



MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN (MAPA) NEWSLETTER: MARCH 2013



INTERNATIONAL MINE ACTION DAY A CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND A REMINDER OF THE TASK AHEAD FOR AFGHANISTAN

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan celebrated the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 3rd of April in the Loya Jirga Tent, in Kabul. Every year this day marks progress made in mine action, raising awareness about the threats of landmines and ERW, and progress toward their eradication as well as assistance to landmine survivors and persons with disabilities.

Abigail Hartley, Program Manager, United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) in Afghanistan said, "This huge amount of work has delivered dramatic results – the accident rate has been reduced by 80% since 2001, thousands of square kilometers of contaminated land have been returned to communities for productive use, and supported by mine clearance airports have been developed, roads have been built and power lines have been erected."

She further added, "And yet more good news – the end is in sight for Afghanistan. Only 4,900 minefields remain. In December 2012 States Parties to the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty approved Afghanistan's request to extend the deadline by which all AP mines will be removed from the territory."



Above: A Scene from the Mine Action Day Celebration in the Loya Jirga Tent, Kabul

This year the event was well attended by dignitaries from the Government; Ambassadors of donor countries to mine action in Afghanistan, members of mine affected communities and high-level officials from the UN and other organisations.

Mohammad Aslam Syas, Deputy Director of the National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) representing the government said: "I would like to congratulate the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan, for the great achievements of 1391. Excellent strides forward have been taken in the last year. This is a day to celebrate all that has been achieved and look to the future with a hopeful spirit that it will be years, not decades, before Afghanistan is free from the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war."

Mr. Mark Bowden, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, UN Afghanistan, said: "I would like to thank all the donors, past and present for their contribution to the success story of mine action in Afghanistan, it has been a truly multi-national effort. Specifically on behalf of UNMAS I thank those donors who have made contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action, critical for MAPA's success."

The celebration of the International Mine Action Day was well covered by some national and international media including BBC Persian, Dawn News, UNAMA, Pajhwok and many more. The celebration ended with an exhibition and demonstration by MAPA partners.

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

Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Netherlands, Oman, UAE, UK and USA.

MAPA is also supported by the following bilateral donors:

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

AQCHA AND KHANQA DISTRICTS OFFICIALLY HANDEDOVER TO LOCAL COMMUNITY

Khanaqa and Aqcha districts of Jawzjan Province, which were mined, both during the Soviet occupation and the civil war, has been cleared and officially handed over to the community.

These two districts were contaminated with mines explosive remnants of war (ERW) during the decades of fighting in Afghanistan. This area was cleared by Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), Danish Demining Group (DDG) and HALO Trust, and was surveyed by Mine Clearance and Planning Agency (MCPA). All the mentioned implementing partners of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) cordially took part to completely clear the rest of both districts. The demining operation cleared over 137,606 sq m of land, unearthing 1,143 different types of mines, and UXO including rockets, mortars, artillery shells and projectiles.

Azizullah Paktin, MACCA Mazar regional office area manager, addressing a large gathering of Khan Aqa and Aqcha districts elders at the ceremony, noted: "I would like to recognize the extraordinary success that the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan has realized over 20



Above: Azizullah Paktin, MACCA Regional Office Mazar Area Manager speaks to the participants of the ceremony

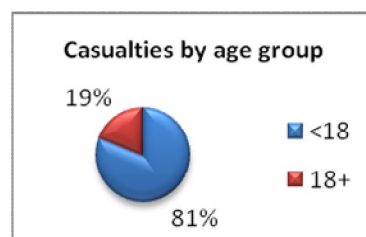
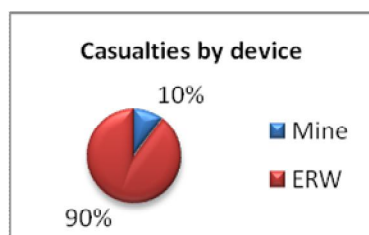
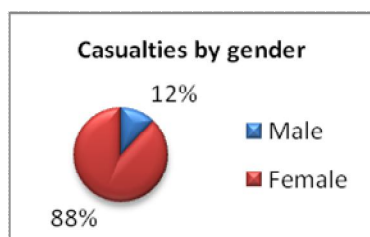
years of operations. This plot of land we talk about that has been cleared and is being turned over is testament to this success, and to the strides being made in clearing mines from Afghan soil."

Alhaj Mawlawi Samaruddin Makhdom Hami, on behalf of these two districts elders, 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."

At the end of the ceremony, district representatives 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 irrigation, agricultural, housing and grazing and other essential buildings such as a health clinics and schools.

CASUALTIES IN MARCH 2013

In **March 2013**, there were 58 casualties due to Mine/ERW recorded in Afghanistan (data as of 11 April 2013).



