

# MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN

## NEWSLETTER: FEBRUARY 2012



### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICIALS ATTEND HANDOVER OF FORMER BATTLEFIELD

Maj. Gen. Walter D. Givhan, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at the US State Department attended the handover ceremony of a former battlefield held in Kabul City this month.

This battlefield, located in Qasaba, was heavily contaminated with unexploded ordnance (UXO) during the decades of war in Afghanistan. With funds from the US State Department, this area was cleared by Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), an implementing partner of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA). The demining operation cleared over 118,000 sq m of land, unearthing 1,754 different types of UXO including rockets, mortars, artillery shells and projectiles.

Maj. Gen. Givhan, addressing a large gathering of Qasaba village elders at the ceremony, noted: "I would like to recognize the extraordinary success that the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan has realized over 20 years of operations. This plot of land we talk about that has been cleared and is being turned over is testament to this success, and to the strides being made in clearing mines from Afghan soil."

He added: "For its part, the United States will continue to support the people of Afghanistan in eliminating the threat of landmines. And we will work with the Government of Afghanistan to complete this vital task."



Mawlawi Saleh Mohammad, a Qasaba community elder, said: "Supporting needy people is a holy and important job, and I - on behalf of this society - thank the countries and organizations who have funded this programme to clear our country of mines."

*Maj. Gen. Walter D. Givhan, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at the US State Department speaks to the participants of the ceremony.*

At the end of the ceremony, four community representatives, including the Assistant Deputy Chief of Police, signed the official hand-over document to indicate their agreement that the area has been fully cleared. Now that hazards have been removed, the land will be used for 270 residential houses and other essential buildings such as a health clinic and a school.

The State Department has supported MAPA since 2005 and is the most generous donor, having contributed \$183 million so far. Recently, another contribution of \$1 million was announced, to be directed specifically to the coordination of mine action activities, which is a critical element in ensuring that the most impacted areas receive priority for clearance and that quality is consistently monitored.

#### **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.

#### **MAPA is also supported by the following bilateral donors:**

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

## NEW TEXTBOOKS TEACH AFGHAN YOUTH ABOUT MINE RISKS

In a landmark achievement for mine risk education (referred to as MRE) in Afghanistan, the first batch of textbooks dealing specifically with mine awareness has been produced for grades 7, 8 and 9. The textbooks, filled with colorful illustrations and class exercises, are accompanied by a comprehensive teacher's manual. The books have been translated into Dari and over 25,000 copies have been printed with support from Azerbaijan, another war-affected country experienced in educating its youth about the dangers of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

To commemorate this initiative, a ceremony was held on (12, Febraury 2012) at the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) office in Kabul, with representatives from the Azerbaijani government and key Afghan ministry officials in attendance.

ANDMA Director, Dr.Daem KAKAR, said: "We really appreciate this endeavor of mine clearance organizations and the Mine Action Coordination Center of Afghanistan. Besides demining, mine risk education is very important to make people aware, especially children, about the risk of those hidden enemies. This kind of book will reduce the number of casualties."



*Above: Schoolgirls inspect their new mine risk education textbooks*

Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to kill or injure many people a year in Afghanistan. On average, there are 34 victims per month, the overwhelming majority of whom are children.

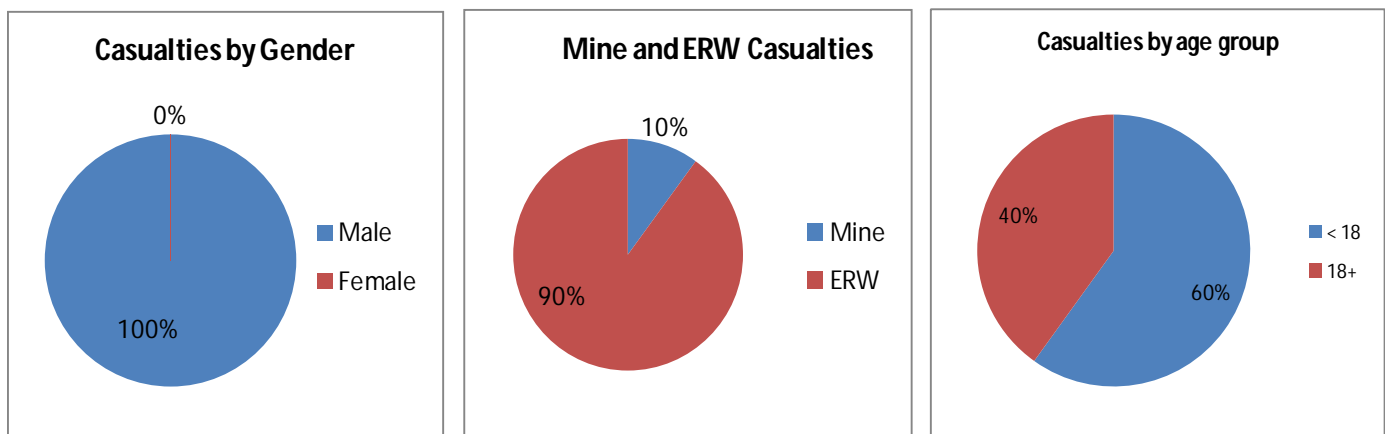
Mr.Musa Jalalov, Manager of the Mine Risk Education Department of the Azerbaijani government said: "We will continue our assistance to print more than 25,000 more MRE books in Pashto, and also we would like to reiterate our support for these kinds of books for Afghan schools."

The Afghan government, particularly ANDMA's Department of Mine Clearance, is exploring other joint initiatives and sharing of mine action experience with Azerbaijan.

