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Summary Report
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Afghanistan

National mine awareness evaluation (MAE)

THE AFGHANISTAN MINE AWARENESS EVALUATION

SUMMARY

The purpose of the 1997 Afghanistan national mine awareness evaluation (MAE) was to estimate the *coverage* of awareness activities and the effectiveness of different training modalities in terms of levels of knowledge, behaviour and reduction of risk. It aimed to provide a baseline for measuring the impact of mine awareness initiatives, while building local skills and a community interface that encourages sustainability. It examined the performance of four UNOCHA partners in mine action in Afghanistan: the BBC *New Home New Life* programme, OMAR, Save the Children Federation USA and Handicap International. The data produced and the operational interface with the communities can facilitate fine-tuning of mine action over the coming years, benchmarked across to a reduction in the social costs of land mines. A flexible mine action tracking scheme is proposed to promote results-based management of mine action.

Coverage of the UNOCHA mine awareness programme: Mine awareness training of the direct training organisations is convincingly concentrated in the areas where more land mine/UXO victims live. No less than 42% of the sample live where direct mine awareness training was conducted – although not all of these received direct training. Only 7.6% of respondents (10.5% in mine affected areas) indicated they had received direct training. No less than 22% of all respondents said their children had received mine awareness education in school. Some 59% of the householders (54% in mine affected areas) said their wives had no source of information on mine awareness. Around one in 20 household respondents (6.3%) knew of a mine committee, supposed to be a mainstay of the awareness programmes of two of the direct training partners.

Some 43% of householders said they did not own radios; nonetheless, 49% of all households said they listen to the BBC “with ease” and, of these, 93% listen to the soap opera *New Home New Life*. The actual coverage including partial access to radios of relatives and neighbours is probably higher: “listenership with ease” was used to estimate the likely coverage from a mine awareness stand-point. Figure 1 shows the coverage of direct training and the BBC.

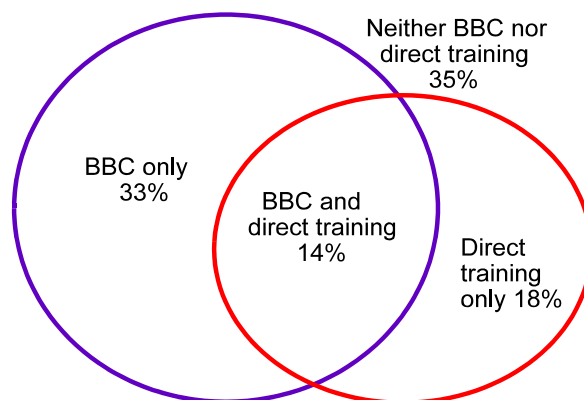
Knowledge of mine fields: Roughly one in ten households (9%) thought there were mines where, according to the MAPA informants, there were none. Some 73% of respondents who knew areas were affected said these had been marked with red stones.

Evidence base of the evaluation

57,287 people
in 9,124 households

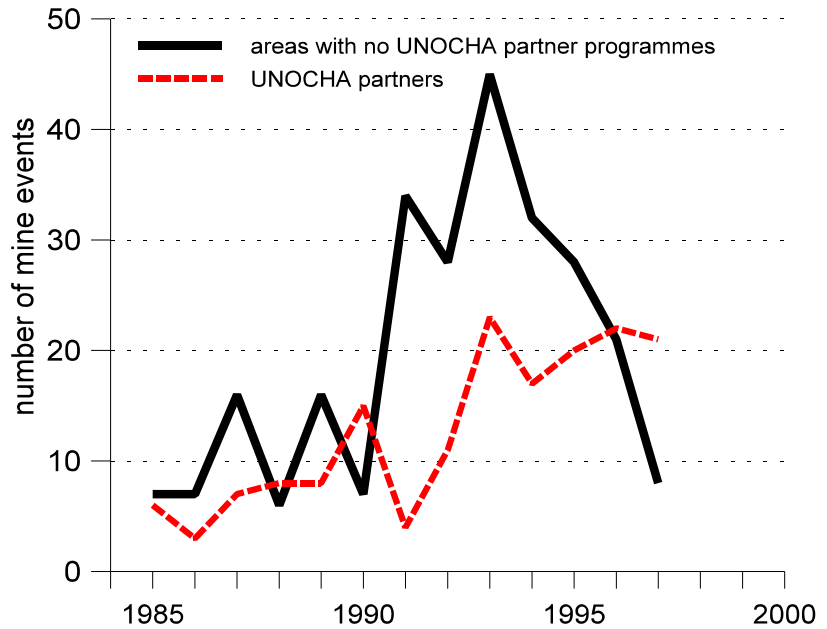
486 mine victims
42 women in 7 focus groups

