

US Agency for International Development (USAID)
USAID/Armenia
Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)

Program/Project/Activity Data

Activity/Project Name:	NK Humanitarian Mine Clearance Program		
Assistance Objective:	Investing in People		
Program Area:	Stabilization Operation and Security Sector Reform		
Country(ies) and/or Operating Unit:	Armenia/E&E		
Originating Office:	Democracy, Health and Social Reform Office (DHSRO)	Date: June 14, 2013	
PAD Level IEE: Yes ☐ No ☐	DCN of Original RCE/IEE:	DCN:	
Supplemental IEE: Yes ☐ No ☐	DCN of Amendment(s):		
RCE/IEE Amendment: Yes ☐ No ☐			
If Yes, Purpose of Amendment (AMD):			
DCN(s) of All Related EA/IEE/RCE/ER(s):	2013-ANK-001		
Implementation Start/End:	November 29, 2013 – November 28, 2017	LOP: FY13-FY16	
Funding Amount:		LOP Amount: \$6,000,000	
Contract/Award Number (if known):	TBD		
IEE Expiration Date (if any):		Reporting due dates (if any):	
Recommended Environmental Determination:			
Categorical Exclusion: ☐	Positive Determination: ☐		
Negative Determination: ☒	Deferral: ☐		
Additional Elements:			
Conditions: ☒	Local Procurement: ☐		
Government to Government: ☐	Donor Co-Funded: ☐		
Sustainability Analysis (included): ☐	Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis (included): ☐		

1. Background and Project Description

1.1. Purpose and Scope of IEE

The purpose of this IEE is to approve the new Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) Humanitarian Mine Clearance Program with a budget of \$6,000,000 and an expected life of 4 years, beginning on November 29, 2013 and ending on November 28, 2017.

1.2 Project Overview

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh stopped with a cease-fire in 1994, but left large areas of the region infested with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, as well as unexploded ordnance. Since September 2003 USAID has supported humanitarian de-mining activities in NK to make Nagorno Karabakh safe from mines and UXO. This work was targeted at the densely laid minefields in and around population centers, where the direct humanitarian impact was greatest.

As in September 25th, 2013 the ongoing NK Humanitarian Demining Program will come to end, and taking into the consideration the importance of this activity, it was decided to initiate a new project to continue the mine clearance works in NK.

Humanitarian demining remains an essential task in NK as it saves lives and clears the way for agriculture, water and other essential needs. Although the trend in mine accidents has been downwards, they continue to happen in NK, killing and seriously wounding civilians, 26% of whom are children. Mine clearance is of utmost importance to civil and agricultural use of land. Most of this land is fertile agricultural land that will be used for wheat planting once it is cleared; other lands pastures and/or gardens; and lands close to internal roads that will allow safe travel from village to village. If these lands are not cleared, the risks to the population conducting normal activities such as herding animals, farming and gathering firewood are significant. Lands are not being used efficiently, as a result of the remaining mines and unexploded ordinance (UXO) in the region, thus seriously reducing effective use of one of the primary sources of income for the people of NK.

Calculations of estimates for the cost of contaminated agricultural land suggest that the value of mine and UXO affected land, i.e. land unsafe to use (even if in some cases it still is) is US\$4.8 million per annum. Using a GDP per head figure of US\$1,330 (as taken from official NK administration figures) this amounts to the livelihoods of about 3,600 people, or 3% of the population. It is extremely difficult to quantify the indirect impact of mines and UXO.

However, in recent years other traditional donors have withdrawn or drastically reduced their assistance leaving USAID as the major donor to the NK demining effort.

The demining needs in NK were traditionally assessed by the implementing partner -Halo Trust. The latest polygon survey results projected that an additional five years will be needed to declare NK as “mine free”. Given the existing need for the Humanitarian Mine Clearance in NK, the new project will allow to continue clearance of the mines and will ensure effective utilization of USG resources and providing high productivity of mine clearance for each US dollar spend on the demining.

