

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN

NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2011



AFGHANISTAN RATIFIES THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 8 September 2011, becoming the 62nd State Party to the convention.

Afghanistan signed the convention in Oslo, Norway, on December 3, 2008, and it is slated to enter into force on 1 March 2012.



Afghanistan representative signs the Convention on Cluster Munitions at the Oslo conference, December 2008. Photo by: Gunnar Mjaugedal

“As a country where cluster munitions have been used and stockpiled, Afghanistan’s ratification of the treaty that bans this indiscriminate weapon is a significant and vital step in getting others on board the ban,” said Sulaiman Safdar of Afghan Landmine Survivors Organization (known as ALSO), a member of the Governance Board of the Cluster Munitions Coalition.

“Thousands of people in Afghanistan are currently living with injuries from cluster munitions and other deadly remnants of war. Thanks to the Convention’s provisions on victim assistance their rights and welfare will now be protected under international law,” Safdar added.

The Convention establishes that cluster munitions are prohibited weapons and aims to act as a bulwark against their further proliferation.

Although the ratification of the Convention was an important success in itself, the true measure of achievement would be how the lives of victims of cluster munitions and their communities change in the months and years to come.

Afghanistan has suffered greatly from the use of cluster munitions. By signing and ratifying the convention, it positions itself as a champion, rather than a victim, on this crucial humanitarian issue.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions prohibits the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention or transfer of cluster munitions. In addition, States possessing or affected by cluster munitions are required to take action to destroy stockpiles, to clear cluster munitions remnants and to provide assistance for victims .

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MACCA HELPS HIGHLIGHT INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY

September 21 marks the International Peace Day that is celebrated annually around the world. In Afghanistan, aid agencies and partners ran sports competitions, drama and theater shows to promote peace in the country.

To assist this effort, MACCA and its regional offices supported special events around the country, including in the capital, Kabul.

MACCA's implementing partner, Mobile Mini Circus for Children (MMCC), held an event which gathered together more than 200 children between the ages of 7-17 from different schools, including children from internally displaced families living in Kabul city.

The programme highlight was a theater competition between 12 groups of children. The slogans delivering peace messages were seen everywhere in the celebration. The celebration was opened by the organizer, MMCC, and each group presented their theater performances to the audience.

The performances also delivered different peace messages. In one show, set in a jungle, animals were embroiled in vicious fights until the king of jungle, the lion, brought peace and guided everyone towards peaceful behavior (see photo at right). In another, a performer dressed to symbolize the devil was overpowered by a group, which ushered in peaceful co-existence. A third performance featured a bitter dispute between two parties over a farm, which was solved when the head of village suggested a mutually beneficial solution—that they build a school on the farm for children from both sides.



"Today is the International Peace Day celebration and I think it is a good initiative to gather children for a theater competition", said Ahmad Fahim, 12, a student and a spectator in this celebration.

Raihana, 14, who also participated in the gathering, said: "This is my first time seeing such a show and, in fact, a competition. It is very interesting for me and encouraging for all children."

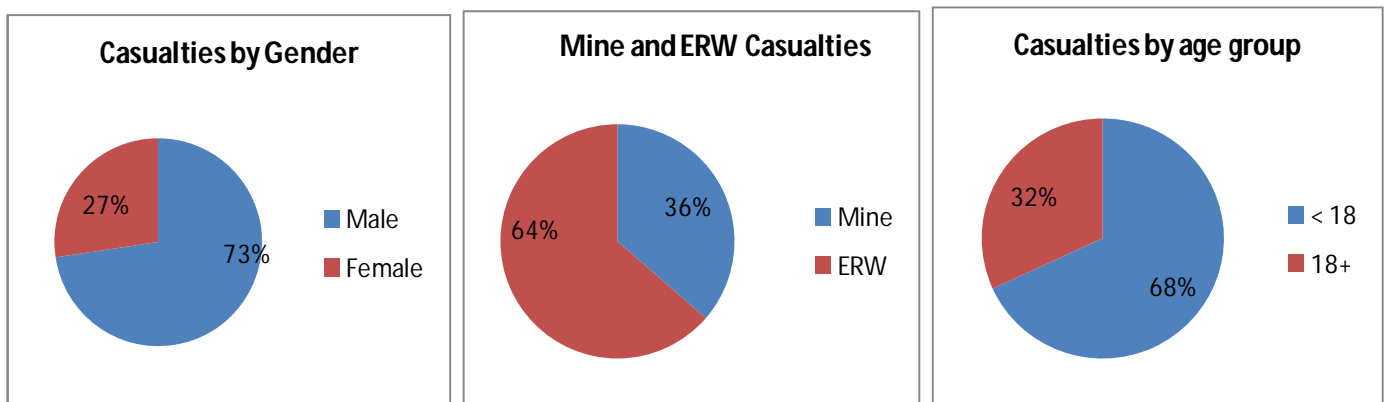
The celebration ended with the juries choosing the three best group performers and awarding prizes. All participants received T shirts delivering peace messages.

