

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN

NEWSLETTER: JANUARY 2012



MAPA TO BOOST AFGHAN ECONOMY THROUGH AYNAK MINE CLEARANCE

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) has helped to develop the Afghan economy and boost livelihoods for over 20 years. In addition to employing more than 14,000 Afghans in demining operations, MAPA has bolstered the economy through clearing agricultural lands, major roads, irrigation systems and highways for the transport of goods. With the recent clearing operations of the Aynak copper mine and surrounding villages, mine action will help to create a sizeable number of job opportunities in Logar province and assist the government in strengthening its income base.

Clearance of the 1.3 million sq m area, which was heavily contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), was requested by the Ministry of Mines and funded by the Government of Afghanistan. After MAPA's implementing partner, Mine Detection Center, completed operations in December 2011, the area was handed over to the local community and the government of Afghanistan.

The area had been mined by virtually all warring parties in Afghanistan.

The widespread contamination had a heavy human cost. Villagers were reluctant to graze their animals or transport goods on the mined road networks, and accidents regularly maimed or killed locals.

Qudratullah, 10, lost a brother to a mine accident in their village. "My second brother lost his leg in an explosion," the boy added, "when they were grazing goats in our village."

Villagers are optimistic about the benefits of the clearance operations. "The clearance of surrounding villages such as Akrokhil, Bahai Jan, Sanger Khil, Easar Tangi and Wali Mohammad, and the copper mine itself will have a very positive effect on the livelihoods of those living in this area and generally all Afghans" said Haji Mohammad Amin, Akrokhil village resident.



Qudratullah, 10, lost his brother in a mine explosion in his village

"Now that the area has been cleared," said Mohammad Rahim, another resident of the village, "we can use the agricultural lands both for planting and grazing, we can safely use the irrigation channels, and we are no longer worried about their family members if they are out of the home. More importantly, hundreds of men can start working on the copper mine for extraction. Demining operations will help Afghans live in a safe environment and take part in strengthening the Afghan economy."

The Government of Afghanistan has contributed \$3.97 million to MAPA for demining operations, the bulk of which was directed to the Aynak mine clearance. Rights to the copper extraction were awarded to the Metallurgical Corporation of China in 2007. The survey and preparations have been already done and the mining operations are set to begin shortly.

MAPA is supported by the following donors to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action:

Canada, European Commission, Australia, Japan, Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Denmark, Austria, Luxembourg, Oman and Lithuania.

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USA, Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Japan, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Government of Afghanistan, Ireland, Finland, Belgium, Czech Republic

A VILLAGE IN PARWAN IS NOW MINE-FREE

Ahmad Wali leads a visitor around his village, pointing out swathes of land where minefields had been laid. The village, called Godar, is located in an area of Parwan province that had suffered heavy fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in 1999. The clashes left lands contaminated with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines as well as unexploded ordnance (UXO), seriously hampering economic and agricultural activities.

In a pioneering public-private partnership between IRU, UNMAS and the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA), clearance was carried out in areas on or around roads linking Kabul to its Central Asian neighbours. The aim of the project was to strengthen road safety and bolster economic links between villages and urban centres.



The village guide Ahmad Wali said: “We are very happy that the area has been cleared by demining teams and now we can use it for agriculture and animal grazing. Now we also

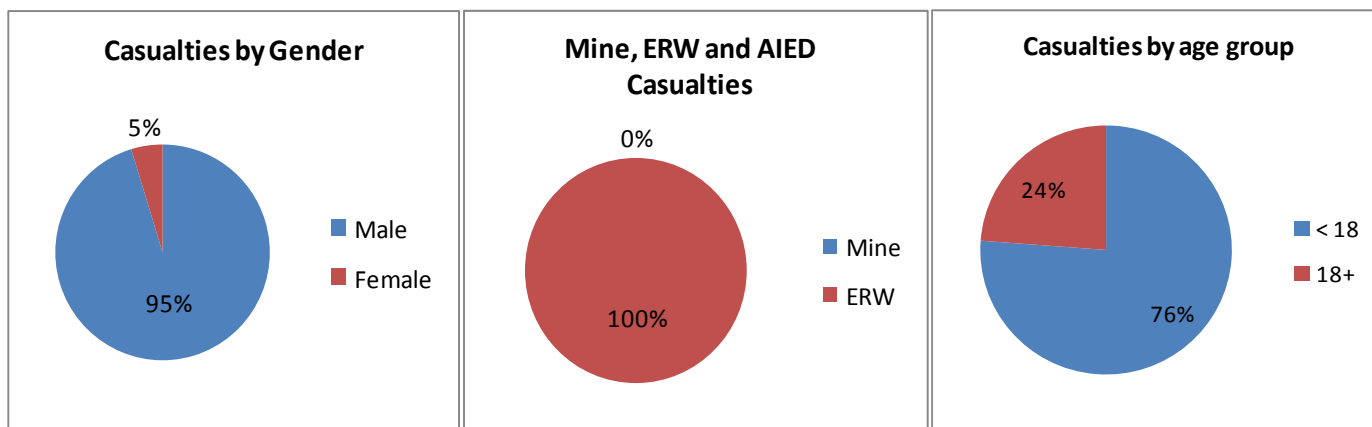
have an asphalt road, which is an important step for business between villagers and urban center to happen.” he added. “There were many mine accidents in this area before clearance. Many people lost their legs, hands, eyes and even their lives.”

