

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN

NEWSLETTER: NOVEMBER 2011



UNMAS VISITS MAPA

The newly-appointed United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Programme Unit Chief, Paul Heslop, visited the Mine Action Coordination Center of Afghanistan (MACCA) for four days in November to reaffirm UNMAS' commitment to the project and witness activities first-hand.

During his visit, he spoke to some of the key stakeholders in the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) and attended a hand-over ceremony in Shahrake Aruzo, a recently cleared area in the Darlaman district just outside of Kabul. Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), MACCA's Implementing Partner for the project, led Paul around the former minefield, located inside a village and punctuated by clusters of dun-colored houses.

The site, where mines and other explosives were laid during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the civil war, had just gone through great changes – and more change was underway.

In what had been, until recent weeks, a minefield, a group of boys played a lively game of football. In the distance, workmen were laying down a foundation for a house.

"It is incredibly satisfying," Paul said. "The place I am standing now was mined 10 years ago. Now we see houses built, roads opened and children playing."

"After the fall of Taliban, refugees and IDPs rushed back to reclaim their land, to reclaim their homes," he continued. "As they entered west Kabul, there were 10 plus casualties in a day in where I am standing now."

Paul had first come to Afghanistan in 1997 as a deminer. He continued working in mine action, moving into management, first at HALO Trust, and then at the United Nations. In his current position at UNMAS, he oversees the agency's global programming, including the UNMAS-supported MACCA, which is responsible for the coordination of all mine action activities in Afghanistan.

Surveying the work done, Paul said: "Afghanistan is a success story. Millions of items have been cleared of this country. So potentially a million casualties have been saved by effective, targeted, well planned mine action".

"A mine does not care how old you are, how big you are, what gender you are or what nationality you are; when you step on it, it will take your leg regardless your background. The real thing to understand about mines in Afghanistan is they affect everybody, but the people who are affected the most are the poorest," said Paul.

Thanking the donors and other international organization for their support to MAPA, Paul noted: "Without the commitment of international organizations, without the commitment of the donor nations, Afghanistan would have still a massive mine problem."

Clearance activities in this area employed community-based demining, which means deminers were hired from the community being cleared. (Continued to following page)



Kefayatullah Eblagh (Left) , Paul Heslop (Right) - Picture:MACCA

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:

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

(Continued from previous page) Kefayatullah Eblagh, founder and director of ATC, the implementing partner that cleared the area, summarized: "We reduced casualties and supported the community by providing them with jobs as deminers. A major problem in our country is lack of jobs, and by employing over 500 people in this community, we helped their children to go to school and the deminers to feed their families."

ATC started demining operations in Shahrake Aruzo in March 2011 and finished by the end of November, at which point the area was officially handed over to the community.

Shahrake Aruzo is part of the Kabul City Clearance Project (KCCP). The KCCP's first phase was funded by donor contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action. Operations started in January 2011, and are expected to be completed by January 2012, resulting in the clearance of 44 minefields, and covering almost 2.3 square kilometers. The second phase of the project is not yet funded, and MACCA is now seeking to secure funds to complete the clearance of Kabul City.

VILLAGERS PARTICIPATE IN HANDOVER CEREMONY IN CHARKHAB

Charkhab village of Bagrami district, heavily mined during the Soviet occupation and during the civil war, has been cleared and officially handed over to the community.

The implementing partner for this project, Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC) began clearance operations in October and, in some two months, cleared an area of 69,050 square meters and verified as safe an area of 9,670 square meters that was previously thought to contain hazards.

The clearance operation was funded by a bilateral contribution from the US State Department.

In recent years, mines left four casualties in the village, one of whom was injured and the other three were killed.

The injured mine victim, fifteen-year old Shir Khan, lost his leg in an explosion when he was gathering firewood on a nearby mountaintop. He was present during the hand-over ceremony where the Office for Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA) representatives, who were also attending, announced they would assist him to get training to help increase his chances of finding a job.

Before the clearance of mines in this area, villagers experienced multiple problems and were satisfied that their village was now safe and other areas previously off-limits – such as the mountains – were now accessible. About 2,460 families and 9,800 individuals live in this village.

