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Accreditation of mine action organisations

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Foreword

International standards for humanitarian demining programmes were first proposed by working groups at an international technical conference in Denmark, in July 1996. Criteria were prescribed for all aspects of demining, 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 and the International Standards for Humanitarian Mine Clearance Operations were developed. A first edition was issued by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in March 1997.

The scope of these original standards has since been expanded to include the other components of mine action and to reflect changes to operational procedures, practices and norms. The standards were re-developed and renamed as International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) with the first edition produced in October 2001.

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, therefore, is the office within the United Nations responsible for the development and maintenance of IMAS. IMAS are produced with the assistance of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

The work of preparing, reviewing and revising IMAS 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/>. Individual IMAS are reviewed at least every three years to reflect developing mine action norms and practices and to incorporate changes to international regulations and requirements.

Introduction

Ensuring the quality of mine action has, historically, been based on the accreditation and monitoring of mine clearance organisations.

Accreditation of mine action organisations and monitoring of work need to be extended from mine clearance to all activities of mine action, including non-technical survey, risk education and victim assistance. One of the aims of this revision is to recognise that the principles of quality management – including accreditation – should be applied to all activities undertaken in mine action

Monitoring and accreditation are both parts of Quality Assurance (QA). QA activities are “focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled” (ISO9001:2015).

Accreditation is usually completed before work starts. Monitoring, covered in IMAS 07.40, takes place as work progresses.

Together, accreditation and monitoring help to answer one of the two important quality questions: “Is the work being carried out correctly by competent operators?” There is a depth of knowledge and considerable experience in mine action about the question of *how* the work is being done. The other important quality question relates to *why* the work is being done: “Are we doing the right work in the right place to best achieve the overall goals?” In terms of *relevance*¹, cost-effectiveness, and prioritisation this second quality question is of greater importance than the first. Although important for the overall Quality Management of mine action it has been largely overlooked.

Many National Mine Action Authorities (NMAA) apply some form of accreditation process to mine action organisations before they are permitted to start operations. The form and extent of the accreditation varies from country to country, but the aim is similar – to confirm that a mine action organisation is properly established, staffed, and equipped, and has the required systems, procedures and support structures in place, before starting work. As a result of the process an accreditation agreement is reached with the mine action organisation on the standards to which work is to be carried out. This agreement then forms the basis for monitoring. Accreditation answers the questions: “Is the organisation competent to carry out the work?” and “Is the organisation able to carry out the work described in the contract?”– the competence required includes financial, administrative and organisational issues, as well as technical skills and equipment.

The aim of this standard is to provide an internationally consistent framework for the accreditation of mine action organisations as part of a mine action process. The goal is to promote a common and consistent approach to accreditation.

There are clear operational, logistic and administrative advantages to combining some or all of the national monitoring, accreditation and post clearance inspection bodies into one overall ‘Quality Assurance and Control’ body, which should also be tasked with a broader systems level approach to quality management.

¹ Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a project, programme or policy are consistent with beneficiary requirements, country needs, global priorities, and donor policies. IMAS 04.10

Accreditation of mine action organisations

1. Scope

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

Accreditation should be applied to organisations working in any of the components of mine action.

Accreditation should not be a stand-alone activity but should form part of an overall quality management system.

2. References

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

3. Terms, definitions and abbreviations

A complete glossary of the terms, definitions and abbreviations 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 the ISO standards and guidelines:

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

The term 'National Mine Action Authority' (NMAA) refers to the government entity, in a mine or ERW affected country, with the responsibility for the regulation, management and coordination of mine action. In the absence of a NMAA, the United Nations, or some other recognised international body, may assume some or all of the responsibilities, and fulfil some or all the functions, of an NMAA.

A mine action organisation is “any organisation (government, military, commercial or NGO/civil society) responsible for implementing mine action projects or tasks. The mine action organisation may be a prime contractor, subcontractor, consultant or agent.”

A 'sub-unit' is part of a mine action organisation which is operationally accredited to conduct one or more defined mine action activities, such as technical or non-technical surveys, manual clearance, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), mine risk education or task prioritisation.

An 'accreditation body' is an organisation, usually part of the NMAA, responsible for the management and implementation of a national accreditation system.

Quality management comprises “coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to quality. These activities generally include the establishment of a quality policy and quality objectives, quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement” (ISO9001:2015).

