine action activities that are implemented;
- 4) Post-clearance developmental progress;
- 5) Contact details of local community representatives and key figures;
- 6) Map of mined, cleared and released areas;
- 7) Contact details and decisions from NGOs collaborating in the development effort;
- 8) Technical survey; and
- 9) Demining progress reports.

### **7.2 Data Collection for Priority Setting**

Community liaison personnel shall consider information from community members considering gender aspects. Community members of different gender may be addressed and consulted directly (men, boys and girls) and indirectly (women) through separate and appropriate sources. Those identified as high risk-takers should be involved at all stages of the consultation process. Any information gaps may be filled by further interviews with community representatives.

## **8. Community Liaison during Clearance and Land Release Process**

Community liaison shall be considered during clearance and land release operations to help ensure that mine action activities are efficient and productive. This liaison aims to keep a line of communication open so that communities are fully informed of what is happening and where and that any problems arisen are quickly addressed. Community liaison personnel shall try to

get information about the real extent of hazard in any given Suspected Hazardous Area (SHA) in order to facilitate removing of hazard from the community and release the land and resources back to the community.

As demining teams inevitably remain in a community for a longer period, they should develop relationships and be put in a position of trust by the community members. Demining team members should pick up knowledge and concerns of a community over a length of time. Demining project managers or supervisors should be engaged in direct liaison with community representatives.

Community liaison personnel shall re-establish liaison with communities as part of the set-up of a clearance task.

### **7.1 Community Liaison in Preparation for Demining Operations**

Prior to beginning demining activities, community liaison personnel (demining project manager, demining team supervisor) shall meet with local key informants to identify and agree on the sites and locations for demining operations.

The community liaison personnel may also accompany the demining teams who carry out a technical survey to ensure cooperation with the relevant local key personnel.

When demining managers have decided upon the start and end dates of demining operations in certain areas, they as community liaison personnel shall visit the community representatives and members living around the specified hazardous area to notify them of the planned schedule.

### **7.2 Information Sharing during Demining Operations**

Community liaison personnel should inform the community representatives and community members of the activities going to be undertaken and the type of equipment and tools used (machine and MDD) and the time of day for operational activity.

Throughout the clearance process, community liaison personnel shall maintain contact with the community to ensure cooperation and communication is clear, this helps in smoothly conducting of demining operations.

The communities living and working around the hazardous area undergoing demining operations shall be informed on the methods of marking, signs, pickets and barriers used. The community liaison personnel shall also provide basic safety briefings for local residents living and working around the demining worksite. The safety briefing should focus on advising people to keep away from the area of operation, refrain from interfering with marking signs and technical equipment, or with the technical teams at work.

Community liaison personnel should also collect information on land right issues and make sure that the boundaries of land are not mixed during the clearance operations (especially mechanical operations).

### **7.3 Community Liaison during the Suspension of Demining Operations**

Where a suspension of demining operations is deemed necessary, the community shall be informed of the decision and the reasons behind it. This helps to ensure that people continue to live and work safely around the area.

If suspension or extension of demining operation is decided to take place, the community liaison personnel (demining manager and supervisors) should arrange a meeting with local community representatives to explain:

- a) The reasons for the suspension/extension of activity; and
- b) Any protection to be established during period of suspension, for example, warning markings, further targeted MRE.

If MRE is carried out in affected community, it should contain a briefing that specifically covers the areas cleared and the areas uncleared, land released, and the areas surveyed. The community representatives should also be informed if the clearance activity will be handed over to another mine action organisation or agency, and be given a contact name within that organisation, where possible, for further enquiries to be re-directed.

### **7.4 MRE during Demining Operations**

Community liaison personnel should assess the need for further MRE activities, for example, to notify local residents about the type of marking and warning signs to be left in place, accessible and non-accessible routes. The assessment should indicate the target group. This assessment may be carried out in collaboration with demining supervisor.

## **9. Task Handover**

Once demining teams have completed clearance or the land release process, the land needs to be returned back to the local community for use. One way of achieving this is through a public handover event. Such an event serves three purposes:

- a) To promote a sense of ownership and responsibility for the land and routes cleared. This encourages sustainable maintenance of cleared land and resources;
- b) To clarify in public to users of the land and those responsible for maintaining the land, specifically what areas have been cleared or released, and what have not. This ensures public safety through knowledge; and

In areas where land rights and lack of access to land are a socio-economic problem, the public would benefit greatly from accurate information on ownership rights and maintenance responsibilities. This also serves to protect the mine action organisation from accusations of political partisanship.

## **10. Community Liaison and Risk Reduction**

In some circumstances, where “intentional” risks are being undertaken by certain groups within a population, the provision and discussion of MRE messages alone are unlikely to bring about a change in behaviour. In these situations, community liaison personnel should facilitate discussions with the risk-taking group regarding alternative solutions.



## **11. Pre and Post-Clearance Reviews**

Community liaison personnel should conduct pre-clearance review of the mined areas together with community representatives, for providing a 'before' picture of the lands use and contribution to socio-economic development including the number of beneficiaries. This will provide a baseline data against which 'post clearance' land use will be compared.

Community liaison personnel should conduct post clearance review within communities to confirm that the cleared land is being used. This provides a means to compare its use to the prior conflict use, and to identify any needs hindering further development.

## **12. Reporting**

A Community Liaison Contact Record & Community Assessment Form (Annex A) shall be used by any team or individual that conducts C.L to gain a clear understanding of the Mine/ERW impact and current situation within a community.

A Project Liaison Contact Record Form (Annex B) shall be completed by CL personnel in respect of each mine action project and tasks relating to certain community. This shall be detailing the communication held with community members, and any information received prior to the deployment of the capacity to the site. This form should include details of the land user/s or his/her authorised representative and their contact details. This form shall be given to the Task Site Supervisor for his/her information and then placed on the Task Dossier for review by Quality Assurance Officer visiting the site during the course of the task.