

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN

JUNE/JULY 2012 NEWSLETTER



UNMAS AND UNOPS HQ STAFF VISIT MINE ACTION COORDINATION CENTER OF AFGHANISTAN (MACCA)

A delegation from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) visited the Mine Action Coordination Center of Afghanistan (MACCA) in June to affirm their commitment to the project and witness activities in Afghanistan. The UNMAS delegation was led by Paul Heslop, the Chief of Programme and Planning for UNMAS in New York while the UNOPS delegation was led by Ms. Kristin Libeling, the Deputy Director of the UNOPS North America Office.

During their visit, the delegation met with MACCA staff, implementing partners (IPs) directors, and other stakeholders, discussing mine action activities funding, and other issues to further strengthen relationships with the implementing partners. Paul Heslop said: "Afghanistan is our largest program, it employs more deminers than anywhere else in the world and it is the single biggest recipient of funding from the UNMAS administrated Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action."

He added "This visit is worth ten thousand emails. I came to Afghanistan, to meet the implementing partners, staff of the coordination center, UNMAS staff to discuss the issues and look at where the program is going."



Above: Paul Heslop the Chief of Programme & Planning for UNMAS in New York

In the last two decades the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) has achieved many of its goals. One to be noted is the split between MACCA and UNMAS. "I think there is a key role for UNMAS and MACCA in transition. Ultimately land mine contamination in Afghanistan is an Afghan problem and the Afghan government should take responsibility for the process of transition. The nationalization of MACCA and collocation of DMC is an important step." Paul said.

Kristin was very impressed by the hard and splendid work of MACCA. She was really happy with the work that MACCA and MAPA have accomplished in the last two decades.

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

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

INNOVATIVE DEMINING TOOL REDUCES DEMINING CASUALTIES

The issue of demining accidents in the MAPA is of critical importance as, with the right equipment and strict adherence to safety standards, most accidents can be prevented.

In recent years, the majority of demining accidents occurred during the stage of investigation of detected signals and excavation. In 2007, for instance, 78 percent of all accidents happened during the excavation phase. For this reason, the programme focused its efforts on bolstering safety during this phase, by encouraging innovation amongst partners.

MACCA's Quality Assurance section took the lead, convening a series of Quality Circle meetings where partners brainstormed new, safer and more effective tools for excavation.

Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), a MAPA implementing partner, was one of the first to design such a tool. Their product – a sharp metal tine with a handle – is called the Excavation Hook.

"This tool proved to be safer and effective and more productive than other excavation tools,"

Said Dr. Aimal Safi, MACCA's Chief of Quality and Management.

He added, "This is a simple hook with a handle with sharp tip penetrating the ground from the side, to be pulled outward from the ground. If it touches a mine, it will slide on it without applying any pressure towards the mine. If it is used straight a vertically on the ground, it will only draw a line and will not penetrate the ground."

The tool proved to be much safer than its predecessors. The hook has been trialed by the MACCA and passed its stringent testing requirements. After it was adopted by the ATC and DAFA another of MAPA's Implementing Partners, their accident rate during prodding and excavation fell to zero.



Above: A new excavation hook designed by

This tool is now being produced by Sparkle Workshop of Clear Path International for all interested demorgанизations.

"During the past years, the majority of the organizations was using Russian made bayonets for excavations and prodding. The mode of their application was to enter them to the ground by direct force either in a straight way or from the side, but the important point was to keep an angle of 30 degree with the ground surface," said Dr. Aimal.

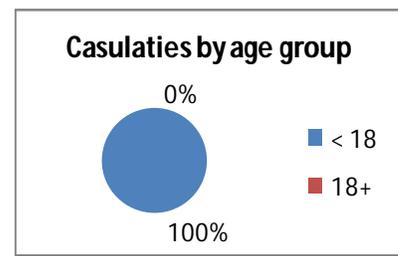
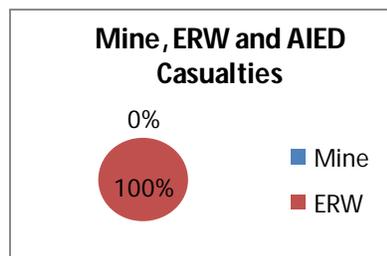
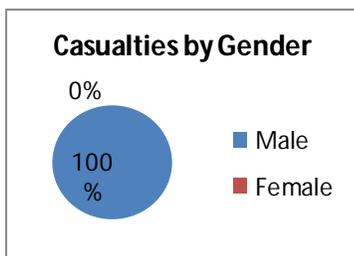
If the angle was greater than 30, the pressure exerted on the mine was excessive, leading to accidents.

