United Nations Mine Action Service, Afghanistan

IMPACT

In 2017, the last year for which comprehensive figures exist, some 2,168 Afghan civilians were recorded to have been killed or injured by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), the latter of which consist mostly of munitions which failed to detonate when fired. **This casualty rate is more than five times than the level recorded in 2012**. **Children make up some 89 per cent of ERW casualties, and one third of overall casualties.** The victim operated improvised explosive devices (VOIEDs) and ERW from more recent armed clashes caused 96 per cent of the casualties recorded in 2017.

Humanitarian mine action actors in Afghanistan have cleared more than 18 million items of ERW, some **731,780 Anti-Personnel Mines** (APM), including **over 752 VOIEDs**, and some **30,115 Anti-Tank (AT) mines** since 1989. Newer contamination from recent fighting poses a challenge to the national mine action programme as traditional humanitarian mine action advocacy, risk education and clearance approaches developed to deal with legacy landmine and ERW contamination from the Soviet-Afghan War (1980-1988) and the subsequent civil war period are less effective faced with the VOIED threat which first emerged in 2010.

A total of **31,410 hazardous areas** have been cleared or otherwise cancelled since 1989. This represents **2,971** communities and over **2,820** square kilometers of land released. Some 1,507 mine/ERW affected communities remain in Afghanistan.

Over 26.2 million individuals have received training on explosive hazard risks since 1989.

ABOUT

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) was established in 1989. In 2012, the Afghan Directorate for Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) began to execute aspects of the programme management of the MAPA in direct collaboration with UNMAS.

As of 1 June 2018, the DMAC had absorbed all the Afghan technical mine action personnel previously employed by UNMAS. The Afghan Government has asked UNMAS for continued technical support beyond 2018, in areas such as strategic planning and advocacy, resource mobilization, and funds management and contracting.

While some 76.5 per cent of the known minefields and battle areas have now been cleared, **Afghanistan remains one of the countries most affected by landmines and ERW**. Some 3,686 identified hazards remain, impeding development by delaying the construction of new road networks, airports, transmission lines, and returnee settlement. Due to evolving conflict dynamics, Afghanistan's **humanitarian mine action needs are now as great as they have ever been.**

ACTIVITIES

Progress towards Mine Ban Treaty 2023 commitments: UNMAS assisted the Government of Afghanistan to successfully request a ten-year extension to complete its clearance obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. A detailed work plan to achieve mine-free status by 2023 was developed, and DMAC and its accredited implementing partners continue to make progress towards this end. In Afghan year 1396 (2017-18), UNMAS-contracted teams cleared some 7.5 square kilometers of explosive hazard contaminated land, destroying 22,259 AP mines, 248 AT mines and 64,245 ERW. This work benefitted 126 communities.

Emergency Humanitarian Response in Ghazni: In August 2018, heavy fighting pitting Afghan government forces against the Taliban broke out in Ghazni province. Mine action operators responded quickly, providing risk education to over 8,000 Afghan civilians. These operators destroyed some 106 items of ERW, including an unexploded aircraft bomb found in Godule Ahangaran village. Given that there are reports of ERW contamination in harder to reach areas of Ghazni, UNMAS is working with various stakeholders to try to access outlying areas.

Agro District, Badakshan, Free from Known Explosive Hazards: The latest clearance project implemented by one of the UNMAS' national NGO partners successfully removed 206 deadly devices in Argo district, Badakshan province from 15 May – 31 July 2018, using manual clearance techniques. Now the residents in Argo district can move freely without the fear of mines and ERW.

Women in Mine Action: For the first time in the 30-year history of mine action in Afghanistan, women began landmine clearance operations on 1 June 2018. Fourteen women were trained on non-technical survey and demining techniques. They released 51,520 square metres of mine/ERW affected land back to their community in Bamyan province. They also participated in vocational trainings, on topics such as archeological excavation, tourism and business. Beyond the immediate lifesaving assistance these women provide to their communities, they also set a good example through their meaningful and impactful participation in mine action, and the development of their community.

FUNDING

Increased financing is critical to realizing Afghanistan's plan to be anti-personnel mine-free by 2023, in line with the country's obligations under the Ottawa Treaty. However, funding has in fact dropped to 41 per cent of what it was in 2011. This has contributed to Afghanistan falling behind on its Ottawa Treaty 2023 commitments. To meet international obligations and address new threats to civilians as a result of more recent armed clashes, **Afghanistan has requested US $85.1 million for clearance activities this year, out of a total budget request of $99.3 million;** about half of this annual budget remains unfunded.

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