MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN (MAPA)

NEWSLETTER: OCTOBER 2013

OVER 40% OF KABUL UNIVERSITY'S CAMPUS REMAINS TO BE CLEARAED OF EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

48,500 square metres of Kabul University's campus have been cleared of all known mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). The area was handed over to officials from Kabul University and the Government of Afghanistan during a ceremony, held at Kabul University on October 23, 2013.

The clearance work is carried out by Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), an implementing partner of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan, with financial support mainly provided by the US Department of State. Although, in the past surface and subsurface clearance to the depth of 13cm has been conducted at the Kabul University, but as a requirement for constructing new buildings, the area was searched deeper to the depth of 100cm to 150cm. During this operation, 90 items of ERW including 123 mm and 124 mm mortar and other small arms ammunitions were found and destroyed.

The ceremony was hosted by ATC and was attended by H.E. Dr. Obaidullah Obaid Minister of Higher Education, representatives from the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan, Government Department of Mine Clearance, Sterling International, Kabul University and ATC.

Expressing his pleasure on the successful completion of this task, H. E. Dr. Obaid, said, *"I'm truly thankful to the deminers for putting their lives at risk in order to bring peace and prosperity to others, by clearing the land from mines and ERW".* On this occasion, Dr. Habibullah Habib, the Kabul University Chancellor, mentioned *"From 12 zones of our University, only 7 zones are now free from ERW, while 5 other zones are still contaminated. We urge the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan to continue their efforts and clear the rest of the problem from our university."*

Historical clashes have left Kabul City contaminated with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines as well as ERW, blocking economic, agricultural, health and educational development and access to many other facilities and resources. Now that the hazards have been removed, the cleared area of the University will be used to build a botany lab, one faculty building and a department for Chinese language. This will benefit around 15,952 people directly and another 30,309 people indirectly.

MACCA AT THE SECOND EDITION OF ASIA'S LEADING C-IED AND EOD CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK

The second edition of Asia's leading Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand from October 29-31, 2013. The conference aims to provide first response networks with the most advanced equipment and training to counter the increasing threat from IEDs and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). This event brought together relevant experts, end-users, policy-makers, industry and procurement staff to discuss this enduring threat for the Asia-Pacific area.

In addition to C-IED, the focus of the conference was expanded to address the threats caused by other explosive remnants of war and landmines. Live demonstrations of the regional EOD and C-IED capabilities, high-level speakers from the whole region, as well as leading experts from NATO, the UK and the US brought together a wealth of knowledge and understanding on how to address the increasingly emerging threats of IEDs and other hazardous explosive materials.

The Director of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), Mr. Mohammad Sediq Rashid, was also invited to this conference as a high-level speaker and panel member. In his presentation, the MACCA Director informed conference participants of the scope and nature of the challenges Afghanistan is facing due to landmines, ERW, IEDs and cluster munitions. One such challenge relates to the withdrawal of international military forces in 2014. The MACCA Director contributed to the panel discussion on the possible aftermath of the troop withdrawal. Mr. Rashid highlighted the increasing threat to the civilian population due to ERW and IEDs on Afghanistan's numerous battlefields and in the firing ranges from which the international military has withdrawn.

As the Director of the world's longest running mine action programme, Mr. Rashid's presentation reflected a number of pertinent lessons learned and best practices of Afghanistan in order to provide advice to other affected countries on how to deal with the challenges caused by landmines, ERW, IEDs and cluster munitions. The Director made the acquaintance of several key partners who expressed their willingness to support Afghanistan in its struggle against these threats.

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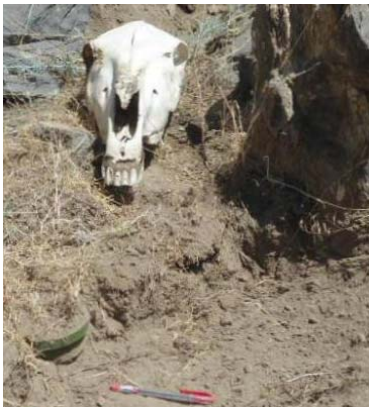
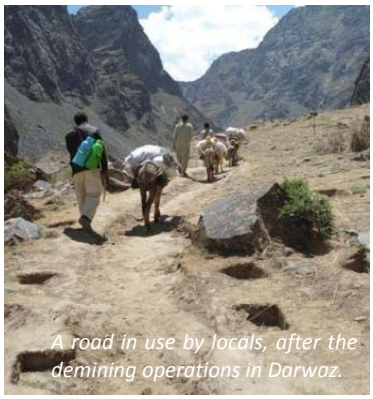
MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN REACHES THE REMOTEST AREA OF THE COUNTRY

Since 2011, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) has cleared 7 high priority hazards of Darwaz area of Badakhshan Province, covering more than 420,518 square meters land. During the FSD operations 7, 988 anti-personnel mines and 809 other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) were found and destroyed. Alongside, more than 5,128 men, women, girls and boys were provided mine/ERW risk education. FSD is also collecting causality data in Darwaz, where so far more than 400 civilian mine/ERW casualties are reported, that have happened during the last decades.