The precise mode of application proved difficult to follow, leading to a high accident rate.

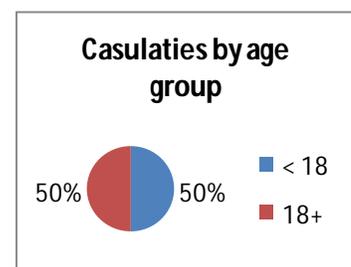
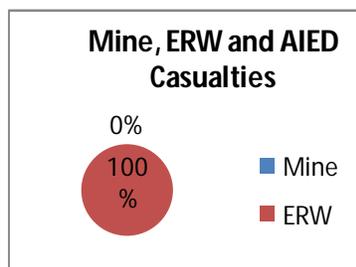
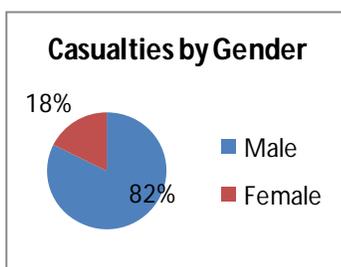
The implementing partners' innovation process yielded other advances. The HALO Trust designed an excavation tool called a scraper, used for shaving the ground without applying pressure, which also proved to be far safer than the bayonet method.

CASUALTIES IN JUNE AND JULY 2012

In **June 2012**, there were 2 casualties due to mines and ERW recorded in Afghanistan (data as of July 2012).



In **July 2012**, there were 28 casualties due to mines and ERW recorded in Afghanistan (data as of August 2012).



MAPA supports Afghan Returnees with Mine Risk Education

"Returning to my country, I was wondering about my children, who are young and didn't know anything about landmines and explosives. But my concern was solved, when I arrived to a UNHCR camp in Mohmand Dara and there in a tent I saw that our Afghan sisters and brothers gathered and were training the people on mines and how to avoid the risks of that," said Abdul Baqi-65 lives in Baghwani village-Jalalabad.

Over the last decades of conflict in the country, many Afghans migrated to Pakistan and other neighboring countries. Since 2001, more than 5 million Afghans have returned back to their homeland and the places they used to live 30 years before.

"When we arrived to our village, our house was ruined, just one room was remaining, which had no door and no roof, just four walls, that is all," said Abdul Baqi.

Baghwani village, where Abdul Baqi lives now, was a battle field during the Soviet occupation and contaminated with mines then. When the residents returned back to the village, one of the challenges ahead of them was mines and UXOs in the village.

Many returnees were killed and injured, since they did not know the danger of mines and other explosive remnants of war.

Tor Khan is another returnee, who came from Pakistan to his village Samar Khail-Nangarhar. After returning, he started working as a farmer and used to take his cattle to a mountain which was contaminated with mines and UXOs remaining from Soviets.

Tor Khan's father Gulzad said: "One day I heard the sound of an explosion coming from the direction of the mountain. I came out of my house and saw black smoke rising from the mountain. I ran towards the mountain, but before I got there, I heard another explosion. When I got to the explosion area, I saw my son, wet with the blood, and the cattle fallen around him."



To avoid such accidents, MAPA Implementing Partners prepare special sessions on Mine Risk Education for returnees from Pakistan and other neighboring countries.

Allah Dad-65 (In the picture with his family-right) attended the MRE sessions in Mohmand Dara, on his way home. "We were divided into two groups, men and women. They trained all of us on the dangers of mines and how to avoid the risks."

Allah Dad is still thankful for the MRE: "I always remember the guidance of the mine action trainers about the risks of mines and that has kept me and my family safe."



