

Guide on the Role of Community Volunteers (CVs) in Mine/ERW Risk Education Program of Afghanistan

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1. Objective and scope:

This document is developed by the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (National Mine Action Authority) to serve as a guideline for its accredited Mine/ERW Risk Education Implementing Partners (IPs) in regards to the role of Community Volunteers (CVs) in the Mine/ERW Risk Education Programme of Afghanistan. This document is developed based on the successful examples of community volunteering in Afghanistan, and in reference to the IMAS Mine Risk Education Best Practice Guidebook.

2. Main Role of CVs:

CVs are expected to function on a voluntary basis, as an autonomous entity that has sustainable capacity within hazard impacted communities to contribute to the reduction of mine/ERW accidents during and beyond project implementation period.

CVs are based at the village and commune level, and act as reference points and information sources for mine/ERW problems, and other related issues. CVs are supervised and supported by the paid Mine Risk Education Teams (MRE Teams), which in most cases are acting as the district or province focal points; and the CV's undertake the following tasks:

- a)** Mine/ERW basic risk awareness sessions for the at-risk groups in their immediate community.
- b)** Support in data collection on mine/ERW accidents, casualties, and suspected hazardous areas and devices.
- c)** Support in informing villagers of mine action activities in their respective villages, and encouraging their support.
- d)** Supporting the facilitation of meetings at the village level.
- e)** Popularising the use of the Mine Action hotline number.

The-above-mentioned expectations are to be clearly explained and elaborated on in a Terms of Reference (ToR) document, which is provided to each CV when appointed.

3. Selection and Composition of CVs:

CVs need to be at least 20 years of age or older; should represent various groups of the community (men, women, diverse ethnic groups); and should be among the respected

members of the community with considerable local influence. Additionally, CVs must be able to:

- a) Dedicate time to undertake the work as per the ToR;
- b) Communicate freely and effectively;
- c) Read and write; and
- d) Pass the post-training evaluation.

Women must also be selected as CVs to facilitate access to at-risk populations comprising both genders. It has also proved that mothers can play an important role in protection and conveying safety messages to their children. Concerning selection and deployment of female CVs, a good strategy may also be to encourage deploying couple CVs (male and female), who are family members (parent, sibling, spouse).

The number of CVs per community will depend on the size of each community's population and geography. Another important consideration that helps to determine the need for the number of CVs in each community is the ability and willingness of each CV to dedicate time to the coverage of the community in question. When possible, and where there is more than one CV in a community, it is encouraged that CVs from the same community form a committee, in order to establish a good forum for relevant debates in the community concerned.

For the MRE IP it is important to establish good contacts within the local communities, i.e. contacts with Shuras (Community Council), village elders, Mullah Imams and other influential individuals who are assumed to be in a good position to support with the identification and selection of CVs.

4. Training and follow up support/monitoring of CVs:

The proper training of the local CVs is the key to the sustainability, and this needs to be the immediate step following the selection of candidate CVs, during the project period. The length of the initial training may take up to 15 hours. The training hours maybe broken down over several consecutive days according to the availability of the CVs, but should be completed in a maximum of five (5) days period. The training for the CVs needs to be followed by further mentoring and on-the-job training. The training of several CVs may take place at the same time and same venue, which will make it cost and time effective.

CVs are to be provided with the necessary teaching aid materials, including trainers' kits, other MRE materials for distribution to the MRE beneficiaries, and some limited stationery (including pens, notebooks and calendars). It remains the responsibility of the MRE team to conduct the training of CVs and provide all the necessary follow-up technical support and refresher trainings, when needed.

CVs are not paid, and should not receive any remuneration. CVs are volunteers who are working because of their interest in helping their communities, and this is how they can express a true sign of commitment. This is considered an important measure to ensure the sustainability of the action, once the project has ended. The MRE IP needs to make sure that these are well understood by the candidate CVs during the identification and selection phase. The MRE IP should also strictly avoid making promises that are not realistic.

The workload of the CVs should be minimal and should not detract them from their everyday income generating activities. If, however, the volunteers are involved in more than a minimal level of activities, they should receive some compensation to make up for their lost income, for example, per diem payments and travel expenses for when they attend trainings, or when attending meetings and workshops outside of their locality.

New CVs may be identified, trained, and deployed in the early stage of the project, so that they can contribute to achieving project objectives from the early stages of the project. The MRE IP should obtain the list of already trained and operational CVs from DMAC HQ, and assume responsibility for the continual support and monitoring of those CVs.

Project staff should respect and support the volunteers, but not criticise them.

The MRE Teams have the responsibility of regularly monitoring the performance of CVs, i.e. by visiting CVs once a month, (noting the particular importance of visiting newly trained CVs more frequently), taking part in one of the risk awareness sessions conducted by CVs; and collecting related activity reports as per IMSMA suggested templates, (which need to be forwarded to DMAC for entry into IMSMA). Each MRE Team needs to be involved with the support of a certain number of CVs according to his/her capacity. Furthermore, the MRE IP needs to maintain a list of all functioning CVs and their necessary details, including:

- a) CV's name;
- b) Father's name;
- c) address (village, district and province);
- d) mobile phone number; and,
- e) an alternative contact (name, relationship, and contact number).

The MRE IP should pass on this information to DMAC regional offices and DMAC HQ, to be entered into the IMSMA database. The mobilisation status of each CV needs to be updated regularly in the IMSMA database, whether or not the CV is operational.