



## MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN (MAPA) NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2015



### Celebrating the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action in Afghanistan

On April 2, 2015, the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) celebrated the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action at the main office of Organisation for Mine Clearance & Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR), one of the MAPA implementers. The event highlighted the importance of public awareness regarding landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW). It also honoured the 26 years of achievement of MAPA.

The existence of landmines and ERW in Afghanistan is still a serious threat to the lives of thousands of Afghan citizens. There is an average of 38 civilian casualties every month and another 61 civilian casualties are recorded due to pressure plate improvised explosive devices or IEDs (mine-type explosives). MAPA being one of the largest mine action programme in the world, works restlessly to clear Afghanistan from the misery of landmines and ERW.

H.E. Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan gave an address via video which was presented for the audience and broadcast live on television. H.E. Dr. Ghani informed the audience "To give tribute to the gallant works of our deminers, I ordered the Ministry of Education to name schools on the name of each martyred deminers so our next generations will remember their true heroes of independence. In addition, I ordered the Kabul Municipality to name the street in front of OMAR Museum as "Demining Street", which will be inaugurated at your ceremony today."

Later in the event, as per the decree of the President, "Demining Street" was inaugurated by all MAPA partners and implementers, which was a major achievement for the whole programme.

The President added, "Now that only 20% of the country is left contaminated and the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan has cleared the rest, I thank the MAPA and I also thank the countries who help Afghanistan in this regard financially and technically, as through the last years about 15,000 staff were working to clear and destroy mines and ERW in the programme. But now that the budget for the mine action of Afghanistan is decreased, most of the deminers and staff are sitting at home. On Tuesday (March 31, 2015), I had a meeting with mine action organizations, and representatives from UN Mine Action Service. I talked to them about the challenges of MAPA. The problem is that from 2011, the funds for Mine Action is reduced."

He further added, "Mines are the souvenir of the few decades of past wars, mines that are able to stay hidden, not only to terrorize the lives of people in the times of war but also in the times of peace. And they threaten a child or an old man, involved in the conflicts or not, and create for them similar risks. Therefore using mines is known as an inhuman and unethical action. Taking this opportunity I call upon the people who use mines on the roadways, villages, agriculture fields and other places that they don't change the homeland soil to a hazardous and dangerous place for our citizens. Also with the help of our brave deminers, we can clear the 20% of contaminated areas in our country".

Mr. Daim Kakar, General Director of Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) stated that "The de-miners of MAPA are like candles, who burn themselves, but enlighten the way for others. MAPA currently has two big challenges, which are lack of funding and insecurity."

Mr. Jeffery McMurdo, Programme Manager of UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) mentioned "The work of Mine Action is all about building peace. Until the last mine is removed we cannot say that communities have security."

This year's International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action theme is "More than Mines". The theme is selected to highlight the problems and challenges created not only by landmines, but also by ERW and other types of explosives that endanger the lives of innocent civilians including women and children around the world.

The ceremony was attended by a special representative of the President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; representatives from the international donors, UN agencies, Afghan civil society and media. The event was also broadcast live on Shamshad TV, one of the local privately-owned TV stations.

[Photos of the event are on Page 2 and 3](#)

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

Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Saudi Arabia.

#### **MAPA is also supported by the following bilateral donors:**

ARR Japan, Belgium, DDG Core Fund, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Norwegian Red Cross, PATRIP, Poland, Sweden, UNHCR, UK, UNOCHA, and US DOS.