Shairkhan, one of MMCC show's organizers, said: "This celebration meant to highlight the International Peace day and to remind of the importance of peace to the people. This is very sweet to hear and to deliver the message of peace through children to the world. I see this also as very effective."

CASUALTIES IN SEPTEMBER 2011

In September 2011, there were 22 casualties due to landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) recorded in Afghanistan, as of October 11.

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 Treaty:

The goal of the Ottawa Treaty 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 treaty 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 a 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 (albeit 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 Treaty whilst also recording progress of removal of AT + ERW Hazards.

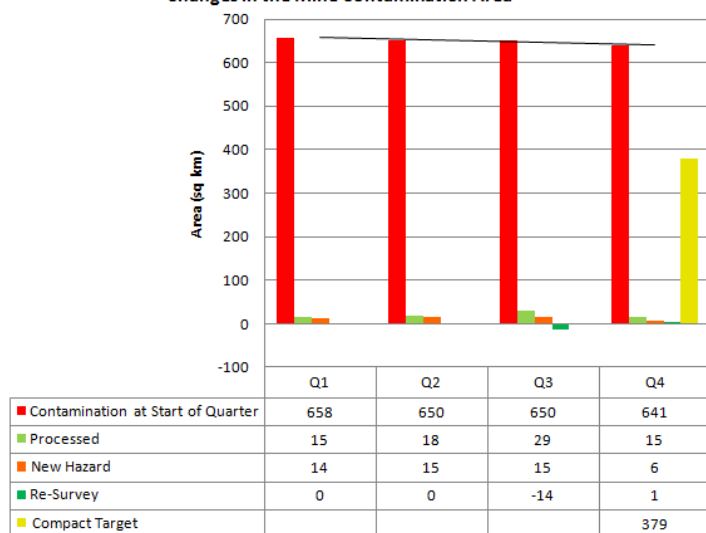
AFGHANISTAN'S PROGRESS TOWARD MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS (APRIL 2011)

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

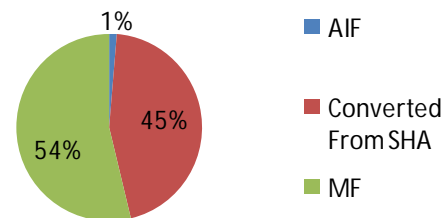
	Baseline		New Hazard		Hazard Processed		Progress		Remaining Hazard	
	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	% of Hazards	% of Area	Hazards	Area
AP (+ AP,AT,ERW mixed)	8,491	692,897,357	65	1,554,146	3,799	360,257,174	44.74	51.99	4,692	332,640,184
AT + ERW	4,755	601,807,882	10	228,305	3,231	332,462,032	67.95	55.24	1,524	269,345,850
Overall Contamination	13,246	1,294,705,239	75	1,782,451	7,030	692,719,206	53.07	53.5	6,216	601,986,034

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 (September 2011)

- * 15,023 Anti-Personnel mines, 557 Anti-Tank mines, and 443,267 Explosive Remnants of War destroyed.
- * 111 communities cleared of mines and other explosive remnants of war.
- * 238,709 women and girls and 325,669 men and boys received Mine Risk Education throughout the country.

