

LIVELIHOODS ANALYSIS OF LANDMINE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

On behalf of the
MINE-ACTION COORDINATION CENTRE FOR AFGHANISTAN (MACCA)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Background to the survey

This pilot survey of 25 villages (out of 2,115 mine-affected communities in Afghanistan) in four provinces assessed the social and economic outcomes of demining, mine/ERW risk education and mine/ERW survivor assistance during June/July 2010. A stakeholder workshop was held in Kabul in February 2011 to discuss the findings.

The survey had four main objectives:

1. Learning – to gain a better understanding of the development outcomes and impacts accruing from demining and how to enhance these through:
 - revisions to criteria for selecting priorities and adaptations to the priority-setting process
 - enhanced linkages with rural and community development organisations
2. Accountability – more complete reporting to the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and donors on the contribution made by the MAPA to Afghanistan's development
3. Capacity Development – ensure the MAPA, in partnership with Afghan livelihoods experts, can conduct and analyse such surveys on a periodic basis
4. Quality Management – inform the post-clearance survey efforts of demining operators (internal QA) and the MACCA/DMC (external QA plus national standards) on quality at the development outcome level

It comes at a time when very significant progress has been made by the Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan (MAPA) towards achieving Ottawa Treaty and Afghan Compact targets (48% and 70% achieved by January, 2010).

Methods used and lessons learned for future surveys

Four teams of Afghan men and women surveyors, each with an embedded Afghan or international social scientist spent two days in each community using a range of qualitative and quantitative methods within a Livelihoods Analysis approach.

The villages were selected from two Regions (Central and North) to give a contrasting sample of: cleared and partially cleared situations, different agro-ecological zones, a mix of contamination types (UXO and/or mines), and urban and rural locations. Commercial demining operations were not included.

In the villages discussions were held separately with men (village leaders, farmers and key informants), women and children (boys and girls). Lessons learned from the methods used include:

- Including women surveyors considerably enhanced the breadth of the information obtained
- The use of a range of participatory tools meant that the information could be “triangulated” for consistency between different sources
- During the survey there were deliberately engineered opportunities for the members to interact within and between teams
- The link with the MRRD's Afghanistan Institute for Rural Development (AIRD) was an excellent initiative, and the two social scientists provided specialist local knowledge to the consultants and methodological support to the survey teams. However, these benefits were later reduced when both social scientists left AIRD for alternative employment

- The translation of village datasets from Dari to English took a long time and detail was lost in the translations

For future surveys it is suggested that the following changes be made to the survey methods:

- A separate set of tools should be developed for the women, who have restricted mobility within and outside the community, to explore those aspects of mine clearance that are particularly important to women, rather than their repeating the tools used by the men. Tools such as daily and seasonal calendars would be appropriate to women.
- While some useful financial information was collected, a more effective (simple, practical) way of gathering costs and revenues from agricultural and non-agricultural economic opportunities arising from demining needs to be incorporated into future surveys.
- In future surveys that don't include international staff it may be possible to remove some of the village selection restrictions, particularly those pertaining to security and access. This might mean that random sampling of villages could be used, rather than purposive sampling.
- The survey teams failed to meaningfully engage with government at the District Focal Points for health, education, agriculture. Future surveys could obtain valuable local information from these key informants.
- Questions omitted from the survey that would have been useful include:
 - What assets freed by demining are **not** being used and why?
 - What is the community reaction to the "nuisance" of mine action – e.g. dust, explosions, wasted land and chemical contamination of land and water
- A major error in planning was the omission of representatives of the 25 surveyed villages in the stakeholder feedback meetings. Village representatives (e.g. village council (*shura*) representatives would have been able to provide an additional perspective on the findings and take the main points back to their villages).
- Future surveys should consider the use of wealth ranking that differentiates households into poor, medium and better off categories and allows sampling within these groups to understand the impacts of demining on different sectors of the community.

A major limitation of this survey was the lack of skill in *probing* (asking a series of follow-up questions in order to obtain detail on important topics). Further training of surveyors will be necessary to get the most out of future surveys.

Development outcomes from mine/UXO action

Cleared land is mostly returned to its rightful owners (government, private or communal ownership) and is quickly used for productive purposes.

