



MINE CLEARANCE ENABLES EDUCATION ACCESS IN KANDAHAR

One of the benefits of mine clearance can be enabling children access to education. In October, an example of this was highlighted in Kandahar. The clearance of three villages were completed and the land officially handed over to the community. During the handover, various members spoke about the benefits of being free of the threat of mines, one of which was knowing their children could go to school without the fear of mine accidents.

Najiba¹, now a student of a local girls school, was not able to go to school before due to mine threats in the area. Up until several years ago, Najiba was not able to go far from her home because of mines in the area. Like others, her parents did not feel safe sending their daughter to school in case she became a victim of mines.

“I have heard from my elders at home that this area where now we see many beautiful buildings, including our school, was covered in mines and nobody could use this land,” said Najiba,”

She also remembers that due to huge number of hazards in the area, the Mine Action teams used to teach them Mine Risk Education.

Najiba said: “...the MRE teams were also telling us the stories of mine victims and the problems which families and societies are facing because of those mines,” she added: “I am afraid of mines.”

Now like others in the area, Najiba’s parents are able to send their daughter to the school without any fear.

Najiba says: “Because of the deminers hard work and struggle, the area is cleared from mines and now you see thousands of people living and using the area freely.”

This also demonstrates the link between Mine Action and the UN Millennium Development Goals, which aim to significantly reduce global poverty by 2015. For example, the second Millennium Development Goal is to achieve Universal Primary Education, this is only possible in mine contaminated communities when the mines have been cleared.



1- Name changed for security reasons.

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MAPA SUPPORTS UNHCR EFFORTS TO PROTECT IDPs

In response to a request from UNHCR, mine action teams removed the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) contamination in Bagh e Daud, an informal settlement in Kabul. Following an assessment, MACCA deployed Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams to clear the area. This demonstrates the importance of an emergency response capacity, which MACCA is currently expanding.

There are approximately 30 informal settlements in Kabul City, including Bagh e Daud. These settlements contain mixed populations including refugee returnees, IDPs, economic migrants and other vulnerable groups. UNHCR, along with other humanitarian actors, have been providing humanitarian assistance to the informal settlements for some time now. The current population of Baghi Dawood settlement is 74 families (444 individuals).

In order to better understand the profile of each settlement, the protection concerns of people living there and to work towards a more durable solution, UNHCR, together with the Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) Kabul and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) are undertaking protection profiles in the sites. Such profiling entails household level interviews and focus group discussions, carried out over several days.

The protection profiling for Baghi Dawood informal settlement was completed in August 2010. One serious protection issue that the residents raised was the presence of UXOs on the site. Based on these reports, UNHCR contacted MACCA and a joint field visit was conducted by UNHCR and MACCA which identified the urgent need for UXO removal and mine risk awareness training.

Parents were also worried about their children and warned them not to go far from their houses. Kamna is one of those parents, who says: "I was always trying to keep my children in my sight and it was difficult for us to collect water and brushwood for fire."

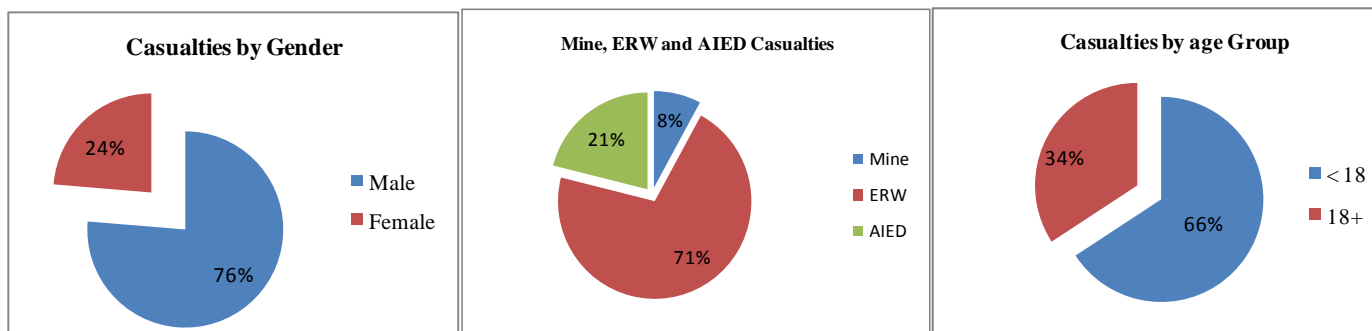


Mine Action operations started on 16th Oct and finished on 28th Oct, the area was cleared of UXOs and was handed over to the 74 families living there. Now the IDPs living in the area are no more in fear of UXOs. Suraya (above), a nine year old girl says: "My older sister used to tell me about mine risks, and was insisting I keep away from objects I didn't recognize; I also remember how the de-miners were teaching us on how to protect ourselves from the threat of UXOs. I was worried, but now I am happy that the area has been cleared from UXOs."

UNHCR's Protection Officer in Kabul said that "We appreciate MACCA's urgent intervention to address the UXO situation in Bagh e Daud informal settlement."

CASUALTIES IN OCTOBER 2010

In October 2010 there were 38 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 fluctuate as the challenges to meeting these goals increases.

MINE ACTION ACHIEVEMENTS SUMMARY 1389 TO DATE (APRIL– OCTOBER 2010)

- * 24,785 Anti-Personnel (AP) mines, 740 Anti-Tank (AT) mines, 165 Abandoned Improvised Explosive Devices (AIED) and 607,959 Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) destroyed.
- * 94 communities cleared of mines and other explosive remnants of war.
- * 288,665 women and girls and 396,416 men and boys received Mine Risk Education throughout the country.

