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STRENGTHENING A SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL CAPACITY FOR GENDER AND DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING IN MINE ACTION

Background photo: A team of female deminers in Cambodia.
Photo courtesy of NPA.

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Khun Sochenda providing training on gender mainstreaming in survey and clearance to CMAA's quality management team.

Photo courtesy of the Cambodian Mine Action Authority.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, “Peace, justice and strong institutions,” promotes building effective, accountable institutions to ensure peaceful and inclusive societies for all. This incorporates strengthening relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation and capacity-building initiatives.¹ For the purpose of this article, capacity development is defined as a process to improve performance at the individual, organizational, and broader system levels.² When an organization carries out a project, it is also important to consider the implications of each planned action on women, girls, boys, and men of different ethnicities, religions, languages, disabilities, education levels, and other diversity factors. Gender and diversity mainstreaming means considering all relevant factors in every project activity as a way to make sure that the concerns, needs, priorities, and experiences of all project beneficiaries are included in the project’s design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In the context of mine action, strengthening national capacity for gender and diversity mainstreaming leads to more effective and inclusive operations, which consider the different information, requirements, and preferences of all members of explosive ordnance (EO)-affected communities. It is also expected to promote equal opportunities, through ensuring that mine action laws, policies, and practices are inclusive and non-discriminatory.³

This article presents achievements in gender and diversity mainstreaming in the mine action sector, both at the individual and organizational level. The Cambodia Mine Action Authority (CMAA) and the Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) Mine Action and Disarmament

Programme in Iraq are examples of good practice. Also discussed is the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining’s (GICHD) Gender Focal Point (GFP) Capacity Development Programme’s contributions to the gender and diversity mainstreaming work of the previously mentioned organizations.

STRENGTHENING GENDER AND DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING CAPACITY

National mine action authorities/centers (NMAA/Cs) and operators are increasingly showing a commitment to gender equality and inclusion through the adoption of gender and diversity-related policies, strategies, and action plans, as well as mainstreaming capacity efforts.

Within the Royal Government of Cambodia, one such organization showing a commitment is the CMAA. The CMAA adopted a robust strategic approach to promote gender equality and inclusion through the Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan 2018-2022 (GMMAP), which includes ambitious targets for the program. The CMAA also established a Gender Team, which implements the GMMAP, and is looking to further develop its own gender and diversity mainstreaming capacity and that of mine action operators in Cambodia, including through capacity development agreements with NPA and the GICHD.

Another example of good practice in the sector is NPA’s Mine Action and Disarmament Programme in Iraq. In 2019, NPA Iraq established a Gender and Diversity Coordinator and implemented a number of interventions, including conducting gender analyses in EO-affected communities benefitting from NPA’s operations: training staff on the importance of gender mainstreaming in mine action; establishing a network of GFP personnel and a gender-based violence (GBV) incidents reporting system within the organization; and conducting surveys on the conditions of women working in operations teams.

Despite these examples of good practice, several challenges remain. Depending on the context, social and cultural norms can hinder the recruitment of women and members of marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities and members of minority religious and/or ethnic groups, in both office and operational roles. Specific additional security threats may also apply to these groups, such as a heightened risk of sexual and GBV. At the organizational level, a lack of authentic management commitment to diversity and inclusion, such as not challenging or holding people accountable for discriminatory policies and



Figure 1. Overview of the Gender Focal Point Capacity Development Programme objectives and outcomes. Figure courtesy of the authors.

practices, can significantly impede gender and diversity mainstreaming efforts.⁴ Furthermore, the absence of a clear institutional approach that formalizes measures to promote gender equality and inclusion in strategy, operations, and employment means that gender and diversity mainstreaming is not carried out in a systematic and accountable manner across all levels of an organization. Another challenge is that although a gender- and diversity-focused position or team is often established, it may lack direction and well-defined responsibilities, or is not allocated adequate financial resources to fulfil its mandate due to a low priority or other constraints. At the individual level, one of the factors that most hinders gender and diversity mainstreaming efforts is a lack of skills to both conduct and apply gender and diversity analyses to ensure mine action activities are effective and inclusive.

OVERVIEW OF THE GICHD GENDER FOCAL POINT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In order to strengthen the gender and diversity mainstreaming capacity of NMAA/Cs, operators, and other partners, in 2019 the GICHD developed and carried out its first global GFP Capacity Development Programme, which is expected to be completed in early 2021. The program seeks to reinforce the positive achievements described previously and address some of the remaining obstacles. The premise of the program is that a single training course is not enough to establish sustainable national and country-program capacity. Instead, the development of an individual trainee’s skills must coincide with organizational change to facilitate a systems-based approach that can, with sufficient resources and authority, contribute to individual and organizational transformation.

