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Transitioning Mine Action Programmes to National Ownership | Afghanistan

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Transitioning Mine Action Programmes to National Ownership

Afghanistan

Geneva, November 2012



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This report was written by Ted Paterson, Head, Strategic Management, GICHD

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ACRONYMS

AIMTEIC	Afghan Institute of Management, Training and Enhancement of Indigenous Capacities	MACCA	Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan
AIRD	Afghan Institute for Rural Development	MACG	Mine Action Consultative Group
ALIS	Afghan Landmine Impact Survey	MAPA	Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan
AMAC	Area Mine Action Centre	MCPA	Mine Clearance Planning Agency
ANDMA	Afghan Natural Disaster Management Authority	MDC	Mine Dog and Detection Centre
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy	META	Mine Evaluation and Training Agency
APMBC	Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention	MoD	Ministry of Defence
APRP	Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme	MoE	Ministry of Education
ARCS	Afghan Red Crescent Society	MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ATC	Afghan Technical Consultants	MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
BAC	Battle Area Clearance	MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
CCM	Convention on Cluster Munitions	MRE	Mine Risk Education
CG	Consultative Group	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
DAFA	Demining Agency for Afghanistan	NMAA	National Mine Action Authority
DMC	Department of Mine Clearance	NPP	National Priority Programme
DSU	Disability Support Unit	OMAR	Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal	QA	Quality Assurance
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War	QC	Quality Control
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining	QM	Quality Management
GoA	Government of Afghanistan	SHA	Suspected Hazardous Area
HI	Handicap International	UN	United Nations
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IED	Improvised Explosive Device	UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
IMAS	International Mine Action Standards	UNMAT	United Nations Mine Action Team
IMB	Inter-Ministerial Body	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action	UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
IOP	Integrated Operational Plan	UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
JCMB	Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board	VTF	Voluntary Trust Fund (for Mine Action)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Afghanistan is a mountainous and ethnically diverse country where successive national governments have failed to exert effective authority over the country's varied regions. The 1979 Soviet invasion led Muslim and Western governments to channel support to *mujahedeen* forces, igniting a civil war which, essentially, continues today. The conflicts have led to extensive contamination by landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).

Following the 1989 departure of Soviet forces, the international community initiated support for what has come to be called the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA). The organisations comprising the MAPA have been largely successful, both individually and collectively, and the overall programme has evolved through a number of stages:

- Tentative beginnings (1988-90) – the initial, failed efforts by the UN and (more successfully) international NGOs to initiate mine action activities
- Establishment and expansion (1990-96) – the creation of the first Afghan Mine Action “NGOs” and the build-up of both the NGOs and the programme coordination mechanism in Islamabad
- Relocating to Afghanistan (1996-2002) – the long process of relocating programme planning and management functions from Pakistan to Afghanistan, which led to a Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (MACCA) based in Kabul, but dominated by international personnel
- MAPA in the post-Taliban era (2002-2007) – a second expansion in the size of the programme plus the beginnings of engagement with legitimate national authorities

With the submission of Afghanistan's Article 5 Extension Request, the MAPA now seems to be approaching the end of its latest phase; one characterised by (i) a tighter focus on medium-term performance targets, (ii) another burst of growth, (iii) a progressive shift to the nationalisation of the MACCA's management team and (iv) more concerted efforts to initiate a transition to national ownership.

Faltering first steps

Compared to other first-generation mine action programmes, from almost the start, Afghans have featured prominently in senior management functions. In particular, a number of the Afghan mine action NGOs grew into large and capable demining operators. They were coordinated by a fairly small, UN-managed MAC that – due to the insecurity throughout Afghanistan – remained based in Islamabad.

This changed dramatically following the overthrow of the Taliban in late 2001. MACCA relocated to Kabul with a significantly expanded complement of international personnel, which served to marginalise the many capable Afghans working in the MACCA. Given this, it is unsurprising that the MACCA's first vision for transition adhered to the conventional wisdom at the time within the international mine action community: an inter-ministerial committee serving as national authority, reporting to a vice president, under which would be the national Mine Action Centre (MAC). The MACCA envisaged that it would subsequently transition to a nationally-managed MAC.

With this vision for the NMAA and MAC in mind, in 2004 the UNDP and MACCA launched a mine action transition project that aimed to reverse the setback in nationalisation and accelerate the transfer of ownership from the UN to the Government of Afghanistan (GoA). However, the project ended prematurely in late 2006 after the UNDP advisor concluded the pre-conditions for a successful transition were absent. Most fundamentally, the Government had never expressed interest in assuming responsibility for mine action; as well, the participating UN agencies did not reach an agreement on a transition plan, which prevented constructive engagement with the GoA.



Subsequently, the draft legislation to create a national mine action programme was abandoned, due in part to opposition of the Department for Mine Clearance (DMC), a government unit established in 1990 which had been largely ignored. That opposition from such a weak source could block the legislation suggests there was no champion for transition within the government and no group, such as the Afghan mine action NGOs, pressing the government to make a commitment to transition.

Nationalisation without ownership

Taking a different approach, a new MACCA management team – headed for the 1st time by an Afghan – convened a ‘national mine action symposium’ in December 2007. This led to a meeting of an ‘inter-ministerial body’ (IMB) and, eventually, to the designation that DMC would remain the ‘government focal point’ for mine action. However, this was an *ad hoc* initiative and the decision that DMC would serve as focal point could not be interpreted as a GoA commitment to strengthen DMC and prepare for transition. Regardless, the decision represented a consensus among key ministries and, shortly afterwards, the MACCA offered to have DMC collocate within the its compound. MACCA initiated a number of activities aimed at developing DMC capacities for coordination of demining and of mine action overall.

This was consistent with a new approach to transition in which the MACCA worked to enhance the capacity of existing organisations. This had begun with agreements in 2007 for MACCA support to:

- The ministries of Education and Public Health, together with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, for MRE
- The ministries of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled, Education, and Public Health for Victim Assistance

MACCA also published transition objectives in its annual plan for 2009-10, including a 2013 target date for transition, and reported progress in subsequent annual plans.

Some progress was indeed achieved. But DMC and the Afghan ministries remained dependent on the expertise and financing provided by MACCA. More troubling, the GoA made no effort to strengthen DMC or to enhance its negligible status (e.g. DMC had no input into or control of its budget, and did not even have a stamp, which prevented it from sending official communications to other government units). At the same time, key donors and UNMAS headquarters have not engaged the Government on the issue of transition. As a result, when it came time to prepare Afghanistan’s Article 5 Extension Request for submission in March 2012, the burden fell entirely to the MACCA. The Extension Request does sketch out a possible path to transition, but at the time of writing there has been no signal from the GoA how it intends to proceed.

On the other hand, UNMAS was able to fully nationalise the management structure in MACCA, with the few remaining international staff reverting to advisory roles. This was a significant achievement – where international technical assistance personnel actually did achieve the oft stated goal of ‘putting themselves out of a job’ – and it demonstrates confidence in the capability of Afghan mine action managers to run a large and complex programme. But it does not constitute transition to national ownership; for this, the GoA must show willingness to accept ultimate responsibility and to discuss how to transfer responsibility, which has not happened.

INTRODUCTION

Key features of the history, society, and economy

At 647,500 km² (about 50% larger than Iraq), Afghanistan is a mountainous and ethnically diverse country. The largest ethnic group among the estimated 29 million people is Pashtun, followed in size by Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek. The country's borders cut through the traditional homelands of many ethnic groups, leaving Pashtun divided between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Tajik and Uzbek Afghans split from those in the Central Asian republics. This has complicated efforts by successive national governments to exert authority over the country's diverse regions, which remains a recurrent theme in the political economy of the country.

These difficulties have been magnified by interference from neighbouring countries, often facilitated by the cross-border ethnic and religious affiliations, which also bolster informal trade (i.e. smuggling) and further reinforce regional divisions. Prolonged conflict has also seen the growth of war economies, especially opium, which provide revenues and regional power bases for insurgents and the many warlords (or, more politely, "commanders").

The 1979 Soviet invasion led Muslim and Western governments to channel support to *mujahedeen* forces, igniting a civil war. Fierce resistance wore down the Soviets forces, who exited in 1989. The *mujahedeen* finally toppled the pro-Soviet regime headed by Najibullah in 1992 but then continued fighting among themselves. While a government of sorts was formed, it remained under constant attack by other factions, reducing much of Kabul to ruins. The anarchy only ended with the Taliban movement, which took Kandahar (late 1994), Herat (1995) and Kabul (1996). Some anti-Taliban forces then united under the Northern Alliance, controlling about 20% of the country. The conflict continued until late 2001 when the U.S.-led coalition threw its weight behind the Northern Alliance. By December 2001, their forces captured Kabul and the Afghanistan Interim Authority was installed.

However, the Taliban were not destroyed. Initially, much of the effort to eliminate the Taliban was left in the hands of regional "commanders" financed by the U.S. This proved unsuccessful and alienated the population.¹ The Taliban resumed operations in Afghanistan starting in early 2003 and regained control over large areas, leading to renewed conflict. Because of this, security remains the central issue in Afghanistan. It is a pre-condition for revitalising the legitimate economy and for the government to establish even minimal credibility. Progress on the peace-building agenda requires wholesale reform of the country's security sector, demobilisation of multiple militias and the destruction of vast quantities of arms.

In this difficult environment, international efforts to foster a legitimate government have largely floundered. After being anointed by Western powers as head of the Interim Authority in 2001, Hamid Karzai has been declared the victor in two presidential elections, in spite of widespread allegations of rigged voting. His government is widely viewed as both ineffective and corrupt. Regardless, in 2009 the government initiated peace talks with some elements of the Taliban. Progress on this front was set-back seriously with the assignation of the chief government peace negotiator, Burhanuddin Rabbani in September 2011.

The Contamination Problem

Explosives contamination in Afghanistan stems from:

¹ See for example, "...regions that show up as "Low Risk...on United Nations security maps are areas where local populations often report high levels of conflict and are experiencing insecurity at the hands of armed political groups, warlords, commanders and their associates." Feinstein International Famine Center, 2004, Human Security and Livelihoods of Rural Afghans, 2002-2003, Tufts University, p 7.

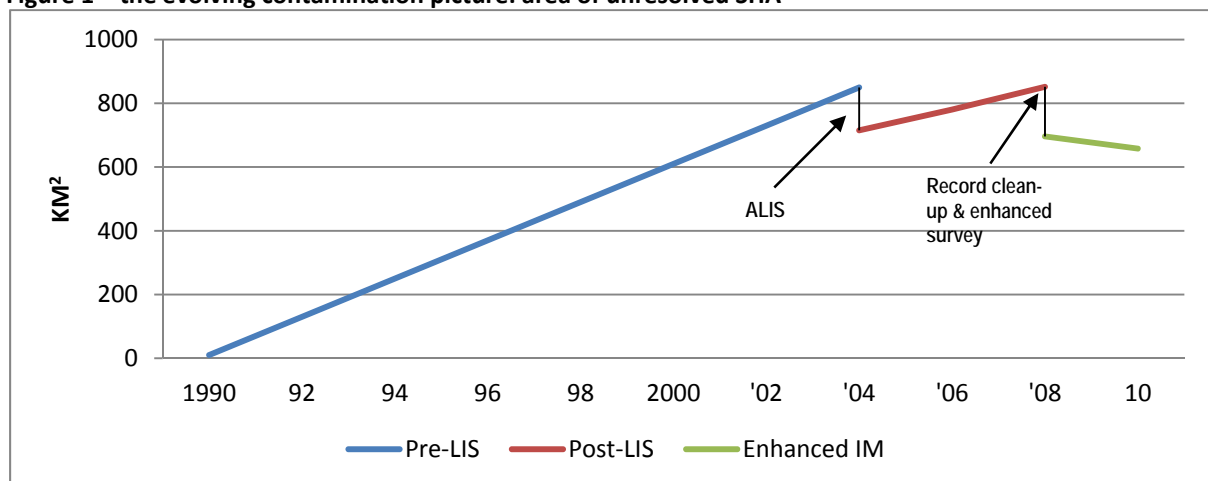
- The Soviet intervention – 1979-89
- The campaigns by the *mujahedeen* against the Najibullah regime – 1989-92
- The civil war among various *mujahedeen* factions – 1992-95
- The civil war between *mujahedeen* factions and the Taliban – 1995-2001
- The U.S.-led coalition campaign to overthrow the Taliban – 2001
- Continued conflict between the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), coupled with the Afghan National Army, against the Taliban and other insurgency groups.

