



LIS Operational Protocol P02 – Preliminary Opinion Collection

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this protocol is to outline the procedures for preliminary opinion collection (POC). During the LIS HQ staff or a coordination unit must gather a list of possibly affected communities from informed individuals in order to determine where to conduct community interviews and false negative sampling. This information is used to establish the number of communities to be visited, and therefore informs the survey budget, number of teams needed and operations plan.

2.0 Overview

2.1 POC is a process for identifying all possibly affected communities by collecting information on the names and locations of possibly affected provinces, districts and communities. POC produces an initial list of mine suspected communities and their locations, which allows for finalizing field operations.

2.2 The POC will not directly lead to accurate estimates of mine/UXO impact, or even which communities are impacted, but instead will establish an initial list that enables the survey process to begin operations and plan a frame for false negative sampling. It is expected that new communities will be identified throughout the survey while other communities that appear on the initial list may, in fact, be found to not exist.

2.3 POC must be conducted at the earliest stages of the survey process. It is recommended that it be conducted as a separate activity prior to establishing the LIS operations. If this is not possible then POC should be conducted soon after establishing operational capacity. The earlier the POC is conducted the better the ultimate planning will be for the survey. The POC sources and methodology may differ in each country depending upon the amount of information available on landmine contamination, administrative boundaries, and community locations as well as funding and available staff.

2.4 The POC is an on-going process. The list of suspected communities will get continually refined during field operations. A POC conducted prior to establishing LIS operations should allow for better planning and more efficient use of survey resources.

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1 LIS HQ staff, or a designated survey coordination unit, is responsible for identifying and listing provinces, districts and communities that are suspected to be mined based on informed opinion.

3.2 LIS HQ staff will develop and revise budgets and operational plans based on the POC as necessary.

3.3 Field supervisors, field editors and interviewers are responsible for gathering information during fieldwork which will update the POC and list of suspected communities.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Source: A person, institution, database or report with knowledge of which communities are mine/UXO suspected.

4.2 Preliminary Opinion: Information on the names and locations of communities suspected of mine/UXO contamination that is collected prior to the main survey fieldwork.

4.3 Preliminary Opinion Collection: Process whereby a list of possibly mine/UXO affected communities is compiled from knowledgeable people on the landmine problem at national, provincial and district levels.

4.4 Foundational data: Gazetteer and administrative boundaries.

4.5 Gazetteer: List of names and unique identifiers of all provinces, districts and communities.

5.0 Instructions

Preliminary Activities

5.1.1 LIS HQ staff should acquire the most accurate available gazetteer of the country, as well as spatial data or maps showing administrative boundaries. The minimum requirements for each settlement in a gazetteer are its geographic coordinates and name. Other information if available can support the POC process. If a gazetteer is not available or is considered to be highly unreliable, LIS HQ staff can suggest other approaches to obtaining these essential data, including deriving locations from paper maps and building local maps using local experts. In cases where no gazetteer exists, where accurate paper maps are unavailable and where local knowledge is insufficient to provide accurate directions, it may be necessary to expand the POC process to develop a gazetteer for the LIS.

5.1.2 HQ staff should develop a process for gathering Preliminary opinion that includes a questionnaire which standardizes the information collected. Surveys should design criteria on which the quality of the different sources of information can be evaluated during the POC. The survey headquarters should build a master map and a list of affected communities from the opinion gathered which should be updated throughout the LIS process and used for false negative sampling. **[cf. 6.5, 6.6]**

5.1.3 Survey staff may use the media to relay public service messages asking communities to contact them if they are mine-affected, as a supplementary means of gathering Preliminary opinion.

5.2 Gathering Preliminary Opinion at the Different Administrative Levels*

5.2.1 It is rare that a comprehensive and reliable POC can be attained from one source. It is likely several sources will be required before the POC is finished. There is no limit to the number of sources but judgment should be used to reach a reasonable number of reliable sources to contact.

The POC should begin in the national capital. Appropriate government agencies, the military, hospitals, traditional leaders, international organizations, mine action organizations, and the diplomatic community should be formally requested about landmine information at the provincial, district, sub-district and community level, or their equivalent. Past Landmine Impact Surveys have shown that the information from sources at the national level, especially from governmental sources, is usually weak. As a result POC needs to be gathered at all administrative levels until a complete list of possibly mine affected communities is compiled. Experience from other Landmine Impact Surveys have shown that the accuracy of the POC becomes problematic the further away from the administrative level the information is collected. **[cf. 6.1, 6.4]**

5.2.2 After conducting POC in the national capital it should be continued in the affected provinces, then in the affected districts to identify specific suspected communities. If a list cannot be compiled at the district level, survey staff should continue to sub-districts until a list of communities and their locations can be gathered. **[cf. 6.2, 6.3]**

5.2.3 If the survey is being conducted in a country with an established mine/UXO action program, survey headquarters will make every effort to utilize the database as a primary source of information. The quantity and quality of the data, however, may vary from country to country, and therefore, in some cases, the database may be inadequate or unreliable. However, these databases shall be employed as fully as practical in the development of the Preliminary Opinion Collection.