The GICHD decided to concentrate on the role of GFPs for three main reasons. First, more clarity was needed from NMAA/Cs and operators on the roles and responsibilities of GFPs, as well as on the qualifying criteria to take up this position. Second, the GICHD identified a skills gap in the mine action sector for gender equality and



Figure 2. The 18-month Gender Focal Point Capacity Development Programme adopts a blended learning approach comprised of four main activities. Figure courtesy of the authors.

inclusion programming where field-level decisions are taken. Third, GFPs were expected to be generally more available to take part in longer training courses focused on gender equality and inclusion than other staff members.

The role of a GFP is to promote gender equality and inclusion in their organization by advocating, advising, and supporting staff. While the title of the position could suggest that the focus is only on gender, in fact the GICHD believes that it must encompass work on diversity more broadly of which gender is only one among many relevant considerations to take into account. Furthermore, while ultimate accountability for the results of gender and diversity mainstreaming efforts lie with management, a GFP has a crucial role in supporting this work. Because those designated as GFPs within an organization are not necessarily experts in gender equality and inclusion, participation in the Capacity Development Programme can play a pivotal role in equipping them with the relevant knowledge and skills to perform the GFP tasks.

The “Introduction to Gender and Diversity in Mine Action” e-Learning course equips learners with knowledge of where and why gender and diversity matter in mine action. By making the e-Learning a mandatory step in the capacity-development process, it ensures that participants have the same basic understanding of key definitions and concepts. These include how gender norms and diversity considerations can impact on mine action activities, as well as the characteristics of a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach to mine action, especially in community-facing activities. This is followed by a ten-day intensive face-to-face training that equips participants with the skills required to effectively mainstream gender and diversity in the organization’s policies, systems, and practices. In this second phase of the Capacity Development Programme, participants develop or reinforce skills ranging from how to mainstream gender and diversity in national mine action strategies or standards, standard operating procedures, and data collection forms, to building the capacity to ensure inclusive employment systems and practices.

Following the face-to-face training, participants complete up to four assignments during the remaining year of the program, in which they apply the knowledge and skills they acquired on the course in their own workplace. These assignments are adapted to the unique work situation and responsibilities of each trainee and the identified gender and diversity mainstreaming priorities of the organization. During this phase of the program, a member of the GICHD supports the trainees, providing technical advice to complete the assignments.

Finally, in the last stage of the program, the GICHD invites participants to take part in an online workshop, during which they have the opportunity to present their organizational gender and diversity mainstreaming work plan, provide updates on what they have achieved, discuss challenges faced, and identify next steps to continue to promote

gender equality and inclusion within their organization. Participants in the current program include representatives from twelve organizations, representing both NMAA/Cs and international operators’ headquarters and country programs.



NPA Iraq conducting a focus group discussion with women from a local community in Rawa City, Iraq.
Photo courtesy of NPA Iraq.

GFPS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Anyone working to mainstream gender and diversity considerations, be it a GFP, a full-time manager or advisor, or a working group, must have a clear role and specific responsibilities. Based on consultations with a number of NMAA/Cs and operators, the GICHD developed recommendations on what these responsibilities should include. However, these should always be adapted to the work of the NMAA/C or operator to ensure that they are relevant and realistic in a specific context. The organization's management must endorse the GFP's responsibilities and clearly communicate to staff how the GFP's role will be integrated with the work of other units/teams in the organization.

Prior to participation in the GFP Capacity Development Programme, the CMAA's Gender Team had a network of GFPs deployed in different units/teams across the institution. However, since the Gender Team did not have terms of reference (ToR) endorsed by management, they faced a number of challenges. These included implementing the GMMAP 2018-2022; the availability of dedicated staff trained on gender mainstreaming; and the lack of capacity to conduct gender and diversity analysis.⁵ With technical assistance and support from the GICHD as part of the Capacity Development Programme, the Gender Team has now developed a ToR for these GFPs.⁶

There are already positive examples of how the ToR supports the Gender Team to achieve its objectives and reinforces the support provided through the CMAA-GICHD capacity development action plan. For example, the Team now has a more prominent role in decision-making processes with management personnel. The Team has also recently participated in technical reference group meetings, including one on survey and clearance. Moreover, efforts to promote parity of women and men participating in events are paying off. For example, in July 2020, the head of the CMAA Gender Team presented on "Gender Mainstreaming and Diverse needs in practice in Cambodia" at the Intersessional Meeting of the *Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention* (APMBC).