## Photos of the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action Celebration in Afghanistan



Video message of the H.E. the President Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani



Mr. Fazil Rahim—Director of OMAR, Opening speech of the event



Dr. Diam Kakar—Director of ANDMA



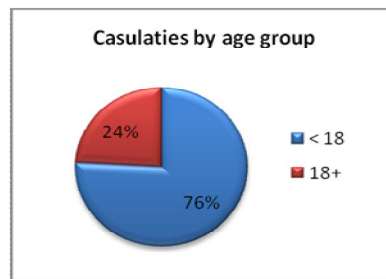
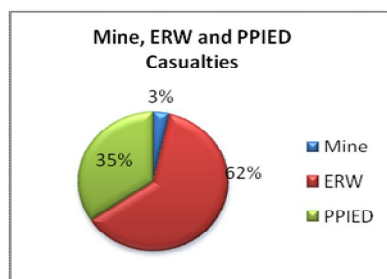
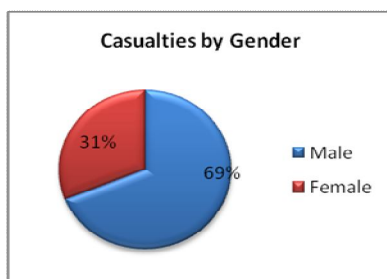
Mr. Jeff McMurdo - Programme Manager of UN Mine Action Service



Inauguration of Demining Street by members of Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan

## CASUALTIES DURING APRIL 2015

During April, 29 civilian casualties due to mines, Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and PPIEDs were recorded in Afghanistan.





Photos of the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action Celebration in Afghanistan



National anthem by Students with disability



Mine Risk Education Exhibition



Volleyball match by persons with disability



Demining demonstrations



Demining Exhibition



Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan Deminers Celebrate the Inauguration of "Demining Street" in Kabul



## Five districts in Takhar Province declared free of known mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)

Five districts of Takhar province have been declared free from the impact of all known landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), and officially handed over to the Government of Afghanistan during a ceremony held at the Provincial Governor's Office in Taluqan City on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The ceremony formed part of celebrations marking the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

The continuing existence of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of countless citizens. Even today, after 25 years of operations by the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) during which around 80% of known contamination has been cleared, the hazards still claim an average of 38 casualties every month.



Mr. Alhaj Abdul Latif Ibrahim -the Governor of Takhar Province

The five districts—Chal, Baharak, Hazar Sumooch, Darqad and Chah Aab—were left heavily contaminated as a result of 30 years of armed clashes but can now be declared impact free following survey, clearance and risk education operations implemented by the ARCS, ATC, the HALO Trust, MCPA, MDC and OMAR with financial support from donors including Canada, the European Union, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and the USA. In the districts, a total of 483 communities have been visited by survey teams to ensure that no known contamination remains, 34,723 people have received mine/ERW risk education and 1,014 antipersonnel mines, three anti-tank mines and 3,333 items of ERW have been destroyed.

MACCA's northeast regional office hosted the ceremony with

implementing partners HALO Trust and MDC, with attendees including the Governor of Takhar, the Head of the Takhar Provincial Council, representatives of ANDMA, DMC and other government departments, local authorities and the media. The Governor opened the ceremony with a speech, followed by more speeches from the Head of the Provincial Council, the Chah Aab District Chief, MACCA's Area Manager for the North-east and the Head of ANDMA Takhar.

The Governor, Alhaj Abdul Latif Ibrahim, expressed his pleasure at the successful completion of clearance operations in the districts, commenting that "Afghanistan is suffering from the residual problems of numerous wars over the past two dec-



Mr. Sayed Agha Atiq—MACCA Regional Manager

ades, every day claiming the lives and limbs of innocent people – our children, farmers, travelers and shepherds – and creating barriers to economic development." He explained the Afghan Government's aim to free Afghanistan of all mines and ERW so that people can live in safe environments, contributing to the growth and progress of the country and gave thanks to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), MACCA and the international donor community who have supported the MAPA and continue to do so. Finally he thanked the deminers, declaring them "the real heroes because they sacrifice their lives to save and protect others."

The Head of the Takhar Provincial Council, Esmatullah Qurbani, highlighted how mines and ERW are cruel weapons made for killing human beings without discrimination, that claim the lives of innocent men, women, children and even livestock. He called deminers "the real Mujahedeen" and encouraged the local authority to further extend its support to the MAPA, and representatives of local and national TV companies to broadcast the MACCA hotline number through which mines and ERW can be reported.