In a minority of cases, villagers are unhappy about the unfair and/or undemocratic way in which the land has been used (e.g. opportunistic land grabbing by a local politician in Qal'eh-ye-Khwaja, dominance of "people of power" in Hayratan, and building houses for the "elite" in Qal'eh-ye-Khater).

Ensuring the correct distribution of cleared assets at clearance or the follow-up of any commitments does not appear to have been part of the mine action process.

In some instances requests for clearance were not acted on for a long time (10 years in the case of Kariz-e-Mir). In other cases the process of clearance took up to nine years (Rabat). However, there were sound operational reasons for these delays.

Villagers were satisfied with the conduct and performance of the demining teams, and the village men were often involved in deciding the sequencing of demining operations.

This survey recorded **no casualties** due to mines/UXO after clearance. This commendable record has translated into quick use of the freed assets by men and a great feeling of relief on the part of women (*"The benefit of demining is that we feel safe: if our children go out of the house or our husbands go to work we feel relaxed because they are safe"* - woman, Ala Chapan).

While men emphasise the productive opportunities made possible by clearance plus the infrastructure installed to date, women emphasise the safety and recreational benefits that give them peace of mind and a better life for their children.

Men receive more information than women directly from the demining teams on the demining process and the status of clearance. In a number of instances, village men said that the village and cultivated lands are safe, but that they are unsure about some cleared outlying grazing lands which they have not fully tested for themselves (e.g. Suffokhel).

The wide variety of assets freed and opportunities created following clearance include:

- The freedom to return home from within and outside Afghanistan, and on return to be able to re-build homes, businesses, agricultural enterprises and communities
- The ability to safely access and improve their gardens
- Access to grazing land for cows, sheep and goats, for villagers and nomadic Kuchis
- Access to collect scrub and wood for fuel, stone, sand and soil for building and wild food and medicinal plants
- Cleared land that is used for housing, mosques, schools, telecom masts, cemeteries, storage and petrol stations
- Cleared land and thoroughfares allowing villagers and visitors to use the community for recreation and sport
- Cleared battlefield used for markets/shops
- Cleared corridors that can be used for major infrastructure projects
- Cleared premises allowing factories to re-open or be newly established
- Making safe watercourses that can then be repaired to increase land productivity

The absence of casualties since clearance provides a significant **economic** benefit as the reduction in injury and death has led to reduced medical costs and increased productivity.

The assets freed by demining include crop and grazing land, land for housing and other local construction (schools, mosques, markets, businesses etc.), access to construction materials and fuel, watercourses, roads and strategic structures such as phone masts, railways, electricity pylons etc. Most of these have a tangible economic impact at community and/or national level in the short, medium or long-term.

The benefit:cost ratio for a limited number of clearance situations was calculated. A number of cases (e.g. Qala-i-Kashif, where a battlefield has been cleared and Base Sokhta – a large minefield that was cleared close to Mazar-i-Sharif town) yielded high economic returns, in part by allowing public or private investments on the safe land. In other instances, the clearance of a command post has enabled two factories to start up, while important infrastructure (e.g. phone masts, electricity pylons and a railway) that contributes to national economic development has been made possible by mine clearance

A more common use of cleared land is for cropping or grazing. Unfortunately, the quantitative data collected (or, perhaps, translated) in this survey typically was missing key pieces of information, preventing the proper analysis. However, data collected from the PDIA survey undertaken at about the same time is adequate for ‘good enough’ analysis. In most cases, clearance of minefields for agricultural purposes does not lead to a positive outcome in economic terms alone, in part because agricultural productivity remains low in Afghanistan. There were, however, a number of cases in which good soils, adequate water and reasonable access to markets mean that minefield clearance is a good economic investment. BAC is far less expensive, and the data indicates that battle area tasks will often lead to positive returns, even when only economic benefits are considered.

The survey confirmed that male victims outnumber those of females, and that young men make up the majority of these. However, women are the mothers, wives and sisters of men who make up the majority of mine victims, and their role as care givers for the injured should not go unmentioned.

From the 25 villages, only one example of a woman receiving victim assistance was identified. Support to male survivors is far more common than for women, with nine instances of artificial limbs being made available, and thirteen instances of regular cash payments (mostly from the MoLSAMD). There were few examples of livelihood support. In one village (Kareiz-e-Mir) a survivor was assisted with a loan to open a shop.

