



# Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan Newsletter

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ACAP III psychosocial counselors receive training on counseling techniques, the counselors provide counseling services throughout Afghanistan to eligible civilian victims of conflict. @ UNMAS

## The Afghan Civilian Assistance Program (ACAP III) Expands Psychosocial Services Nationwide

2016 was one of the deadliest years for civilians in Afghanistan since the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) began keeping records in 2009. In just the first six months of the year, 5,166 civilians were killed or maimed<sup>1</sup>.

Victims of conflict-related incidents in Afghanistan suffer not only from physical injuries and loss of life, but also from psychosocial conditions relating to the violence and trauma they experienced. These psychosocial conditions can manifest in debilitating symptoms such as headaches, stomach pain, depression and isolation that affect the individual, the family and society.

In addition to providing immediate assistance, physical rehabilitation and economic reintegration, the ACAP III project provides psychosocial support to eligible victims to assist them with recovering from psychosocial trauma.

In response to the increased demand for psychosocial support as a result of a record number of incidents in 2016, ACAP III recruited and trained 27 psychosocial counselors to provide services throughout the country. Over the lifetime of the project, ACAP III counselors have assisted over 4,500 victims of conflict and their families. The counselors visit victims and their families and provide follow-up sessions. Counselors provide individual counseling as well as group sessions, referrals to online services and in some circumstances, referrals to local health centers for necessary medical interventions. In the Western Region, a 19 year old boy named Sayed incurred severe injuries as a result of stepping on an explosive mine on 2nd April 2016 while on his way to work.

“After the mine explosion, when I opened my eyes I found myself in the hospital. I was feeling pain and after looking at my body, I found myself severely burned and my right hand was broken. I wanted to attempt suicide after this incident because life became worthless and a burden for me”.

<sup>1</sup> <http://unama.unmissions.org/afghanistan-record-level-civilian-casualties-sustained-first-half-2016-un-report>

ACAP III provided short and long term assistance to Sayed and his family including psychosocial counseling sessions. The counselor provided therapy and also sought the support of Sayed's family and friends to help alleviate his depression. After two months of intensive counseling sessions Sayed began to feel hopeful about his life again. "Now I realize that I am not living for myself, but I am a son to my parents, a brother to my siblings and a friend job. I'm hopeful for my future. "Thanks to ACAP III for giving me inspiration to deal with challenges in life".



A young man named Sayed, severely injured by a mine explosion, received psychosocial counseling from the ACAP III project that saved him from attempting suicide. @UNMAS

## ACAP III Announcement: Eligibility Criteria Update

Based on the experience gained during ACAP III implementation in Year 1, USAID has revised the eligibility criteria for the selection of beneficiaries for ACAP III assistance. The revised criteria extends eligibility to a wider range of victims and qualifying incidents allowing more families impacted by conflict to benefit from ACAP's services. The revised eligibility criteria has been widely shared among the ACAP III stakeholders. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the updated ACAP III eligibility criteria please contact Forozan Rasooli at [ForozanR@unops.org](mailto:ForozanR@unops.org).

ACAP III is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS); the project provides long-term and short-term assistance to victims of conflict in Afghanistan.

## **EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR (ERW) INJURED A 13 YEAR BOY IN NORTH OF AFGHANISTAN**

The past three decades of war left explosive remnant of war (ERW) and landmines littered all over the country, which have been destroying lives and livelihood as well as distressing the natural environment since then. Unfortunately a large number of civilians become victims of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The ones that survive are disabled for their lifetime, needing long-term care, rehabilitation, and social and economic support.

On 28 February, 2016 in Baghak-e-DehMakai village, Dara-e-Suf Pain district of Samangan province the explosion of an anti-personnel mine injured the 13 year old Hamid. Hamid explains what happened to him. "I left the house in the morning to graze the animals. On my way I came across an unknown metal which was covered with dust. I could hardly distinguish whether it was a stone or a metal. I put my feet at the side while walking. However, my feet accidentally touched it and it exploded."



Mazar-e-Sharif, public Hospital, 29- 02- 2016, Photo by: Sayed Zekria

"At first it shook the entire land. For a second my eyes and ears stopped working and an unbearable pain took all over my body. I opened my eyes and could see my soundings covered with dust and I was not able to move my feet. I started yelling in pain and crying for help."



Hamid's father says; "my son became the victim of newly planted mine in one of the hillside where he always goes to gaze the animals. He is very young and the pain is unbearable for him."

Hamid has received the immediate assistance from United Nation Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Afghan Civilian Assistance Project (ACAP III) funded by USAID. Hamid was referred to ICRC for physical rehabilitation. He has received an elbow Crutch, Ankle foot orthotic for one of his legs and prosthesis to replace his lost limb.

## Five-Day Training on Quality Management System(QMS) in Mine Action

From 17 - 21 December, 2016 DMAC and UNMAS conducted a five day training on Quality Management System in Mine Action in Kabul.

The main focus of the training was on continual improvement in the Quality Management System processes including Quality Assurance (QA) Monitoring and Quality Control (QC) of mine action activities and products, application and oversight of land release operations, Mine/ERW Risk Education and Victim Assistance services.

A total of 36 DMAC staff, International Trust Fund (ITF) funded operations/QM assistants Acting Area Managers and UNMAS Afghan colleagues attended the training.