Figure 1
Coverage of mine awareness partner programmes
Direct training and BBC



Time trends in mine/UXO events: After an increase corresponding with the return of refugees and internally displaced people in 1992, there has been a marked fall-off in the number of mine/UXO events (deaths or injury of an individual) reported by households interviewed in late 1997 (Figure 2). The sites where direct training occurs do not show the same decline (dotted line) as is seen in sites where no direct training occurs; there is even a suggestion of an *increase* in numbers of mine/UXO events (individuals affected) in these communities over recent years. The time trend of among those who listen to the BBC is quite different: their risk of suffering a mine or UXO accident dropped markedly after 1994, when the programme started including mine awareness messages (portrayed in Figure 18, in the body of the report).

Figure 2
Time trends in communities of direct training programmes (number of events that happened each year) contrasted with communities where there no UNOCHA partner works



Type of injury: There is evidence of a transition in type of injury where the direct training partners work. Since the programmes began (1991 for OMAR and April 1996 for SC/US and HI), there has been an increase in injuries to the upper limbs in programme sites compared with non-programme sites. In part, this is because the awareness training was targeted to the worst off sites, many of which have since been cleared of mines but perhaps leaving some UXO. Another part of the explanation could be that some components of the current mine awareness training include “mine stuff” – the technical details of the different types of mines – perhaps stimulating interest in how they work and how they are disarmed. It is possible that this type of education leads to increased interest or confidence in handling mines, unintentionally encouraging people to tamper with them¹.

Mine security: People with mine awareness education have a measurably greater sense of “mine security”. Considering only those respondents from communities known to be affected by land mines, someone exposed to both training and the BBC was significantly more likely to feel he could never be affected by a mine accident than someone who heard the BBC alone or someone who had received neither type of education (44% compared with 39% and 23% respectively). Among those receiving direct training in mined areas, 42% said they learnt about alternatives to entering or using the mined areas.

¹ The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) does not train for removing or disarming mines. The programme has a policy of destruction of mines *in situ* for reasons of safety and quality assurance.

Mine smart behaviour: Those who received both direct training and messages through the BBC were significantly less likely to think someone other than a professional deminer was brave to go into a mine field. In this survey, one per cent of households (n90) had someone who had attempted “informal demining”. This practice of informal demining was prominent in the 1994 survey² as a risk factor for mine accidents; it seems to have all but disappeared by 1997.

Considering only those who knew the mines to be there, people who had both received direct training and who heard the BBC programme were significantly less likely to go into a given field known to be mined, than those who had only heard the BBC or those who received education from neither source. This difference in risk taking is not easily explained as an effect of poverty or occupation, since the additive effect of exposure to the BBC and direct training remains in particular occupational and social groups, like the unemployed, farmers or traders. Four of the seven women interview groups said the main reasons people went into mined areas was a lack of knowledge about the dangers or presence of mines. A women’s group suggested that one might knowingly go into mined areas to commit suicide.

Reporting of mine incidents: The foundation stone of a preventive strategy is to give weight to every single incident. A specific performance criterion for the MAPA is the rate of accurate reports from high risk areas. In this survey, most say they would report to the malik or mullah (55%) or the shurra (18%); 24% say they would report to the mine action agency in the area. Those who received both training and messages through the BBC *New Home New Life* were significantly more likely to report a mine event; someone who heard the BBC but did not receive training, in turn, was more likely to report than someone who received no mine awareness education.

Mine Committees: There were many communities which “officially” had mine committees where neither respondents nor focus groups recognised their existence. Overall, 6.3% (n574) of household respondents said they knew of a mine committee. Whatever their theoretical coverage (the 6.3% were scattered through 34% of the sample communities), this is probably an indicator of *effective* coverage of committees at the time of the evaluation.

Excluding places where less than 1.5% of respondents among the 100-120 interviewed in each site had heard of a mine committee, 16 out of the 86 communities (19%) had a committee, covering a sample of 1705 people. In the 16 communities with this minimal recognition of the existence of a committee,

Five characteristics of mine smartness

1. People *do things differently* to be safer from mines;
 2. They are *aware* of mines/UXOs in their community;
 3. Mine smart people *tell others* about the dangers;
 4. Mine smart people believe events are sufficiently noteworthy to warrant *reporting*, and
 5. People see it as a way of *building security* in their lives and community.
-

Does direct training work?