Quality Assurance is “part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled” (ISO9001:2015). QA is a confidence-building process, based on evidence, that the quality requirements are likely be met.

Quality Control is “part of quality management focused on fulfilling quality requirements” (ISO9001:2015). QC should address the question “Did we get what was specified?”

An interested party is a “person or group having an interest in performance or success of an organization.” “A group can comprise an organization, a part thereof, or more than one organization.” Both: ISO9001:2015. In mine action an interested party is often called a *stakeholder*.

Monitoring is “systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an on-going project, programme or policy with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, and progress in the use of allocated funds.” IMAS 04.10 based on the OECD/DAC definition.

4. Overall aim of quality management

The overall aim of mine action quality management (QM) is to provide confidence (to the beneficiary, the mine action organisation, the NMAA, the donor and to other interested parties) that quality requirements have been met or exceeded, and that the mine action activities are “fit for purpose.” Mine action QM should ensure that documentation is in order, and a system is implemented to make sure that non-conformities are identified and rectified, and that lessons learned are used to improve the quality of future work. Mine action activities being “fit for purpose” includes both the selection of the work (choice of different activities, prioritisation, task selection, etc.) and also the quality of the work done.

5. Accreditation general principles and procedures

Accreditation is the procedure by which a mine action organisation is formally recognised as competent and able to plan, manage and implement mine action activities. This competence includes the ability of the organisation to run an effective internal QM system.

Accreditation should focus on a preventive approach and foresee possible problems so that they can be avoided.

The result of the accreditation process is an accreditation agreement between the NMAA and the mine action organisation. The agreement specifies which activities may be carried out and the relevant standards, norms, regulations, quality requirements, methods and processes. The agreement forms the basis for follow-on monitoring activities.

Where the NMAA undertakes activities that would normally require accreditation if they were done by a mine action organisation, or where the NMAA has a material interest in organisations that undertake activities that would normally require accreditation, then the same accreditation procedures should apply equally to the relevant parts NMAA or associated organisations as would apply to any other mine action organisation. The accreditation agreement is then between the accreditation body (or accreditation section of the NMAA) and the implementation section of the NMAA. In this case the NMAA needs to make clear that there is no significant conflict of interest by documenting the separation between the accreditation body and the other parts of the organisation (or other organisations).

Accreditation has the following steps and the requirements are described in detail in section 6 of this standard:

- (1) **Organisational accreditation.** The mine action organisation demonstrates administrative, financial, legal, management, quality and technical capacity. The accreditation is granted on the basis of documents provided by the organisation. The organisational accreditation confirms that the organisation and its staff are competent and able to supply services which are to be implemented. Accreditation requires compliance with relevant standards, norms, regulations, and quality requirements. Compliance with established “good practice” may also be included. Following a successful assessment, a provisional accreditation should be provided to the organisation to allow it to prepare for implementation in the country. Accreditation is granted on the basis that the organisation will maintain the stated capacity for the duration of the accreditation.
- (2) **Operational accreditation.** The mine action organisation demonstrates that it has the practical and operational ability and competence to undertake the specified mine action activities at the specified location. The proposed implementation is evaluated on the basis of documents supplied, and meetings if required. This stage includes accreditation of procedures (including standard operating procedures), equipment, training, internal quality management, logistics, staff composition (gender and diversity) and data management. On successful completion of this stage an accreditation agreement will be drawn up and will form the basis for monitoring of the organisation.
- (3) **On-site assessment.** When the organisation is ready to start work the final stage of accreditation is an on-site demonstration to show that people, equipment, materials, processes and procedures are as described in the accreditation agreement. The on-site demonstration should be conducted under realistic conditions. For activities which do not require staff to enter hazardous areas (e.g. risk education, victim assistance, non-technical survey, etc.) the demonstration may be provided by accreditation staff monitoring normal work activities at the start of the contract. In the case of work in hazardous areas the demonstration shall take place in a safe area that replicates the challenges of the hazardous areas where the organisation will work, including any access and logistic issues of remote or difficult sites.. The demonstration shall replicate the normal operations that are to be accredited, and shall include demonstration of emergency procedures as appropriate. Monitoring and/or accreditation staff will observe the demonstration. Once any nonconformities have been rectified then the accreditation body, and the mine action organisation shall both sign the accreditation agreement, and accreditation shall be issued without delay. Withholding or delaying accreditation without good cause shall not be used to influence contracting.

