

# Lessons learned on the importance of community liaison in ensuring effective programming

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## HI Gender, Disability, and Age policy



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## Effective community liaison - Iraq

- Village profile, socio-economic and Knowledge, Attitude and Practice surveys;
  - Ensuring 50/50 participation;
  - Sex and age disaggregated data collection and analysis.
- Community Safety Committees;
  - Creating opportunities for female empowerment.



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## Lessons learnt

- Having mixed teams is key to successful community liaison;
- Inclusive data collection and analysis is necessary to provide impactful responses;
- Special efforts may sometimes have to made;
- Effective community liaison can promote female empowerment;



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When it comes to programming, HI is committed to making sure we contribute to the 2030 vision of 'leaving no one behind'. To do this, HI aims to identify as early as possible people most in need so that we can prioritise our interventions accordingly. This includes an understanding of the diverse factors of people present in the intervention area, and how these factors, such as sex, age and disability, intersect with one another, and the context that they live in. A person is never just a woman, but may also be an elderly person or a youth, and perhaps living with a disability. HI notes that when these factors intersect, they add compounding layers of vulnerability and exclusion that HI needs to be aware of to be truly accountable, inclusive and participatory. HI's Disability, Gender and Age Policy – in short, our DGA policy – and our Quality Management Framework provides guidance in this regard.

At an operational level, HI's policy and quality management framework calls for projects to conduct context analysis at community, local and national level that ensures our projects are conflict sensitive, and therefore most beneficial to people most vulnerable and at risk. Importantly for HI, we don't believe that an analysis is something that is done only at the start of a project, but is a continuous exercise that is monitored throughout the entire project cycle.

A good analysis is built on good data, and HI's project staff are trained in the collection and analysis of sex, disability and age disaggregated data. Again, this is not a one off activity in our projects but a continuous process so that we ensure our work continues to be prioritised based on an understanding of changing contexts and remains relevant to the requirements of our target population.

I'd now like to turn to one of our country programmes, Iraq, and use the example of community liaison to demonstrate how we put our DGA policy and Quality Management Framework into action.

In Iraq, prior to delivering Explosive Ordnance Risk Education activities, our teams are trained to undertake individual surveys to make our EORE projects most impactful for the affected communities.

The individual surveys are conducted with teams going door-to-door in the target locations. Although the participants of the survey are selected at random, teams are asked to have a 50/50 gender balance and amongst other socio-economic data, to collect and record whether the interviewed person has a disability according to the Washington Group Short Set of Questions. This data is analysed daily so we can adjust our interviewees and ensure the 50/50 gender balance. More globally, we analyse the data to improve our understanding of how EO contamination affects people through an intersectional lens, so as to determine which group is most impacted and what kind of intervention we need to prioritise to enable adapted and impactful programming that is conflict sensitive and accessible to all. These surveys have been essential to help us obtain feedback from the different diversities representative of the community, and to foster participation, inclusion, and accountability.

In my second example, I am going to focus on inclusion and empowerment of women in our Community Safety Committees or CSCs. The purpose of the CSCs is to engage the local community to find safer solutions against the threat of Explosive Ordnance via quick impact safety projects. HI has made specific efforts to ensure CSC are represented with both male and female members.

A specific example is during the COVID-19 pandemic, the community liaison work to establish the CSCs had to be done using phone calls. In the communities where HI were working, most of the people owning phones were men and this meant that our access to women was challenged. To overcome this, our EORE Agents worked in pairs – one male and one female agent – and when a male agent reached a male caller, he would ask if it were possible for the female agent to speak with a female member of the household. When this was permitted, the female EORE Agent would encourage the female to apply to be a CSC member and also collect the number of their female friends so that our Agent could reach out to more females.

In another example, all members of the CSC need to be voted on by the community. From past experiences, HI found that only men would be nominated as community representatives. To counter this, EORE Agents asked community members to vote for one male member and one female member. Then, the top males and females would be selected to be a part of the CSC. The result of these efforts is that all of our CSCs are now composed of men and women, and our 'quick impact safety projects', reflect perspectives and ideas of male and female CSC members. Over the longer term, our EORE Agents working directly with the CSC report seeing greater self-confidence in the female CSC representatives. One of our Agents, who provided input into this presentation, reported: 'at first, the female members of the CSC were not as talkative as their male counterparts. As a result, HI staff were trained to facilitate discussions to ensure that women had their voices heard and were a part of the CSC decision making process. Over time, the female members of the CSC gained confidence and started contributing more, so now they are on an equal footing as their male counterparts'.

These are only a few examples of how HI is promoting an intersectional and conflict sensitive approach to our mine action interventions, with the aim to leaving no one behind. We are also committed to continuous learning and improvement. Together with MAG, NPA and HALO, we are developing a concept that – if put in practice – would greatly maximize the impact of humanitarian mine action activities. Moving forwards, HI will continue their focus on improving disability responsive programmes. This will include improving our knowledge on the impact of Explosive Ordnance on people with disabilities and how to respond to specific disabilities identified. HI also notes that there is an absence of disability disaggregated casualty data which prevents us from analysing vulnerability through intersecting factors of disability, gender, age and others, thus potentially leaving more people in need behind. HI is committed to improving on this, so that we can provide more impactful programming in the future.

Thank you.