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Accreditation of demining organisations and operations

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Foreword

In July 1996, international standards for humanitarian mine clearance programmes were proposed by working groups at a conference in Denmark. Criteria were prescribed for all aspects of mine clearance, standards were recommended and a new universal definition of 'clearance' was agreed. In late 1996 the principles proposed in Denmark were developed by a UN-led working group into *International Standards for Humanitarian Mine Clearance Operations*. A first edition of these standards was issued by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in March 1997.

This IMAS reflects changes to operational procedures, practices and norms that have occurred over the past three years. The scope of these standards has been expanded to include the other components of mine action, in particular those of mine risk education and victim assistance.

The United Nations has a general responsibility for enabling and encouraging the effective management of mine action programmes, including the development and maintenance of standards. UNMAS is the office within the United Nations Secretariat responsible for the development and maintenance of international mine action standards (IMAS).

The work of preparing, reviewing and revising these standards is conducted by technical committees, with the support of international, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The latest version of each standard, together with information on the work of the technical committees, can be found at <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/>. IMAS will be reviewed at least every three years to reflect developing mine action norms and practices, and to incorporate changes to international regulations and requirements.

Introduction

IMAS 09.10 specifies the methods of achieving clearance quality by adopting a two stage approach. Stage 1 (quality assurance) involves the accreditation and monitoring of the demining organisation, before and during the clearance process. Stage 2 (quality control) involves the inspection of cleared land before it is formally released to the beneficiary for use.

Most national mine action authorities already apply some form of accreditation procedures. The form and extent of such accreditation varies from country to country, but the aim is similar – to establish and confirm the quality of demining organisations, particularly those with specialist capabilities such as mine detection dogs or mechanically-assisted demining. Accreditation is also needed for those organisations involved in quality assurance and post-clearance quality control.

The aim of this standard is to provide specifications and guidelines for the implementation of an accreditation system as part of Stage 1 of the clearance process. The goal is to promote a common and consistent approach which will encourage demining organisations to develop and demonstrate a broadly similar quality of management practices and operational capabilities, regardless of their size or experience.

Edition 1 of IMAS 07.30 referred to accreditation and licensing. The term licensing has been re-examined over the last 12 months; in certain programmes the term license meant that legal responsibilities beyond the scope of those envisaged in Edition 1 would be placed on all stakeholders. Therefore this Edition of IMAS 07.30 now refers to the accreditation process, which shall consist of two parts:

- a) organisational accreditation (the old accreditation); and
- b) operational accreditation (the old licensing)

There are no major changes in this IMAS other than this terminology.

There are obvious operational, logistic and administrative advantages to combining the national monitoring, accreditation and post clearance inspection bodies into one overall "Quality Assurance and Control" body. This should be considered by the national mine action authority.

Accreditation of demining organisations.

1 Scope

This standard provides specifications and guidelines for the implementation of a system for the accreditation of demining organisations.

Although this standard focuses on demining, the concept of accreditation can be applied to other components of mine action including national technical assessment missions, impact surveys, mine risk education projects and stockpile reduction.

2 References

A list of normative references is given in Annex A. Normative references are important documents to which reference is made in this standard and which form part of the provisions of this standard.

3 Terms and definitions

A list of terms and definitions used in this standard is given in Annex B. A complete glossary of all the terms and definitions used in the IMAS series of standards is given in IMAS 04.10.

In the IMAS series of standards, the words 'shall', 'should' and 'may' are used to indicate the intended degree of compliance. This use is consistent with the language used in ISO standards and guidelines.

- c) 'shall' is used to indicate requirements, methods or specifications that are to be applied in order to conform to the standard.
- d) 'should' is used to indicate the preferred requirements, methods or specifications.
- e) 'may' is used to indicate a possible method or course of action.

The term 'national mine action authority or authorities' refers to the government department(s), organisation(s) or institution(s) in each mine-affected country charged with the regulation, management and co-ordination of mine action. In most cases the national mine action centre (MAC) or its equivalent will act as, or on behalf of, the 'national mine action authority'. In certain situations and at certain times it may be necessary and appropriate for the UN, or some other recognised international body, to assume some or all of the responsibilities, and fulfil some or all of the functions, of a national mine action authority.

The term 'demining organisation' refers to any organisation (government, NGO or commercial entity) responsible for implementing demining projects or tasks. The demining organisation may be a prime contractor, subcontractor, consultant or agent.