## CASUALTIES IN FEBRUARY 2012

In February 2012, there were 10 casualties due to mines and ERW recorded in Afghanistan, as of March 8, 2012.

**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:

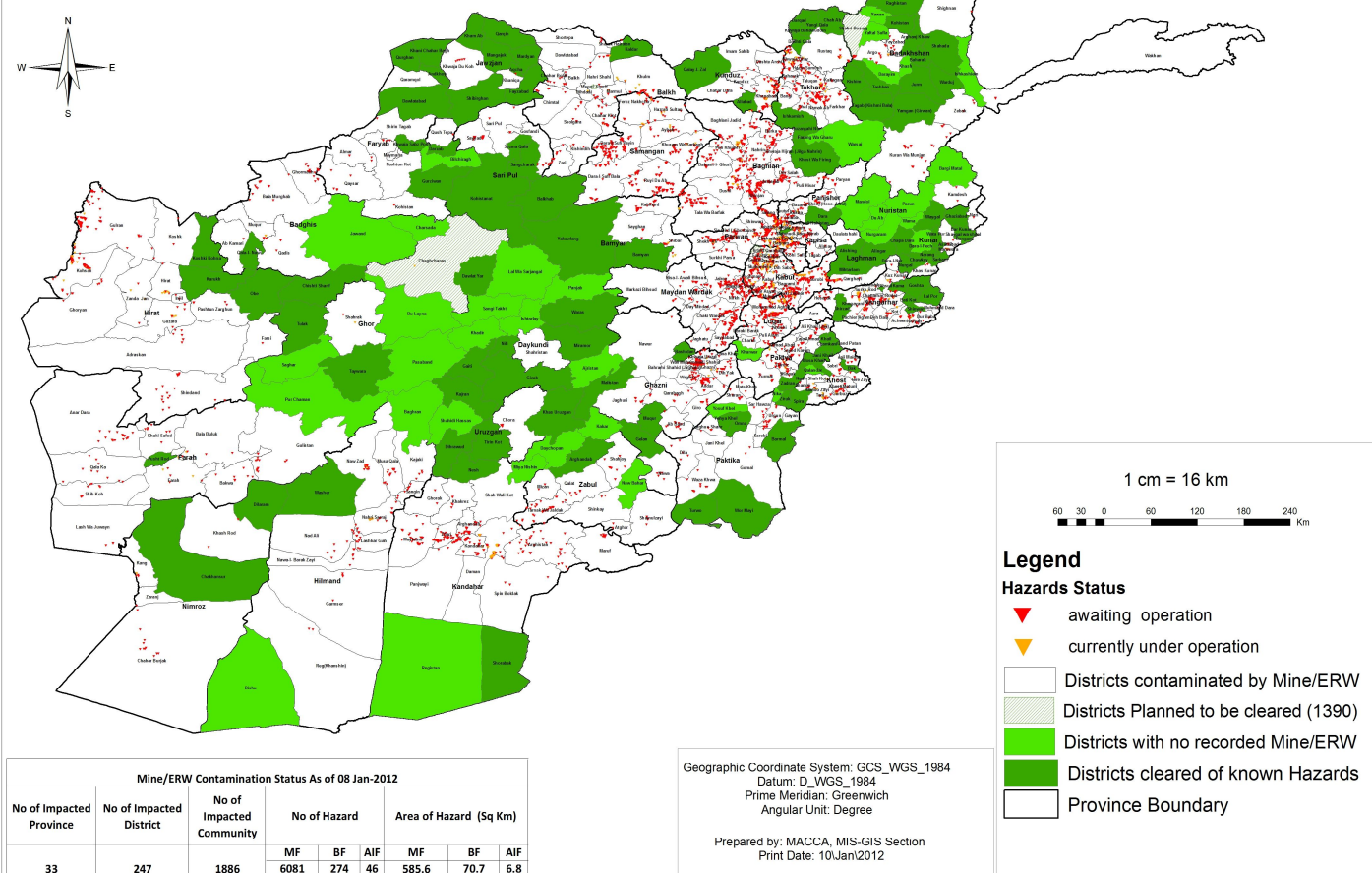
The goal of the Ottawa Convention is to clear all emplaced anti-personnel (AP) mines in Afghanistan by 2013; destroy all known AP mine stockpiles by 2007; provide mine risk education and assist mine survivors. To note, the Ottawa Convention is about the removal of AP mines, and not of anti-tank (AT) 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.

**BENCHMARK TABLE, FEBRUARY 2012**

	Baseline		New Hazard		Hazard Processed		Progress		Remaining Hazard	
	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	% of Hazards	% of Area	Hazards	Area
AP (+ AP,AT,ERW mixed)	8,890	710,541,375	107	4,215,937	4,373	390,376,306	49.19	54.94	4,517	320,165,070
AT + ERW	4,865	614,583,655	21	2,274,024	3,407	345,892,758	70.03	56.28	1,458	268,690,898
<b>Overall Contamination</b>	<b>13,755</b>	<b>1,325,125,030</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>539,147</b>	<b>7,780</b>	<b>736,269,064</b>	<b>56.56</b>	<b>55.56</b>	<b>5,975</b>	<b>588,855,968</b>

**Contamination Status of Districts in Afghanistan as of 10 Jan 2012**



## MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS SUMMARY IN 1390 SO FAR (February 2012)

- \* 24,011 AP mines, 920 AT mines, and 666,813 ERW destroyed.
- \* 239 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- \* 431,101 women and girls and 591,034 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