In the case of NPA's Mine Action and Disarmament Programme in Iraq, the organization had already created the position of Gender Equality and Diversity Coordinator and allocated resources to support gender and diversity mainstreaming efforts. As the organization

was working on defining a job description for the position, participation in the GFP Capacity Development Programme came at an opportune moment. Indeed, NPA Iraq believes that the support provided by the GICHD sustained the organization's ability to adopt a ToR that integrates the full range of tasks that a GFP in mine action should perform. NPA Iraq also developed a work plan, which led to a more structured approach to mainstreaming gender and diversity in its internal procedures, and established a network of GFPs in all the program's field locations. These GFPs have different roles and responsibilities compared to the Gender Equality and Diversity Coordinator. Specifically, they support the Coordinator in the delivery of training courses, reporting allegations of GBV, and maintaining a database in which these complaints are systematically recorded.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

Gender and diversity analysis is a tool for understanding how the cultural, social, and economic differences between women and men from diverse groups influence their opportunities and roles in society. In mine action, the main goal of such an analysis is to be able to plan and tailor activities to make them more effective and inclusive. At a minimum, gender and diversity analysis should involve desk-based research to understand more about demographics at the local level. In addition, the analysis should identify decision-making capacity, property rights and ownership, division of labor and livelihood activities, barriers to participation, mobility patterns and access to services, direct and indirect communication channels, and finally the socio-economic and humanitarian impact of EO on different groups.

In the case of the CMAA, the Gender Team is using its coordination role to encourage Mine Action Planning Units (MAPUs) and operators to conduct gender and diversity analyses to inform operations. The CMAA is now planning to develop a gender and diversity analysis checklist to support the MAPUs and operators to conduct this essential activity and use the findings to tailor activities to the needs of different groups. The development of the gender and diversity analysis checklist is expected to contribute to SDG 10 by putting in place a framework ensuring that mine action operations in Cambodia are inclusive and non-discriminatory.³ It will also enable the CMAA to demonstrate how it is implementing Actions 29 and 33 of the Oslo Action Plan, through ensuring that community-facing mine action activities are "...sensitive to gender, age, disability and that take the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities..." are taken into account.⁷

In the case of NPA Iraq, the organization had already planned to conduct a gender and diversity analysis of Anbar, one of the districts in which the program operates. NPA Iraq's Gender Equality and Diversity Coordinator had previously worked on several field surveys and need assessments related to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment programs. However, the coordinator had not yet completed a gender and diversity analysis for a mine action project. Therefore, the GFP Capacity Development Programme provided an excellent opportunity to build on her existing skill set and strengthen her capacity to conduct gender and diversity analysis for mine action. Participation in the program helped NPA Iraq identify information requirements

and create forms for field-level data collection in Anbar District. Both desk-based and field-level research are complete and NPA Iraq is in the process of analyzing the findings to ensure an inclusive approach to activities in Anbar.

LOOKING FORWARD

A sense of ownership is created by focusing efforts on strengthening sustainable gender and diversity mainstreaming capacity at the national and country-program levels. It also contributes to international and national frameworks by ensuring that mine action organizations promote peaceful and inclusive societies for all. This enables mine action programs to not only achieve more with the resources they have at their disposal, but also to better adapt programs, projects, and activities to reflect the real needs and priorities of all beneficiaries in the area of operations.

Ultimately, strengthening the capacity to mainstream gender and diversity in mine action organizations positively influences national capabilities in two ways. First, it promotes gender equality and inclusion in EO-affected communities by challenging traditional gender norms. Second, it contributes to improving the quality of mine action projects and activities, which allow beneficiary communities to receive higher-quality services that are inclusive, effective, and tailored to the needs and priorities of all affected groups, including those in positions of vulnerability, thus spreading the benefits of mine action more equally.

The purpose of the GFP Capacity Development Programme is to enable and strengthen the efforts of NMAA/Cs, operators, and other NGOs in their work by providing them with the knowledge, tools, and skills to achieve their own objectives over time. This is why the program adopted a staged approach spanning eighteen months and which, in addition to training, provides sustained support to the GFPs to achieve the stated goals of their organizations.

The first global GFP Capacity Development Programme will soon be followed by a second program specifically targeted at GFPs from Arabic-speaking countries. CMAA and NPA Iraq are only two out of twelve organizations that are currently participating in the first global GFP Capacity Development Programme. The program has led to the creation of a community of practice trained on gender and diversity mainstreaming, comprised of members who rely on each other's experiences and expertise. Ultimately, the ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity to mainstream gender and diversity in mine action organizations are expected to improve the effectiveness of mine action policies, programs, and operations by ensuring that the contributions, concerns, and needs of all members of EO-affected communities are acknowledged and addressed in an inclusive manner. ©

See endnotes page 66

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