1.3 Project Description

The aim of this program is to save lives and prevent injury via the humanitarian clearance of landmines and UXO remaining from the conflict of 1992-1994. The project will return contaminated land to the local population for productive use, in order to promote and enable subsistence living for the rural population through low-level agriculture, animal husbandry and foraging. The proposed program will allow to continue humanitarian demining activities with an ultimate goal of having the Traditional NK declared as a mine free land. The activities within USAID funding should be performed only in “traditional NK territory” which includes the territory of the all regions of Nagorno-Karabakh as defined by the Soviet-era Autonomous Oblast boundaries and not use the USAID funding for the activities in so called “green villages” located outside of these boundaries.

Expected outcomes and results of the project:

- Elimination of mine and unexploded ordnance contamination in NK.
- Elimination of AT accidents by tractor drivers.
- Additional land is freed up for the planting and cultivation of wheat with an obvious positive impact on rural NK.

- Increased grape production.
- Traditional NK territory (as defined above) is declared a mine-clear zone.

To reach those results by the end of the project the following tasks must be completed:

1. Clearance of all the remaining anti-personnel (AP) minefields.
2. Clearance of all the remaining anti-tank (AT) minefields.
3. Surface clearance of the entire remaining cluster munitions in strike zones.

In the chart below an estimate of the remaining clearance area is presented (provided by HALO Trust, based on polygon survey results):¹

Remaining Contaminated Area in Traditional Nagorno Karabakh (Hectares Remaining as of 08.05.13)	
Anti-Personnel (AP) Minefield Area	108
Anti-Tank (AT) Minefield Area	80
Total Mined Remaining Area	188
Total Surface BAC Area Remaining	4,163

All clearance work shall be performed in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

2. Baseline Environmental Information

2.1 Locations Affected and Environmental Context

General Baseline Data:

Nagorno Karabakh is situated in the South Caucasus midway between Armenia's border with Turkey and the Caspian Sea. A variety of the Flora and Fauna of the planned territory is conditioned with climatic parameters and complexity of the landscape. Skeletal mountains, cliffs, and slide rocks occupy some areas while populated areas, gardens, agricultural areas occupy others. Its diversity is conditioned with the presence of outdone habitants, migratory and wintering types of fauna.

Nagorno-Karabakh is also one of the poorest areas in the region: the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of Nagorno Karabakh is closer to that of Cambodia and Tajikistan than that of Armenia or Azerbaijan. NK is predominantly an agricultural area with a total population of 140,000 in five administrative regions. During the Soviet Union NK was predominantly an ethnic Armenian area, autonomic oblast, within the Republic of Azerbaijan. As the Soviet Union collapsed, the population of NK voted in a referendum to secede from Azerbaijan, which resulted in armed conflict during the period 1988 to 1994. This conflict erupted into full-scale war in 1992 and continued until a Russian-brokered ceasefire was agreed in May 1994. From 1988 to 1994 it is estimated that up to 30,000 people were killed, with many more injured. With both sides having access to a large range and quantity of former soviet weaponry the war was intense, with significant use of aircraft: thousands of mines were laid countrywide. Nagorno Karabakh's economy is more highly dependent on agriculture in comparison to the

¹ These figures may change due to the independent assessment that USAID is carrying out.

economies of the three Caucasus countries. The nature of the fighting in the war has meant that potentially productive agricultural land on which rural Karabakhis rely for both subsistence and cash crops is contaminated with Anti-Personnel (AT), Anti-Tank (AT) mines and Cluster Munitions.

These two facts together mean that mine contamination has a proportionately large impact on NK's ability to develop and lift its rural population out of poverty. Clearance of these agricultural areas prevents accidents and allows more land to be used for agriculture.

Sector Specific Baseline Data:

Mines were laid by both Azeri and pro-Karabakh forces during the war, with a relatively high proportion of AT mines being used in some regions, as well as AP mines throughout. There is also a lot of UXO littering the country side, ranging from mortars, grenades to rocket and air-dropped bombs: thousands of these bomblets were dropped from the air during the conflict. Today these items contaminate the ground and continue to pose a threat to the local population.