U Mine-smart behaviours (avoidance strategies) are improved in sites where SC/US is active

U Someone in a partner site is more likely to learn from the BBC than in a site with no UNOCHA partners (85% compared with 74%)

Y Mine events are more common in sites that had direct training, and have *increased* there since the programmes began

Y Community participation is not facilitated; very few people know about mine committees and most depend on external initiation of mine

² Andersson N, Palha C, Paredes S. Social costs of land mines in four countries. British Medical Journal 1995,311;718-721.

respondents were significantly more likely to suggest sharing information with other community members (17% compared with 9%). It seems plausible that committees, where these exist, could increase the social currency of mine awareness in some way. Asked how the mine committee helped them to behave safely in mined areas, 80%^{nu} of the 6.3%^{nu} who recognised committees said they were helpful. Despite this positive marker, not many saw committees as the main way when asked “how to improve mine smartness”; only 5.6% of respondents spontaneously suggested starting mine committees. When asked “How do you think people here can solve the problem of mines?”, only 0.4% suggested starting a mine committee.

The enquiry into the functioning of mine committees raises a question of definition; for at least one implementing partner, a “committee” might be a single mine awareness promoter they trained. Community members probably think of a committee as several people. In the present evaluation, this more usual interpretation was used, particularly because of the interest in how mine smartness might tie into questions of governance.

Increased participation and endogenous mine-smart systems: MAPA explicitly promotes “community participation” and involvement in the establishment of community-based priorities for threat elimination projects. From the present evaluation, this aspect of the programme is yet to mature. For example, in mine affected areas, 37% of participants in direct training sessions said they could not ask questions during the training. There are only weak suggestions of direct training finding multiplication factors between different partners’ programmes and delivery modalities. Although 78% in mine affected areas said they could explain their training to others, only 0.6% say they “tell others” after receiving training.

In the communities themselves, there is a continued and explicit reliance on externally motivated initiatives; when asked what was needed to improve mine-smart behaviour, 74% of respondents said courses were the main thing needed to improve awareness and, to solve the problem of mines, 22% say “keeping contact with demining agencies” is the main way.

It is hard to talk of community participation while excluding more than 50% of the population, the women. The UNOCHA programme at the time of this evaluation made little attempt to reach women, even given the constraints in Afghanistan today. Since the evaluation, a tiny woman-to-women direct training programme has been started by OMAR in Kabul, where it is not most needed but where funding is available. This complements OMAR’s longer standing women’s classes in clinics and home tents in IDP camps. This is symbolic of what needs to happen in the country at large.

Summary recommendations

Broadly speaking, there is evidence to suggest that MAPA does contribute to reduction of the risk of mines and UXOs (it is targeted to the worst-off areas, it is associated with an increased confidence, knowledge of the presence of mines, mine smart behavior and reporting of mines). More importantly, it does this under extremely difficult field conditions and a culture that is not at all conducive to evidence-based planning. The contribution to risk reduction, however, is not evenly spread between the partners and, like many if not all successful programmes, there is space for improvement.

1. Curricular reform

There is convincing evidence that the direct training delivery mode and content behind the current baseline rates should be overhauled as a matter of some urgency. A revision was already under way, at least on paper, by the time of this evaluation. All three direct training partners had interesting and even impressive proposals for renovation of their curricula. The following is intended, therefore, more as a

checklist of what should be happening than as new recommendations.

a. A shift is needed from the current supply-led “sharing what we know about mines” to evidence-led promotion of mine-smart behaviour. Despite the best motivation in the world, what the demining agencies know so well is not the foremost substance of mine-smart behaviour. A renewed focus on local evidence of risk – just who was doing what when afflicted by the mine/UXO – could make a more fertile substrate for direct training.

b. The perplexing association between direct training and tampering with mines/UXOs could be related to a curricular emphasis on mine stuff (technical details on the type of mines, their respective capabilities and how they work). A new and more productive focus for direct training might be, for example, how to convince others about mine-smart behaviour (“How would you explain this to your wife and children?”)

c. The delivery mode employed in most direct training in Afghanistan is currently being transformed. There is considerable awareness in UNOCHA and its implementing partners that the classic expert-delivery “classroom” lecture is outmoded. There is a need for a more interactive process based more on the experience of participants, encouraging questions (37% of respondents in mine affected areas said they could not ask questions during direct training sessions) and participation in solutions.