The Chah Aab District Chief, Mawlawi Saifuddin, reiterated the positive comments of the previous two speakers and read a verse from the Quran: "whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or

for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely".

Demining operations in Takhar province have already made over 50 km<sup>2</sup> safe for productive use and the communities cleared of contamination can now benefit from the Government's development plans. While these five districts have been declared impact free, however, many more districts in the province remain contaminated. The MAPA has a plan to complete clearance in these and all other districts across Afghanistan by 2023 but can implement that plan only if the required funds are available. In that, the people of Afghanistan and the Afghan government have an important role to play – they must ensure that mine action remains a priority, to which funding is channeled.

### **Civilian Casualties increased in Afghanistan**

Civilian casualties' figures are not just numbers on the TV news, on a column of a newspaper or in an annex of a report. The numbers actually represent human lives, living and breathing human beings who lost their lives or part of their lives because some others didn't respect their beings, didn't care of their happiness or just some parties wanted to convey messages to other parties by taking their lives. If only, those messages could be passed by not killing or injuring other human beings whose lives were not even related to those messages at all.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released a report in December 2014, "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict". The report clearly stated that the year 2014 was the deadliest year since 2009. It showed 3,699 civilian deaths in 2014 and another 6,849 people were injured, bringing the number of civilian casualties to 10,548, marking a 25 per cent increase in civilian deaths and a 22% jump from 2013. Between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2014, UNAMA has documented 47,745 civilian casualties (17,774 killed and 29,971 injured). (Source: UNAMA 2014 Report)

"The conflict took an extreme toll on civilians in 2014. Mortars, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), gunfire and other

explosives destroyed human life, stole limbs and ruined lives at unprecedented levels. The thousands of Afghan children, women and men killed and injured in 2014 attest to failures to protect civilians from harm. All parties must uphold the values they claim to defend and make protecting civilians their first priority." Nicholas Haysom, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, December 2014, Kabul

This year's theme for mine action is "more than mines". It is now shown that other types of explosives takes more lives than landmines and causes misery in the human societies. Beside armed conflicts, the explosives which are left behind due to the conflicts, cause massive civilian casualties even many years after the war. UNAMA attributed three per cent of all civilian casualties to unattributed explosive remnants of war (ERW); it is making 317 casualties in the year 2014.

Afghanistan is still contaminated by the past conflicts; unexploded ordnances left from 30 years of war, are still great danger to the everyday lives of its citizens. The landmines used in the past conflicts are terrorizing communities all of the country. In 2014, landmines caused 226 casualties, taking lives and limbs of innocent people.

The year 2014 was the worst in terms of civilian casualties, but 2015, is not better at all. In the first three months of 2015, civilian casualties rose compared to the same period last year, according to the latest figures released by the UNAMA with warning that the toll is likely to rise in the coming summer months. Total civilian deaths and injuries in the first quarter of 2015 followed the record high levels of 2014. Between 1 January and 31 March, UNAMA documented 655 deaths and 1,155 injuries.

Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) is doing its part by clearing minefields, previously contaminated battlefields, , military testing and firing ranges; where the fighting groups are no longer engage in those areas, MAPA is helping the survivors by providing them victim assistance and disability activities including Disability awareness & advocacy, Physical Rehabilitation and socio-economical reintegration. The



An Afghan graveyard



Programme is conducting mines/ERW risk education trainings in every community possible. In fact, it is not enough for the country and for the people; it is not enough to lower the number of casualties, or to avoid the casualties at all. All the parties related directly or indirectly to the conflicts should work together or not, but the aim should be to avoid civilian casualties in any way possible. Common people should not be targeted by any party as it is against any rule at any society in the world and in the history of mankind.