5.2.4 NGOs involved in mine clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance can be particularly informative in their areas of operation. The NGO databases and field reports, depending on the size of the area they are working, may not present a

* Provinces and districts are used as generic terms here

complete picture of the landmine problem in the region or province they are working. In that case other sources may have to be consulted.

5.2.5 The survey team leader will prepare a report to the LIS executive agency detailing the POC process, explaining the specific procedures and presenting the outputs and assessing the quality of information.

5.3 Revising Budget, Operational Plan and Continuation of EOC

5.3.1 Once a list of suspected communities has been developed from the POC, the budget and operational plan can be revised.

5.3.2 During the course of fieldwork, the POC will constantly be updated as new communities are identified. Also previous ones may either prove to be not populated or no longer existing or have a new name. In Eritrea a major problem during the LIS was many communities had more than one name causing confusion and sometimes resulting in more than one visit before the problem was recognized.

6.0 Rationale / Background

6.1 POC is critical to the LIS operations. Landmine Impact Surveys have shown that the opinion on landmine contamination is as often wrong as it is correct. Resources are wasted as a result. If the survey is conducted soon after the conflict has ended it may not be practical to start at the capital and proceed down the layers of administrative levels. Survey teams have found that reliable opinion improves the further down the administrative structure it is conducted. National authorities are better at providing opinion at the provincial or state level than they are at the village level in a district or sub-district. At the same time local authorities know more about the landmine problem in their administrative level than they do about other districts and provinces. This is especially true in countries where vast distances and poor roads and transportation hinder easy movement.

6.2 The operational purpose of the POC is to limit the number of community visits to only those suspected to be affected by landmines. Limited resources require a rigorous POC to compile as accurate a list as possible to begin the survey. Surveys may decide to visit all districts in a mine/UXO-affected province to make sure that mine/UXO-affected districts are not missed. In Chad, the survey called for staff to visit every district in an affected province, regardless of its status according to the provincial headquarters. They met with both the district leaders and other informants, such as former combatants and medical authorities, to determine whether the district was really not suspected. Staff may decide to initiate contacts themselves or rely on other organizations (NGOs, government agencies) to provide the contacts. [cf. 5.2.2]

6.3 The goal is to contact the most informed institutions and individuals, who can indicate which provinces, districts, sub-districts and communities, or their equivalent are possibly affected by landmines. The informed institutions and individuals will vary from

country to country and may vary within countries as well. In Thailand, district officials and the military were good sources of information. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the canton disaster coordinator was the most informed. In Angola, the local police and mayors at the comuna level proved to be the most knowledgeable. The quality of POC also affects false negative sampling. **[cf. 5.2.2, P07 – False Negative Sampling]**

6.4 Those agencies or individuals that are involved in mine action are good sources in their areas of operation regarding which communities may or may not have landmines. It is essential, however, that POC asks several institutions and individuals and not rely only on one source. The following types of organizations are normally good sources for the following reasons: a) military agencies that know the history of the conflict and pattern or recent mine/UXO incidents; b) medical and social welfare agencies that maintain records of mine/UXO accidents and contacts with mine/UXO victims and their families; c) development and relief agencies that may have projects that are affected by mine/UXOs; d) traditional representatives that tend to communicate the concerns of communities, such as a mine problem, to higher authorities; and e) agencies that conduct clearance operations and MRE activities. **[cf. 5.2.1]**

6.5 Literature searches can also inform the POC. The history of the conflict including the frontline, military bases and refugee and IDP flows, can be an additional source of information to better understand and interpret the POC results. Such information can also test the validity of other sources of POC. For example, if one source indicates contaminated communities in areas where there is no history of conflict should lead to questioning the authenticity of the information.