No one has been able to provide a definitive assessment of the contamination problem, for a number of reasons:

- The Afghanistan programme began when “humanitarian” demining² was an emerging discipline, with limited capacity to conduct systematic surveys
- Mine action personnel have not had secure access to the entire country
- Significant contamination stems from mines scattered from the air by the Soviets, and is in remote, inaccessible locations
- The absence of a functioning government in much of the country means there is no simple channel to report contamination to authorities
- Continued fighting has led to new contamination.

A reasonably thorough picture of the contamination was provided by the Afghan Landmine Impact Survey (ALIS), completed in late 2004. It reduced the total suspected hazardous area (SHA) remaining from about 850 km² to 715 km² (14%). However, the discovery of new contamination³ plus slow updating of records led the remaining SHA figure to creep-up again, reaching a maximum of 852 km² in 2007. It has since fallen slowly due to record clean-up and more rapid release of SHA through enhanced survey and better information management, as well as clearance.

Figure 1 – the evolving contamination picture: area of unresolved SHA



The ALIS also provided a new way of assessing the impact of contamination in Afghanistan. As with LIS conducted in other countries, it focussed more on communities than on individual hazards, finding that 2,368 communities (8% of the national total) – home to 4.2 million people (15% of

² In mine action, ‘humanitarian’ usually means simply ‘non-military’ and not for a commercial purpose. Thus, humanitarian mine action may support broader humanitarian, reconstruction, peace-building, and development programmes.

³ Since the completion of the ALIS, 3,285 hazards have been added, including 1,224 minefields totalling 67 sq. km. See Table 48 on page 157 of the Article 5 Extension request.

Afghanistan's population) – were impacted by explosives contamination. Almost 2,500 recent victims (i.e. within the two previous years) were identified.

HISTORY OF THE MINE ACTION PROGRAMME FOR AFGHANISTAN

The evolution of MAPA can be divided into a number of phases:

- Tentative beginnings (1988-90) – the initial, failed efforts by the UN and (more successfully) international NGOs to initiate mine action activities
- Establishment and expansion (1990-96) – the creation of the first Afghan Mine Action “NGOs” and the build-up of both the NGOs and the programme coordination mechanism in Islamabad
- Relocating to Afghanistan (1996-2002) – the long process of relocating programme planning and management functions from Pakistan to Afghanistan
- MAPA in the post-Taliban era (2002-2007) – a second expansion in the size of the programme plus the beginnings of engagement with legitimate national authorities

The MAPA has now entered a new phase characterised by (i) a tighter focus on medium-term performance targets, (ii) another burst of growth, and (iii) more concerted efforts to initiate a transition to national ownership.

Tentative beginnings: 1988-90

The signing of the Geneva Accords in 1988 led to optimistic predictions of impending peace and the repatriation of millions of refugees, but it was apparent that landmines were a major impediment. In July 1988, HALO Trust started a small programme in Kabul. Shortly thereafter, the UN commenced its mine action activities by (i) funding MRE for refugees, and (ii) using Western military personnel to train thousands of refugees in basic clearance techniques. This UN effort was an abject failure, which pointed to the need for a different approach.⁴

Establishment & Expansion: 1990-95

Switching strategy, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) then decided to encourage the establishment of what have become known as the Afghan Mine Action NGOs (although in fact these were established in Pakistan under special registration provisions for Afghan “NGOs”⁵).⁶ Most international donors channelled funding via the UN to finance the Afghan mine action NGOs, giving the Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (MACCA⁷) great leverage.

HALO Trust aside, the programme functioned more like an industrial conglomerate than a network of independent organisations. In essence, the MACCA served as the corporate headquarters, with the operators functioning like divisions that had to operate within the corporate strategy and

⁴ See Florence, Colonel Brian and Jim Freedman, 1991, Evaluation of the Mine Clearance Programme in Afghanistan, available at <http://www.gichd.org/lima/reports-publications/detail/publications/evaluation-of-the-mine-clearance-programme-in-afghanistan/>

⁵ These organisations were formed as delivery mechanisms for the UN and lack both the governance structures and independence that most knowledgeable people would expect of an NGO.

⁶ The first of these – Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC) – was created as a clearance organisation in October 1989, followed by the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), which specialised in minefield survey and data base management. The Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA), Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR), and the Mine Dog and Detection Centre (MDC) followed in subsequent years. Additional partners were added over time, most of which were involved in MRE.

⁷ From 1989-2008 it was called the UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA). MACCA has never been a legal entity; rather, it is a UN project (currently, an UNMAS project executed by UNOPS).

operations plan, but each with some independence in how they achieved the objectives set for them. The annual operations plans were prepared collectively.

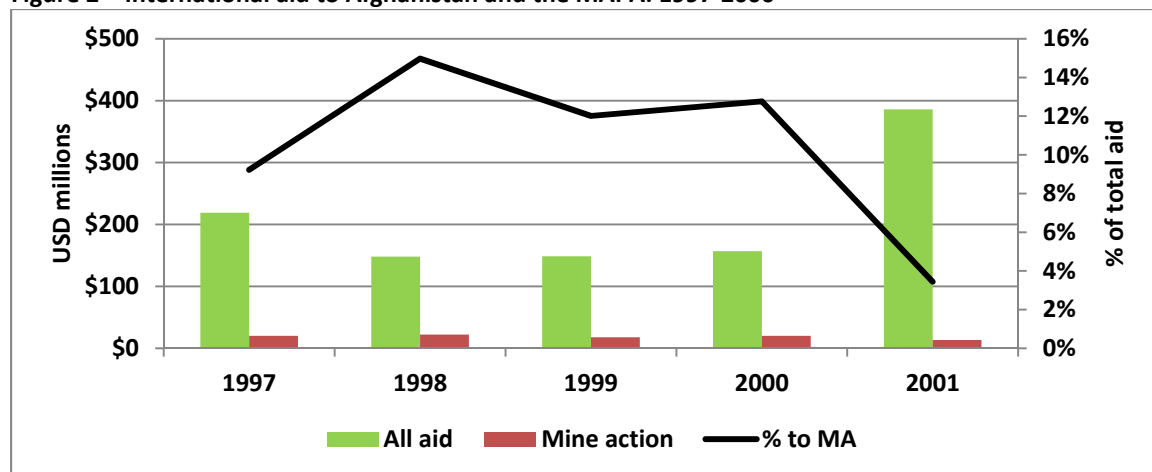
MACCA’s leverage – and its ability to institute this ‘conglomerate model’ – was based on more than its control over much of the funding. None of the Afghan NGOs could operate with full independence even at the individual task level. For example, a demining task might entail a survey by MCPA (which had all the survey capacity), followed by a task order by MACCA to an operator with clearance assets (ATC, DAFA or OMAR), with META providing QA inspections. MDC supplied dog teams – it did not have the capacity to undertake survey or clearance on its own. MCPA would record all data. The model was successful in many ways and the programme expanded rapidly.

Relocating to Afghanistan: 1995-2002

In the anarchy following the Soviet withdrawal, the MACCA was based in Islamabad. It had only five international personnel supported by a few local staff. However, because of the excellent relationships between MACCA and the Afghan NGOs, buttressed by UN control of the finances, this small unit was able to coordinate the programme. However, as different regions of the country evolved on diverse trajectories, the separation of MACCA and NGO headquarters in Pakistan from the work in Afghanistan became increasingly problematic. Once security improved with the emergence of the Taliban in 1994, the NGOs opened offices in Afghanistan. UNOCHA then established Area Mine Action Centres (AMAC) in the country. From the start these were managed by Afghans – the first management positions in the MACCA occupied by Afghans.

The MAPA operated more or less effectively during the 1996-2002 period. MAPA partners were able to operate in areas under both Taliban and Northern Alliance control, and mine action was widely recognised as one of the most effective aid programmes in the country.⁸ Regardless, donor governments appeared to lose patience with Mine Action. Instead of providing a solution (i.e. once the mines are cleared the problem is resolved), Mine Action in Afghanistan came to look like a never-ending proposition. New landmines were being laid by both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. Even without the new minefields, MAPA partners kept finding more contamination than they were clearing. As well, the MACCA management team failed to deliver a credible strategic plan.⁹ In 2001, mine action funding plummeted in both absolute terms (to just over \$13 million in 2001 from an average of \$20 million in the three previous years) and, even more so, as a percentage of all aid to Afghanistan (to 3.8% compared to an average of 13% in the three previous years).

Figure 2 – International aid to Afghanistan and the MAPA: 1997-2000



⁸ See, for example, van Ree et al (2001), Report on the Review of UNOCHA’s Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, for CIDA, Japan and ODA (U.K.).

⁹ In lieu of a Strategy, the MACCA management team compiled a Powerpoint presentation.

It is unclear whether the decline in Mine Action funding would have continued because the attack on the World Trade Center of 11 September 2001 led to dramatic changes in both Afghanistan and the international engagement in the country. Within a year, MACCA had relocated to Kabul and come under the responsibility of UNMAS, and the Mine Action programme was growing rapidly.

MAPA in the post-Taliban Period: 2002-07

After the World Trade Centre bombings on 11 September 2001, the Northern Alliance – backed by the U.S.-led coalition – breached Taliban lines and quickly took control of the entire country. The MAPA partners lost much of their equipment in the conflict. They quickly had to resume operations and undertake a rapid assessment of the new hazards stemming from coalition bombing. Clearance priorities also needed to be altered to deal with cluster bomb strikes and to address the return of displaced persons to their homes. The MRE programme had to be overhauled, with women instructors re-engaged and programmes established for refugee camps and transit centres. Large-scale reconstruction projects, particularly roads and airports, also required demining support.

The installation of the interim government meant the end of the UNOCHA mandate. The UN transferred MACCA to UNMAS and moved it from Islamabad to Kabul, just as hundreds of other agencies were establishing offices in the capital. New staff had to be added to handle the administrative, finance, and logistics functions previously provided by UNOCHA in Islamabad. The number of international positions more than tripled to over 20. MACCA and its implementing partners responded effectively to the challenges, and donors increased funding almost fivefold. In 2003, Afghanistan became a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

Given the large number of returnees and the substantial requirements for demining support to reconstruction projects, mine action was seen by donors as a key sector. The Mine Action Consultative Group (MACG – a government-donor mechanism designed to enhance aid effectiveness) was formed in the same year under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). Mine action also featured in both the Afghan Compact, agreed in London in February 2006, and the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) adopted in 2008.

