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Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA)

AYNAK COPPER MINE PREDICTED TO CREATE 8,000 DIRECT JOBS ONCE LANDMINES ARE CLEARED

27 August, 2009. The Aynak Copper deposit in Logar, was discovered in 1974 and is estimated to contain 11.3 million tons of copper. Once the landmine clearance is completed and the mine can be developed, it is expected to provide a much needed boom to the economy of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Mines of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has signed a contract with a Chinese company (MCC) for the development and extraction of copper from the mine.

This mine and its five other related projects of maintaining security, production of 400 Megawatts electricity from coal, water supply, annex minerals and railroad (from north to Trorkham) are expected to directly employ 8,000 Afghans and indirectly 30,000 more. Four contracts are already signed and the railroad contract will be signed later. Further, the Chinese company (MCC) is committed to provide much needed infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, mosques and water sources, these projects are estimated to cost \$8-8.5 billion in total. This project's impact will be felt on a national scale as well, as the Chinese company is expected to pay \$350-\$400 million in taxes each year to the Afghan government.

As demining is a prerequisite for any development project in the country, according to a request from Ministry of Mines the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) deployed Landmine Impact Assessment Teams to the area to find out more about the extent of the contamination in the Aynak copper area. The assessment found that 4.135 sq. km area was contaminated with mines and 1.4 sq. km area is contaminated with Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). Mine Dog and Detection Centre (MDC) is currently handling the Aynak copper mine clearance project and deployed demining teams there.

Contamination has prevented the community rebuilding their ruined houses, tending their animals and using their roads. Mine accidents in this area has resulted in 89 deaths and 92 injuries so far. There are some problems which cause difficulties to demining teams too, for example a number of the contaminated areas are located at high points in the steep mountains. Another big challenge is mineral content of the rock which causes the mine detector to give signals on many stone. This makes progress slow as they have to carefully assess whether each signal is a rock or a mine. Two experts from the Ceia mine detector company visited the area and investigating a solution to this problem.

During the demining operations, 1.4 sq.km ERW and 700,416 sq. m of mine contaminated land has been cleared and as a result 110 anti personnel, three anti tank and numerous ERW and other small ammunitions have been found and destroyed. According to the contract between the Ministry of Mines and MDC, demining project will last for 18 months. It began in June 2009 and is due to be completed in December 2010 with a total contract value of \$2.6m.

The community and local council (Shura) are happy about the clearance operations and they are committed to support it. Redy Gul Islamyar a resident of Aynak village said: "During the Russian occupation lots of mines were laid here, since then many of our villagers and animals have been killed in mine accidents. We are thankful to the deminers for coming here and clearing the area for us, anytime they call on us we are ready to support them."



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About the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan

The concept of humanitarian mine action was developed in Afghanistan in 1988/9. Mine action encompasses all pillars of mine action: advocacy, demining (survey, marking and clearance), stockpile destruction, mine risk education (MRE), and victim assistance (VA). The programme is funded both bilaterally and through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF).

Collectively known as the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA), mine action implementers in Afghanistan form one of the largest mine action programmes in the world. Together, these agencies have a twenty year history of successfully delivering mine action in Afghanistan and have cleared over 12,000 hazard areas throughout the country. The MAPA is coordinated by the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), which is funded through a UN modality. The MACCA has sub-offices, known as Area Mine Action Centres (AMACs) in Parwan, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar, Kunduz, Gardez, and Kandahar.