

27. QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. Introduction

Quality Assurance (QA) is the system, put in place, to maximize quality within the Mine Action program. Quality Control (QC), which is a part of the QA, is a combination of activities that will provide the overall confidence level in the processes.

All Mine Action components will be carried out according to humanitarian standards as established in the Azerbaijan Mine Action Standards. In summary, the guidelines have been established to ensure that procedures provide operations with a maximum degree of safety. The organizations, equipment, training, procedures and operations within a Mine Action program must be designed to achieve maximum safety.

QA must enhance the overall process of the Mine Action Program, not slow it down or create financial or resource barriers. Determining the amount of QC and establishing an acceptable degree of QA requires a large degree of common sense and practicality to be applied. Otherwise, the process becomes difficult to implement in a timely manner and extremely costly in terms of resources and associated funding.

2. General

Quality Assurance (QA) is a thread of continuous assessment, which will be applied throughout the process, from the initial planning and contract drafting stages, through equipment procurement and training, and including scrutiny of all aspects of the different operations within Mine Action. QA and all field operations techniques must be inextricably linked. QA will include Internal and External Quality Control (EQC) checks.

The basic framework for meeting Mine Action standards and the degree of QA is as follows:

- a. Adherence to Training Standards and the enforcement of these standards;
- b. Adherence to established Standing Operational Procedures;
- c. Applicable procedures;
- d. Levels of supervision and the associated internal Quality Control checks;
- e. Writing of technical specifications and awarding of the contract to reputable organizations.

Quality Control (QC) is a part of QA and will be conducted through inspections or checks. QC may be a measurement of anything that can be measured. EQC personnel, appointed by ANAMA TSQAD, should carry out EQC after completion of clearance before handover of the cleared MF/BAC to end land-user. Part of the QA process will involve ANAMA staff visiting/monitoring the organizations' trainings and operations., External/Internal Supervisors and managers may carry out QC checks.

3. Training

Proper training is the first essential step in the overall process and must be carried out using professional training staff in an environment conducive to training. All personnel, employed within ANAMA umbrella, will be required to undertake and qualify on ANAMA authorized courses, appropriate to Terms of Reference (TOR).

The basic framework for meeting training standards and the degree of QC is as follows:

- All training programs and syllabi will require approval from ANAMA before implementation;
- ANAMA will determine Revision and Refresher training programs;
- Students on courses are to be formally tested in all subjects;
- ANAMA will set training Test Standards, when the course syllabus is approved.

4. Manual Demining

Manual clearance operations fall into two categories, clearance with mine detectors, prodders or excavation. The most important part of the QA process is Quality Control. It represents at least 95% of the overall QA process. Good and continuous supervision is essential in Mine Action Program.

The most difficult environment for Quality Control is when the ground does not permit the use of mine detectors. In this situation, additional supervision is mandatory, as it makes no sense to prod the area second time. The only option to check the area is to use MDD or mechanical devices, such as small mechanical flails, if available. If these options are not available, additional supervision will be required.

If mine detectors can be used, the area, i.e. the lanes, will be daily checked by Section Leaders, weekly and upon completion of the lane clearance by Deputy Team Leaders, and by Supervisors/Team Leaders at their decision, as this will speed up the confirmation that all metal has been removed from the cleared area.

External/Internal QA in manual demining will be considered as two separate levels.

External QA will be arranged by ANAMA and will be ongoing during the whole time of contract. The QA will be carried out by EQC (EQC) personnel and will consist of either one or more of the following checks:

- An MDD set check;
- Manual clearance check, carried out by a EQC team;
- Mechanical devices check;

Internal QA will be carried out by the demining organization and will include the following QC as a minimum:

- Deminers crosscheck the area with detectors;
- Section Leader checks the area at the end of each working day;
- Deputy Team Leader checks the area on weekly basis;
- Supervisor/Team Leader checks the area by carrying out spot-checks upon his decision.

It must be emphasized that sound procedures and close supervision, associated with well-trained personnel, provides a high degree of reliability towards providing cleared safe land for the use of civilians.