### Promoting mine action within the Government

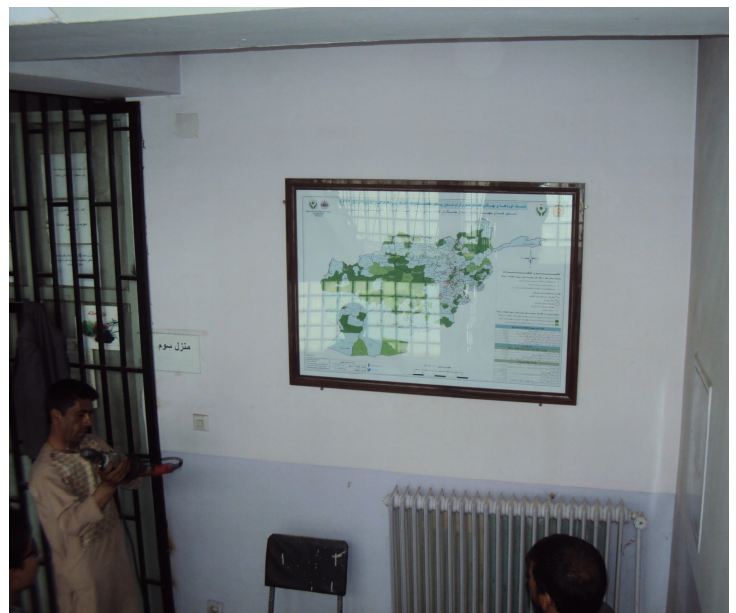
The Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) works eagerly to raise awareness of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA), of its accomplishments and of the continuing threat that landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) pose to the Afghan people.

Recently MACCA has been working hard to raise awareness within the Afghan Government by installing informative displays in ministry buildings. The displays use a map to illustrate the huge amount of mine and ERW contamination which has been cleared by the MAPA since 1989, but also the extent of the remaining challenge. The hope is that by educating government employees, the displays will lead to greater consideration of mine action during the planning and prioritising of government projects and activities, and ultimately a reduction in the impact that hazards have on the lives and livelihoods of civilians.

MACCA has already installed the displays at the Ministries of Economy, Energy and Water, and Education, and has plans to install them at all other ministries in the not so distant future.