A road in use by locals, after the demining operations in Darwaz.

The demand to relieve Darwaz area of its mine/ERW problem was directly raised by a delegation from Darwaz, when they decided to raise awareness of the situation in their districts. Because of its remoteness, all clearance plans were put on hold after a mines survey expedition reached the area on foot in 2007. The survey revealed 6 distinct minefields comprised of approx 230,320 square metres of land, mostly within 500 metres radius of inhabited villages. The survey also discovered that a clearance operation would be almost impossible to mount from Afghanistan itself.

Accordingly, the Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (MACCA) identified FSD a Tajikistan-based demining organization, as Darwaz is best accessed via Tajikistan in order for an operation to be logistically viable. FSD can use its high level contacts with key ministries of the Tajik Government to gain the necessary agreements to mount operations via Tajikistan. FSD is also registered as a tax-free entity, permitted to conduct mine action operations in Afghanistan. In October 2013, the Government of Afghanistan signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Tajikistan, facilitated by FSD, to ease and speed up the demining operations of the Darwaz area.

Darwaz in Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan is a highly remote and effectively cut off from the rest of Afghanistan by barrier of mountains, making it extremely deprived area with limited contact with the outside world. It is easier to reach by crossing the river frontier from the Tajikistan border, comparing to enduring 3 days march by foot from Afghanistan side. During the Soviet occupation and to some extent afterwards during the Tajikistan internal war, Darwaz area was sown with deadly anti-personnel landmines and littered with hidden caches of weapons and ammunition, frequently killing or injuring inhabitants or livestock, and strictly limiting the productive use of affected land.

MACCA PROVIDES TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO COLOMBIA

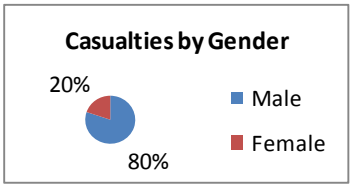
Dr. Aimal Safi, Chief of Quality Management at Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), was invited to participate as one of the main trainers in a quality management (QM) workshop in Colombia from October 28 to November 1, 2013. During this visit, Dr. Aimal shared the lessons learned and best practices in Afghanistan in regard to QM and humanitarian demining (HD), as well as the planning and prioritisation processes in use in Afghanistan. This workshop aimed to build on current QM awareness processes in HD and to improve participants' practical knowledge in line with national and international mine action standards.

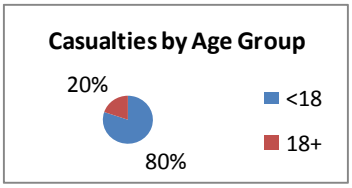
Colombia has been impacted by a deadly internal conflict for decades, resulting in one of the most complex landmine problems in the world. Since 2005, a military battalion has been dedicated to the mine clearance of army bases. In 2007, the battalion also began humanitarian mine clearance. The Colombian Mine Action Centre (PAICMA) was established in 2007 as a presidential programme to coordinate mine action in this country.

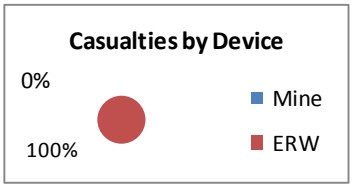
Quality management of mine action activities in line with national and international standards is essential to achieving full confidence in land release processes. In Colombia, this process is currently managed by the Organization of American States on behalf of PAICMA. The introduction of a formal accreditation process for HD organisations has raised expectations in terms of QM. PAICMA is therefore strengthening all QM processes for HD, with the aim of enhancing the capacity of stakeholders to understand and implement efficient concepts of quality. With this in mind, PAICMA through UN Mine Action Service in Colombia requested the technical support of Afghanistan. As the world's longest running programme, Afghanistan has much to offer other mine-affected countries. At the end of the workshop, PAICMA conducted an interview with Dr. Aimal on the benefits of QM in mine action, humanitarian demining, and lessons to be learned from Afghanistan. This interview was also broadcast by one of the TV channels of Columbia.

CASUALTIES DURING OCTOBER 2013

During October 2013, there were 5 civilian casualties due to Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) recorded in Afghanistan.