2. *Combine local training and the BBC*

Direct training combined with the BBC proves to be more effective than either of these modalities on its own. It makes sense to promote the complementarity between these two educational thrusts. UNOCHA is already involved in the script development process, and coordination of the timing and content of BBC broadcasts and direct training initiatives. The soap opera is complemented by educational compilations, single story extracts that are combined with relevant interviews, and made available to agencies involved in training and awareness programmes. A cartoon magazine offers the soap opera in print, making it easy for listeners to refer to. These materials could be used in direct training exercises.

3. *Focus on women*

Consistent with a wide range of development objectives, several channels are currently being opened to include women in mine awareness training. Only in part is this a question of getting them the information they need on mines; just as important is the *fact* that they are getting the information, that they are seen to be sufficiently important to be targeted with the information.

a. In addition to its women’s classes in health clinics and home tents in IDP camps, OMAR has launched, thus far at symbolic levels of coverage and only in Kabul, its woman-to-women direct training programme. This could have early lessons for rollout to a level where it could have an impact on mine awareness.

b. Men in focus groups and household interviews said that they themselves could be an information channel for women to learn more about mines and UXO. This could be addressed with the development of messages that men can pass on to their wives and daughters. These could be mutually reinforced through a combination of BBC and direct training. It may be possible to facilitate and even to augment

...programme synergy

- those with BBC and direct training were
more likely to report a mine incident
less likely to think it brave to go into a minefield
less likely to go into a known minefield
had more confidence

- those with direct training were more likely to tamper with mines – but this effect is to a large extent neutralised by listening to the BBC.

this channel of communication if mullahs were to advocate protection of women from mines as part of religious duty; some mullahs interviewed in this evaluation said clearly that this was the case.

c. Access to radios: The BBC is currently the most important and effective channel to inform the socially isolated women in Afghanistan about mine awareness. Yet 43% of households had no radios. If it was possible for the supply of radios to target women in mine affected areas, this could pay substantial dividends. Despite well founded reservations on the matter, in this survey lack of batteries was only rarely given as a reason for not listening to the radio. There is considerable international experience with battery-free windup radios.

d. The 915 children interviewed showed a lively interest in the subject of mines/UXOs, and they offer an inexpensive and socially acceptable channel of communication to their mothers and sisters. Child-to-child and child-to-community initiatives could conceivably be added to the programmes offered by each of the implementing partners. School-based programmes do have the disadvantage of leaving out the girls, since they do not attend school. Given the added coverage gained for the cost, this evaluation considers that school-based child-to-family programmes might be a valuable complement. By drawing attention to the gender issues in landmine events, it may be possible to stimulate mine smartness among boy children while at the same time reiterating and thereby reinforcing the value of women.

4. Reinforce endogenous mine-smartness systems

One of the groups of baseline indicators used in this evaluation had to do with passing on the messages of mine awareness to others. In the main, little priority was given to this by respondents. It is possible that the land mine issue is so “obvious” – a feature of living in Afghanistan for the last two decades – that people are not in the habit of talking about it or developing their endogenous coping and smartness systems.

In each of the communities, there are endogenous reference points of mine smartness. Some 70%^{nu} of respondents said they informed the mullahs, maliks and shurras when they became aware of any mine events. Of those who said there was someone in their community promoting mine awareness, 73%^{nu} said it was the mullah. One in every six (17%) said they had heard about mines from the mullahs, but only one in ten say the mullah best helps them to understand mine smartness. These key local opinion makers have often been left out of the loop in much of the mine awareness training. HI has a strong position in favour of linking mine awareness with the local religious structures; a consistent approach on this issue by all the mine awareness agencies could pay high dividends for the programme.

One of the main mechanisms for reinforcing messages after the direct training by mine awareness trainers, is through the formation of mine committees. HI and OMAR both have this as a strong part of their programmes. In practice, the committees are not widely recognised by the communities and there is a need to revisit the implementation process for establishing and maintaining mine committees. The loose definition used by HI – a teacher or a mullah can be the one-person “committee” – may be the closest to a working approach in the present conditions in Afghanistan. The idea should be to link any training opportunity with an endogenous resource, perhaps setting aside the notion that committees are possible or sustainable.