Dr. Aimal Safi, UNMAS Afghanistan Chief of Quality Management and Abdul Qudous Ziaee UNMAS Afghanistan head of operations, research and development were the main instructors of this QMS in mine action and land release training, Dr. Aimal said: "Quality Management is essential element of every business and crucial in mine action through which we can built the confidence of mine action stakeholders and customers including



QMS Training, December 21, 2016, Kabul - Photo by: Sadaf Baseer

Government of Afghanistan and donors that the mine action services and products have been delivered to the customers that meeting/exceeding their requirements, and the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of mine action activities and services are improved continually."

The training covered topics like Background of Quality Management, Requirements of ISO 9001:2015 QMS standards and their application in mine action, land release operations and practical work on (Mine/ERW non-technical survey, technical survey and developing land release operational plans), QA monitoring and its principles and stages, use of QA monitoring data, corrective action and preventive action processes, analysis of QA data, QC sampling of cleared land, writing professional problem statements, writing professional emails (communications), problem solving techniques (Root cause analysis

of the problems, through a six step process of: 1- identification of the problems, 2- assessing impact of the problems, 3- analysis of possible causes through "data collection on possible causing factors including management, personnel, tools, procedures, environment and worksite conditions", 4 - preparing action plan, 5- implementation of actions planned, 6- follow up actions including verification and validation of actions taken). Investigation of accidents, management response and reporting procedures have also been covered.

According to Kashmir Khan, Operation Assistant in DMAC/UNMAS "our day to day work revolves around quality management, in this training the procedures of step by step implementation of QMS in mine action was instructed in details which was very helpful."

As a result of this training, the notions of field and HQ staff of DMAC, ITF and Afghan UNMAS trainees were informed about the effective and efficient implementation of QMS requirements enabling them to apply the knowledge gained from the training into their daily work.

## Mine Risk Education for Afghan Returnees



Kabul Encashment Centre, November 22, 2016 - Photo by: Sadaf Baseer

The past three decades of war in Afghanistan had forced half of its population to leave the country and live as refugees in different countries. Now due to the political asylum between Pakistan and Afghanistan, refugees are forced to come back to their countries. UNHCR managed encashment centers around the country are welcoming Afghan refugees.

On November 22, 2016, UNMAS Afghanistan staff conducted a monitoring visit to Kabul UNHCR encashment centre where hundreds of families are welcomed every day. Returnees are particularly vulnerable to the risk posed by mines and explosive remanant of war (ERW) due to their lack of knowledge on the extend of the contamination problem and of the attitudes to adopt to protect themselves from the risk of explosives. Mine Risk Education (MRE) is systematically delivered to the Afghan returnees to prevent harm to civilians from explosive devices. The main purpose of the MRE session is to raise awareness among children, youth, men and women on the danger of landmines and explosive remnants of war so that people have the required knowledge of different kinds of explosives, their possible risks, hence, adopt safe behavior when they come across an unknown object.

The Afghan Returnees are given a thirty minute awareness session, which is divided into three section. In the first section, the instructor along introduces the the dangers of the explosives it entails, various forms of mines are introduced through pictures and banners. In the second section, different types of mines and the danger signs are put in the display where returnees get the chance to observe the danger signs by seeing them. In third section, a short movie is shown to the returnees covering the mine risk and how they can be in the safe side. These sessions are conducted in both local languages making sure everyone benefit from them.

Sanuallah, a 13 year old boy who had returned back from Pakistan had never attended any MRE session before stated: " The session was very well conducted and the instructors were very clear. Now that I have learned about the landmines, if I see them, I will not touch them and will inform elders of my family." Similarly, Bibi Hawa a 12 year old girl states "I will deliver the messages I got from here to all my friends." A total 21,323 people have received Mine Risk Education in this Encashment centre.

"The unprecedented influx of Afghan returnees from Pakistan this year had not been expected. Danish Demining Group teams funded by the Canadian Government through UNMAS Afghanistan have done a wonderful job coping with the situation to deliver Mine/ ERW Risk Education sessions to all returning Afghans in UNHCR Encashment Centers of Kabul, Nangarhar and Kandahar." said Humayun Achakzai Mine Risk Education Manager of UNMAS Afghanistan.



# The War and MAPA Emergency response, Kunduz



Kunduz City, Ward No 03/04, Khwaja Mashad, ERW found after conflict, 28 Oct 2016: photo by DDG

Kunduz City, Ghulam Bahawddin, Feb 24 2 016, MRE to the conflict affected civilians. Photo by MCPA

Afghanistan has been the victim of violent conflict throughout its history, which, in recent years, has left the land plagued with landmines and UXO, disrupting the social, economic and environmental development of the country.

During the recent ground engagement between the government forces and the anti-government elements in Kunduz province, many areas have been contaminated by ERW which threatened the limbs and lives of the civilian population in the province. Those hazards, had to be cleared to allow the safe returned of the displaced civilian population.

The Mine Action Program of Afghanistan, in an emergency response provided humanitarian services to the conflict affected civilians in Kunduz. Funded through the UN Common Humanitarian Fund, implementing partners provided mine risk education and destroyed explosive devices. The operations coordinated by UNMAS Afghanistan regional office enabled MDC, OMAR, MCPA, DDG, to provide MRE to 22,226 people, including children and adults, and destroyed a total of 113 UXO / ERW on October 2016.

The Afghan Civilian Assistance Program (ACAP III) also delivered immediate assistance packages, including food and non food items, to the conflict affected victims.

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