The final phase of QA is the hand-over of cleared land from a demining contractor, after conducting External Quality Control, to a land-user. This part of the process is formalized through the Certificate of Completion of Clearance, signed by both parties.

5. MDD Support

Mine Detection Dogs (MDD) are most effective for Quality Checks, Level 2 Surveys and Area Reduction (reduce large mine suspected areas to smaller areas that are actually mined) where manual clearance resources can not be utilized for different reasons.

For MDD search to be reliable, the dogs must be used in teams of a minimum two (2) dogs to check each square meter of land. Again, good supervision and well-trained teams are the most important conditions. Land, surveyed in this manner, may need to have additional QC. Where mines are found, manual clearance procedures and QC will be used.

MDD internal QA and external QC will be considered as two separate levels.

External MDD QA will be arranged by ANAMA and is ongoing during the whole time of contract. The QA will be carried out by External Quality Control (EQC) team and will consist of either one or more of the following checks:

- A second MDD check, using a different MDD set;
- Manual clearance checks;
- Mechanical device checks;

Internal MDD QA will be carrying out by the MDD teams and will include the following QC as a minimum:

- Regular testing of the MDD in the field environment where the MDD are working;
- Proper medical examination of the MDD before work;
- Proper supervision of the MDD/handlers during work or search operations;
- MDD and their handlers should receive refresher training and evaluation every three months;
- An area should always be searched at least twice, preferably from two different directions.

6. Mechanical Demining Machine (MDM) Support

Mechanical demining machine is an essential component of the mine clearance. Like MDD support, it increases productivity and reduces costs.

Mechanical demining machines are ideal to support QA operations or manual clearance. In support of manual clearance, the mechanical device prepares the ground and is followed by 100% manual clearance or MDD QC. No additional QC is required in this case.

Mechanical systems, such as remote mini flails, are the best option to provide the QA and maintain confidence levels.

7. Medical

Appropriate medical support and a workable casualty evacuation procedure are crucial factors of all field operations and will always be a compulsory requirement for mine clearance.

Medical external QA and internal QA will be considered as two separate levels.

External Medical QA will be arranged by ANAMA and will be ongoing during the whole time of contract. The QA will be carried out by Quality Control (QC) Officers and will consist of either one or more of the following checks:

- Inspections and checks, conducted by medical personnel appointed by ANAMA, which will include checking of equipment, vehicles, medical skills, status of medical training, evacuation procedures, accident procedures, documentation, occupational health and safety matters;
- Medical exercises conducted at all levels;
- CASEVAC exercises.

Internal QA will be carried out by the Regional offices of ANAMA and collaborating NGOs by conducting the following QC as a minimum:

- Daily check of medical equipment and vehicles before operation commences;
- Daily check of CASEVAC procedures before operation commences;
- Daily check of Level 3 medical facility support before operation commences;
- Daily radio check before operation commences and regularly during the operation;
- Daily check of documentations, related to accident procedures;
- Regular medical and CASEVAC exercises (at least once per month).

8. Information system (IS)

QA also needs to be applied to the mine database in terms of input, processing and output of information. A system is being developed to streamline the format of information that is entered into the database, a verification system as well as a system to create credibility in the output.

External IS QA will be arranged by ANAMA and will be ongoing during the whole time of contract. The QA will be carried out by Quality Control (QC) Officer, appointed by ANAMA, and will consist of either one or more of the following activities and checks:

- Set up and operate a Reports Tracking Management System;
- Crosscheck Reports;
- Provide coding sheets.

Internal IS QA will be carried out by collaborating organizations (NGOs) by executing the following QC as a minimum:

- Set up and operate a Reports Tracking Management System;
- Crosscheck Reports by another survey/clearance team;
- Completeness and validation check on reports.

9. Public Relations (PR)

External PR QA will be arranged by ANAMA and will be ongoing during the whole time of contract. The QA will be carried out by Quality Control (QC) Officer once in 6 months, and will consist of either one or more of the following checks:

- Assess PR System with assistance of PR Officer;
- Establish an Impact Evaluation Board on own publications and mine action related mass media publications;
- Organize public survey with feedback analysis.

