

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN NEWSLETTER: JULY 2010



NEW MINE RISK EDUCATION INITIATIVES TO EXPAND REACH OF MESSAGES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

In a bid to expand the reach and sustainability of Mine Risk Education (MRE) activities an agreement was made between DMC/MACCA, Ministry of Information and Culture, Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Department/ National Solidarity Program to integrate MRE activities into the structures of these ministries.

As a result, for the first time MRE messages are now being broadcast through the National Radio (Radio Afghanistan) and three government newsletters (Islah, Anis and Hewad) are publishing MRE messages on a daily basis. The broadcasting of MRE TV spots will start in the next few months. These new developments will raise awareness among more people on the risks of mines and other explosive remnants of war.



The MRE department will begin activities with Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) next month such as MRE messages being included in sermons at mosques. MoRA will target eight provinces of central region as a pilot project to provide MRE training for Mullah Imams. They will then expand the Programme to reach more religious leaders and Mullahs in affected communities. The MRE messages will also be published through MoRA monthly Magazine "Payam-e-Haq".

Another recent initiative of the MACCA MRE department with the support of Ministry of Education, was the establishment of MRE and Victim Assistance (VA) committees in schools throughout the country. The purpose of these committees is to better coordinate and monitor MRE/VA activities and to support sustainability of these activities in schools and communities.

To date, 5,695 committees have been established in provincial centres and the Child Protection Officers, in coordination with school principals and teachers, are trying to establish more committees at the district and village level. These committees will hold monthly coordination meetings to communicate MRE activities and reports.

MINE ACTION SPEARHEADS REGIONAL COOPERATION

In July, on behalf of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the International Trust Fund for demining and mine victims assistance undertook a working visit to Afghanistan as part of the improved regional cooperation to enable clearance in remote areas of Afghanistan "*Facilitation of Central Asia Regional Co-operation in Mine Action*".

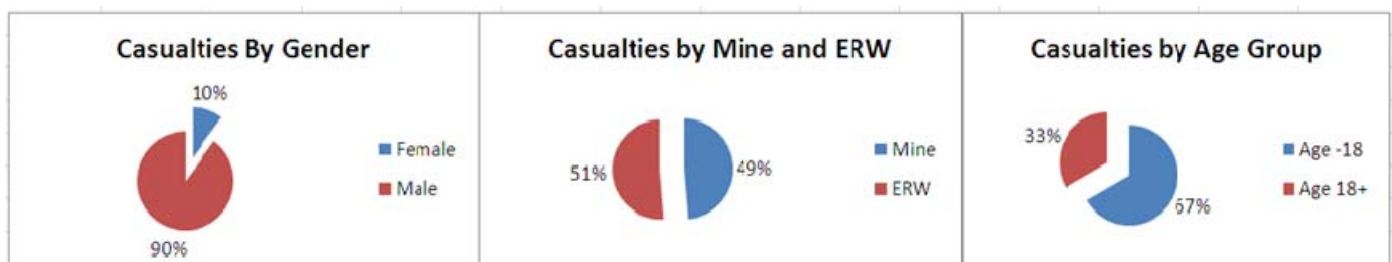
An example of this cross border cooperation in action now is a project developed by The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) in Darwaz district in Badakhshan. There are six communities identified as contaminated with landmines and other explosive remnants of war in Darwaz district which borders Tajikistan. However, Darwaz District is a very remote, extremely poor region with limited contact with the outside world. The district is effectively cut off from the rest of Afghanistan by a barrier of mountains. Due to its remoteness and difficult access, plans to clear mined areas were put on hold after a survey expedition reached the district on foot in 2007.



In fact, Darwaz is best accessed via Tajikistan in order for a mine clearance operation to be logistically and economically viable. Now due to a cross border agreement between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, FSD will be able to start the one year project clearing the contaminated communities funded by US Department of State. MACCA believes having FSD projects on both sides the Afghan-Tajik border and attempting mixed teams will enhance and strengthen developing regional cooperation.

CASUALTIES IN JULY 2010

In July 2010 there were 39 casualties recorded due mines and other explosive remnants of war. The below charts show a breakdown of these casualties:



MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS IN AFGHANISTAN

Ottawa Treaty:

Clear all emplaced anti-personnel mines by 2013;

Destroy all known anti-personnel mine stockpiles by 2007; and

Provide mine risk education to Afghans and assist mine survivors.

Afghanistan Compact:

Land area contaminated by mines and ERW will be reduced by 70% by March 2011;

All stockpiled anti-personnel mines will be located and destroyed by March 2007.

DESTRUCTION OF ALL KNOWN STOCKPILES OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES

The Government of Afghanistan successfully fulfilled its Article 4 of Ottawa Treaty and Afghanistan Compact benchmark to destroy all known stockpiled anti-personnel landmines in its territory in October 2007.

KEYS TO MEETING THE BENCHMARKS FOR MINE ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN

- * Sustaining existing capacities
- * Expansion of Community - Based Demining
- * Programming through focused projects
- * Introduction of competitive tendering
- * Enhanced fundraising to ensure resources to meet benchmarks

CHALLENGES TOWARDS BENCHMARKS

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan must increase multilateral and bilateral funding to mine action to achieve the targets set by the Ottawa Treaty and the Afghanistan Compact. Essentially, funding needs to be coherent to enable effective delivery; this means funds must be received before the beginning of the year . If the funds are provided, the MAPA has the technical capability to achieve the targets.

MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS SUMMARY APRIL - JULY 2010

- * 15,188 AP mines, 352 AT mines, and 291,758 ERW destroyed.
- * 57 communities cleared of mines and other explosive remnants of war.
- * 167,473 women and girls and 228,105 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

EXPLANATION ON CHANGES TO BENCHMARK TABLE

Introduction:

In January 2006, when the Afghan Compact was signed, the baseline set of known hazard was 719 sq. km, therefore the target of clearing 70% of the hazard required a removal of 503 sq km. The benchmark table below shows that to date, 579 sq. km has now been cleared. This would mean the MAPA would have now exceeded the goal of 70% clearance, if the baseline had remained the same.

However, the baseline set at that time was in fact an incorrect picture of the overall hazard in the country. Much work has been done over the last few years to ensure that the national database presents an accurate picture of known hazard is included in this database. For a full explanation on these changes, please see p 25-27 of the 1389 Integrated Operational Framework, available on www.macca.org.af. In short, this work has resulted in an increase in the baseline.

The current baseline and progress is shown in the benchmark table below. However, as people continue to return and resettle in Afghanistan, new hazard continues to be discovered. In addition, there is new hazard being laid by the insurgent forces in some parts of Southern Afghanistan, although not in traditional high-density mine belts. Therefore it is expected that the baseline will continue to change and the progress towards these goals June fluctuate as the challenges to meeting these goals increases.

AFGHANISTAN'S PROGRESS TOWARD MINE ACTION BENCHMARKS

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

Indicator	Adjusted Baseline June 10	Remaining Contamination at 30 June 10	Clearance Processed at 30 June 10	Compact Target of 70% of Hazards	Progress toward Compact	Treaty Target of 100% of Hazards	Progress towards Treaty
Number of Hazards	12,121	6,679	5,442	8,485	64%	12,121	45%
Hazardous Area (sqkm)	1,247	650	579	873	68%	1,247	48%

THE MINE ACTION STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

The strategy for mine action is based on the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's vision of a country free from landmines and ERW, where people and communities live in a safe environment conducive to national development, and where landmine and ERW survivors are fully integrated in the society and thus have their rights and needs recognized and fulfilled. To turn this vision into reality, the government has established benchmark obligations within its national development strategy, the Afghanistan Compact, which are in accordance with its obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

SUPPORT TO MINE ACTION NATIONAL CAPACITY

The Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) supported by the United Nations and the Government of Afghanistan through its Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA)/Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) have formed a partnership within the MACCA offices to plan, coordinate and ensure the quality of all mine action activities in Afghanistan.

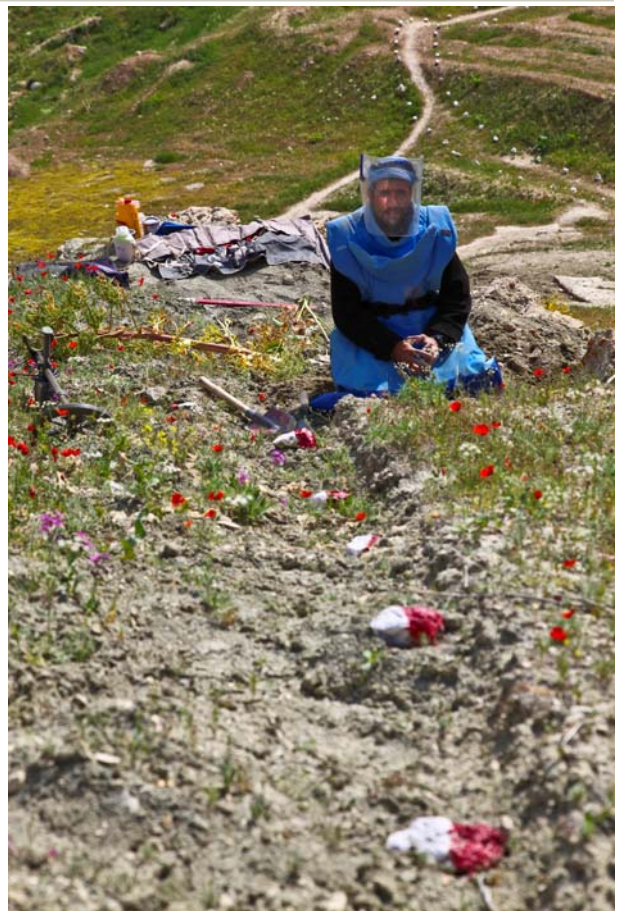


MDD teams returning from demining operation in Charasyab district / June 2009

MAPA AND MACCA SUMMARY

The concept of humanitarian mine action was developed in Afghanistan in 1988/9. Mine action encompasses all pillars of mine action: advocacy, demining (survey, marking and clearance), stockpile destruction, mine risk education (MRE), and victim assistance (VA). The Programme is funded both bilaterally and through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF)^[1].

Collectively known as the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA), mine action implementers in Afghanistan form one of the largest mine action programmes in the world. Together, these agencies have a twenty year history of successfully delivering mine action in Afghanistan and have cleared over 15,000 hazard areas throughout the country. The MAPA is coordinated by the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), which is funded through a UN modality. The MACCA has sub-offices, known as Area Mine Action Centres (AMACs) in Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar, Kunduz, Gardez, and Kandahar.



Demining Operation in Samangan province

Photo by Jacob Simkin, April 2009

MAPA is supported by :