6. Detailed requirements

6.1. Basic considerations

To obtain mine action accreditation a mine action organisation must demonstrate competence to apply the national mine action standards (NMAS) (or IMAS where no NMAS are in force), and any specific provisions of the NMAA, including national laws and regulations, and financial and insurance requirements. The organisation must also demonstrate the ability to implement the agreed standards and other provisions in practice.

Accreditation will usually be for a fixed period which may be linked to the length of the contract. Accreditation may be revoked if monitoring shows that the mine action organisation is no longer meeting the terms of the accreditation agreement and is not implementing effective remedial actions.

The NMAA will be responsible for accreditation. The NMAA may establish an accreditation body to act on its behalf, which will be referred to as its agent.

6.2. The accreditation process

6.2.1. General

A diagram of the accreditation process sequence is shown in outline in Annex B; the process is summarised in section 5 of this standard and described in detail in section 6, below.

6.2.2. Length of accreditation period

Accreditation may be for a fixed period or may be linked to the length of an agreement between the organisation and its funding source. An initial accreditation period of 12 months is often used. Where an agreement has duration slightly longer than the usual period of accreditation, then matching the period of accreditation to the length of the agreement may offer significant gains in efficiency by avoiding a renewal shortly before the end of work.

6.2.3. Application for accreditation

The accreditation body shall provide a set of standard instructions and accreditation requirements in writing to the mine action organisation. The requirements shall include a list of the documents to be supplied and a deadline by which they must be received.

The mine action organisation should submit an initial application in accordance with the instructions issued by the accreditation body.

6.2.4. Step 1 - Organisational accreditation

The purpose of organisational accreditation is to confirm that the organisation has competence and ability to operate as a mine action organisation.

Where the organisation requesting accreditation is a part of the NMAA that implements mine action (e.g. risk education, community liaison, technical or non-technical survey, or clearance), or a closely associated organisation, then same accreditation criteria as used for other mine action organisations should be applied, except where rendered void by the automatic in-country status of the NMAA. (See also paragraph 4 of section 5 of this standard).

The accreditation body shall confirm receipt of the application and supporting documents promptly. After an initial review the accreditation body may, if necessary, ask the applicant to provide further information. The accreditation body shall provide a deadline in writing for the receipt of further information.

Documents from the following list should be included in the assessment as appropriate, together with any further national requirements agreed by the accreditation body. The accreditation body should prepare and circulate a standard list of all documents required for accreditation which forms the basis for the list for each specific accreditation.

In assessing the mine action organisation, recognition should be given to other existing accreditations held by the organisation, such as current ISO 9001 or ISO14001 compliance, or accreditation for similar work in other countries.

When an organisation is applying for renewal of an existing accreditation, the results of monitoring during the current and/or previous phases of the contract should be taken into account. If monitoring has shown that the organisation is consistently reaching a good quality standard and there are no substantial changes to the accreditation agreement, then the accreditation body should consider a simplified accreditation process or automatic renewal. The accreditation renewal process should not require stopping field operations that are in progress unless there are serious concerns about the future quality of work.

As appropriate, the mine action organisation should supply documents describing:

- a) organisational structure and proposed representation in-country;

- b) formal qualifications and relevant practical experience of the management team. Recognition should be given to membership of relevant, recognised professional organisations;
- c) financial planning and control procedures;
- d) recruitment, training and promotion procedures (non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive);
- e) arrangements to use sub-contractors, local labour, and joint ventures, including the use of non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive procedures by sub-contractors and partners;
- f) a statement of freedom from any outstanding or pending legal action, or any pending disputes with the contracting authority;
- g) insurance cover, both staff medical insurance and third party liability;
- h) planning capacity, including logistic planning procedures, the capacity to prioritise work and select tasks based on development outcomes and/or other standard criteria, and the capacity to develop standard operating procedures if required;
- i) the internal quality management system including procedures for root cause analysis of non-conformities, for ensuring lessons learned, and for continual improvement;
- j) information management systems, GIS competence and capacity, and mapping;
- k) employee training and skills development programmes, management training schemes;
- l) intended staff composition (functions and gender);
- m) overall gender and diversity policy;
- n) environmental protection policy;
- o) safety and occupational health policy; and
- p) any additional requirements of the NMAA or national legal requirements.