6.6 Each survey has posed challenges for the POC. In Yemen, where tribal allegiances and cultural factors limited field staff mobility, especially for women, POC was accelerated by sending field supervisors and editors to provincial and district headquarters, followed by the start of community surveys in all the affected regions. There was a similar use of the freshly trained field supervisors and field editors in Thailand, but community surveys were initially focused on one border region at a time. In Angola, one survey team was assigned to do only POC. In northeast Somalia in the state of Puntland, POC was conducted six months before the survey began and greatly informed the budget and operational planning. In Afghanistan the database at the UN Mine Action Center was the major source for POC for the LIS. The local shuras were less accurate. Although not true in every case, the most reliable source of information on possibly mine suspected communities is the lowest administrative level. **cf. 5.1.2]**

6.6 Master maps updated from official records can serve other functions too. In both Chad and Cambodia, listing new roads was important for field operations. In Mozambique, groups of small settlements called “satellite villages” were not classified as communities or mentioned in databases or maps. Such newly generated geographic data should be entered into GIS software through digitization (for complicated data such as roads) or the manual entry of coordinates (for simple points such as villages). **[cf. 5.1.2]**

7.0 Materials

7.1 Complete gazetteer of target country (recommended if available)

7.2 Complete map of administrative boundaries (recommended if available)

8.0 Attachments

[NB: These are documents from different surveys, reports or old protocols that have been attached to this protocol in case they are found useful, interesting or relevant. They are purely optional reading.]

8.1 EOC instructions from Thailand

8.2 EOC methodology from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

9.0 Related Protocols and Advices

9.1 P07 – False Negative Sampling

9.2 P05 – Guidelines for interviewers

10.0 References

10.1 P02: Preliminary Opinion Collection is covered in objective 1.4 and output 5 on the generic timeline.

11.0 Revisions

11.1 Originally written by Aldo Benini, 01 01 02

11.2 Edited by Dann Naseemullah, 03 01 20

11.3 Edited by Mike Kendellen, 05 06 15

Attachments

1. EOC instructions, Thailand Survey

Plan of Visits in each Province

- Day One: Meet provincial authorities:
1. Present NPA, the survey project and expert opinion task
 2. Inquire about expert opinion letter from TMAC/NPA
 3. Identify districts that have communities that are affected by landmine/UXOs or UXO.
 4. Identify any neighbour provinces that may have affected communities.
 5. Make appointments at district offices for all affected districts. Always visit border districts.
 6. Request relevant information from provincial offices (for example victim list)

- Day Two Start district visits. In all affected districts, meet district authorities:
1. Present NPA, the survey project and the expert opinion task.
 2. Identify all communities affected by landmine/UXOs or UXO. Update the gazetteer:
 - a. add all new communities as:
 - i. NA – not affected
 - ii. PA – possibly affected,
 - iii. A – Affected
 3. Update 1:50,000 topographic maps;
 - a. add all new communities (location and name)
 - b. add all new roads (draw with pencil and highlight in yellow)
 - c. draw a circle with pencil around all communities that are classified as PA or A
 4. Get mine/UXO victim list
 5. Discuss and request additional data (community boundary maps, forest map and plan – including protected areas and areas of reforestation, land use and land reform maps, community development maps, number of primary, secondary and higher education in each village)

Day three until? Continue district visits until finished,

If any other provides are identified as affected, repeat procedure for all these provinces.

Updating the expert opinion information for each province

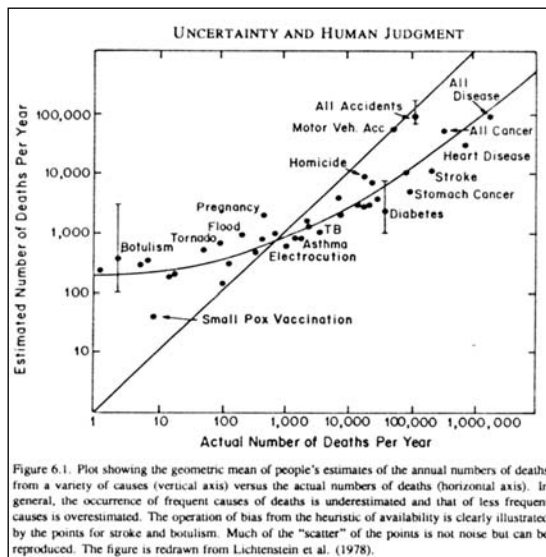
1. Identify all communities affected by landmine/UXOs or UXO. Update the gazetteer;
 - a. add all new communities

- b. classify each community as:
 - i. NA – Not affected
 - ii. PA – possibly affected or
 - iii. A – affected
2. Update 1:50,000 topographic maps:
 - a. add all new communities (location and name)
 - b. add all new roads (draw with pencil and highlight in yellow)
 - c. mark all communities that are classified as PA or A (highlight in yellow and draw a circle with pencil around)
3. Mark all suspected contaminated areas on 1:50,000 topographic maps (highlight in red)
4. Describes the conflict and history of mine/UXO laying in the province
5. Describe the accessibility in the province
6. Describe the security situation in the province relevant to the survey operation

Identify any other important information or concerns that are useful for planning and carrying out the survey in the province.