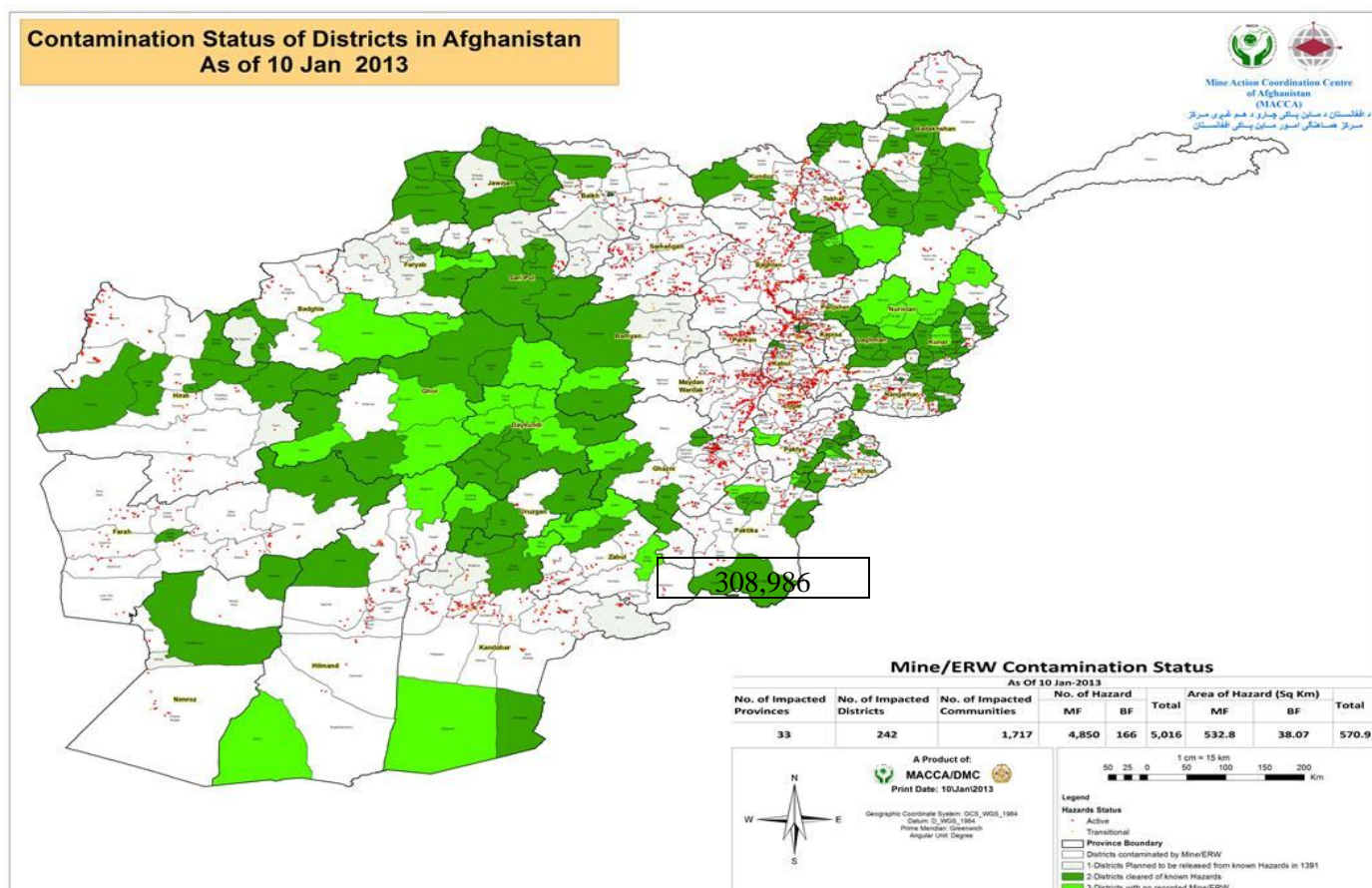
MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS IN AFGHANISTAN

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 by 2023. All AP mine stockpiles have already been destroyed.

BENCHMARK TABLE - MARCH 2013

	Baseline		New Hazard		Hazard Processed		Progress		Remaining Hazard	
	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	% of Hazards	% of Area	Hazards	Area
(AP,AT ,ERW mixed)	9,284	722,937,584	48	709,039	5,877	461,799,217	63.30	63.88	3,407	261,138,367
AT + ERW	5,154	646,021,805	50	3,860,933	3,874	388,745,797	75.16	60.18	1,280	257,276,008
Total	14,438	1,368,959,389	98	4,569,972	9,751	850,545,014	67.54	62.13	4,687	518,414,375



MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS IN YEAR 1391 SO FAR (March 2013)

- * 25,388 AP mines, 2,204 AT mines, and 902,312 ERW destroyed.
- * 315 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- * 308,986 women and girls and 318,137 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