If the accreditation body is not satisfied that the relevant requirements for accreditation have been met, the mine action organisation shall be informed of the reasons in writing as soon as possible. Whenever possible, the applicant should be given the opportunity to take corrective action within a deadline agreed by the accreditation body. The accreditation body shall then reconsider the application on the basis of the new information.

If the mine action organisation is unable to satisfy the requirements within the agreed deadline then the application shall be terminated and the mine action organisation informed of the decision in writing.

When the accreditation requirements of the first stage desk assessment have been achieved, the mine action organisation shall be informed in writing. The applicant can then move forward with contract procedures and can start work on the second stage of accreditation. The accreditation body may specify a time limit for achieving full accreditation.

6.2.5. Step 2 – operational accreditation

The purpose of operational accreditation is to ensure that the applicant has the resources, competences and management skills to perform specific mine action tasks at specific locations. Operational accreditation was previously known as certification.

The result of operational accreditation is an accreditation agreement that specifies implementation in detail and which forms the basis for future monitoring of the mine action organisation's operations. The accreditation agreement shall include the documents that form the basis for operational accreditation and shall include any additional remarks or requirements of the accreditation body. A copy of the agreement shall be provided to the mine action organisation promptly and the original and the copy shall be signed by both parties at the end of a successful on-site assessment.

Where the organisation requesting accreditation is a part of the NMAA that implements mine action (e.g. risk education, community liaison, technical or non-technical survey, or clearance), or a closely associated organisation, then same accreditation criteria as used for other mine action organisations should be applied, except where rendered void by the automatic in-country status of the NMAA. (See also paragraph 4 of section 5 of this standard).

Step 2, operational accreditation, is primarily a document based process. However, the accreditation body may choose to meet with staff of the mine action organisation to clarify issues, if this is feasible. This can be helpful in assessing the degree to which staff understand and actively implement standards, procedures, processes and policies.

Documents in the following list should be included in the assessment as appropriate, together with any further national requirements. The accreditation body should prepare and circulate publicly a standard list of documents that forms the basis for the list for an accreditation. Similarly, the accreditation body should provide a written list of standard items to check for the guidance of its own staff.

In assessing the mine action organisation, recognition should be given to other existing accreditations held by the organisation, such as current ISO 9001 or ISO14001 compliance, or accreditation for mine action work in other countries.

When an organisation is applying for renewal of an existing accreditation, the results of monitoring during the current and/or previous phases of the contract should be taken into account. If monitoring has shown that the organisation is consistently reaching a good quality standard and there are no substantial changes to the accreditation agreement, then the accreditation body should consider a simplified accreditation process or automatic renewal. The accreditation renewal process should not require stopping field operations that are in progress unless there are serious concerns about the future quality of work.

Documents to be supplied by the applicant, as appropriate:

- a) standards, norms, regulations and procedures (including standard operating procedures) applicable to the proposed work;
- b) organisational structure of field staff;
- c) composition of staff (by function and gender);
- d) staff training standards, copies of training certificates for all qualified staff, including any emergency medical training; individual CVs of key senior staff;
- e) details of safety and operational health implementation at site level (if not already included in standard operating procedures);
- f) details of quality management and record keeping procedures on site (if not already included in standard operating procedures);
- g) information about sub-contractors and local labour working on site, including their organisational structure and composition of staff (by function and gender);
- h) details of equipment to be used, including its maintenance and supply of spare parts, and any relevant test reports; and

- i) logistics for (i) task implementation (ii) obtaining and delivering supplies.

After an initial review of the documents supplied the accreditation body shall, if necessary, ask the applicant to provide further information. The accreditation body shall provide a deadline in writing for the receipt of further information.

If, after requesting further information, the accreditation body is still not satisfied that the relevant requirements for accreditation have been met, the mine action organisation shall be informed of the reasons in writing as soon as possible. Whenever possible, the applicant should be given the opportunity to take corrective action within a deadline agreed by the accreditation body. The accreditation body shall then reconsider the application on the basis of the new information.

When the accreditation requirements of the second stage operational accreditation have been achieved, the mine action organisation shall be informed in writing. The accreditation body shall provide in writing a list of the documents and requirements that have been included in the operational accreditation and which, taken together, form the accreditation agreement. The applicant can then move forward with implementation. Permission to start work depends on the third step, an on-site assessment. The accreditation body may specify a time limit for achieving full accreditation. A date for the on-site assessment should be agreed as soon as possible. The accreditation body should not delay the start of operations of the mine action organisation by delaying the proposed date for an on-site assessment.