The targets set in the Afghan Compact and ANDS envisaged that, by 1 March 2013 (Afghanistan’s Article 5 deadline), SHA recorded at the time (the ‘baseline’ of 720 km²) would be demined. However, SHA continued to be discovered, so the ANDS noted that “A capacity to remove mines and ERWs beyond the 2013 MAPA transition deadline probably will be needed.” (p. 55)

Table 1 – Afghan Compact and ANDS Targets for Mine Action

Target	Indicator & status	Comments
All stockpiled anti-personnel mines will be located and destroyed by 20 March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In October 2007, the GoA announced the achievement of the Ottawa Treaty obligation to destroy all known stockpiles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 480,000 anti-personnel landmines have been destroyed. Some stockpiles may not have been located
The area contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance will be reduced by 70% by the end of 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Square meters of land released as safe. The baseline is 720 million m² of suspected hazardous areas (SHA), implying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 540 million m² need to be released by the end of 2010 648 million m² by the end of 2012 720 million m² by 1 March 2013 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On target relative to the baseline, however... New SHA continue to be discovered.
Clear 90% of all known SHA by 1391 (2012)		
Clear all emplaced anti-personnel mines by 1391 (1 March 2013) as per the Ottawa Convention.		

MAPA since 2007

The increase in the roster of international personnel in the MACCA after 2002 enabled the rapid rebuilding, then expansion, of capacities. However, productivity drifted downwards (see Figure 3 – Demining Outputs) and the MAPA was seen as resistant to the adoption of techniques pioneered elsewhere. In addition, the increase in numbers of international personnel meant some crowding-out of capable national managers. No Afghan managers occupied high profile positions. At one point a position of Deputy Director was established and reserved for an Afghan national, but never filled.

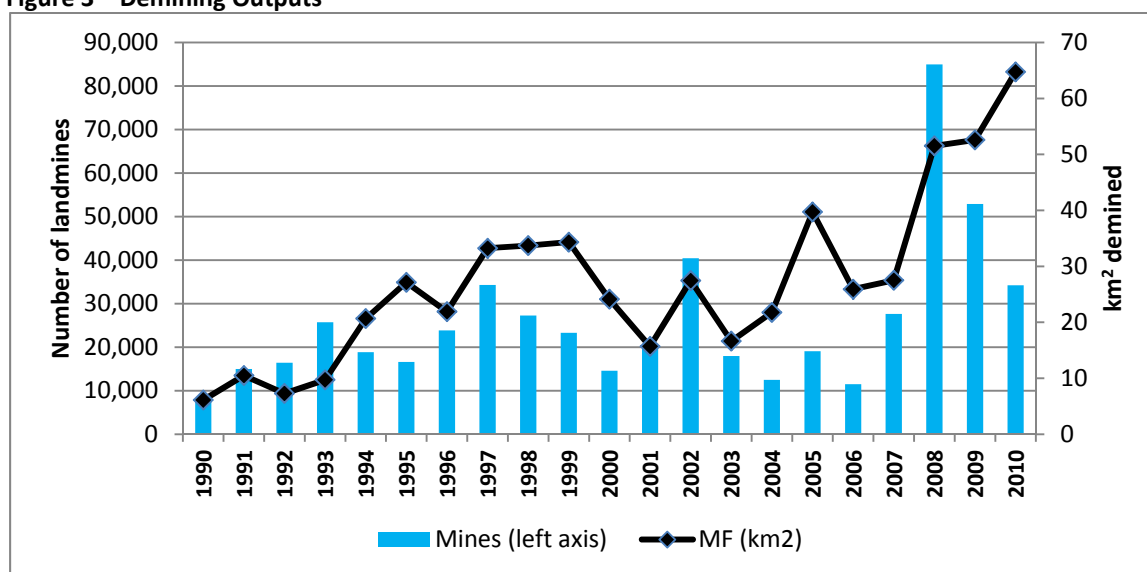
Finally, in mid-2007 UNMAS created a new management structure at the MACCA and appointed Dr Haider Reza – the first chair of the MACG, who was widely viewed as effective – as Programme Director. Shortly after, another Afghan was appointed Operations Manager. The new management team instituted a number of reforms to operations and broader programme management.¹⁰

Table 2 – MAPA Reforms

Broad reforms	Operations reforms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced information management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Full-service’ Afghan demining NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised criteria for priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Criteria for resource allocation ○ Criteria for task priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced survey processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Landmine Impact Assessment Teams ○ Polygon survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regionalisation of Afghan demining NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-man lanes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ‘business model’ based on contracting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller demining teams

These led to substantial improvements in the key outputs delivered from the demining programme.

Figure 3 – Demining Outputs

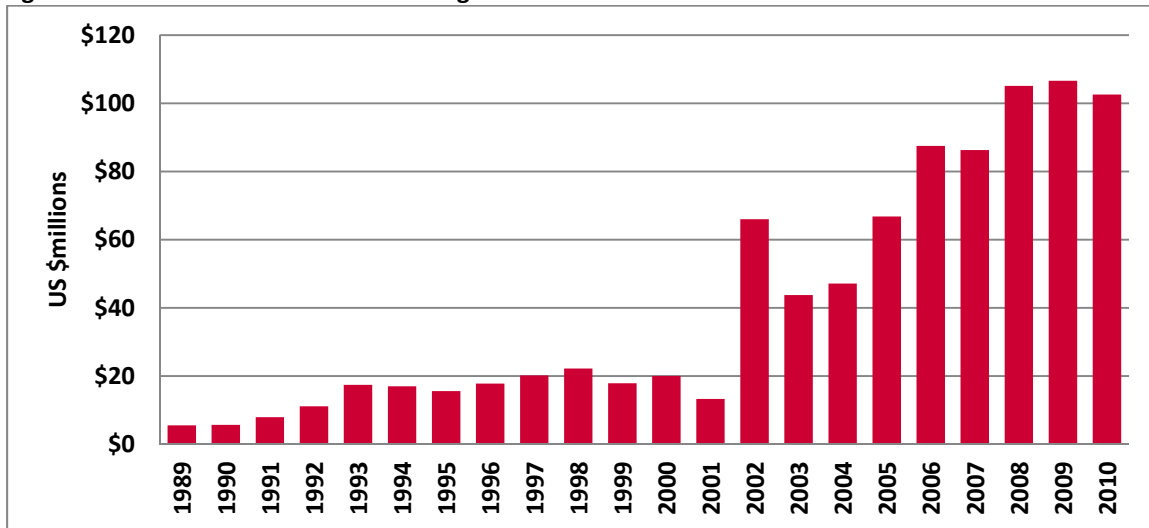


In turn, these improvements bolstered donor confidence and led to another expansion in funding.¹¹

¹⁰ See Paterson et al (2008), Assessment of the Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (MACA), GICHD, www.gichd.org/links-information-database/research-and-evaluation-reports/country/linksdb/countries/afghanistan/

¹¹ For an assessment at the time, see Paul Davies and Bruce Todd (2010), Mid-Term Evaluation of the Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan, HTSPE Limited for EU, available at <http://www.gichd.org/links-information-database/research-and-evaluation-reports/country/linksdb/countries/afghanistan/>

Figure 4 – Estimated international funding to MAPA 1989-2010¹²



¹² The Graph does not include financing for commercial operators, estimated at \$85 million in 2010.

GOVERNMENT AND DONOR ENGAGEMENT IN MINE ACTION

Afghanistan has been a fragile state for decades. The international community is insufficiently equipped, coordinated, and coherent¹³ to achieve success in the complex task of developing a nation, and success ultimately depends on the emergence of a reasonably capable and committed national government. But a transition from dependency on international actors to national ownership is fraught with problems due to real differences in strategic approach that inevitably will emerge, plus the fact that the state apparatus has limited capacity to plan and implement a multi-dimensional development effort.

Most donors want transition in principle, but they may believe the government lacks the capacity or commitment to manage a sector. Transferring authority to national officials means donors face fiduciary and ‘reputational’ risks that some of their funds may be stolen or wasted.¹⁴ As well, in insecure countries such as Afghanistan, donors have trouble attracting and retaining personnel who are sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced to manage risks effectively (i.e. who could determine when accepting risk is a worthwhile gamble and when it is not). As a result, donors generally avoid risks, hampering the transition to national ownership.

This has been the case in Afghanistan for most of the period since the mine action programme began. While large amounts have been spent on capacity building, ill-coordinated donor assistance has created a fragmented “second civil service” – an estimated 7,000 Afghan consultants managing projects – without building sufficient government capacity and, perhaps, even reducing existing capacity.¹⁵ Given this, transition in mine action needs to be seen as part of the broader transition to national ownership and the evolving relationship between the government and the international community.

The Government’s Role in Mine Action

From the Soviet time, limited survey and clearance operations were undertaken by the army. In 1988 the Najibullah Government established the National Commission for Mine/ERW Clearance under the leadership of the Prime Minister. This Commission included representatives from 15 ministries, including the Ministry of Defence.

The Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) was established via an executive decree in 1990 as the Coordination and Secretariat Centre of the National Commission.¹⁶ Originally, it was purely military. When the Najibullah government fell in 1992, the National Commission was dismissed, but DMC was converted into a civilian agency and appended to the Disaster Preparedness Department (which later became the Afghan Natural Disaster Management Authority – ANDMA¹⁷). It has remained in existence ever since, although with scant resources and modest capacity until MACCA began to provide greater support, starting in 2008.

¹³ ‘Coherence’ usually refers to how well the 3Ds – the defence, diplomacy, and development arms of each government – work together on a complex problem.

¹⁴ See OECD, *Managing Risks in Fragile and Transitional Contexts: The Price of Success?* 2011

¹⁵ The embassies, aid agencies, consulting firms and international NGOs hired many of the most capable Afghan public servants, in many cases destroying capacity faster than it could be developed. The same happened with the Afghan NGO sector, which resulted in the bankruptcy of a number of the largest NGOs, including AREA, which had developed the initial community-based demining projects in Afghanistan.

¹⁶ Decree No 1- 1969 dated 15 January 1990.