Perhaps the foundation for an endogenous mine smart system is income generation. There is ample evidence in this evaluation to link mine/UXO events to limited economic opportunities. Although it may not initially seem the obvious line of action of a mine awareness agency, development and particularly communication about income generation alternatives should be considered. In discussing the results of this evaluation, it was suggested by the BBC team that they look at ways to do this through the media

available to them. To make a contribution in the domain of alternative income generation, it is not necessary that an agency actually open credit schemes or hire vocational trainers. There is a role for a communications initiative focussing on alternatives.

5. A mine action tracking system

Each of the partners has an internal review or supervisory monitoring process that complies with the letter if not the spirit of their agreement with UNOCHA. Voluminous data are available on the activities carried out and the numbers of people contacted by mine awareness activities. In all three cases, the sheer scale of reported activity is impressive. However, the data were difficult to interpret and more difficult to relate to programme impact. The present evaluation, for all the positive results, demonstrates how an impact is not always the one expected.

Any evaluation carries a risk that not all will turn out to be as it should do. The fact that UNOCHA undertook this evaluation speaks of its commitment to programme transparency and to optimal use of its programme resources. The challenge now will be to keep the door open for change, to encourage the partners to act on the actionable results of the evaluation, to benchmark the progress and to hold up the gains as these are achieved.

If the programme can be retooled to address more fully the issue of mine smartness, the tools exist to monitor progress in changing attitudes and practices. The use of these results to guide programme implementation and continued adjustment is the substance of results-based management of mine smartness.

- **The baseline:** The present baseline establishes indicators of awareness and strategies to promote mine smart behaviour.
- **Participation of mine affected communities and individuals in the process:** the method used in the MAE and in CIET's mine action tracking (MAT) approach is to obtain data in a way that precipitates effective local action. There is a need for ongoing community input for developing locally effective communication channels to promote mine safety.
- **Benchmarking progress:** On-going monitoring of mine affected communities through repeat surveys of these communities allows the MAT to detect gains, "levelling-out" or ineffectiveness of mine action initiatives. Decreases in mine injuries and land loss, as a consequence of mine awareness and mine clearance activities, can help to re-target operations.
- **Mine action end points:** There will not be an end to the need for mine action in Afghanistan in the immediate future. From a donor's point of view, however, it is necessary to detect levelling out of gains of programmes -- as repeat surveys detect a falloff of gains of awareness training. Thus, ineffective programs can be stopped and effective ones reinforced in order to optimise investments.
- **Social audit and governance:** Strong messages about results-based management can be conveyed from systematic monitoring of the impact of mine action. Registering of every case gives them importance; in this way case, messages can be conveyed about the social and human value of women and children.

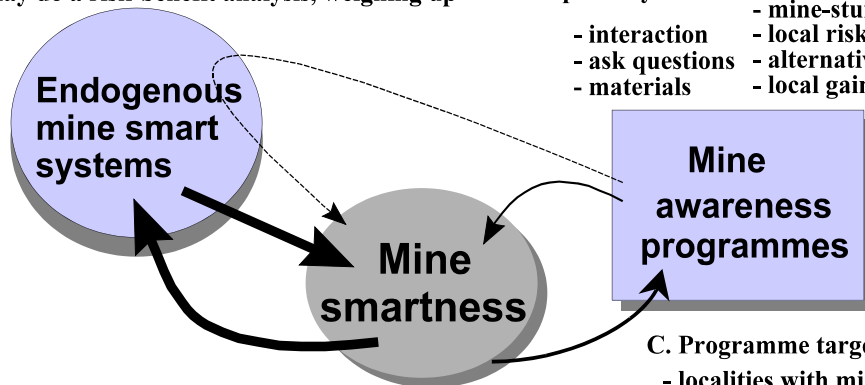
Figure 3
The CIET model of mine smartness

A. Several local factors build smartness

- people see their neighbours affected
- local promoters draw their attention to risks
- they might have a strong sense of security
- they may do a risk-benefit analysis, weighing up

D. Delivery mode and content will determine whether programme has influence *via* endogenous system or separately

- mine-stuff
- interaction
- ask questions
- materials
- local risks
- alternatives
- local gains



B. Self-reinforcing survival

- they do things differently
- they have fewer events
- they know fields, tell others
- increased food and mine security

C. Programme targetted

- localities with mines
- more mine events
- local acceptance