Informative display installed at the Ministry of Economics



Informative display installed at the Ministry of information Culture



Informative display installed at the Ministry of Energy and Water

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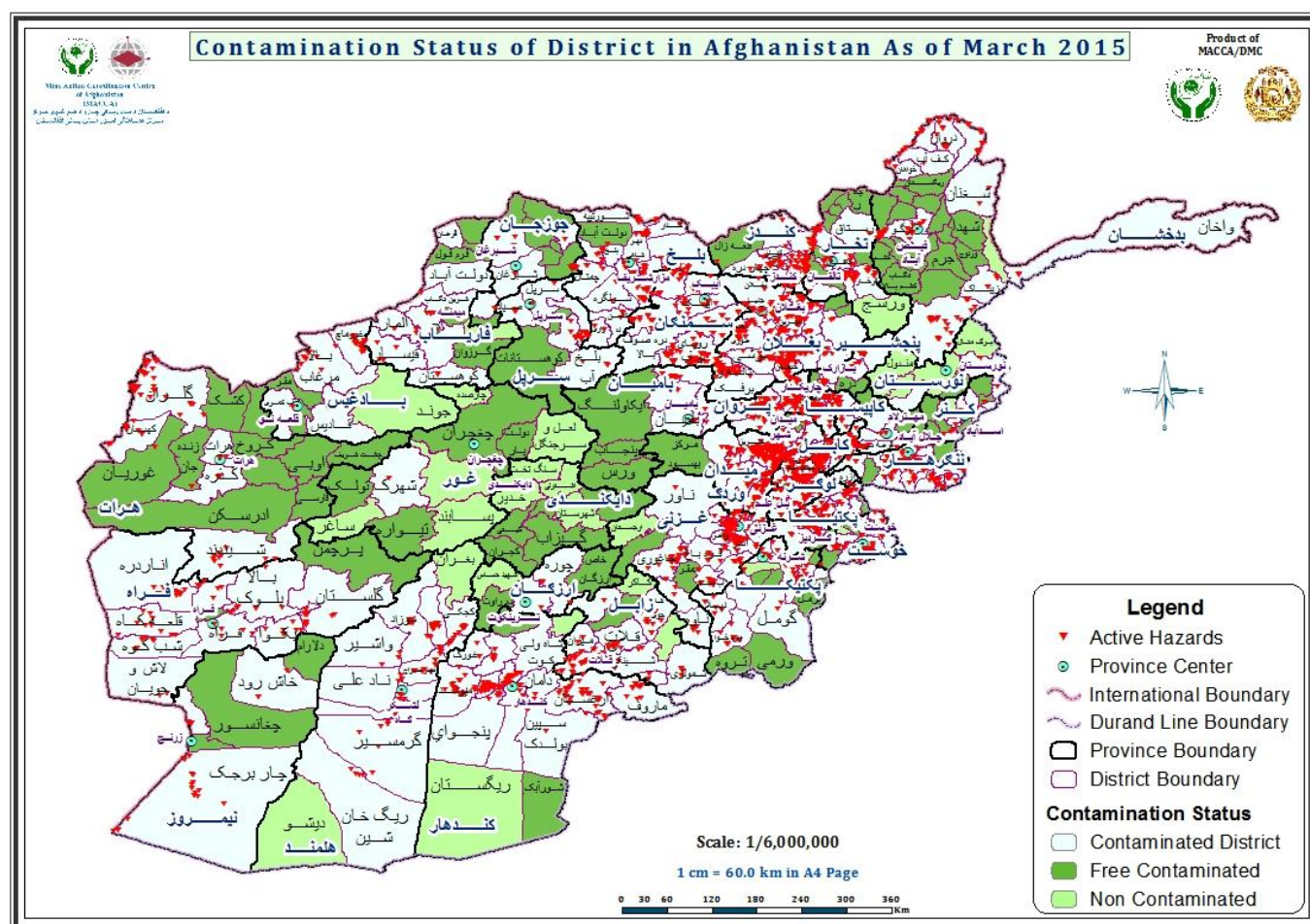


## MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS IN AFGHANISTAN

### 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 other hazards are not forgotten whilst the focus is on meeting the Ottawa Convention's obligations. In March 2012, the Afghan Government submitted a request for a ten-year extension of the deadline to remove all AP mines by 2023. All AP mine stockpiles have already been destroyed. This request was assessed by 10 members of secretariat at the end of November 2012, where all parties accepted the Afghanistan's request. The current baseline and progress is shown in the benchmark table below. In this table "Hazards" represents number of hazardous areas and "Area" represents the area of hazards in square kilometers.

Hazard type	Baseline April 2013		Previously unreported hazards, up to end of April 2015		Resurvey results up to end of April 2015	Current target as of end of April 2015		Hazards processed from April 2013 to end of April 2015		Remaining hazards at the end of April 2015	
	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Change	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>f (a+c)</i>	<i>g (b+d+e)</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>k</i>
AP + (AP,AT,ERW mixed)	3,439	266.4	982	54.9	0.8	4,421	322.1	1,580	81.3	2,841	240.8
AT + ERW	1,248	252.1	549	94.1	-13.1	1,797	333.1	601	73.6	1,196	259.5
BF	179	33.5	193	24.6	0.6	372	58.7	119	22.3	253	36.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,866</b>	<b>551.9</b>	<b>1,724</b>	<b>173.7</b>	<b>-11.7</b>	<b>6,590</b>	<b>713.9</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>177.2</b>	<b>4,290</b>	<b>536.7</b>



## MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS IN 1394 SO FAR

- \* 411 anti-personnel mines, 57 anti-tank mines, and 29,688 ERW destroyed.
- \* Two communities cleared of known mines and ERW.
- \* 38,864 women and girls, and 57,450 men and boys received Mine/ERW risk education throughout the country.
- \* 2,168 people received victim assistance and disability activities including Disability awareness & advocacy, Physical Rehabilitation and socio-economical reintegration.

MAPA Current Donors for the year 1394:

