

## **Awareness on Environmental Management in Forest Clearance Operations**

As a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) since 2017, the Government of Sri Lanka remains committed to achieving a mine-free country by 2028 by removing all mine contamination in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention.

The National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) functions as the apex body responsible for planning, coordinating, and overseeing mine action activities in Sri Lanka. To fulfil this mandate, NMAC works closely with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and accredited mine clearance organizations to ensure full compliance with the APMBC.

Under the Convention, all mine- and Explosive Ordnance (EO)-contaminated Grama Niladhari (GN) divisions must be declared mine- and EO-free as required by Article 5. This includes forested and restricted areas within those divisions. Accordingly, NMAC has collaborated with the District Forest Department, the Department of Wildlife Conservation, and the Department of Archaeology to inspect, assess, and identify clearance needs in environmentally sensitive areas.

To accelerate mine and EO clearance in forested areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, NMAC obtained formal approval from the Department of Forests to conduct clearance activities under agreed-upon methods and conditions. An MoU was subsequently signed between NMAC and the regional Forest Departments to strengthen coordination, promote transparency, and ensure strict adherence to environmental management standards during clearance operations.

Recognizing the importance of responsible clearance practices in forest ecosystems—and in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)—NMAC emphasized the need to raise awareness among deminers regarding environmental concerns and sensitivities. During the most recent operational meeting in Kilinochchi, the District Forest Officer requested the provision of targeted environmental awareness training for all demining personnel.

### **Awareness Programmes Organized by the Regional Mine Action Office**

The Regional Mine Action Office organized a series of environmental awareness programmes in collaboration with the following demining organizations. The sessions were conducted by experts from the District Forest Office, ensuring that deminers received practical guidance on environmental protection and adherence to the agreed conditions outlined in the MoU.

### **Key Messages and Topics Covered**

**Across all programmes, strong emphasis was placed on environmental protection and responsible behaviour during clearance operations. The sessions highlighted the importance**

of strictly following MoU conditions and complying with regulations issued by the Department of Forest Conservation.

Key topics covered included:

1. Definition and classification of forested areas
2. Characteristics of forests in the Northern Province
3. Introduction to endemic wildlife species in local forests
4. Identification of rare plant species and their ecological and medicinal value
5. Compliance obligations under Forest Department regulations and related legal considerations

#### Programme Participation by Organizations

##### HALO Trust

- The programme was held on 13 November 2025 in Kilinochchi, with full participation from HALO Trust deminers and field experts.



## MAG (Mines Advisory Group)

- The programme was conducted on 14 November 2025 in Kilinochchi, with the participation of all MAG deminers and organizational representatives.





## DASH

- The programme was held on 3 November 2025 in Kilinochchi, with the participation of all DASH deminers and operational staff.



## **SHARP**

- **The awareness programme for SHARP is scheduled to be conducted in December 2025, arranged by the Regional Mine Action Office with District Forest Office expertise and facilitated by SHARP staff.**