

In the year 2000, an average of about eighty-eight casualties per month were attributed to landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Afghanistan. This represents a sharp decline from recorded casualties in 1999 when an estimated five to ten people became mine victims every day. In 1993 the daily casualty estimates totaled twenty to twenty-four each day. Almost fifty-percent of mine victims in Afghanistan are still believed to die before reaching a medical facility.

This grim reality can only be exacerbated by the current crisis. Despite the efforts of a decade-long coordinated mine survey and clearance program, Afghanistan remains one of the most mine and UXO affected countries in the world. According to the United Nations Mine Action Program for Afghanistan (MAPA), landmines and UXO contaminate 724 million square meters of land. Of this some 344 million square meters is classified as high-priority land for clearance. There are areas of the country that are still not accessible and the full extent of the landmine problem in Afghanistan is yet to be determined. Mined areas are still being discovered at a rate of 12 to 14 million square meters per year. According to a June 2001 socio-economic survey sponsored by the UN Development Program and the World Bank, if current funding levels and clearance rates are sustained, it will take seven to ten years to clear the 344 million square meters of high-priority land.

MAPA received approximately \$172.8 million in funds for demining from 1991 through 2000. Of this total, the United States has contributed \$25 million since 1993. From 1990 through 2000, over 224 million square meters of mined area and about 320 million square meters of former battle areas were cleared of mines and UXO. In the same period 215,908 antipersonnel mines, 9,897 antitank mines, and 1,305,558 different types of UXO were detected and subsequently destroyed. In 2000, mine clearance organizations cleared more than 24 million square meters of mined area and about 80 million square meters of former battle areas. A total of 13,542 antipersonnel mines, 636 antitank mines, and 298,828 UXO were destroyed during these clearance operations.

Eight organizations are currently engaged in mine and UXO clearance in Afghanistan. Since it started in 1989, MAPA has expanded from a few hundred deminers assisted by a dozen foreign experts to a workforce of some 4,900 Afghans and fewer than ten expatriates. The number of demining accidents to MAPA's deminers and surveyors declined in 2000, when compared to 1999. In the year 2000, four deminers died and ten were injured, while in 1999 four deminers died and twenty-one were injured. MAPA's record of demining casualty incidents indicates that from 1990 to February 2001, thirty-four deminers and surveyors were killed and 544 injured during mine clearance operations.

All information in the fact sheet was extracted from: International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), Landmine Monitor Report 2001, (September, 2001), pp. 497-518.

Go to: www.icbl.org/lm/2001/afghanistan.

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