6.2.6. On-site demonstration

The purpose of the on-site demonstration is to confirm that the proposed activities will be carried out and managed in accordance with the documented procedures specified in the accreditation agreement.

Monitoring of the on-site demonstration shall be carried out by the accreditation body, using its own staff, or monitoring body staff, or both. Participating monitoring body staff shall be informed in writing by the accreditation body of the activities to be monitored for accreditation and any special issues to be taken into account.

An on-site demonstration should be conducted for all mine action activities. Where there is no specific risk due to conducting the demonstration (e.g. in the case of risk education, victim assistance, non-technical survey, etc) the accreditation body may monitor normal activities at the start of the program and not expect a separate demonstration.

When an organisation is applying for renewal of an existing accreditation the results of monitoring during the current and/or previous phases of the contract should be taken into account. If monitoring has shown that the organisation is consistently reaching a good quality standard then the accreditation body should not insist on a separate on-site demonstration but use a monitoring visit before the end of the existing accreditation to undertake the required assessment for renewal of accreditation. The accreditation renewal process should not require stopping field operations that are in progress unless there are serious concerns about the future quality of work.

The sole basis of the assessment is the accreditation agreement; the on site assessment shall evaluate if there is reasonable evidence that this agreement will be put into practice.

The assessment should include, as appropriate:

- a) inspection of all relevant parts of the site, including offices and support areas, to verify that they are in accordance with the accreditation agreement;
- b) a demonstration of the activities specified in the accreditation agreement, including support activities. The demonstration should be as realistic as possible including data gathering, information management, medical emergency response, and logistics (as appropriate)

- c) where possible, observation of staff, including sub-units, in their final phase of training;
- d) confirmation that staff composition is the same as presented for operational accreditation and follows established good practice, for example that teams for non-technical survey and risk education activities are gender balanced;
- e) confirmation that SOPs, or equivalent instructions and guidelines, and relevant quality management processes, have been disseminated, are understood by team leaders, and are the same as presented for the organisational and/or operational accreditation.

The accreditation team and/or monitoring staff should address the following issues, as appropriate:

- a) the *quality* of data gathering and record keeping;
- b) the degree to which the following are *understood* by staff and *actively implemented* by the site administration:
 - safety and occupational health, environmental, gender and diversity, and training policies
 - standard operating procedures and logistics management
 - the quality management system
 - the information management system

If it is not possible to review all documents during the time available a representative sample shall be chosen.

If the accreditation body is not satisfied that the provisions of the accreditation agreement will be met, the mine action organisation should be informed as soon as possible. The non-conformities should be identified in writing and the required corrective actions discussed and agreed between the accreditation body and the mine action organisation. The mine action organisation will then have to present to the accreditation body its corrected procedures, or details as to how the existing procedures will be properly implemented. The mine action organisation will also demonstrate that compliance with the agreed or modified requirements has been achieved. A further partial or full on-site demonstration may be necessary. The mine action organisation shall also show to the accreditation body the internal quality management procedures that have been used to ensure that the corrective action has been integrated into operating procedures.

If the mine action organisation is unable to take corrective action within a reasonable time, then the provisional accreditation should be terminated and the mine action organisation shall be informed in writing.

When the accreditation body is satisfied that the requirements have been met both the accreditation body and the mine action organisation shall, without delay, sign the accreditation agreement and each shall retain a copy.

If there is a delay between the successful completion of the pre-deployment demonstration and the formal completion of the accreditation process the signed accreditation agreement shall be accepted as evidence of compliance with accreditation requirements.

6.3. Emergency accreditation

In circumstances where there is no NMAA or other regulatory body in place and a requirement for immediate mine action, then the bodies coordinating emergency humanitarian relief work or similar interventions may agree with the host government that a temporary mine action coordinating body should be established, with the power to accredit mine action organisations. Such accreditation may initially be based on the previous experience of the organisation elsewhere until full accreditation in country can be established. Agreements to allow accreditation on an emergency basis will be made on a case-by-case basis, and should be time-limited.