Both male and female survivors received free medical treatment in most cases. Such treatment depended on their being able to get to a suitable hospital, which is difficult for more remote villages, especially in winter. Both hospital treatment and government financial support seem to be more common nearer the main centres of Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif.

The amount provided by MoLSAMD appears to be a flat rate of 700 Afghanis per month (roughly \$15). While this is not a living wage, it can help the family to buy basics for the survivor. Several survivors and their families complained that the amount was insufficient.

All villages surveyed received at least some Mine Risk Education, with the adult males and children reporting that they had received more than the adult women. However, the coverage of MRE appears to be far from universal. Not all children attend school to receive their awareness there, and many women have restricted mobility thus reducing their ability to attend meetings. The level of MRE coverage for women appears to vary between villages and between age groups, with younger women more likely to have received MRE. Some MRE visual aids (posters and leaflets) were in evidence, as the following photos show but these were only found in three villages.

Community development priorities

During separate focus group discussions, men and women were asked about the developments that would most benefit their community. Each community was different with regard to proximity to urban

facilities and the level of facilities already present in the village. There was also a marked variability in the cohesion and organisational capacity of different communities. The rapid utilisation of assets following clearance for housing, community amenities and productive gardens is testament to the hard work of individual families and collective action at the community development council (*shura*) level.

The most requested development items are clinics, schools and electricity, followed by drinking water, roads and bridges. All of these are physical infrastructure projects. However, there is also a significant number of requests for educational/vocational and employment initiatives, especially for women who have limited literacy and limited income-generating opportunities. These requests are both for classes and for the facilities that would enable new skills to be practiced for income generation.

It is interesting that agriculture, which is seen as the mainstay of most village economies, comes low down the list of development opportunities, apart from the rehabilitation of damaged water courses which has severely limited productive potential in a number of villages.

The provision or enhancement of assistance to survivors of mine accidents was mentioned (medical care, artificial limbs, appropriate vocational training, loans, grants and regular payments). Also mentioned in some communities was the need to carry on demining until the whole village area is cleared and safe.

Women's development priorities are more related to women's needs (clinic, girls schooling, drinking water, employment for women, literacy courses for women) and also quite consistent across villages.

In general, women are primarily concerned with raising children, housework and activities such as collecting grass for fodder (some households keep a cow for milk), collecting fuel including twigs and dry cow dung, keeping chickens, and work in the fields, especially during harvest and for land preparation.

There was some frustration among the women that development opportunities were not being fully realized. The survey also came across several well educated young women (eight years at school) who were keen to support others by teaching girls or leading literacy classes, but the lack of facilities and teaching materials, as well as a lack of support from their families, had discouraged them. In most villages, boys' schools were more common than those for girls and this means that either girls do not attend school or they have to walk long distances to a school that will accept them. The lack of female teachers and the reluctance of families to allow girls over the age of eight years to be educated by male teachers are also restricting attendance.

While the above analysis provides a good indication of the type and frequency of perceived community needs, the process used to obtain these needs was not comprehensive or democratic. We talked to groups of women and men, but often these groups were self-selecting and opportunistic, rather than necessarily representative of all sections of the community.

Capacity development

This survey was a pilot to test the survey tools and the survey capacities of local organisations. Participatory capacity assessments were conducted with the survey teams at the mid-point of the survey and again at the end. The results indicate that the process of training and implementation had no major hitches, and that the surveyors felt that they are now capable of conducting similar surveys (with the support of social scientists from the Afghan Institute for Rural Development). However, the

actual **data collected by the survey is rather disappointing**. This points to deficiencies in the training, the methodology and the surveyors.

A deficiency in the training was to underestimate the time needed to gain competence in probing (the ability to follow a storyline using the probing prompts who, where, when, why, what and how – including how much and how many).

The methodology relied too heavily on qualitative tools that required the above competence. There was also a set of questions designed to obtain quantitative data describing the changes due to clearance, but in many cases the respondents didn't know the answers and the surveyors did not try to obtain the information by other routes. The methodology also did not fully consider the lack of mobility of rural women, leading to their reduced understanding of activities even within their own village. If this had been fully appreciated from the start, a distinct set of questions would have been designed for the women, rather than duplicating the same questions.