Internal PR QA will be carried out by the Regional offices of ANAMA and collaborating NGO offices by executing the following QC as a minimum:

- Allow contacts with press only to authorized personnel;
- Prepare and authorize press releases for major events;
- Maintain press contact log.

10. Mine Risk Education (MRE)

External MRE QA will be arranged by ANAMA and will be ongoing during the whole time of contract. The QA will be executed by Quality Control (QC) Officer, and will consist of either one or more of the following activities and checks:

- Assess MRE Management, MRE Training Plan and MRE Delivery;
- Collect and analyze MRE section of Mine Victims Questionnaires;
- Analyze mine avoidance training section of Survey Level 1 reports;
- Analyze mine accidents after MRE activities.

Internal MRE QA will be carried out by ANAMA regional offices and implementing NGO partners and will include the following QC as a minimum:

- Collect and analyze feedback at the end of MRE Training sessions;
- Maintain log about MRE activities.

11. Management

QA for management will be conducted internally through the Project Management Teams (PMT), who will continually assess the impact of the project against the goals and objectives, and provide reasons for under and over achievement, with recommended actions. These are to be in written form and maintained as a record of the meetings of the PMT. External management QA will be executed through external project assessment teams, organized either by the UN or by the GOA. Feedback on these missions will be provided to the Director of ANAMA, the Resident Representative of UNDP and the Chairman of the State Commission for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

12. Administration

Internal QA is to be conducted by Directors and Support or Administrative Managers/Officers in all agencies. The form of QA will include be periodic spot checks on:

- Leave Records;
- Attendance Sheets;
- Filing systems;
- Personal Files;
- Personnel Contracts.

External QA on administration will only be conducted by ANAMA, if the organization is funded through ANAMA, UNOPS or UNDP, and will be in compliance with Azerbaijan State Rules and Regulations. ANAMA Support staff and national/international audit teams will conduct external QA. The QA will focus on the same areas as the periodic checks. In addition, the

Management staff is to conduct periodic checks with personnel in the form of question and answer to determine problems and areas of concern of field personnel on administration matters.

13. Financial

Internal QA is to be conducted by the Director, Finance Manager/Officer and Accountants (QA of petty cash accounts) in all organizations. The QA should cover all accounting procedures. In addition, the monthly reconciliation report is to be provided as an opportunity to conduct additional QC by the Directors.

External QA on finances will only be conducted by ANAMA, if the organization is funded through ANAMA, UNOPS or UNDP. External QA is conducted monthly by ANAMA by reviewing the organization's accounts. In addition, the ANAMA Finance Manager and Chief Accountant will conduct periodic spot checks of the organizations. A national/international audit team will conduct an annual detailed audit on each account in compliance with Azerbaijan State Rules and Regulations.

14. Logistics

Internal QA is to be conducted by a periodic spot-checks, executed by non-logistics staff. All organizations are to implement a periodic spot check to review all equipment of the individual value equal to and more than US\$100, received/procured during the period of one year. This process is to be in accordance with the ANAMA Manual of Operating Procedures (MOP). Cases of malfunctioning or poor quality equipment are to be formalized in written reports, protocols and forwarded to ANAMA Director. All staff on visits and QA checks is to ensure that logistics is reviewed as part of their QA.

ANAMA support staff will conduct quarterly external QA on logistics of ANAMA regional offices and collaborating NGOs, and persons responsible for equipment purchase within program funding. In addition, the international audit team will conduct an annual audit. This audit will review logistics systems as part of their QA checks.

15. Summary

It is recommended to conduct QC only in needed circumstances to ensure its appropriate application and justify money spent for its conduction. In mine clearance, Quality Assurance is a continuous process, accomplished by means of Quality Control of training, procedures and supervision. Additional QC to provide the levels of Quality Assurance is required only when the Quality Control process has limitations or obvious shortcomings. QA must enhance the overall operation process and not slow it down or create financial and resources barriers when the overall process clearly indicates negligible risk to civilians. QA is cost effective and morally appropriate, as it ensures that no mine/UXO is missed.

Additional Quality Control as a part of Quality Assurance must be implemented only when the overall mine clearance process creates conditions, where a suspected risk exists.