The term 'demining sub-unit' refers to an element of a demining organisation, however named, which is operationally accredited to conduct one or more prescribed demining activities, such as technical surveys, manual clearance, EOD or the use of mine detection dog teams.

4 General principles

This standard makes a distinction between organisational accreditation and operational accreditation. **Organisational accreditation** is the procedure by which a demining organisation is formally recognised as competent and able to plan and manage demining activities safely, effectively and efficiently. For most mine action programmes, the national mine action authority will be the body which provides accreditation. International organisations such as the United Nations or regional bodies may also introduce accreditation schemes. Accreditation will be given to the in-country headquarters of an organisation for a finite duration, normally for a period of two to three years.

Operational accreditation is the procedure by which a demining organisation is formally recognised as competent and able to carry out particular demining activities; this may sometimes be referred to as certification in order to distinguish between an organisation's accreditation to work in a country and its accreditation for certain distinct tasks. Each operational accreditation shall refer to the capabilities required to carry out a particular activity such as survey, manual clearance, community liaison or mine detection dogs. The granting of such accreditation assumes that the capability will not change beyond the scope or intention of the original accreditation.

Note: The community liaison accreditation would normally be granted to a specialist agency under the provisions of IMAS 07.31 Accreditation of MRE organisations.

In most situations it will be appropriate to award accreditation in two stages. The first stage involves a provisional desk assessment by the national mine action authority or its agent based on documentary evidence presented by the demining organisation, such as organisational charts, management qualifications and proven experience. The second stage involves an on-site assessment to confirm that people, equipment, materials and procedures are being used as intended, and that demining activities are being conducted in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

5 General requirements

5.1 Basic considerations

The basic considerations for obtaining and retaining a demining accreditation are that:

- a) the applicant shall be competent to apply the general provisions of IMAS and the specific provisions of the national mine action authority, including financial and insurance requirements;
- b) organisational accreditation will only be granted to a demining organisation so long as it remains in conformity with IMAS and with national standards and regulations; and
- c) operational accreditation will only be granted to an accredited organisation and its demining sub-units, however named, that are within the scope of the operational accreditation agreement and are in conformity with IMAS and with national standards and regulations.

Accreditation may in practice be incorporated in the tendering process for mine action contracts, especially where a two stage contractual process is being used, when accreditation will become a major component of the pre-selection process.

5.2 The accreditation process

A summary of the accreditation process is shown in outline in Annex C, and is described in detail below.

5.2.1 Application for accreditation

The demining organisation should submit an initial application in accordance with instructions issued by the national mine action authority or its agents.

5.2.2 Desk (provisional) assessment of the application

On receipt of the application and accompanying documentation from the demining organisation, the national mine action authority shall confirm receipt of the application, and if necessary shall request the applicant to provide further information.

For organisational accreditation, the desk (provisional) assessment shall be carried out by the national mine action authority or its agents. This assessment should consider the suitability of the applicant's:

- a) organisational structure and proposed representation in-country, including arrangements to use sub-contractors and joint ventures. Recognition should be given to other existing accreditations held by the organisation, such as ISO 9000.
- b) formal qualifications and practical experience of its management team gained on previous mine action programmes. Recognition should be given to the membership of relevant, recognised professional institutes or bodies. (Details of such bodies can be obtained from UNMAS or the GICHD);
- c) financial situation;
- d) freedom from any outstanding or pending legal actions, or any pending disputes with the contracting authority;
- e) planning and project management capabilities;
- f) logistic planning procedures, including equipment procurement, evaluation, maintenance and repair;
- g) financial planning and control procedures;
- h) information management systems and mapping;
- i) management training schemes and employee skills development programmes;
- j) safety and occupational health (S&OH) policy;
- k) community liaison experience and capabilities, or access to teaming partners with relevant experience;
- l) insurance cover, both staff medical insurance and third party liability; and
- m) other accreditation schemes obtained by the demining organisation such as ISO 9000 which demonstrate the effectiveness of its quality management system.

For operational accreditation, the desk (provisional) assessment shall consider the suitability of:

- a) the sub-unit(s)'s organisational structure, including its logistic and re-supply system;
- b) human skills (formal qualifications and experience of its operational and support staff);
- c) equipment capabilities (equipment performance and supportability);
- d) operational procedures (SOPs);
- e) worksite safety and occupational health (S&OH) procedures and practices;
- f) previous accreditation obtained by the sub-unit which demonstrate the effectiveness of its operational capabilities; and
- g) additional requirements (such as the use of sub-contractors and local labour) required by the national mine action authority.

