

BACKGROUND NOTE

Plenary Session III: Community Engagement Matters.

- Date and time: Wednesday, 26 May 2021, 2:00p.m. – 3:00p.m. (CEST)
- Chair: **Ms. Meritxell Relaño**, Deputy Director Emergency Operations, UNICEF
- Speakers: **H. E. Ly Panha Rith**, Deputy Secretary General, Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority
Ms. Alessia Radice, Communication for Development Specialist, Social Norms, UNICEF
Mr. Guy Mondjii, Country Director, Viamo (mobile technology company) Nigeria
Ms. Alexandra Letcher, Community Liaison Manager-Team Leader, Mines Advisory Group, Iraq
Ms. Lyuba Guerassimova, Programme officer, UNMAS Afghanistan

Introduction

The 2020 United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace define community engagement as “a strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making and implementation to strengthen local capacities, community structures and local ownership as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings”.

Community engagement is a critical component of international development practice and humanitarian assistance. Around the world and across contexts, community engagement approaches support communities to take action in addressing their most pressing issues. Community engagement is intrinsic to a human rights based approach, one of the guiding principles of the UN. Communities should be listened to and have a meaningful role in processes and issues that affect them.

Several international agreements in recent years (e.g., the Grand Bargain; the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness) have highlighted the need for improved practice, coordination, integration and measurement of community engagement. These are essential components of community systems strengthening, with multifaceted implications for aid effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability across all domains.

Purpose of the Session

This session will unpack Community Engagement as a necessary, powerful, ethical and vital approach for all mine action pillars. In particular, the session will take stock of the state of play on community engagement in mine action, identify best practices and explore avenues for improvement. Panelists will share how their experience on how different activities such as clearance and risk education - can be enhanced by the right community engagement approach; they will also review how the mine action sector can draw lessons organizations in other sectors especially regarding digital connectivity advances and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) approaches. Speakers from affected countries and the international community will be invited to discuss their approaches to Community Engagement in and beyond mine action and address the principles and parameters for communities to plan, take action and be heard in all matters that affect them.

Format for the Plenary: (60 minutes)

Introductory remarks by Chair	05 minutes
Presentation by H. E. Ly Panha Rith	08 minutes
Presentation by Ms. Alessia Radice	08 minutes
Presentation by Mr. Guy Mondjii	08 minutes
Presentation by Ms. Alexandra Letcher	08 minutes
Presentation by Ms. Lyuba Guerassimova	08 minutes
Discussion and Q & A	12 minutes
Closing remarks by the Chair	03 minutes

Guiding Questions

- Where does the mine action sector stand in terms of Community Engagement?
- What works well?
- What can be done better?