

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN NEWSLETTER: OCTOBER 2011



MAPA supports Afghan Returnees with Mine Risk Education

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

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

“When we arrived in 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 battlefield during the Soviet occupation and was contaminated with mines. When residents returned to the village, one big challenge ahead of them was the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance (known as UXOs) in the village.

Many returnees were killed or injured, largely due to their lack of awareness about mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).

Tor Khan is another returnee from Pakistan who made the trip back to his village of Samar Khail-Nangarhar. After his return, he started working as a farmer and used to graze his cattle on a mountain which was contaminated with mines and UXOs remaining from the Soviet occupation.

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 there, saw my son, wet with the blood, and the cattle fallen around him.”



Fortunately Tor Khan survived, but he lost one leg and a large number of cattle.

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

Allah Dad, 65, (pictured with his family at right) attended the MRE sessions in Mohmand Dara, on his way to 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 saved me and my family from this danger.”

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

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MAPA helps conserve Afghanistan's ancient relics

Implementing clearance operations in multiple historical sites across the country, the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) helps to safeguard the Afghan civilization.

The 5,000 year old Kafer Qala hill, located in Sayad village of Parwan province, is one historical area where MAPA launched clearance operations.

This hill contains the ruins of ancient houses which are now buried underground. It is uncertain when the houses were built, but some estimate it was during the Kushan Empire in the 3rd century or even earlier.

This hill was strewn with mines and ERW during Soviet occupation in 1979 and again during the civil wars in the 90s.

Due to the contamination in this area, people were not able to walk around or use it for collecting wood. Gul Mir, 70, living in Sayaad village said: "There were a lot of mines and other explosives in this area. I was witness to many accidents in this area and we lost eight people in explosions in this site. One of them was a French journalist."

Before the area was contaminated, it was a key tourist site. "I remember a lot of tourists used to come here, but when this area was contaminated, no one came here anymore," said Gul Mir.



70 years old Gul Mir, one of Sayad village residents

"While clearing the site, we were more than careful to not harm any piece or corner of this historical site and we didn't use any method to destroy anything in this site," said Mirwais Hussaini, the Charikar Area Mine Action Centre Manager said.

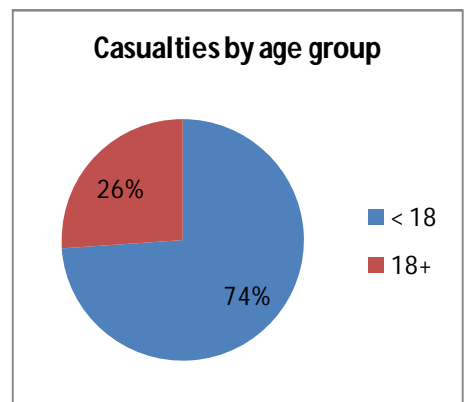
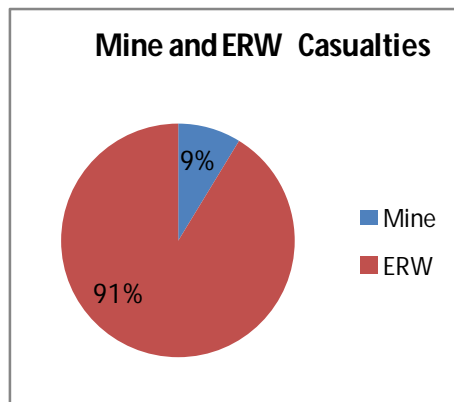
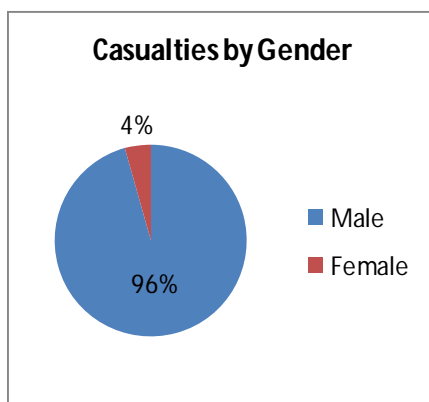
In October, the clearance operation finished and the area was handed over to the community.

With the clearance completed, Afghanistan's Information and Culture Ministry has decided to open the site for tourists and other visitors due to its importance in the country's heritage.

CASUALTIES IN OCTOBER 2011

In October 2011, there were 23 casualties due to landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) recorded in Afghanistan, as of November 9.

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.

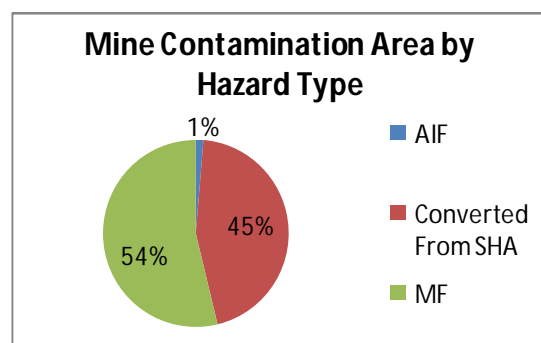
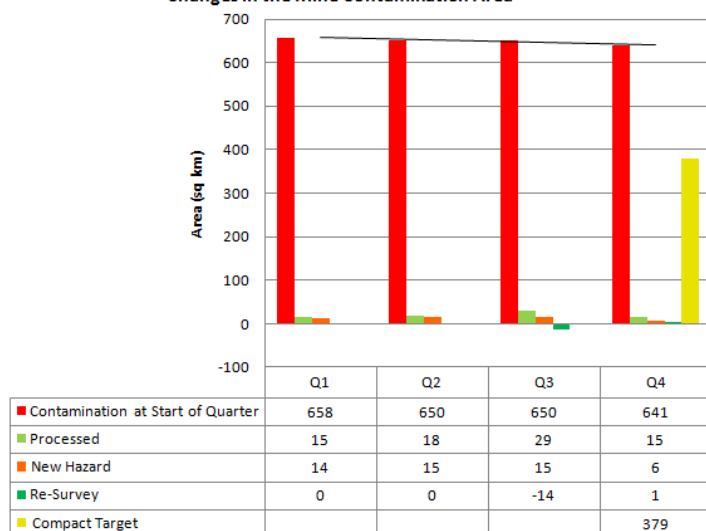
AFGHANISTAN'S PROGRESS TOWARD MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS (OCTOBER 2011)

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)	8,517	693,496,377	26	599,020	3,912	367,235,136	45.93	52.95	4,607	326,261,242
AT + ERW	4,755	601,469,212	0	-338,670	3,255	334,046,591	68.45	55.54	1,498	267,422,621
Overall Contamination	13,272	1,294,965,589	26	260,350	7,167	701,281,727	54	54.15	6,105	593,683,863

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

Changes in the Mine Contamination Area



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

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

- * 17,234 AP mines, 667 AT mines, and 505,880 ERW destroyed.
- * 147 communities cleared of mines and ERW.
- * 285,025 women and girls and 387,092 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