¹⁷ ANDMA itself serves as secretariat to the National Commission for Disaster Management, comprising representatives from about 20 ministries, headed by the President. ANDMA has approximately 170 employees and its budget of \$1.5 million is barely sufficient to cover personnel costs. (Afghanistan Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction, March 2011)

International Mine Action Support Prior to 2002

Prior to 2002, international support was channelled directly to international NGOs or through UNOCHA. In turn, most of the UNOCHA funds were passed-on to the Afghan mine action NGOs. This made the MACCA appear cost effective because a large share of total funds seemingly went to operations rather than coordination. Part of this was slight-of-hand as the MACCA had created specialised Afghan NGOs to deliver services normally discharged by a mine action centre, such as maintenance of the national database (done by MCPA) and quality assurance and control inspections (done initially by MCPA, then by META). Regardless, this strategy allowed the MACCA to operate with few international personnel. With the Afghan NGOs and the AMACs in Afghan hands, a large number of capable Afghans had the opportunity to develop technical expertise and management experience.¹⁸

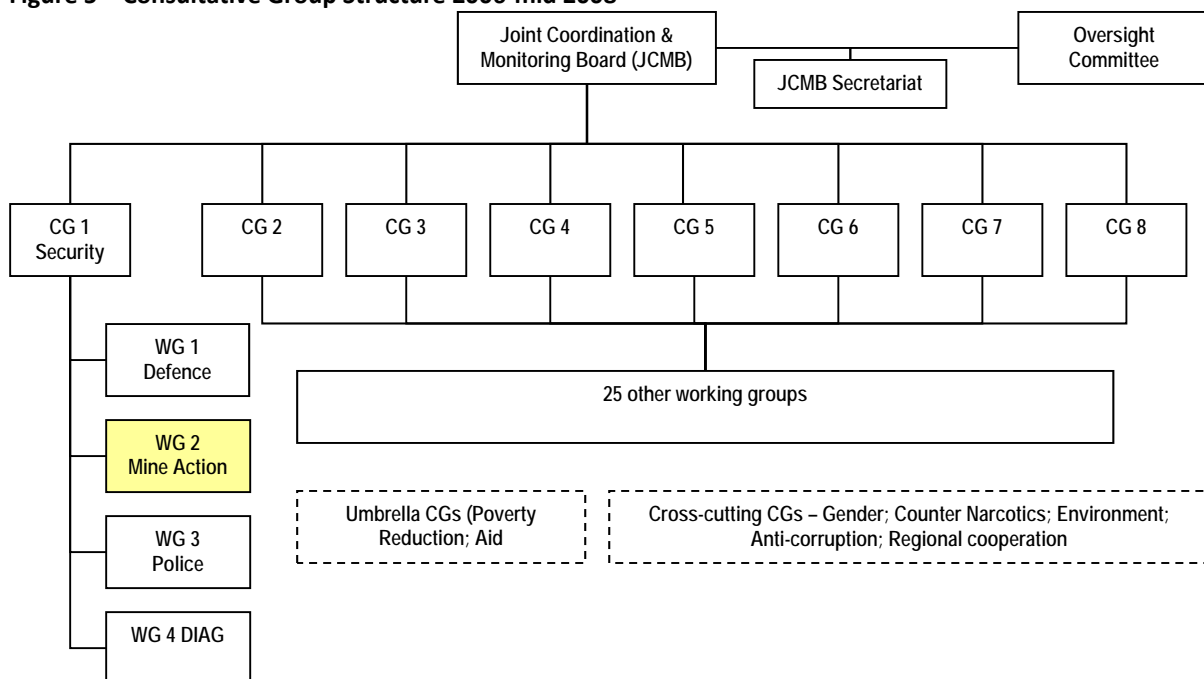
Government-Donor Coordination Since 2002

Overall coordination mechanisms

Seeking to avoid some of the confusion created by the rush of donors into a fragile situation, the World Bank pushed for a comprehensive aid coordination mechanism in Afghanistan, and tried to align this with the government’s priorities and ways of doing business. The mechanism went through a number of modifications over the years. A simplified structure was agreed at the London Conference in early 2006, the same time as the Afghan Compact (see Figure 5).

This featured eight Consultative Groups (CG), each with a number of Working Groups reporting to it, along with two ‘umbrella CGs’ and another five covering cross-cutting issues, all reporting to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). The JCMB, comprising seven GoA and 21 international members, was the senior body for policy dialogue and joint problem solving, serving as the ‘custodian of the Afghan Compact’.

Figure 5 – Consultative Group Structure 2006-mid 2008



¹⁸ A number of Afghan nationals from mine action have subsequently embarked on international careers.

At the Paris Conference in July 2008, the GoA and its international partners agreed to keep the JCMB but to streamline the rest of the structure as follows:¹⁹

Table 3 – New aid coordination mechanisms

Level	Body	Roles
1	JCMB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main forum for joint policy formulation, problem solving and strategic coordination • ensure donor funds spent efficiently & in coordinated fashion • promote mutual accountability • ensure strategic priorities are set & adjusted with changing context
2	Standing Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one Committee per pillar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Security (includes mine action) ○ Governance, Rule of Law, Human Rights ○ Economic & Social Development
3	Task Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set-up by Steering Committees to focus on specific priorities • time-bound • prepare policy papers & recommendations for Steering Committees

In advance of the Tokyo conference in July 2012, the GoA also formulated 22 ‘National Priority Programmes’ (NPPs) within six ‘clusters’, and asked donors to use these as a framework for their assistance programmes.²⁰ The Security Cluster included one NPP – the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) – that incorporates some mine action projects. Mine action also was identified as a cross cutting issue in the Government’s “Towards Self Reliance” paper presented in Tokyo, but it is not mentioned explicitly in any of the NPPs. However some kind of mine action response will be required to support a number of NPPs (e.g. rural road access programme; extractive industry programme) and DMC/MACCA’s work is relevant to the NPP covering the rights of people with disability and governance strengthening.



Coordination for Mine Action

For some time in the post-Taliban period, donor coordination via the Mine Action Consultative Group (MACG – later renamed the Mine Action Working Group) was relatively effective. The departure of the first MACG Chair (Dr Reza) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coupled with the rotation of key aid agency staff from Kabul, led to a decline in the effectiveness of donor coordination, as well as coordination between the government and donors. In recent years, a limited number of donors attend (somewhat sporadically) the monthly Stakeholders Meeting chaired by MACCA, which is also draws UNMAS, all MAPA operators and DMC.

¹⁹ JCMB co-chairs, Report on the Implementation of the Afghanistan Compact (for The International Conference In Support Of Afghanistan, Paris, 12 June 2008).

²⁰ See <http://mof.gov.af/en/page/3976>

STEPS TOWARDS TRANSITION

Nationalisation without ownership

Afghanistan's mine action programme represents a unique case in many ways, and demonstrates the critical influence of the broader political and economic context on a mine action programme. For example, the fact that the UN operated from Pakistan prior to 2002 led to the decision to create the Afghan Mine Action NGOs to conduct operations inside Afghanistan. The opportunity provided by generous funding and significant autonomy allowed these NGOs to develop a cadre of capable managers and to demonstrate a track record of success that was sufficient to convince some donors to fund them directly. As a result, there was a significant degree of nationalisation of management functions (one vital aspect of local ownership) from the early days of mine action in Afghanistan. The graduation of some of these capable Afghan managers into important positions within the international mine action field ensured there was continued support for this 'Afghan model'.

At the same time, no progress was made prior to 2002 on engaging with the government and building its commitment to assume ownership for the simple reason that there was no recognised and credible government in place. This lack of progress prevailed in the years immediately following the expulsion of the Taliban: for example, MACCA showed no interest in building the capacity of the DMC. Instead, it formulated draft legislation that reflected the prevailing consensus among the UN and the main mine action donors: a new, semi-autonomous statutory body should serve as the national mine action centre and secretariat to the national authority (an inter-ministerial committee reporting to the Office of the President).²¹

The relocation of MACCA to Kabul also represented a temporary setback for the nationalisation of programme management. The influx of international mine action personnel to Kabul reduced the management scope of senior Afghans. Additional opportunities for talented Afghans only appeared with the decision to appoint Dr Reza as the MACCA Director in 2007, marking the start of an effort by UNMAS to nationalise the management of MACCA.

UNDP Mine Action Transition Project

The UNDP (which has the lead role within the UN mine action system for capacity development) had not been involved with the Afghan programme prior to the instalment of the Karzai regime. Following a 2003 assessment of transition options,²² UNDP launched a 'mine action transition project' in 2004 that aimed to reverse the setback in nationalisation and accelerate the transfer of ownership from the UN to the GoA. The first transition advisor was unsuccessful and departed early. UNDP persevered and engaged an experienced capacity development specialist, who began in June 2005. UNDP and MACCA established a Mine Action Transition Coordination Office that same month.

However, the UNDP advisor concluded the pre-conditions for a successful transition were absent. In particular: *Transition and handing over can only be successful on the condition that the Government formally and clearly expresses its wish to take over the full ownership and responsibility for the Mine Action Programme and takes the active lead in the transition process...[but]...there is still no formal request from the GoA to hand over the MA programme and organization from the UN to the Government.*²³

²¹ This is similar to the structure of the mine action programmes in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

²² Phil Bean, Mine Action in Afghanistan: Transition Options, March 2003.

²³ UNDP delayed and later abandoned plans to fill two other positions (Coordinator and Transition Advisor, and Transition Monitoring Officer) due to a perceived lack of commitment to the transitions process by the GoA.

The UNDP advisor also expressed regret that *A lack of agreement and competition between the UN agencies has seriously delayed a constructive and pro-active role towards GoA.*²⁴ As a result, the advisor recommended the early termination of the project, which the UNDP did in December 2006. Following this experience, the UNDP also decided to avoid any further involvement in mine action.

There appear to have been many reasons for the lack of progress. First, the mine action programme was working comparatively well: why fix it if it's not broken? Second, mine action was well down the list of Government priorities. Third, demining support was essential for many reconstruction projects: why take the risk of instituting major changes when demining disruptions could create major problems for high-profile infrastructure problems? On the government side, there was no consensus concerning which ministry should take the lead role in mine action. Finally, the UN chose to ignore DMC rather than work with it to identify a transition strategy that DMC would support.²⁵

This is not to say there were no individuals within the government who supported the concept of transition. In April 2005, Dr Reza, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and chair of the Mine Action CG, did endorse a national mine action strategy (Mine Action in Afghanistan: The Way Ahead) on behalf of the GoA. In addition to presenting 'end goals' for demining, MRE, stockpile destruction, mine/ERW survivor assistance, and advocacy and coordination (see Annex 2), the strategy spoke extensively on transition. For example, one of the key 'influencing factors' was "*The draft Afghanistan Mine Action Law calls for the creation of a National Mine Action Agency (NMAA). The intended outcome of the planned Transition Process is that the full ownership, responsibility and liability of the UN managed MAPA is transferred to the GoA.*" (p. 7) However, this endorsement did not lead to commitment on the part of the Government as a whole.

The draft mine action legislation was never presented to Parliament, due in part to the opposition of the DMC. That opposition from such a weak source could block the legislation suggests there was no champion within the government, or among the Afghan mine action NGOs (which are respected and potentially influential organisations within the country), for a transition to national ownership. This may have been due to the concern that some donors would use transition as an excuse to reduce their financial support to mine action.

Re-starting the Process

Soon after Dr Reza was appointed as Director of the MACCA in mid-2007, the new management team initiated informal discussions within the GoA to seek a clear decision concerning the body that should be the 'government focal point' for mine action. These efforts led to national mine action symposium in December 2007 involving government ministries, donors, implementing partners, UN agencies, etc. The participants decided an inter-ministerial body (IMB) should be established and, in January 2008, the IMB selected the DMC as its Chair and the lead government agency for mine action. However, the IMB represented an *ad hoc* initiative, never endorsed by the President or Cabinet, and its designation of DMC as the focal point could not be interpreted as GoA policy or its commitment to strengthen DMC and prepare for transition.

Regardless, the IMB agreed a target for transition in 2013:²⁶ until then the United Nations, national and international NGOs and commercial companies would support the GoA to clear all known mined

²⁴ Gielissen, Hubert, Capacity Development for the Transition of Mine Action: Final Report, 24 Dec 2006

²⁵ This may have been the correct strategy as there was no certainty the DMC would have supported realistic solutions. As well, a joint effort by the UN and DMC to accelerate transition may have led to in-fighting among ministries (e.g., Defence; Interior; Foreign Affairs) to control mine action.

²⁶ This coincided with Afghanistan's APMBC deadline for clearance of all known mined areas.

areas and carrying out MRE and VA and other mine action activities, including coordination. As a first step towards transition, the UN refurbished offices to allow DMC to collocate with MACCA.²⁷

The Emergence of a Transition Plan

As agreed, DMC was collocated within the MACCA compound in Kabul in 2008. From April 2009, MACCA began listing specific transition goals as part of the annual plan for the Mine Action programme (termed the Integrated Operational Plan – IOP). The IOP 1388 (2009-10)²⁸ laid-out a multi-year plan for transition in some detail.

In broad terms, the plan envisaged transition when the Afghanistan Compact benchmark was met (i.e. 70% reduction of the hazard) and that not all government end goals for mine action (i.e. those stated in the endorsed strategy, The Way Ahead) would have been met. Further, the Transition Plan assumes that significant international funding would continue for mine action, and for further support to DMC, until the point where only 'residual contamination' is left. Thus, DMC needed the capacity to coordinate an adequate response to this residual contamination.

The overall approach to transition envisaged three processes covering (i) overall coordination and planning of mine action (by DMC), (ii) victim/disability assistance, and (iii) MRE, each with some specific planned outcomes:²⁹

1. Transition of overall Mine Action Coordination and Planning
 - Outcome 1 – MACCA and its Government partners create and implement a comprehensive transition plan that increases Government capacity
 - Outcome 2 – DMC develops a capacity development plan
2. Transition of Victim/Disability Assistance and advocacy responsibility to the ministries of Public Health (MoPH), Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), and Education (MoE)
 - Outcome 1 – Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan linked to ANDS and implementation on-going within relevant ministries and through relevant stakeholders
 - Outcome 2 – MoPH integrates disability services into both the basic and essential packages of health services³⁰ and develops Community Based Rehabilitation strategy
 - Outcome 3 – MoLSAMD advocates for rights and services, monitors progress and raises awareness with regards to the rights and needs of persons with disabilities
 - Outcome 4 – MoE capacity to implement inclusive education within public school systems and special needs education is standardized
 - Outcome 5 – Special projects for disability advocacy and awareness training implemented to support the efforts of the MoPH, MoE and MoLSAMD with other relevant stakeholders
3. Transition Mine Risk Education (MRE) activities to national ownership within the MoE

²⁷ It seems the MACCA management team did not push for more at this time. On the one hand, it appeared to fear that either the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Interior would try to assume control of the mine action programme; on the other, the team was afraid that the international community and the UN would use transition as a convenient excuse to reduce funding to mine action in Afghanistan.

²⁸ This started with the IOP for 1388 (i.e. April 2009-March 2010 – Afghanistan uses the Persian calendar. To convert, add 621 after 31 March or 622 years, before 1 April).

²⁹ The IOP 1388 also laid-out a number of concrete outputs to be delivered. See Annex 3 for the outputs and achievements since 1388.

³⁰ As has been done in other conflict-affected countries, the MoPH has focussed its limited resources on policy and monitoring, leaving service delivery largely to NGOs and private clinics/hospitals. The Essential and Basic health packages represent key policy decisions. Essential health packages are intended to be a guaranteed minimum of services and aim to concentrate resources on interventions which provide the best 'value for money'. Afghanistan's Essential Package of Hospital Services covers provincial and specialist hospitals and is complemented by the Basic Package of Health Services covering clinics and district hospitals.

- Outcome 1 – Mine Risk Education will be implemented within MoE structures of textbook curriculum, child protection programme and teacher training
- Outcome 2 – MACCA role of support to coordination for MRE transferred to DMC

The set of objectives outlined in the Transitions Plan is interesting: it makes clear that MACCA wished to separate responsibility for demining, Victim Assistance and MRE among different government agencies rather than have an ‘integrated’ mine action programme (i.e. one embracing all five mine action pillars) following transition.³¹ For Victim Assistance, MACCA’s approach was in keeping with current views within the international donor and ‘expert’ communities: while the APMBC and CCM create specific responsibilities for a State Party with respect to mine and cluster munitions victims, services to landmine and cluster munitions victims should be part of a national disability programme rather than the responsibility of the Mine Action programme.³²

There is less of a consensus within the mine action community how MRE should be organised for the long-term. Cost and sustainability considerations suggest that most MRE services should be mainstreamed within ministries of Education (to reach children), but some rapid response capacity is also required to reach specific communities following accidents, reports of new contamination, etc. As well, in Afghanistan not all children attend school. So there remains an issue about who should coordinate MRE: both the ‘systematic’ MRE delivered by MoE and responsive MRE. The MACCA plan suggests this coordination responsibility should fall to MoE, with ‘support’ from DMC.³³ However, it is far from clear that MoE had the willingness to perform such a role or had the mandate and capacity to coordinate responsive MRE, which is delivered, in the main, by the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and NGOs.

More fundamentally, the Transition Plan did not address the core problem identified by the UNDP Capacity Development advisor: the seeming lack of interest at senior government levels in assuming responsibility for mine action.

Attempts to implement the Transition Plan have proceeded along four different, albeit interwoven, tracks in an effort to:

1. Formulate and implement a capacity development plan by DMC to put it in a position to assume responsibility of overall coordination of mine action
2. Build capacities of the MoPH, MoE and MoLSAMD
3. Build capacities in MoE to assume responsibility for MRE (with support from DMC)
4. Prepare and implement a Transition Plan endorsed by UNMAS headquarters, that would include both:
 - restructuring MACCA to separate out those functions that would be retained by the UN and, therefore, not transferred to DMC
 - capacity development support to the various Afghan agencies that would assume responsibilities in the transition process

We discuss these tracks in turn.

³¹ In some documents, MACCA also alluded to the possibility that the responsibility for managing the mine action information system might also be transferred to a government agency other than DMC.

³² See, for example, paragraphs 13 and 14 in the Cartagena Action Plan.

³³ Two large evaluations happened to take place in 2008-09, and both considered the question of transition strategy. The two evaluation teams came to different conclusions about whether mine action should remain an ‘integrated’ programme or not after transition. Paterson et al, 2008, Afghanistan Country Mission Report Evaluation of EC-Funded Mine Action <http://www.gichd.org/strategic-management/quality-management-monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluations/evaluations-of-ec-funded-mine-action-programmes/>; Davies, Paul and Bruce Todd, 2009, Mid-Term Evaluation of the Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan op. cit.

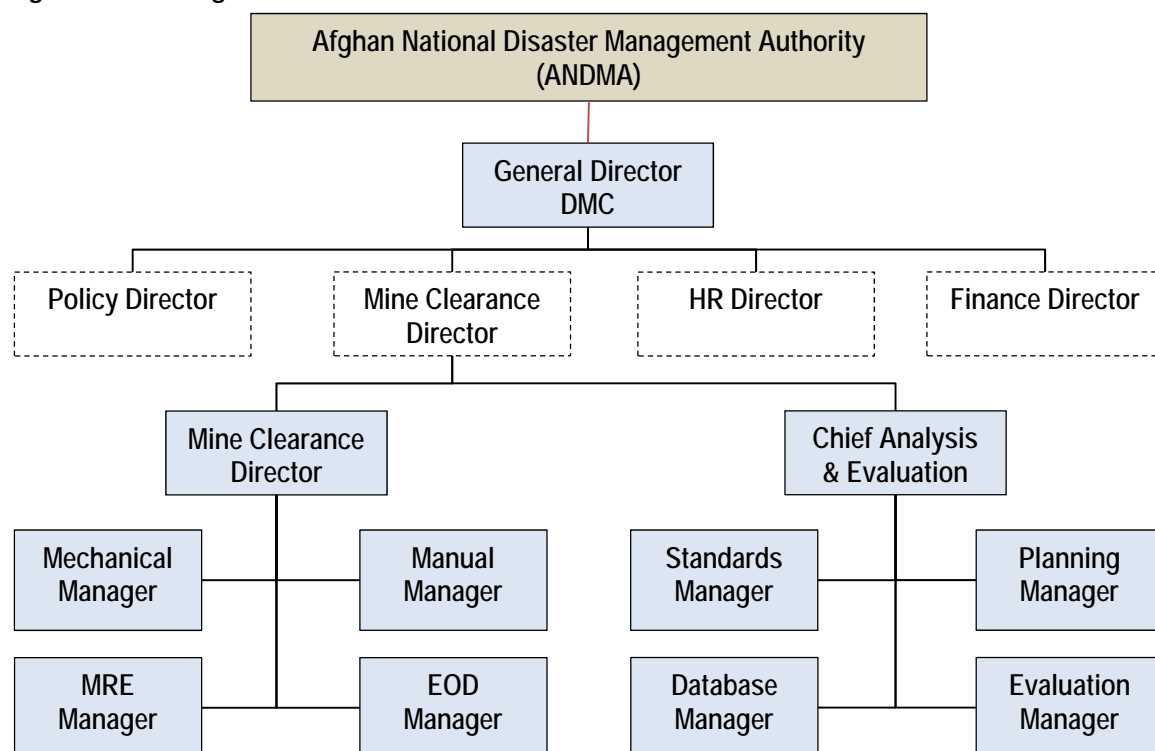
Support for Capacity Development Planning and Implementation in DMC

A key issue in this ambitious transition plan was that the relevant Afghan agencies (DMC, MoPH, MoE and MoLSAMID) lacked capacity and, perhaps, willingness to prepare themselves to assume their envisaged responsibilities. Accordingly, MACCA assigned experts to work within the different Afghan agencies. MACCA’s efforts to prepare for the transition of MRE and Victim Assistance began first. Its strategy for the transition of these components of mine action has been different than the approach used in most countries, and is somewhat controversial. This is discussed in a later section.

For DMC, MACCA recruited a national Capacity Support Project Manager in mid-2009 to work on a full-time basis and assist DMC in formulating its own plan for transition (i.e. developing its capacities to assume responsibility for the functions it would inherit). The individual facilitated a joint review of DMC roles, responsibilities and structures.³⁴ The review described the roles and responsibilities of 11 positions (plus two drivers and a cleaner), and suggested an additional four positions were required (those shown with no shading in Figure 6 – DMC Organisation Chart, below).

Following this, MACCA proposed a ‘Partnership Framework’ to the DMC³⁵ and the Capacity Support Manager initiated a staff capacity and training needs assessment.³⁶ This led to a draft Capacity Development Plan, consisting mainly of training requirements for the incumbent personnel.

Figure 6 – DMC Organisation Chart



The training package included:

- Foundation workshop
 - Basic skills (communication, time management, effective meetings, etc.)
 - Overview of management functions
- English language

³⁴ Habib Khan, Report on Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) Current Functional Position, Jan 2010.

³⁵ See Status of Core Functions for DMC/MACCA Partnership Framework: 1389, May 2010

³⁶ Afghan Institute of Management, Training and Enhancement of Indigenous Capacities (AIMTEIC), Capacity Development plan (CDP) for the Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) Government of Afghanistan, July 2010

- Basic computer training
- Professional training modules
 - Senior management workshop
 - Quality Management
 - Info Management; Planning; Mechanical; EOD; etc.

MACCA then began to offer some of the basic training courses, including for English language and basic computer usage. All DMC staff also received on-the-job training from their MACCA counterparts (see Table 4 – DMC/MACCA counterparts). DMC personnel also were included in:

- Outreach to government ministries – from 2009, MACCA began to invest more effort in establishing links with government agencies and programmes (e.g. the National Solidarity Programme), in large part to ensure it understood their priorities for mine action support so these could be factored into operations plans³⁷
- An exchange programme with ANAMA in Azerbaijan (part of an aid package from Azerbaijan to Afghanistan)
- Evaluating Mine Action training workshops – a series of three workshops delivered by the GICHD on behalf of MACCA
- Participation in pilot projects, including the 1st and 2nd Landmines and Livelihoods Surveys in Afghanistan (a partnership between GICHD, MACCA, DMC, the Afghan Institute for Rural Development – AIRD, five of the IPs and, for the 2nd survey, Central Statistics Office – CSO)³⁸

MACCA also provided financial and logistical support, plus training and advice, to allow DMC to conduct the first annual ‘audit’ of clearance tasks in 1389. DMC conducted field audits of 10% of all clearance tasks, plus a desk audit of another 20%.³⁹

Table 4 – DMC/MACCA counterparts

DMC Position	MACCA Department/section
DMC Director	MACCA Director
Chief of Quality Management and Deputy Director	Overview with all departments – Operations, Information Management, Programme
Chief of Operations	Operations Department
Planning Manager	Plans Section
Standards Manager	Quality Management Section
Database Manager	Information Management Section
Assessment and Evaluation Manager	Quality Management Section
Manual Operation Manager	Operations Section
Mechanical Operation Manager	Operations Section
EOD operation Manager	Operations Section
MRE Manager	MRE and Victim Assistance (VA) sections

MACCA, ANDMA and DMC also raised the need for a government compound for the national mine action programme, plus the housing for the regional operations planning and monitoring function, currently handled by the AMACs, in ANDMA or other government facilities. Suitable land for an office compound was identified in Kabul in 2010 but, since then, no further progress has been made.

³⁷ This has proved to be an extremely important initiative. For example, the recent Article 5 Extension Request mentions 43 important development projects planned in Afghanistan that will require some mine action support, including a railway line, three main dam projects, and several road networks.

³⁸ See www.gichd.org/strategic-management/mine-action-security-and-development/themes/socio-economic-survey/landmines-and-livelihoods

³⁹ The audit demonstrated that communities are satisfied with the work of demining teams. However, it also indicated that AMAC and IP coordination with local authorities should be improved, and that communities advocated for complete clearance of communities rather than a focus on individual high-impact minefields.

In short, MACCA invested heavily in clarifying the responsibilities that DMC would inherit, defining the capacities required to discharge those responsibilities, identifying capacity gaps, and building or acquiring those capacities. Progress, however, has been slow. The constraints include:

- Inadequate legal basis for DMC – no national mine action legislation yet exists
- More generally, there has been inadequate delegation of authority from ANDMA – DMC has no control over its budget or human resource functions, and has never even been issued a stamp, which means it cannot officially communicate directly in writing with other government agencies (i.e. written communication must go to ANDMA for signature and to be stamped as an official written communication)
- ANDMA’s failure to delegate specific authority for DMC to issue accreditation to operators
- Low initial levels of education and training of the DMC staff
- Salaries and benefits for civil servants are inadequate to attract and retain well-qualified personnel, given the presence of UN agencies, embassies, international consulting companies and NGOs

The most fundamental issue has been the lack of interest from the Government of Afghanistan in serious discussions for a transitions plan, or in taking steps to enhance the mandate and authority of DMC, without which little sustained progress to transition would be possible.

Transition of MRE and Victim Assistance

Work on the transition of Victim Assistance and MRE had begun even earlier. MACCA supported efforts by government ministries and the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) to strengthen their capacities to assume responsibility for MRE and for services to persons with disabilities. These efforts started to bear fruit by 2006 and MACCA proposed a programme to develop a national Plan of Action via an inter-ministerial task force for disability.⁴⁰ In 2007, MACCA signed MoUs with three ministries as well as the ARCS and ICRC to ensure the progress continued.⁴¹ In 2008, MACCA created a Transitions Unit to manage its partnerships with the ministries and the ARCS.

Textbox 1 – MACCA Transitions Unit

In 2008, MACCA established a transition unit under the Director’s office to manage the transition to national responsibility for the MRE and VA components. To facilitate this, it signed three-year memoranda of understanding (MoU) with:

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD)
- Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)
- Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS)

During the transition, the UNMAS agreed to fund an advisor in each of the ministries to assist with policy development and capacity enhancement. This aimed at the mainstreaming of MRE and Disability into ministry policies and programmes.

Mine Risk Education

For its part, the MoE made MRE and Inclusive Education cross-cutting issues in its new curriculum (along with gender, narcotics, corruption, and the environment). New textbooks incorporating MRE and

⁴⁰ MACCA, Transition Plan for Victim Assistance Activities and Mine Risk Education: Inter-ministerial Task Force for Disability Awareness, Advocacy and Prevention, Nov 2006.

⁴¹ In 2008, the GICHD officer responsible for assisting countries in developing strategies for disability programmes (including assistance for landmine victims) reported that Afghanistan was one of the two ‘stars’ among the 24 countries she had surveyed or assisted.

Inclusive Education messages were issued in 2008 and MoE regularly issues its quarterly magazine (*Tarbeyat*) with MRE and Inclusive Education messages to reach school children.⁴² MACCA has trained and the UN has supported 120 Child Protection Officers who, in turn, have trained 21,000 teachers.⁴³

MACCA also worked with ARCS since 2006 to attempt a phase-out of 'direct delivery' MRE. In 2007, MACCA and ICRC signed a tripartite MoU with ARCS to support its capacity to assume responsibility for residual risks. ARCS had already assumed responsibility in the North and North-East, and MACCA planned to stop support of direct delivery MRE in the East in 2009.

Victim Assistance

Disability is a major problem in Afghanistan – a survey conducted by Handicap International (HI) showed that 2.7% of the population are severely disabled.⁴⁴ Accordingly, the MoPH and MoLSAMD established Disability Support Units (DSU). An Afghan consultant has been assigned by MACCA to both DSU, with additional staff provided by the ministries. By 2008, both ministries were developing policies to ensure people with disabilities could access their services.

As well, the MoE has included Inclusive Education in its new strategic plan and established an Inclusive Education Department in its new organizational structure to coordinate the inclusive education activities of MoE and its partners. The MACCA national advisor supports MoE/MACCA activities according to a joint plan of action agreed by MoE and MACCA.

For example, by the end of 2008 MACCA had supported training in inclusive education (focusing on enrolment of children with disabilities into general schools) for 400 school teachers of Kabul city and four surrounding districts. This training continues and, to the end of 2011, about 1,200 teachers, 1,500 children with disabilities and their parents have received training. This has resulted in the enrolment of over 350 children with disabilities into general schools.

The MACCA provides additional support to the ministries to enable representatives to attend regional forums to share information and to network with other countries in the region.

An assessment conducted for CIDA in 2008 found that:

- MACCA's partnership with MoE covered both MRE and disability issues provided for modest assistance from MACCA for curriculum development, training and material to personnel in the child protection unit allowing them to train 12,000 teachers on MRE, plus education and training TV.
- with the MoPH, UNMAS provided modest financial assistance and paid for an Afghan technical advisor who served as the Coordinator of the Disability Unit in the MoPH, in charge of capacity development for:
 - capacity development (e.g. curricula for training physiotherapist and orthopaedic technicians; inclusion of disability topics in the training of Community Health Workers)
 - meetings of the national disability taskforce
- with MoLSAMD, UNMAS paid for a local technical advisor who serves as the Coordinator of the Disability Unit

⁴² MACCA continued activities targeting the estimated four million children who do not attend formal education in Afghanistan.

⁴³ The MoE will cover salaries of the Child Protection Officers from this year, but there are concerns that some may leave because government salaries are lower.

⁴⁴ As well, the 2003 National Risk & Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) found that about 14 per cent of rural households have a disabled family member. The NRVA 2007-08 found that over 10 per cent of households had at least one severely disabled family member. Conflict and accidents are the leading causes of disability. (Source: Ministry of Economy, *Poverty Status in Afghanistan*, World Bank, July 2010.)

- in all cases, the cooperation seemed to be fruitful and progress was being made (although starting from a low base)⁴⁵

Conversely, an evaluation conducted a few months later for the EC warned that “...the team is concerned that some of the MACCA’s apparent success in transitioning elements of the programme, such as MRE to line ministries may appear as developmentally correct, but may not deliver tangible benefits where it is most needed, in mine affected communities.”⁴⁶ The Report pointed to the deterioration in victim data gathering by ARCS in 2008, following the reduction of support for this activity by ICRC. The evaluation team was concerned that MACCA was reducing its responsibility towards MRE and Victim Assistance, and recommended instead that MACCA increased its involvement with, for example, vocational training programmes for landmine victims rather than restricting itself to supporting policy and capacity development.

The UN continues assistance through MACCA (the Transitions Unit is now called the Disability Support Unit) and progress has continued in building capacities in MoLSAMD, MoPH, and MoE. Each ministry has incorporated disability assistance policies and activities within its strategic plan, and all three ministries have established units dedicated to disability programming, as follows:

- in 2008, MoLSAMD appointed a new Deputy Minister for Martyrs and Disability Affairs plus a Disability Directorate
- in 2009, MoPH created a Disability and Rehabilitation Department, which now has 11 personnel
- in 2009, MoE established an Inclusive Education Department

Further details on milestones achieved in Victim/disability assistance are provided in Annex 3

MACCA and UNMAS

The Government has not been alone in its lack of engagement in the development of and commitment to a transition plan; MACCA has not received a clear endorsement from UNMAS headquarters in New York. By early 2010, MACCA had drafted a Road Map⁴⁷ to transition. The document was based on principles stated in the Afghan Compact (state building and capacity development), strategic goals in the current UN Mine Action Strategy (development of national institutions and capacities to address the residual threat) and the goals and indicators of success for transition contained in The Way Ahead (the National Mine Action Strategy endorsed by the government). Implementation was to be ‘event driven’ rather than according to a timeline (i.e. moving forward once defined milestones are achieved, as opposed to setting a schedule for when each milestone should be achieved).

The document went through numerous revisions, turning into a draft “UNMAS Concept Paper for Transition” by June 2010. However, UNMAS headquarters never endorsed it as a basis for discussion with the Government. At the same time, UNMAS HQ did not express any fundamental opposition to the Plan so MACCA continued with implementation, securing approval for specific steps forward via the annual operations planning and budgeting process. However, the lack of official endorsement of the Transition Plan by UNMAS curtailed, somewhat, MACCA’s ability to press ANDMA and the Government to focus on their part of the transition process.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Paterson et al, Assessment of UNMACA, GICHD, Geneva, August 2008

⁴⁶ Paul Davies and Bruce Todd, Mid Term Evaluation of the Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan, p. 41.

⁴⁷ The document uses the definition of a road map as a plan to a final outcome, which also defines the process, required outcomes and indicators of success along the way.

⁴⁸ International mine action donors and the States Parties to the APMBM have also remained reticent to engage the GoA on the question of transition. This probably reflects the general belief that the Afghan mine action

The Road Map explained the split in the UNMAS Afghan operations into three separate project offices:

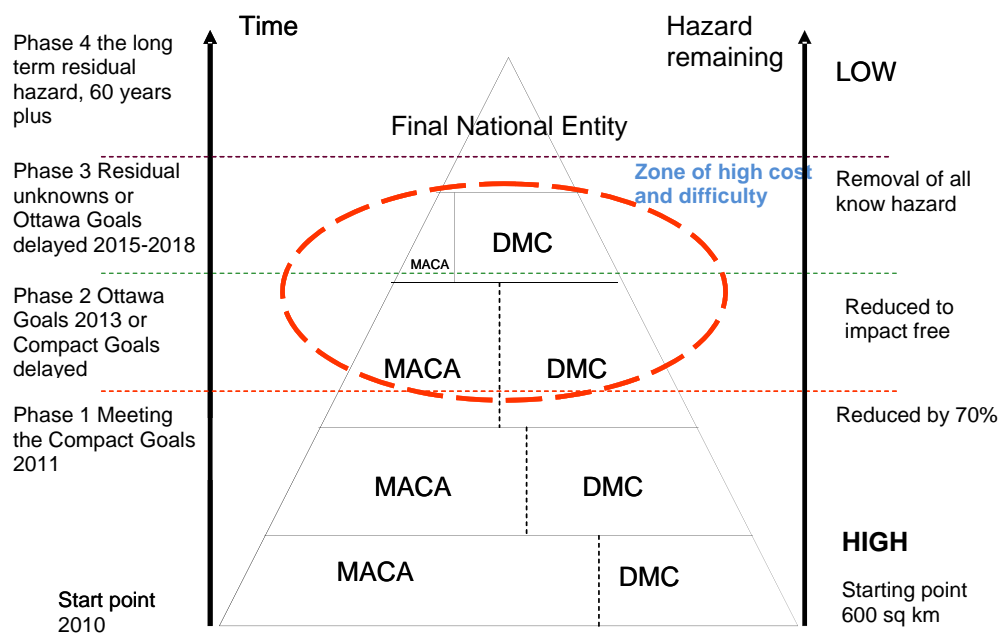
- the **Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA)** handling the functions that would eventually be transferred to the DMC
 - Mine Action operations planning and coordination
 - Delivery of operational support
 - Quality Management
 - Information Management
- the **UNMAS Office in Afghanistan** covers broader UNMAS responsibilities (e.g. within the UN system; resource mobilisation and donor relations)
- the **Mine Action Support Services Office** houses the financial and administrative services provided by UNOPS and includes MACOA – Mine Action Contracts Office, Afghanistan – which handles contract management for funding provided by donors via the UN

This reorganisation set the stage for transition by removing functions that would not be transferred to GoA into two distinct projects.

The various draft transition documents prepared by MACCA also took pains to highlight that the transition process would be protracted and the role of DMC and an eventual national mine action authority would expand gradually. For instance, the diagram below lays out four stages, with the following milestones:

1. Meeting the Afghan Compact goals (reduce hazard by 70%) – 2011
2. Achieving ‘impact free’ status – 2013 (Afghanistan’s initial deadline for Article 5 compliance)
3. Achieving Article 5 compliance (clearing all known mined areas) – 2018
4. Full national responsibility for dealing with the residual contamination – after 2018

Figure 7 – Depiction of evolving roles during the transition process



programme was working well coupled with the fear that the GoA would be unable to oversee and coordinate the programme effectively.

CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PLANS⁴⁹

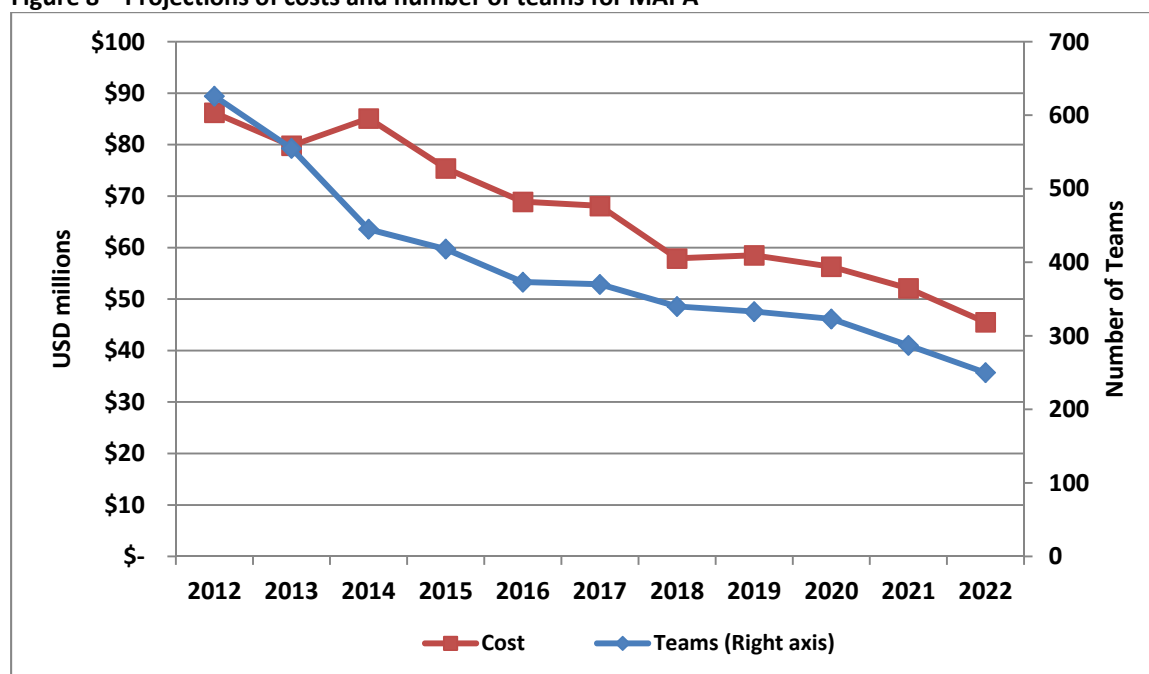
MAPA

The MAPA remains a large programme, with 44 implementing partners employing over 12,500 people. The recent Article 5 Extension Request foresees a decline in the size of the demining programme averaging about 10% per year over the next decade.

Table 5 – Overview of the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) today

Level	Organisations
Strategy, Policy & Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government of Afghanistan – Department for Mince Clearance • UN support – MACCA
Coordination and QA/QC for an area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Area Mine Action Centres
‘Humanitarian’ mine action implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 operators
Commercial demining (mostly site safety verification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 national and international commercial operators

Figure 8 – Projections of costs and number of teams for MAPA



DMC and ANDMA

MACCA continues to involve DMC in planning and general coordination of the MAPA. DMC also conducts an annual audit of demining tasks and is active in facilitation of mine action activities that involve government processes, including:

- Processing the importation of demining equipment
- Facilitating the transportation of explosives
- Endorsing mine action agency reports for donors and the Ministry of Economy
- Reporting on Afghanistan’s treaties and obligations
- Reporting the programme’s progress to the Presidential Office;
- Identifying the GoA’s priorities for the mine action annual national work plan to meet the requirements of Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)
- Initiating the accreditation process for new demining organisations

⁴⁹ This section is based largely on Chapter 5 of Afghanistan’s Article 5 Extension Request.

- Organizing and chairing demining coordination meetings with the GoA
- Facilitating the outreach process to the GoA and Parliament

In brief, DMC is still accompanying MACCA rather than playing a central role in setting the strategic direction of MAPA, planning and coordinating operations, or assessing results. It remains weak in terms of human and financial resources, as does its parent, ANDMA.⁵⁰

MACCA and AMACs

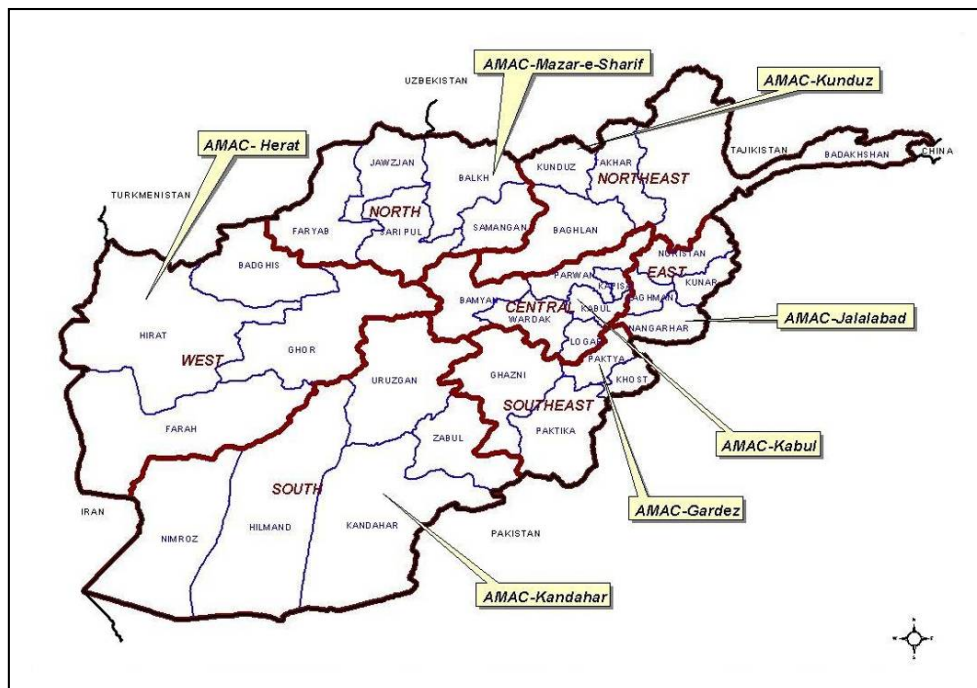
The MACCA in Kabul employs about 150 people. It is responsible for:

- Managing the national mine action database
- Coordination of survey, clearance and EOD response
- Coordination of MRE
- Support to the GoA for Victim Assistance and disability programming, through advisors in MoLSAMD, MoPH and MoE
- Quality Management, Monitoring & Evaluation
- Outreach and information sharing with government departments and agencies, donors, development agencies, and security sector organisations, plus regional and international mine action organisations

At the start of 1391 (1 April 2012), MACCA removed the remaining international personnel from direct management roles: the remaining international staff serve in the UN Project Office as advisors to both MACCA and UNMAS. They remain collocated with MACCA and DMC.

In addition, there remain seven Area Mine Action Centres responsible for coordination in seven regions of the country.

Figure 9 – Area Mine Action Centres



⁵⁰ See, for example, Sudha Gooty, Rapid Capacity Assessment and Proposed Actions: Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), July 2011.

Possible Future Evolution

The Director of DMC has recently retired. An option is for one of the current managers in MACCA to assume the post of Director of DMC. This would put DMC under an experienced mine action manager who is well versed in how the international mine action community functions. Such a solution, should it come to pass, would provide for an advocate, inside the government apparatus, who could make the case for Afghanistan to assume greater responsibility over time, and to invest in its own capacities to assume such responsibility.

Over the next two years, the UN plans to close the MACCA compound and the AMAC offices, moving all the staff into a DMC compound in Kabul and into ANDMA or other government offices in the region. Once this occurs, the remaining international advisors will move to UNMAS offices and will no longer be collocated with the MACCA and DMC.

The UN envisages a gradual reduction in the UN Project Office and in its financial support to coordination (i.e. the MACCA and DMC). UN support to coordination is projected to end in 2017.