2.2 Description of Applicable Environmental and Natural Resource Legal Requirements Policies, Laws, and Regulations

NK is not recognized as a sovereign entity by the US, therefore NK laws and regulations are not applicable in this case. At the same time Armenian laws and regulations also are not applicable because NK is not under Armenian jurisdiction. However, the Implementer will follow International Mine Action Standards (IMA).

2.3 Country/Ministry/Municipality Environmental Capacity Analysis

Since 2003, with USAID and other donors support the rapid development of the mine clearance program in NK has led it to become the focal point of information and expertise for mine related issues in the territory. A Mine Action Center (MAC) was created to consolidate all relevant information. The MAC coordinates the de-facto administration's ministries and departments, all other NGOs and local communities; the Center maintains maps and a database covering the following:

- All suspect areas surveyed.
- All areas cleared of mines and UXO.
- Locations of all mines and UXO accidents.
- A full record of all Mines Risk Education given.

This information is "public" information in that it is available to anyone in NK who asks: private individuals who wish to check that there is no mine threat in a certain area are able to see maps without restriction.

The MAC coordinates with the NK Rescue Services (RS) department, which is a cross between a Civil Defense department and an emergency service. RS has a handful of qualified staff, but no capacity to conduct full-scale clearance. The de-mining program coordinates its activities with RS, with relevant information being passed between the two organizations. RS has representatives based in each region of NK, and are therefore often the first point of contact when people find suspicious items. The local RS representative is always invited to take part in the handover of any completed task within their region.

3. Analysis of Potential Environmental Impact

Pursuant to 22 CFR 216.3(a)(2)(iii), the originator of the proposed project has to review the potential environmental impacts of the activities. De-mining is anticipated to have only beneficial effects on the living conditions and environment in NK. Given the unique nature of de-mining efforts, it would not be appropriate for USAID to establish special environmental guidelines, additional to those standards followed by the experts in this field. In particular, USAID requires

that the Implementer follow International Mine Action Standards (IMA) version 7.0 or later as available and indicated approved by the UNMAS and/or GICHD as notified on <http://www.mineclearancestandards.org.imas.htm>.

3.1 Mine Clearance

Defined/Illustrative Activities	Potential Impacts
Mine clearance activities: 1. Clearance of all the remaining anti-personnel (AP) minefields. 2. Clearance of all the remaining anti-tank (AT) minefields. 3. Surface clearance of the entire remaining cluster munitions in strike zones.	De-mining is anticipated to have only beneficial effects on the living conditions and environment in NK.

4. Recommended Environmental Actions

4.1 Recommended Mitigation Measures

Negative Determination with Conditions

Pursuant to 22CFR 216.3(a)(2)(iii), Negative Determination with Conditions is recommended for de-mining operations. The condition is that the implementer follow International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) version 7.0 or later as available and indicated approved by UNMAS and/or GICHD as notified on <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/international-standards/imas-in-english/list-of-imas/>

Defined/Illustrative Activities	Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Recommended Threshold Determination
1.1 Mine clearance activities: Clearance of all the remaining anti-personnel (AP), anti-tank (AT) minefields and surface clearance of the entire remaining cluster munitions in strike zones.	De-mining is anticipated to have only beneficial effects on the living conditions and environment in NK.	Pursuant to 22CFR 216.3(a)(2)(iii), Negative Determination with Conditions is recommended for de-mining operations. The condition is that the implementer follow International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) version 7.0 or later as available and indicated approved by UNMAS and/or GICHD as notified on http://www.mineactionstandards.org/international-standards/imas-in-english/list-of-imas/	Negative Determination

4.2 Recommended Environmental Determination:

Negative Determination with Conditions

Under §216.3(a)(2)(iii), a negative determination with conditions is recommended for activity 1.1 de-mining operations. Specific terms and conditions are presented below in Section 4.3.

4.3 Terms and Conditions:

The implementer should follow International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) version 7.0 or later as available and indicated approved by UNMAS and/or GICHD as notified on <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/international-standards/imas-in-english/list-of-imas/>

4.4 USAID Monitoring and Reporting:

4.4.1 The AOR/COR, with the support of the MEO, is responsible for monitoring compliance of activities by means of desktop reviews and site visits.

4.4.2 If at any time the project is found to be out of compliance with the IEE, the AOR/COR or MEO shall immediately notify the BEO.

4.4.3 A summary report of Mission's compliance relative to this IEE shall be sent to the BEO on an annual basis, normally in connection with preparation of the Mission's annual environmental compliance report required under ADS 203.3.8.5 and 204.3.3.

4.4.4 The BEO or his/her designated representative may conduct site visits or request additional information for compliance monitoring purposes to ensure compliance with this IEE, as necessary.

4.5 Implementing Partner (IP) Monitoring and reporting

4.5.1 The originator of the proposed project has to review the potential environmental impacts of their activities. De-mining is anticipated to have only beneficial effects on the living conditions and environment in NK. Given the unique nature of de-mining efforts, it would not be appropriate for USAID to establish special environmental guidelines, additional to those standards followed by the experts in this field. In particular, USAID requires that the Implementer follow International Mine Action Standards (IMA) version 7.0 or later as available and indicated approved by the UNMAS and/or GICHD as notified on <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/international-standards/imas-in-english/list-of-imas/>

4.5.2 IPs shall report on environmental compliance requirements as part of their routine project reporting to USAID.

5. Mandatory Inclusion of Requirements in Solicitations, Awards, Budgets and Workplans

5.1 Appropriate environmental compliance language, including limitations defined in Section 6, shall be incorporated into solicitations and awards for this activity and projects budgets shall provide for adequate funding and human resources to comply with requirements of this IEE.

5.2 Solicitations shall include Statements of Work with task(s) for meeting environmental compliance requirements and appropriate evaluation criteria.

5.3 Environmental mitigation and monitoring requirements, when available, shall also be included in solicitations and awards.

5.4 The IP shall incorporate conditions set forth in this IEE into their annual work plans.

5.5 The IP shall ensure annual work plans do not prescribe activities that are defined as limitations, as defined in Section 6.

5.6 The USAID Mission will include an indicator for environmental compliance as part of the project's performance monitoring plan.

6. Limitations of the IEE: This IEE does not cover activities (and therefore should changes in scope implicate any of the issues/activities listed below, a BEO-approved amendment shall be required), that:

6.1 Normally have a significant effect on the environment under §216.2(d)(1) [See http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/compliance/regulations.html]

6.2 Support project preparation, project feasibility studies, engineering design for activities listed in §216.2(d)(1);

6.3 Affect endangered species;

6.4 Result in wetland or biodiversity degradation or loss;

6.5 Support extractive industries (e.g. mining and quarrying);

6.6 Promote timber harvesting;

6.7 Provide support for regulatory permitting;

6.8 Result in privatization of industrial or infrastructure facilities;

6.9 Lead to new construction of buildings or other structures;

6.10 Assist the procurement (including payment in kind, donations, guarantees of credit) or use (including handling, transport, fuel for transport, storage, mixing, loading, application, cleanup of spray equipment, and disposal) of pesticides or activities involving procurement, transport, use, storage, or disposal of toxic materials and /or pesticides (cover all insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, etc. covered under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act); and

6.11 Procure or use genetically modified organisms.

7. Revisions

Under §216.3(a)(9), if new information becomes available that indicates that activities covered by the IEE might be considered major and their effect significant, or if additional activities are proposed that might be considered major and their adverse effect significant, this environmental threshold decision will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised by the Mission with concurrence by the BEO. It is the responsibility of the USAID COR/AOR to keep the MEO and BEO informed of any new information or changes in the activity that might require revision of this IEE.

8. Recommended Environmental Threshold Decision Clearances:

Approval :

Karen Hilliard, Mission Director

Date _____

Clearance:

Marina Vardanyan, Mission Environmental Officer

Date _____

Clearance :

Tatshat Stepanyan, Activity Manager/COR/AOR

Date _____

Concurrence:

William Gibson

E&E Bureau Environmental Officer (acting)

Date _____

Distribution:

IEE File

MEO (to also provide a copy to AOR/COR)