While three or four of the surveyors show promise in being interested in and able to master qualitative survey methods, most rushed the job despite there being sufficient time available to do the job comprehensively following up each question in the manner described above.

The support from AIRD for training and survey implementation was excellent up to the end of the fieldwork, but there is a question about the continuity of employment in AIRD.

Assessment of the prioritisation of hazard clearance

The priority setting process for hazard clearance in Afghanistan is based on specified criteria, including requests from villages; hazards near to resettlement/development areas; hazards that are blocking key assets; the number of affected families; the area of the hazard; small hazards that can be easily cleared; hazards close to community centres; minefields on flat land; presence of ERW. In general, the number of people expected to benefit from the mine action work, and the immediacy of that benefit, are guiding factors when determining mine action priorities. An assessment using these criteria (with weightings) leads to the categorisation of a hazard into one of four categories (high impact, medium impact, low impact and requests).

The findings of this survey show that villagers are satisfied with the prioritisation of cleared areas within their communities. In Suffokhel (Shakardara) the local men said: *"We all appreciate the work of the HALO-Trust because they started the mine cleaning process with the village first, then the agriculture land and pasture, and after that they started mine cleaning in the mountain"*. In another village the women also showed their satisfaction:

In our village the mine cleaning process is successful. The village people take part in the process (men) and encouraged the mine cleaning organization regarding the process. After cleaning the area they distributed land for house making and it was really good and they gave us equally (women in Gojurkhel).

The findings of the livelihood survey encourage MACCA and the DMC that in most cases the priority of villages in term of mine clearance have been appropriately chosen, but it is also to be noted that most of the areas cleared within the surveyed communities are based on the previous approach of MACCA for prioritisation by which AMAC was the key influence in the process. The new approach, by which the IPs are the key decision makers – based on the list of contaminated areas they receive from the MACCA

database - needs to be followed by MACCA through a documented process to make sure that the IPs have also consulted with the relevant communities on their priorities for the tentatively selected areas.

Quality management outcomes of the survey

An objective of this study was to *inform internal and external Quality Assurance on quality at the development outcome level.*

Although there were no specific questions during the survey about the quality of mine clearance conducted in the community by demining organizations, generally it was found that the community members (men and women) are confident that the area is safe after clearance by demining teams. Cleared areas that have economic or cultural value were utilised very quickly after clearance.

The findings of the survey indicate that MACCA has successfully established procedures for monitoring and controlling the technical processes and outputs of mine action such that the area handed over is safe for community use for agriculture, grazing, recreation, passage and construction purposes.

However, the survey also highlights the fact that the Afghanistan mine action Quality Management process does not have an explicit focus on the process of community liaison with mine action personnel. Such community liaison would help to understand the priorities of communities in terms of demining operations, and the degree of satisfaction with the outcomes for different sections of the community and for different purposes. Although the demining organizations claim that they have close contacts and discussions with the villagers, there is no **systematic** approach to ensure, for instance that women are included in these discussions, and this is not followed by Quality Assurance to make sure it happens for all communities.

There are five main areas of outcomes to clearance:

1. The social outcomes of reduced fear, and of feeling safe and relaxed for ones own and ones family's safety, and the use of recreational areas, construction/reconstruction of mosques, schools and other social amenities
2. The humanitarian outcome of eliminating injury and death from mines and UXOs, and providing treatment and support for those affected by mine/UXO accidents
3. The economic outcomes for the community (agriculture, grazing, fuel and construction materials, construction/reconstruction of houses, markets, roads, water courses and other contributors to the local economy)
4. The legal outcome of the correct use of freed assets (e.g. is land allocated to its rightful owners or is it [illegally] appropriated by those with power)
5. The strategic and political outcomes (major constructions of national importance, return of migrants and IDPs etc)

It is suggested that only outcome 2 results are captured through the present QM process. The present system focus is on outputs and not outcomes, and is generally more task related than community-related. Capturing all of the above outcomes would require further investment in skills and finance, but would provide evidence of the social, humanitarian, economic, legal and strategic outcomes that could be presented to government and donors for their support and funding for both clearance **and post-clearance** development activities.