Additional requirements for granting operational accreditation to operate mine detection dogs are described in IMAS 09.40.

If the national mine action authority is not satisfied that all the requirements for accreditation have been met, the demining organisation should be informed as soon as possible, and reasons given for its unsuccessful application. Whenever possible, the applicant should be given the opportunity to take corrective action.

If the demining organisation is unable to satisfy the requirements for accreditation and is unable to take corrective action within a reasonable time, then the application should be terminated and the demining organisation should be informed.

5.2.3 On-site assessment

The purpose of the on-site assessment is to confirm that the management practices and operational procedures proposed by the demining organisation in its application are being applied in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

The on-site assessment shall be carried out by the national mine action authority or its agents. The assessment should include:

- a) visits to all management, logistic and administrative offices or facilities including explosive storage areas, medical facilities and equipment maintenance areas;
- b) visits to all sub-unit locations including worksites and supporting workplaces;
- c) observing sub-units in their final phase of training;
- d) observing the field testing and evaluation of equipment and mine detection dogs;
- e) observing demining activities; and
- f) observing community involvement throughout the project life.

During the on-site assessment, samples of documentation and records shall be selected randomly. Samples shall be representative of all products, documented procedures and SOPs for which accreditation is sought. The sampling of cleared land shall comply with the requirements of IMAS 09.20.

If the national mine action authority is not satisfied that all the requirements for accreditation have been met, the demining organisation should be informed as soon as possible. The problems should be identified and the required action discussed and agreed between the national mine action authority and the demining organisation. The demining organisation will then have to present its corrected management or operational procedures to the national mine action authority, and demonstrate that full compliance with the stated requirements has been achieved.

If the demining organisation is unable to take corrective action within a reasonable time, then the provisional accreditation and/or licence(s) should be terminated.

There will usually be a delay between the desk (provisional) assessment and the on-site (confirmatory) assessment. In this situation the national mine action authority should issue a provisional accreditation until the full accreditation process has been completed. Subject to the conditions of the provisional accreditation it may be necessary for the demining organisation to commence work prior to the on-site (confirmatory) assessment.

5.3 Extending or modifying an accreditation

5.3.1 Modification or changes in the management system

If during the mine action programme the management of the demining organisation intends to make major or significant changes to its management structure which could impact on its management capability, the national mine action authority or its agent may require an extension or revision of the accreditation. For this reason, the accredited organisation shall inform the national mine action authority of any intended modification to its management system, or other changes that may affect compliance with its accreditation. The national mine action authority shall determine whether the announced changes require any form of re-assessment, either desk or on-site.

5.3.2 Modification or changes to operational procedures

In the same way, the accredited organisation shall inform the national mine action authority of any intended modification to the operational procedures of one or more of its sub-units, or of the introduction of new or modified equipment. The national mine action authority or its agent shall determine whether the announced changes require a desk or on-site re-assessment.

If the changes are minor and are consistent with IMAS and national standards, then no further action should be necessary.

If the changes are significant, then the national mine action authority should consider conducting an on-site assessment. For clearance tasks, this will normally require a 'tightened' inspection regime (see IMAS 09.20 Clause 5.3.2) to be temporarily applied to the post-clearance sampling.

If the changes are substantial and the conditions and scope of the original operational accreditation are no longer valid, then the national mine action authority should require the demining organisation to request new accreditation as defined in Clause 5.2 above.

5.3.3 Increasing the number of demining sub units using the same SOPs

The accredited organisation shall inform the national mine action authority of any intended increase in the number of its sub units. If it is intended that the additional sub-units will apply the same operational procedures and use the same equipment, then no further action should be necessary.

If the changes are significant, then the national mine action authority should consider conducting an on-site assessment. For clearance tasks, this will normally require a 'tightened' inspection regime (see IMAS 09.20 Clause 5.3.2) to be temporarily applied to the post-clearance sampling.

If the changes are substantial and the conditions and scope of the original operational accreditation are no longer valid, then the national mine action authority should require the demining organisation to request new accreditation as defined in Clause 5.2 above.

The implication of increasing the number of mine detection dogs, and the need for additional accreditation, are addressed in IMAS 09.40.