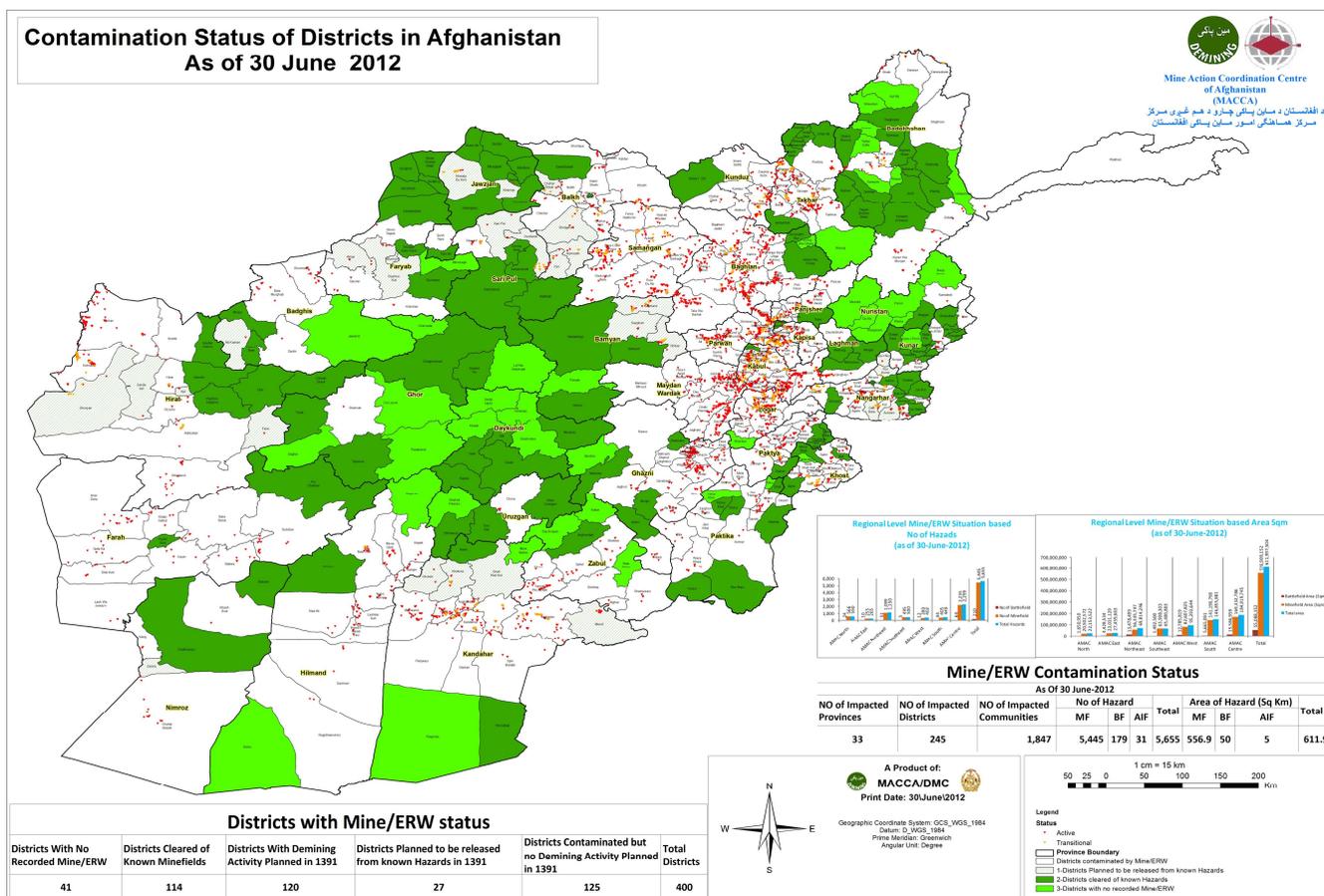
MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS IN AFGHANISTAN

Ottawa Convention:

As part of its obligations under the Ottawa Convention, Afghanistan aimed to clear all emplaced anti-personnel (AP) mines 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 ERW. However it is equally important to ensure that the other hazards are not forgotten whilst the focus is on meeting the Ottawa Convention obligations. In March 2012, the Government of Afghanistan applied for 10-year extension of its deadline to clear all AP mines. All AP mine stockpiles have already been destroyed.

BENCHMARK TABLE-JULY 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)	9,028	717,983,286	51	2,023,968	5,024	419,069,956	55.65	58.37	4,004	298,913,331
AT + ERW	4,949	620,122,683	30	2,340,987	3,591	360,473,373	72.56	58.13	1,358	259,649,310
Total	13,977	1,338,105,969	81	4,364,955	8,615	779,543,329	61.64	58.26	5,362	558,562,641



MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS IN YEAR 1391 SO FAR (June 2012)

- * 8,434 AP mines, 851 AT mines, and 127,423 ERW destroyed.
- * 86 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- * 42,783 women and girls and 46,303 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS IN YEAR 1391 SO FAR (July 2012)

- * 11,683 AP mines, 1,194 AT mines, and 275,547 ERW destroyed.
- * 115 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- * 56,683 women and girls and 59,166 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.