Effective monitoring and controlling systems are essential for programme accountability and quality assurance, and for assessing the full value of outcomes and impact against the resources and money invested. But equally, they are fundamental to learning about processes and problems and hence to improving performance (especially if performance is defined in terms of attainment of community and national objectives).

The MACCA process focuses on the capability of mine action organizations; i.e. their human resources, equipment and procedures, and considers how this capability is being applied to provide the outcome of complete hazard clearance. External monitoring complements an internal monitoring system and verifies that procedures are appropriate and being applied effectively. In addition, external studies or occasional surveys can provide information on those outcomes not covered by the internal quality management processes.

Recommendations

Methodology

- Include women surveyors in future livelihood surveys
- Maintain the link with the MRRD's Afghanistan Institute for Rural Development (AIRD) for specialist social science inputs to surveys
- Develop a separate set of tools for women, who have restricted mobility within and outside the community, to explore those aspects of mine clearance that are particularly important to women, rather than their repeating the tools used by the men. Tools such as daily and seasonal calendars would be appropriate to women
- The survey teams failed to meaningfully engage with government at the District Focal Points for health, education, agriculture. Future surveys could obtain valuable local information from these key informants
- Questions omitted from the survey that should be considered in future include:
 - What assets freed by demining are **not** being used and why?
 - What is the community reaction to the "nuisance" of mine action – e.g. dust, explosions, wasted land and chemical contamination of land and water
- A major error in planning was the omission of representatives of the 25 surveyed villages in the stakeholder feedback meetings. Village representatives would have been able to provide an additional perspective on the findings and take the main points back to their villages
- Future surveys should consider the use of wealth ranking that differentiates households into poor, medium and better off categories and allows sampling within these groups to understand the impacts of demining on different sectors of the community
- The economic benefit of the reduction in hospital costs and lost production has not been quantified. In future surveys the time pattern of casualties from planting of mines through to clearance, and the economic costs of injury and death should be quantified so that these can be factored into the overall economic benefit of clearance
- A minimum dataset needs to be developed for sample situations (e.g. crop production, grazing, small business development, construction projects etc)

Development Outcomes

- In a minority of cases there are abuses in the distribution of free assets after clearance. This particularly involves the appropriation of land by powerful individuals. A mechanism is needed to prevent this abuse before it arises

- Women need to be better and more directly informed about clearance activities and the safety status of land during clearance
- Women survivors of mine accidents are far less likely than men to receive financial assistance from MoLSAMD. This needs to be further understood, and addressed.

Capacity

- The women surveyors need further encouragement and practice in reacting to the answers they receive and asking additional probing questions. They also need further practice in observation – to look around them and ask questions relating to what they see as well as what they are being told
- Further training in probing, or a shift to a more questionnaire-based approach, is needed for future surveys to improve on the quality of information collected.
- MAPA staff would benefit from training in the use of benefit:cost analysis and other economic analysis tools

Prioritisation

- The findings of the survey encourage MACCA and the Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) to **keep the present criteria** used for selection of areas for clearance, but at the same time to identify improvements through conducting similar surveys in other regions
- The estimated outcome value of clearance to the community could be added to the other prioritisation criteria. This means IPs would need to use Livelihood tools **pre-demining** to feed into prioritisation and then into the **post-demining** assessment to see if outcomes have been met
- A stronger and more methodical **community liaison process** (with men, women and children) needs to be established to ensure community engagement in planning and advising clearance

Quality Management

- The present system focus is on outputs and not outcomes, and is generally more task related than community-related. Capturing the social, humanitarian, economic, legal, strategic and political outcomes would require further investment in skills and finance, but would provide evidence of the social, humanitarian, economic, legal and strategic outcomes that could be presented to government and donors for their support and funding for both clearance **and post-clearance** development activities.

The Way Forward

- A suggestion at the stakeholder workshops was to integrate the Livelihoods, Post Demining Impact Assessment (PDIA) and DMC audit processes into one survey process – or to use each type of survey for their separate objectives, but as part of a coherent survey toolbox. The latter is recommended.
- This report should be shared with MRRD and other relevant government departments, as well as with donors and civil society, so that appropriate action can be taken by relevant agencies to support the development needs of men, women and children in mine-affected communities.