5.4 Monitoring

The national mine action authority shall monitor the demining organisations and its sub-units to confirm that the management systems and operational procedures are consistent with the terms of the accreditation. Such monitoring should be random, non-intrusive and should not interfere with the conduct of the demining activities. The frequency of monitoring should be dependent on the task and the previous performance of the demining organisation; it should be agreed between the national mine action authority and the demining organisation.

The national mine action authority may appoint a body to carry out the monitoring on its behalf. Any monitoring body appointed by the national mine action authority must be adequately staffed, equipped and trained to monitor the demining organisation and its sub-units in an effective and appropriate manner. Monitoring is covered in detail in the IMAS 09.40 Series.

The accredited organisation shall be informed of the results of all monitoring.

5.5 Suspension and termination of accreditation

5.5.1 Suspension

The national mine action authority may suspend an accreditation of a demining organisation or one of its sub-units for a limited period, for example in the following cases:

- a) if monitoring shows non-compliance with the requirements of the accreditation agreement which is of a nature that would not warrant cancellation of the accreditation; or
- b) in the case of improper use of the accreditation agreement; or

- c) in the event of failure to disclose major and significant management or operational changes.

5.5.2 Termination

The national mine action authority may terminate an accreditation in the following cases:

- a) if the accredited organisation goes out of business; or
 - b) if the accredited organisation does not wish to prolong the accreditation agreement; or
 - c) if the requirements or provisions of standards or laws are changed and the accredited organisation cannot or will not ensure compliance with the new requirements or provisions; or
 - d) if monitoring reveals that non-compliance with the accreditation agreement is of a serious nature, such as repeated violations of the provisions for safety and occupational health; or
- a) if inadequate measures are taken following the suspension of an accreditation.

Serious non-compliance may include the repeated failure to apply accredited management systems or operational procedures, the refusal to allow monitoring or inspection to take place, or the interference of monitoring or inspections, the premature release of cleared land or the application of processes known to place staff or the local population at unacceptable risk.

Before the termination of an accreditation agreement, the national mine action authority shall determine measures to be taken to re-clear land released prior to the cancellation of the accreditation agreement. The responsibility for re-clearing land and the cost of such re-clearing will either lie with the demining organisation or the national mine action authority. The responsibilities should be specified in their contract.

6 Accreditation body - general obligations

6.1 General

The national mine action authority shall establish an accreditation body. The accreditation body, however named, shall have the necessary documentation that describes its responsibilities, the methods to be used in the accreditation process, and the technical scope of its activities.

6.2 Independence, impartiality and integrity

The personnel of the accreditation body shall be free from any political, commercial, financial and other pressures which might affect their judgement. Policies and procedures shall be implemented to ensure that persons or organisations external to the accreditation body, cannot influence the results of inspections, evaluations or monitoring carried out by the accreditation body.

The accreditation body and its staff shall not engage in any activities that may conflict with their independence of judgement and integrity in relation to their inspection, evaluation or monitoring activities. In particular they shall not become directly involved in organisations that design, manufacture, supply, install, use or maintain services or equipment for demining organisations operating in the mine action sector, or similar fields.

All interested parties shall have access to the services of the accreditation body. The procedures under which the body operates shall be administered in a non-discriminatory manner.

6.3 Confidentiality

The accreditation body shall ensure confidentiality of information obtained in the course of its activities. Proprietary rights shall be protected. In practice, the proceedings of the accreditation body will not be released to anyone but the national mine action authority, although reasons for non-compliance with accreditation requirements may be made known to applicants.

6.4 Organisation and management

The accreditation body shall have an organisation that enables it to maintain the capability to perform its technical functions quickly and satisfactorily. The body shall have a technical manager, however named, who is qualified and experienced in the operation of the accreditation process and who has overall responsibility for ensuring that the accreditation activities are carried out in accordance with IMAS and other relevant standards. The technical manager should if possible be a permanent employee, but in the early stages of a mine action programme may be a suitably qualified consultant.

The accreditation body shall develop and maintain documented procedures. Where the accreditation body also supplies inspection and monitoring services, the relationship between its functions shall be clearly defined.

6.5 Management system

The accreditation body shall define and document its management system and procedures and shall ensure that its management policy is understood and its procedures are implemented and maintained at all levels in the organisation. Where its systems and procedures affect the conduct of the mine action programme, the working relationship between the body and the demining organisation should be agreed, and form part of the contractual arrangements.

The management of the accreditation body shall designate a person who, irrespective of other duties, shall have defined authority and responsibility for quality assurance within the accreditation body. This person shall have direct access to the most senior executive of the national mine action authority.