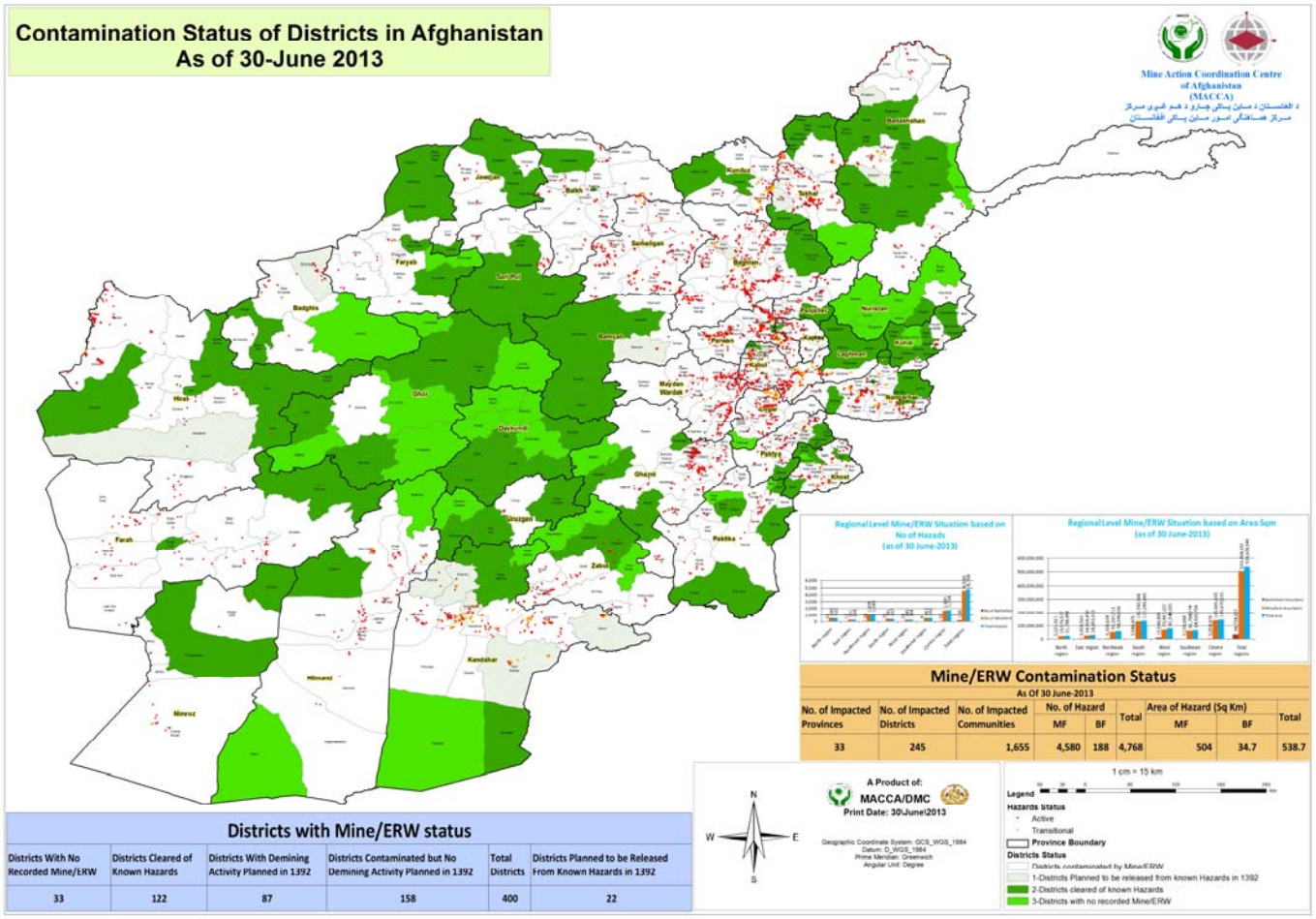


MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS IN AFGHANISTAN

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 October 2013		Resurvey results up to end of Oct 2013	Current target as of end of Oct 2013		Hazards processed from April to end Oct 2013		Remaining hazards at the end of Oct 2013		Progress at the end of Oct 2013 against current target	
	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Change	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area	Hazards	Area
	a	*b*	*c*	*d*	*e*	*f (a+c)*	*g (b+d+e)*	*h*	*i*	*j*	*k*	*l (%of a & h)*	*m (%of b & i)*
AP + (AP,AT,ERW mixed)	3,439	266.4	327	14.5	-1.2	3,766	279.7	660	29.8	3,106	249.9	17.53	10.65
AT + ERW	1,248	252.1	139	9.5	-2.3	1,387	259.3	239	24.9	1,148	234.4	17.23	9.60
BF	179	33.5	74	7.3	0.8	253	41.6	42	7.2	211	34.4	16.60	17.29
Total	4,866	551.9	540	31.4	-2.7	5,406	580.6	941	61.9	4,465	518.7	17.41	10.66



MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS IN 1392 SO FAR

* 14,187 anti-personnel mines, 438 anti-tank mines, and 516,386 ERW destroyed.
* 181 communities cleared of known mines and ERW.
* 171,036 women and girls, and 197,236 men and boys received Mine/ERW risk education throughout the country.