2. Error Control

It is important to say that experts, although better informed than the average person, are often wrong. In recent years, much has been learned about how judgments are made under uncertainty, and some of the patterns in expert error have been discerned. For



example, the incidence of problems that occur rarely is often overestimated whereas the numbers of other types that are much more frequent tend to be underestimated. The illustration (left), although summarizing estimates made by laypeople, reveals this law of increasingly short estimates for a variety of causes of death in the US. The situation with regards to locally polled landmine/UXO experts is similar.

2. EOC Methodology, Bosnia-Herzegovina Survey

1. EOC METHODOLOGY

The Bosnia Herzegovina Mine Action Center (BHMAC) provided substantial data about potentially suspected areas in the form of a MapInfo table. They identified these places based on a 500-meter buffer zone around suspected hazard areas. However these data points did not correspond to the official gazetteer which we used for all other opinions and which is the latest official gazetteer. For this reason, we have been unable to correlate and incorporate all of their data at this time. This task will take a little longer to complete as it involves separating out places which are not populated.

Civil Defense and the Mine Action Coordinator were the selected Experts at the municipal level. The response rate from both was 80%. It is interesting to mention that in many cases (more than 60%) the opinions of these two experts were similar. The main explanation for this is that the Mine Action Coordinator and the person at Civil Defense were the same person.

ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and LSN (Landmine Survivors Network) were selected as the Experts about mine accidents and mine victims. Although they responded to our mail inquiry they were only able to give an opinion on suspected communities based on their victim data. Also, the lack of a precise date for the mine accidents might provide less competent opinion on which communities have to be surveyed. For example it becomes problematic when deciding to include an LSN or ICRC community as one to conduct the survey if the mine accident occurred in 1997 or 98 or 2000 but in the meantime all of the hazard areas were cleared.

OHR' RRTF Department as an Expert was selected because of their involvement and knowledge of the returnee issue in Bosnia. NPA was chosen because of their activities in mine action. As in the case of LSN and ICRC, the response from OHR and NPA was excellent but it did not always correlate with clearance activities.

3. THE EOC DATA MODEL

In the absence of a standardized input instrument, the GIS and Quality Control units elected to use Microsoft Excel to input data. Excel is a user friendly interface and HI local staff know how to use Excel.

EOC Survey Unit: The EOC survey unit was a community (referred to as "populated places" in Bosnia) and was taken from the Federal Bureau of Statistics gazetteer of local community names. The 6,147 communities targeted by the EOC were taken from this gazetteer. The EOC data was entered into 14 MS Excel Worksheets each representing a second order administrative division.

Visual Basic for Applications (VBA): VBA was used to move data from the 14 Excel sheets to a SUMMARY EXCEL Sheet. This technique proved very useful in these ways:

- Greatly facilitated updating as EOC data arrived;
- Assured consistency of data while migrating or summarizing it;
- Permitted direct linking to Arc View's DBF Table format;

The VBA scripting actually served as a quality control device since it ensured internal consistency among data form and position.

EOC Database Operations: The EOC data was sorted by administrative order:

- First order = entity/district
- Second order = canton or region, and finally
- Third order by municipality.

Breakdown by cantons / regions

Canton/region name	No of comm.	Total with no data	Total with data	Total number affected or possibly affected	Total number not affected	No of communities to be surveyed
Bosansko-Podrinjski	194	15	179	77	102	77
Hercegbosanski	269	112	157	74	83	74
Hercegovačko-Neretvanski	481	8	473	239	234	239
Posavski	33	0	33	32	1	32
Sarajevski	249	7	242	134	108	134
Srednjobosanski	659	26	633	322	311	322
Tuzlanski	386	10	376	203	173	203
Una-Sana	350	67	283	159	124	159
Zapadno-Hercegovački	102	0	102	3	99	3
Zeničko-Dobojski	618	0	618	266	352	266
Banja Luka	723	178	545	115	430	115
Bjeljina	462	43	419	236	183	236
Doboj	296	25	271	188	83	188
Sarajevo	882	111	771	376	395	376
Trebinje	383	7	376	181	195	181
Brcko	59	0	59	36	23	36