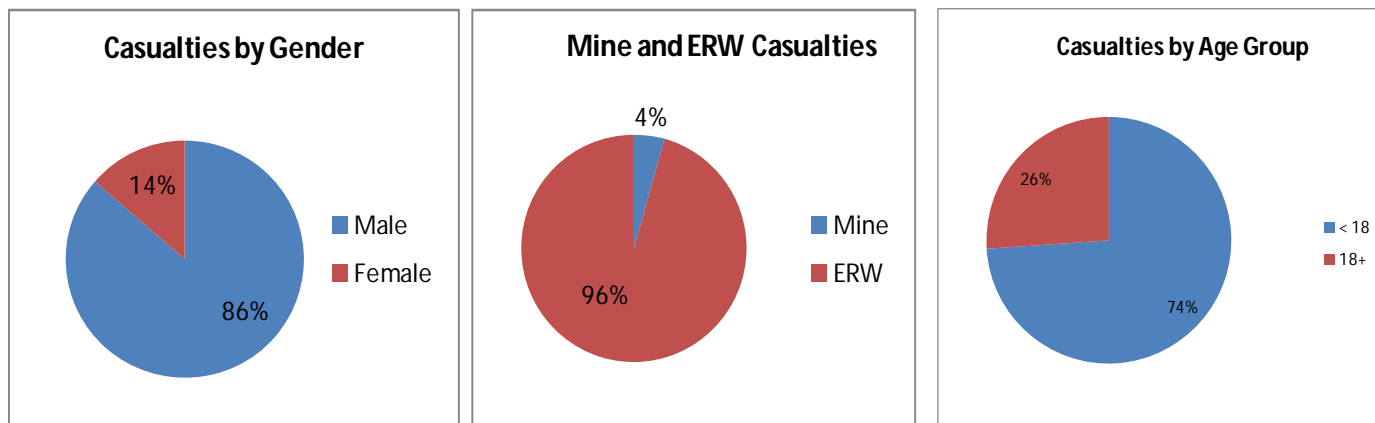


Above: Villagers and mine action representatives during handover ceremony. Photo credit: ATC

CASUALTIES IN NOVEMBER 2011

In November 2011, there were 23 casualties due to landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) recorded in Afghanistan, as of December 21.

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 may seek an extension of their deadline of 2013 to complete the clearance of all known AP sites.

Afghan Compact:

Between 2006 and March 2011, MACCA was reporting on progress towards the Afghan Compact target of a 70% reduction in all mine hazard. Although the Compact was not fully met (though 69% of the 70% target was, equaling to 48% of mine hazards cleared), MACCA has adjusted the table to reflect the achievement towards the Ottawa Convention whilst also recording progress of removal of AT + ERW Hazards.

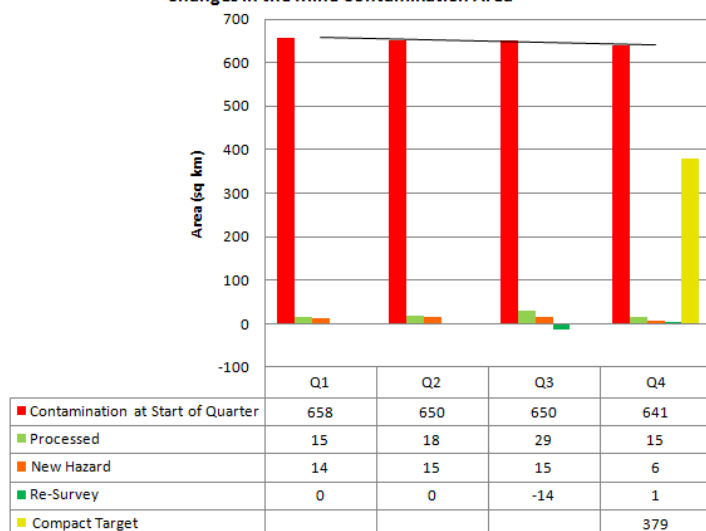
AFGHANISTAN'S PROGRESS TOWARD MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS (NOVEMBER 2011)

70% reduction of mine/ERW contaminated areas by 2011 and clearance of all known anti-personnel landmines by 2013:

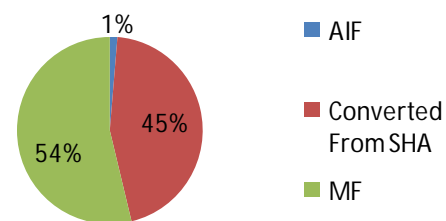
	Baseline		New Hazard		Hazard Processed		Progress		Remaining Hazard	
	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	% of Hazards	% of Area	Hazards	Area
AP (+ AP,AT,ERW mixed)	8,543	687,289,800	26	-6,206,577	3,980	369,823,237	47	54	4,563	317,466,564
AT + ERW	4,781	610,953,994	26	9,484,782	3,269	335,075,145	68	55	1,512	275,878,850
Overall Contamination	13,324	1,298,243,794	52	3,278,205	7,249	704,898,382	115	109	6,075	593,345,414

The graph and pie chart below show progress against all hazards.

Changes in the Mine Contamination Area



Mine Contamination Area by Hazard Type



AIF: Abandoned IED Fields
MF: Mine Field
SHA: Suspected Hazardous Area

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

- * 18,752 AP mines, 752 AT mines, and 544,131 ERW destroyed.
- * 165 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- * 328,407 women and girls and 451,768 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