Ahmad Wali noted: “This is a busy road and every day thousands of passengers and drivers pass by; some buy food from the shops and oil from the pump stations. So from that way we can take care of our families and communities.”

CASUALTIES IN JANUARY 2012

In January 2012, there were 21 casualties due to ERW recorded in Afghanistan, as of February 11, 2012. There were no mine victims.

NB: Casualty reports take time to come in from the field and so the monthly total may increase some weeks after this newsletter is published. The charts below show a breakdown of these casualties:

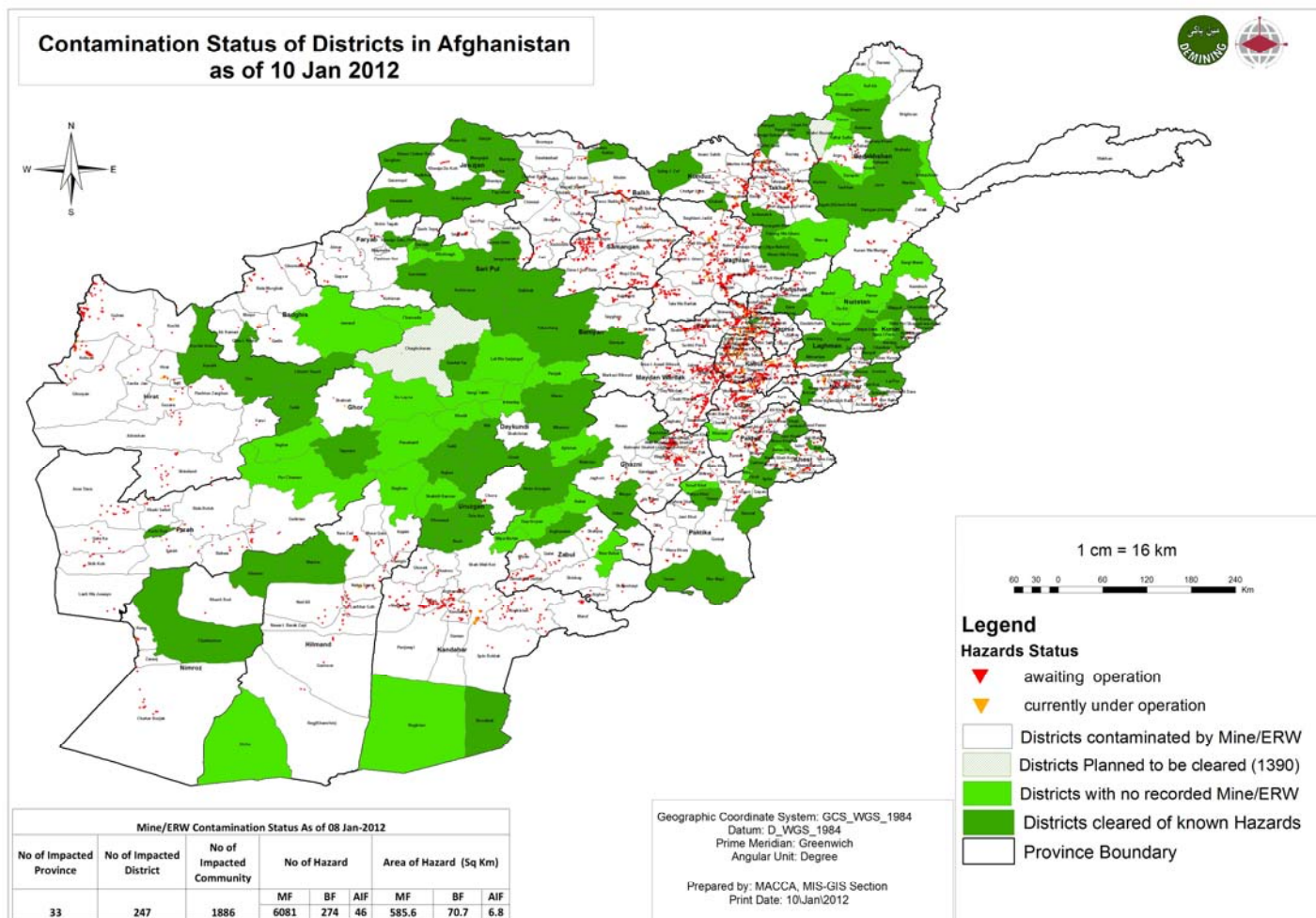


MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS IN AFGHANISTAN

Ottawa Convention:

The goal of the Ottawa Convention is to clear all emplaced anti-personnel (AP) mines in Afghanistan by 2013; destroy all known AP mine stockpiles by 2007; provide mine risk education and assist mine survivors. To note, the Ottawa Convention is about the removal of AP mines, and not of anti-tank (AT) mines or ERWs. However it is equally important to ensure that the other hazards are not forgotten whilst the focus is on meeting the Ottawa treaty obligations.

The Afghan State will be seeking an extension of their deadline of 2013 to complete the clearance of all known AP sites.



MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS SUMMARY IN 1390 SO FAR (January 2011)

- * 23,571 AP mines, 808 AT mines, and 630,628 ERW destroyed.
- * 218 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- * 546,622 women and girls and 400,576 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

