

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME OF AFGHANISTAN

NEWSLETTER: NOVEMBER 2010



FIRST MEETING OF STATE PARTIES TO CLUSTER MUNITIONS CONVENTION HELD

Max Kerley, Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the UN focal point for mine action, expressed his satisfaction with the new Convention on Cluster Munitions during the First Meeting of States Parties in Vientiane, Laos held on 9 November 2010. "This is the most important step for global conventional disarmament since the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty. Cluster munitions have limited military usefulness and cause terrible humanitarian and socio-economic damage."

A 304-page report released last week by the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor found that of the more than 16,500 casualties are linked to cluster munitions globally.

Tremendous efforts by national authorities, NGOs, civil society, the ICRC and the United Nations have already contributed to achieving significant successes in addressing the impact of cluster munitions. For example, UNMAS coordinated mine action programme in Afghanistan and in Lebanon deal not only with landmines but also with unexploded sub munitions used during past conflicts.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions prohibits the

use, production, and trade in cluster munitions, requires assistance to victims of the weapons and provides a framework for donor assistance and cooperation to affected countries. It entered into force on 1 August 2010. A total of 108 nations have signed the convention, 46 of which have now ratified, allowing them to become full states parties to the agreement. According to "Cluster Munitions Monitor 2010," 38 of the nations that have signed the convention are former users, producers, exporters, or stockpilers of the weapon.

Afghanistan signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3rd December 2008 but has not yet ratified it. To date, 161 areas contaminated with Cluster Munitions have been cleared of 272,948 devices by the implementing partners of Mine Action Programme. This means that 24 contaminated areas remain to be cleared. From December 2001 to November 2010, a total of 206 civilian casualties (40 dead and 166 injured) were recorded in the national database. The number of casualties has reduced dramatically over the last nine years. In 2010, only two casualties were reported compared to 70 in 2001.



Cluster bomb and landmine survivors read a declaration at the closing ceremony of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Photo credit: Mary Wareham/HRW

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TWO MAJOR CONFERENCES HIGHLIGHT CHALLENGES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Three decades of war in Afghanistan has resulted in a large number of Afghans living with a disability. In fact the 2006 National Disability Survey in Afghanistan reported that 2.7% of the population has a disability, or around 800,000 people; including around 60,000 landmine survivors.

To raise awareness and develop solutions for the challenges faced by persons with disability, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyred and Disabled (MoLSMD) with the support of MACCA organized two major conferences in November.

The first one specifically focused on the issue of accessibility for persons with disability, since there are few public places equipped to enable access for persons with disability with facilities such as wheelchair ramps.

Highlighting the importance of the issue, Minister of MoLSMD, Amina Afzali said: "Physical barriers are one of the main challenges ahead for persons with disabilities, since it restricts their participation and inclusion in the society and social services."

The second conference was the annual National Disability Conference. This was organized to monitor the progress of the activities in terms of economic reintegration of persons with disability and to integrate the physical accessibility regulation in Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan.

During in this conference, the International community, government and civil society organizations presented their activities and future plans for persons with disabilities. The National Disability Law for persons with disability was also introduced which was approved on Dec 19, 2009.

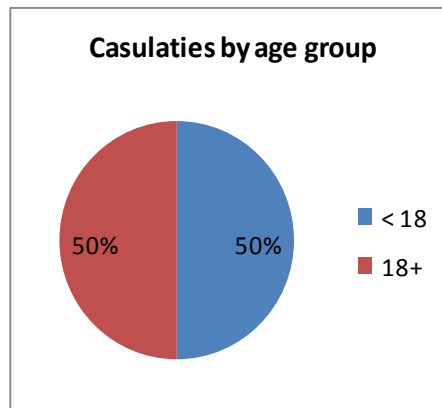
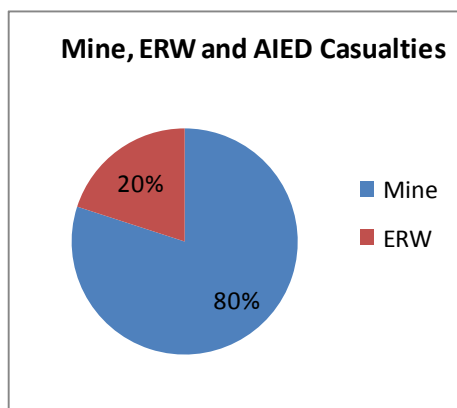
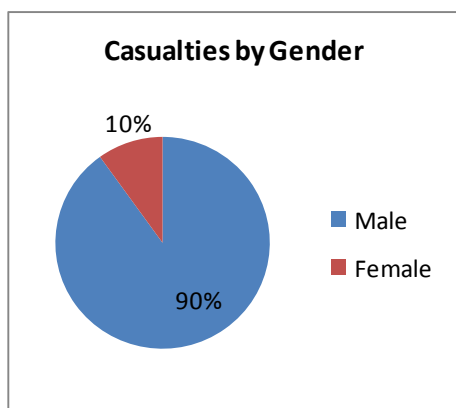


A person with disability Haji Mohammad Nader Wardak (Pictured above) who participated in both conferences, said: "These conferences were so important because it is our chance to get our messages to the authorities and people,"

He added: "Many authorities and ministries participated in the conferences, understood the problems of the persons with disabilities and promised to include preparing facilities for persons with disabilities in their working plans."

CASUALTIES IN NOVEMBER 2010

In November 2010 there were 40 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.

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 Sept 10	Remaining Contamination-at 30 Sept 10	Clearance Processed at 30 Sept 10	Compact Target of 70% of Hazards	Progress toward Compact	Treaty Target of 100% of Hazards	Progress towards Treaty
Number of Hazards	12,528	6,776	5,752	8,770	66%	12,528	46%
Hazardous Area (km ²)	1,262	650	612	883	69%	1,262	48%

EXPLANATION ON CHANGES TO BENCHMARK TABLE

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, 612 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. 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 July fluctuate as the challenges to meeting these goals increases.

MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS SUMMARY IN 1389 SO FAR (APRIL– NOVEMBER 2010)

- * 27,037 Anti-Personnel mines, 794 Anti-Tank mines, and 682,876 Explosive Remnants of War destroyed.
- * 104 communities cleared of mines and other explosive remnants of war.
- * 322,803 women and girls and 441,722 men and boys received MRE throughout the country.