6.6 Personnel

The accreditation body shall have a sufficient number of permanent personnel with the range of expertise required to carry out its normal functions.

6.7 Accreditation methods and procedures

The accreditation body shall establish and maintain procedures for desk assessments and inspections defined in the requirements of this standard and other relevant standards against which conformity shall be determined.

6.8 Records

The accreditation body shall prepare and maintain records of all assessments and inspections, and any information needed to understand and interpret them. All records shall be safely stored for a period of at least five years, held secure and in confidence to the applicant, unless otherwise required by law.

6.9 Appeals

The national mine action authority shall establish a fair and impartial system to enable demining organisations to appeal against decisions of the accreditation body that it feels are unfair, or when new evidence comes to light.

The appeals system shall include the use of independent arbitration from the international community present in a mine affected country; for example a representative from the UN system.

7 Responsibilities

7.1 National mine action authority's responsibilities

The national mine action authority, or an organisation acting on its behalf, shall:

- b) establish a system for the accreditation of demining organisations and operations;
- c) specify the national standards and provide guidelines for the accreditation of demining organisations and operations;
- d) accredit and appoint an accreditation body;
- e) oversee the work of the accreditation body, ensure that the system is being applied in a fair and equitable manner, and that accreditation does not interrupt or delay demining projects; and
- f) ensure appropriate follow-up action is taken on the accreditation body's recommendations.

7.2 Demining organisation's responsibilities

The organisation undertaking demining shall:

- a) apply management practices and operational procedures which aim to clear land to the requirements specified in the clearance contract or other formal agreement;
- b) maintain and make available documentation, reports, records and other data on demining activities to the accreditation body; and
- c) provide the accreditation body with access to all sites, buildings and other facilities which need to be visited as part of the monitoring requirement.

In the absence of a national mine action authority or authorities, the demining organisation should assume additional responsibilities. These include, but are not restricted to:

- d) agree with the donor a system of accrediting clearance activities; and
- e) assist the host nation, during the establishment of a national mine action authority, in framing national standards for accreditation and licensing.

7.3 Accreditation body's responsibilities

The accreditation body shall:

- a) gain (from the national mine action authority) accreditation to operate as a accreditation body;
- b) accredit the demining organisation and its sub-units; and
- c) accredit and make available documentation on site visits and inspections as required by the national mine action authority.

7.4 Donor's responsibilities

When the contract or other formal agreement has been framed by the donor organisation, it shall be responsible for including details of the national accreditation requirements, or in the absence of a national mine action authority requirements established by the UN or other appropriate international body.

Annex A

(Normative)

References

The following normative documents contain provisions, which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this part of the standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this part of the standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the normative documents indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative document referred to applies. Members of ISO and IEC maintain registers of currently valid ISO or EN:

- a) IMAS 09.20 Sampling procedures for the inspection of clearance tasks
- b) IMAS 09.40 Guide for the use of mine detection dogs

The latest version/edition of these references should be used. GICHD hold copies of all references used in this standard. A register of the latest version/edition of the IMAS standards, guides and references is maintained by GICHD, and can be read on the IMAS website (www.mineactionstandards.org). National mine action authorities, employers and other interested bodies and organisations should obtain copies before commencing mine action programmes.

Annex B (Informative) **Terms and definitions**

B.1.1

accreditation

the procedure by which a demining organisation is formally recognised as competent and able to plan, manage and operationally conduct demining activities safely, effectively and efficiently. For most mine action programmes, the national mine action authority will be the body which provides accreditation. International organisations such as the United Nations or regional bodies may also introduce accreditation schemes.

B.1.2

accreditation body

an organisation, normally an element of the national mine action authority, responsible for management and implementation of the national accreditation system.

B.1.3

demining organisation

any organisation (government, NGO or commercial entity) responsible for implementing demining projects or tasks. The demining organisation may be a prime contractor, subcontractor, consultant or agent.

B.1.4

demining sub-unit

an element of a demining organisation, however named, which is accredited to conduct one or more prescribed demining activities, such as technical surveys, manual clearance, EOD or the use of mine detection dog teams.