6.4. Extending or modifying an accreditation

6.4.1. Modification or changes in the management system

Proposed changes to the mine action organisation's management structure, which could impact on its management capability, may require an extension or revision of the accreditation by the accreditation body. The accredited organisation shall inform the accreditation body of any such changes. The accreditation body shall determine whether the changes require re-assessment of the accreditation, either desk or on-site.

6.4.2. Modification or changes to operational procedures

The accredited organisation shall inform the accreditation body of any intended modification to the operational procedures for its staff or sub-units, or of the introduction of new or modified equipment or techniques. The accreditation body shall determine if the proposed changes require a re-assessment.

If the changes are minor and are consistent with NMAA (or IMAS if no NMAA exist), then no further action should be necessary.

If the changes are significant, then the accreditation body should conduct an operational accreditation process as appropriate, and amend the accreditation agreement. If necessary, an on-site inspection to verify field compliance with the new accreditation agreement should be carried out, either as part of routine monitoring or as a separate visit.

6.4.3. Increasing the number of sub units using the same SOPs

If the additional sub units will use the same equipment, techniques and operational procedures then no further action is necessary, provided that the existing management and administrative structures have sufficient capacity to manage the larger operation. This applies to all types of mine action, including risk education, victim assistance, non-technical survey, clearance, etc. Otherwise, the accreditation body shall require amendment of the accreditation.

6.5. Suspension and termination of accreditation

6.5.1. Suspension

The NMAA may suspend the accreditation of a mine action organisation or one of its sub-units for a limited period 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 but is serious enough that it must be put right before work continues; or
- b) in the case of improper use of the accreditation agreement; or
- c) if monitoring shows that non-critical non-conformities, which have been previously notified, have not subsequently been properly addressed in a timely manner;

- d) if there is a failure to disclose major and significant management or operational changes.

6.5.2. Termination

The accreditation body may terminate accreditation in the following cases:

- a) if the accredited organisation goes out of business or otherwise closes down; or
- b) at the written request of the accredited organisation; 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 within a reasonable period; or
- d) if monitoring reveals that non-compliance with the accreditation agreement is of a serious nature (i.e. a critical non-conformity), and corrective action has not been made in a timely manner; or
- e) if adequate measures are not taken in a reasonable time following the suspension of accreditation.

Examples of serious non-compliance include: the repeated failure to apply accredited management systems or operational procedures, the refusal to allow monitoring or inspection to take place, interference with monitoring or inspections, the application of processes known to place staff or the local population at unacceptable risk, falsification of data and records.

Before the termination of an accreditation agreement, the accreditation body shall consider measures to be taken to repeat work done prior to the cancellation of the accreditation agreement (where applicable). In the case of re-clearing land, the responsibility for re-clearing and the cost of such re-clearing should be specified in the accreditation agreement.

7. Accreditation body - general obligations

7.1. General

The NMAA shall establish an accreditation body. The accreditation body, however named, shall have a written description of its responsibilities, the methods to be used in the accreditation process, and the technical scope of its activities.

Any accreditation body appointed by the NMAA shall be adequately staffed, equipped and trained.

Where the accreditation body also acts as a monitoring body and/or an inspection body, the relationship between its functions shall be clearly defined.

7.2. Independence, impartiality and integrity

The staff of the accreditation body shall be free from political, commercial, financial and other pressures that 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 the independence their activities. In particular they shall not become directly involved in organisations that carry out any mine action activities, or that design, manufacture, supply, install, use or maintain services or equipment for organisations operating in the mine action sector, or closely related fields. These restrictions also apply to close family members and business partners of the accreditation body staff.

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 and gender sensitive manner.

7.3. Confidentiality

The accreditation body shall ensure confidentiality of information obtained in the course of its activities. Proprietary rights shall be protected. The proceedings of the accreditation body shall not normally be released to anyone but the NMAA, except for informing mine action organisations of any reasons they are non-compliant with accreditation, and the remedial measures required to achieve accreditation.

7.4. Organisation

The accreditation body shall have an effective and efficient organisation. The separation of the accreditation body from any monitoring body, or implementing organisation (such as a clearance, MRE, land release or other mine action team or organisation run by the NMAA, or with close links to the NMAA) shall be clearly defined in writing.

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 NMAS, IMAS and other relevant standards. The technical manager should if possible be a permanent employee.

Where the accreditation body also supplies inspection and monitoring services, the relationship between its functions shall be clearly defined in writing.