B.1.5

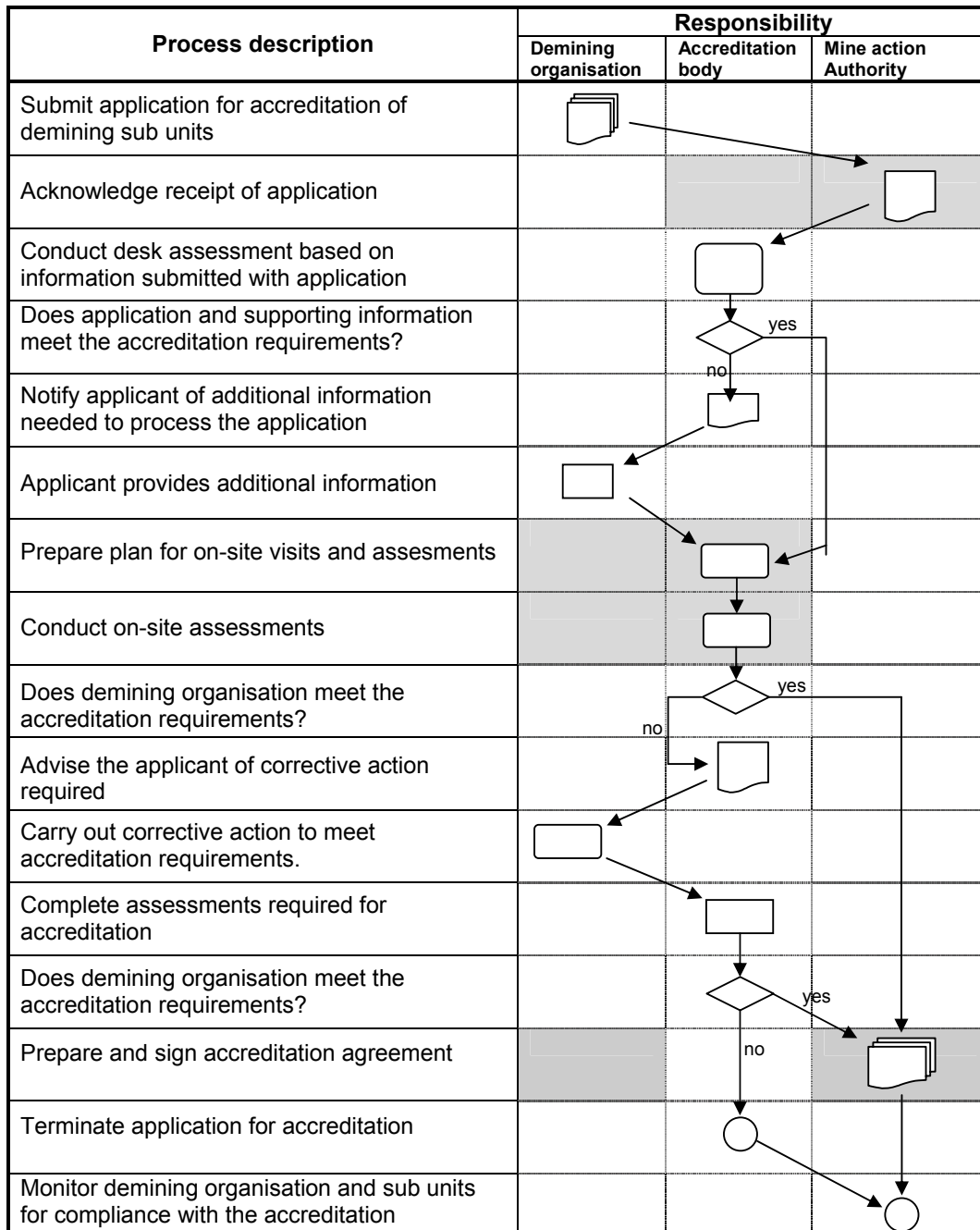
monitoring

in the context of humanitarian demining, the term refers to the authorised observation by qualified personnel of sites, activities or processes without taking responsibility for that being observed. This is usually carried out to check conformity with undertakings, procedures or standard practice and often includes recording and reporting elements.






*in the context of mine risk education, the term refers to ...*the process of measuring or tracking what is happening. This includes:

- a) measuring progress in relation to an implementation plan for an intervention – programmes/projects/activities, strategies, policies and specific objectives.
- b) measuring change in a condition or set of conditions or lack thereof (e.g., changes in the situation of children and women or changes in the broader country context).
- c) *definition from UNICEF Policy and Programming Manual.*

Annex C (Informative) The staffing process for accreditation



Legend

Document		Process		Decision	
Document (multiple)		Multiple responsibility		Connector	