7.5. Management system

The accreditation body shall develop and maintain documented procedures. The accreditation body shall implement an internal quality management system, preferably based on a recognised system such as ISO 9001. The management of the accreditation body shall designate a person who, irrespective of other duties, shall have defined authority and responsibility for all quality management within the accreditation body. This person shall have direct access to the most senior executive of the NMAA for quality related issues.

The accreditation body 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 mine action organisation should be agreed, and form part of the contractual arrangements.

7.6. Personnel

The accreditation body shall have a sufficient number of permanent qualified personnel with the range and level of expertise required to carry out its normal functions. The accreditation body shall have access to technical expertise on all the activities covered by the applying organisation. A suitable level of experience is generally at least five years full time equivalent experience in mine action activities of the type that are being accredited.

7.7. Accreditation methods and procedures

The accreditation body shall establish and maintain written procedures for desk assessments and on-site demonstrations.

7.8. Records

The accreditation body shall prepare and maintain records of all assessments and inspections. 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.

7.9. Appeals

The NMAA shall establish a fair and impartial system to enable mine action organisations to appeal against decisions of the accreditation body that the organisation considers unfair, or when new evidence comes to light.

The appeals system should include the use of independent arbitration from the international community present in a mine-affected country. A person (or persons) from the international community who is (are) acceptable to both parties should be chosen.

8. Summary of Responsibilities

8.1. National Mine Action Authority (NMAA)

The NMAA, or an organisation acting on its behalf, shall:

- a) establish a system for the accreditation of mine action organisations and operations;
- b) specify the national standards and provide written guidelines for the accreditation of mine action organisations and operations;
- c) monitor the work of the accreditation body, ensure that the accreditation system is being applied in a fair, equitable, non-discriminatory, gender and diversity sensitive manner;
- d) ensure that accreditation does not unnecessarily interrupt or delay mine action projects; and
- e) ensure appropriate follow-up action is taken on the accreditation body's recommendations.

The NMAA, or an organisation acting on its behalf, should:

- f) accredit and appoint an accreditation body; and
- g) conduct periodic external quality and financial audits on the accreditation body.

8.2. Mine Action organisations

The organisation undertaking mine action shall:

- a) apply management practices, and quality management and operational procedures which lead to mine action activities that meet or exceed agreed, specified standards (usually NMAS or IMAS), and that also meet or exceed requirements specified in the contract, accreditation agreement and any other relevant formal agreement;
- b) maintain and make available documentation (including SOPs and other written procedures), reports, records, (including internal monitoring and quality reports), and other data on their staff and activities to the accreditation body;
- c) provide the accreditation body with access to all sites, buildings and other facilities, which need to be visited as part of the accreditation requirement.

In the absence of a NMAA or similar authority, the mine action organisation should assume additional responsibilities if requested to do so by national or UN authorities acting on behalf of the host nation, and if donor funding permits this.. These include, but are not restricted to:

- a) agree with the donor (or client or customer) a system for accrediting mine action activities; and
- b) assist the host nation, during the establishment of a NMAA, in framing national standards for accreditation.

8.3. Accreditation body

The accreditation body shall:

- a) have accreditation from the NMAA to operate as an accreditation body;
- b) accredit mine action organisations, including sub-units;
- c) process accreditation applications promptly so that delays do not impact on the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the applicants. Provisional accreditation should be used if delay cannot be avoided;
- d) work with mine action organisations to resolve any issues arising during the accreditation process;
- e) establish and maintain an effective and documented quality management system for accreditation;
- f) recruit appropriately qualified and experienced accreditation staff; and
- g) publish current accreditation requirements and make them available to all interested parties.

8.4. Donors

When a contract or other formal agreement has been written by a donor organisation, the donor organisation shall be responsible for including a requirement that the implementing partner(s) will comply with the national accreditation requirements established by the NMAA or other appropriate body acting in its behalf.

Annex A

(Normative)

References

The following normative documents contain provisions, which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this 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:

- h) IMAS 04.10 Glossary of mine action terms, definitions and abbreviations; and
- i) IMAS 07.40 Monitoring of mine action organisations.

The latest version/edition of these references should be used. A copy of all references used in this standard can be found on the IMAS website (www.mineactionstandards.org). 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). NMAA, employers and other interested bodies and organisations should obtain copies before starting mine action programmes.

Annex B (Informative) The management process for accreditation