CONCLUSIONS

The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan has a long and complex history. During its first decade, the 'Afghan Model' featured a small group of internationals, based in Pakistan, who coordinated a large and growing programme implemented largely by Afghan mine action NGOs. This gave ample opportunity for talented Afghans to develop managerial and specialist skills. As well, Afghan NGOs were in charge of many of the functions usually associated with a mine action centre, including database management and QA/QC. It was a UN-programme, but largely nationalised.

This changed in the immediate post-Taliban era. UNMAS assumed responsibility for the MACCA, which was relocated to Kabul. UNMAS greatly expanded the number of international positions and absorbed some of the traditional mine action centre functions, which reduced the opportunities for Afghans to display their managerial and leadership roles within MACCA. This de-nationalisation of management continued in spite of a UNDP project intended to initiate a transitions process in 2004-05. With respect to overall coordination and demining (where most of the money is spent), UNMAS instituted a reversal of this de-nationalisation process, starting in mid-2007 with the appointment of Dr Reza as MACCA Director. Five years later, the MACCA is staffed entirely by Afghans, with a few remaining international personnel serving as advisors housed in a UN Project Office.

At about the same time, MACCA also initiated far closer cooperation with the Department for Mine Clearance – the government focal point for mine action. This started with collocation followed by significant assistance from MACCA to develop and begin implementing a capacity development plan for DMC. MACCA also published what it described as a joint MACCA/DMC transition plan, albeit one in which MACCA was overwhelmingly the dominant partner.

However, neither the Government of Afghanistan as a whole or ANDMA have shown interest in assuming greater responsibility for the mine action programme. The government failed to adopt legislation or a decree to establish an adequate structure for a national mine action programme. It has made little effort to inject funds and hire qualified personnel into national mine action structures to create a foundation on which capacities could be built. It has failed to initiate discussions with mine action donors and UNMAS on transition.

For its part, unsurprisingly, the international community has not demonstrated unity of purpose in terms of transition. Neither donors nor the States Parties to the APMBC have pressed the Afghan government on its failure to show interest in assuming greater responsibility for mine action. As well, until the Article 5 Extension Request was drafted in early 2012, MACCA never succeeded in getting a clear endorsement from UNMAS for a UN transition strategy, which might have provided a basis for more focussed and purposeful discussions with the GoA. As a result, only very modest progress has been made in equipping DMC with the capacity to plan and coordinate the MAPA. DMC remains the child of – rather than partner to – MACCA, providing a veneer of government engagement but no substantive contribution.

A plan to accelerate transition is sketched-out in the draft Article 5 Extension Request (prepared almost exclusively by MACCA on behalf of the GoA). This is based not on building the capacity of the current DMC personnel, but on the eventual absorption of skilled MACCA personnel into the public service or on the legal establishment of a semi-autonomous agency as envisaged in the draft legislation finalised in 2006, which subsequently died without being submitted to Parliament. However, the Extension Request makes clear that this proposal represents 'a model for dialogue; it is not a blueprint for change.'

Regardless, transition does figure centrally in the Article 5 Extension Request, signifying that (in the eyes of the outgoing MACCA management team) it is time for more concerted discussions between the international community and the Afghan government to reach a consensus on the way forward. In the continuing absence of a champion for transition within the government, whether progress happens probably depends on the delivery of clear and consistent messages by UNMAS, key donors, and the APMBC States Parties organs⁵¹ that transition is not a distant option but, rather, a process that must begin today. Unfortunately, there seems no guarantee that the international community will find the necessary unity of purpose to rouse the Afghan government from its lethargy.

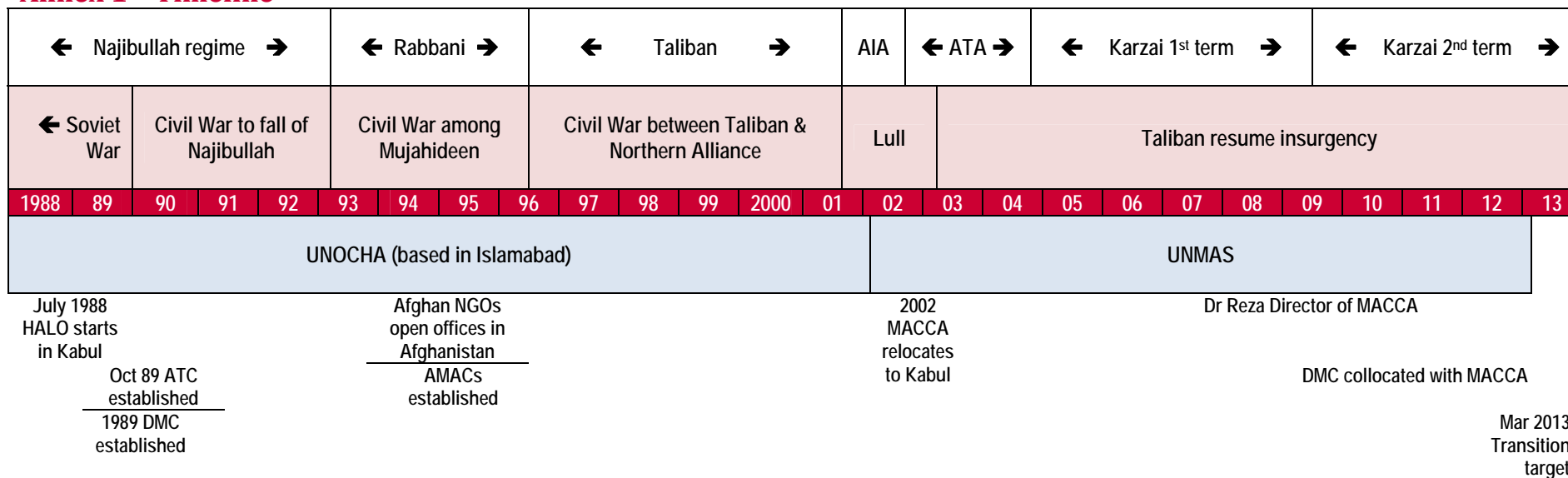
Afghanistan's mine action programme is a stark example of the lack of unanimity within the international mine action community concerning transition, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. Given the great capability of Afghan mine action managers, plus the openness of the post-2007 cadre of senior international personnel in MACCA to transition, this is a squandered opportunity. Concerted engagement at senior management and political levels would have allowed the crafting of an agreement for truly national mine action organs that would have had sufficient oversight and insulation from the corrosive Afghan political process to perform well and set an example of what Afghans can achieve with proper financial support. What could have been a national treasure is still but a work in progress, and the transition to national responsibility will only happen once the programme is vastly diminished.

On the other hand, many would argue that the present situation represents a triumph of common sense over political correctness. The MAPA remains a capable and productive programme that enhances the wellbeing of people in mine-affected communities. It remains under UNMAS control. The Afghan Government has not demonstrated the capacity to deliver public services effectively, so greater control by the government would lead to a reduction in mine action services to the public.

Which view is correct may never be known with certainty. The MAPA depends overwhelmingly on international funding. Some donors might reduce their support if the Afghan Government assumes greater control because, in part, of corruption fears. However, how long will the donor community continue to provide the kind of funding envisaged by the Article 5 Extension Request to a UN-managed programme, without a clear demonstration by the government of its responsibility?

⁵¹ These organs are the 'troika' of the past, current, and in-coming States Parties' presidents, plus the Implementation Support Unit, as well as the States Parties collectively.

Annex 1 - Timeline



Annex 2 – Vision, End Goals and Indicators from *The Way Ahead*

Vision – A country free from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), where people and communities live in a safe environment conducive to national development, and where landmine and ERW survivors are fully integrated in the society and thus have their rights and needs recognized and fulfilled.

<p>Goal 1 Demining – The End Goal for demining will be achieved when all known mine/ERW contaminated areas are cleared. There will continue to be an effective mines/ERW demining capability to respond to unknown residual risk and continuing public awareness of how to recognize and report suspicious items for disposal by qualified authorities. Mapping of cleared areas will be complete and accurate; and this data will be made available as needed to the public and designated institutions. All post-clearance documentation will be complete and all cleared land will have been handed over in accordance with national standards.</p>	Goal 1.1 All known mine/ERW contaminated areas are demined.
	Goal 1.2 Following the demining of all known mine/ERW contaminated areas, a reporting and response capacity to deal with unknown residual mine/ERW contamination is established and maintained.
	Goal 1.3 All demining documentation is completed and recorded in a data system. This database is maintained and made available to all concerned.
	Goal 1.4 Demining coordination functions maintained and linked with the other mine-action pillars/programmes.
<p>Goal 2 Mine/ERW Risk Education (MRE) – The End Goal for MRE will be achieved when a comprehensive and sustainable system is in place to educate and raise awareness throughout people and communities nationwide regarding the residual mines/ERW threats, including sufficient information to recognize and report these items to the appropriate authorities.</p>	Goal 2.1 Pro-active MRE activities undertaken until there are no known remaining mine/ERW contaminated areas in Afghanistan.
	Goal 2.2 Capacity for public awareness of the residual mine/ERW threat to life and limb is maintained.
	Goal 2.3 MRE coordination functions maintained and linked with the other mine action pillars/programmes.
<p>Goal 3 Stockpile Destruction – The End Goal for mine stockpile destruction will be achieved when illegal, abandoned or otherwise unwanted munitions have been destroyed or otherwise disposed of.</p>	Goal 3.1 All stockpiled anti-personnel mines are destroyed as per international treaty commitments.
	Goal 3.2 All abandoned or otherwise unwanted mines (other than anti-personnel mines) are disposed of.
	Goal 3.3 Stockpile destruction coordination functions maintained and linked with the other mine-action pillars/programmes.
<p>Goal 4 Mine/ERW Survivor Assistance – The End Goal for Mine/ERW survivor assistance will be achieved when mine/ERW survivors are reintegrated into Afghan society, with support provided through a national system that incorporates the rights and needs of people with disabilities.</p>	Goal 4.1 Mine/ERW survivor assistance functions are embedded in national entities and programmes that are responsible for social welfare, health, education and employment.
	Goal 4.2 Mine/ERW survivor assistance coordination functions maintained and linked with the other mine-action pillars/programmes and with the broader disability assistance coordination function.
<p>Goal 5 Advocacy and Coordination – The End Goal for advocacy and coordination will be achieved when relevant institutions and civil society cooperate and support the fulfillment of Afghanistan commitments to the eradication of mines/ERW, and the importance of mine-action for communities and national development.</p>	Goal 5.1 Domestic laws related to Afghanistan’s commitments under international legal instruments related to mines/ERW are adhered to.
	Goal 5.2 Afghan establishment and community leaders support mine-action.
	Goal 5.3 Information concerning geographical, cadastral surveys as well as social and economic researches is centrally and methodically reported and made available to all, should they be GoA, NGOs, commercial companies or other organization.
	Goal 5.4 Advocacy coordination functions maintained and linked with the other mine-action pillars/programmes.

Annex 3 – Outputs and Achievements in the Transition Plan

Outputs Planned for 1388	Achievements in 1388	Comments Report for 1388	Achievements in 1389	Plan 1390
Transition plan developed by UN/DMC		*UN and IMB transition plans (to be published in March 2010) *in 1389 UNMAS and IMB will publish a transition timeline.	Transition roadmap developed by MACCA for discussion with UNMAS	An agreed Government/UNMAS document (MoU?) will be created
Transition plan developed by IMB				
Capacity Development plan developed by DMC		Capacity and skills assessment of DMC staff to be carried out by 3 rd party in 1389	Capacity Development needs assessment and 4-year plan developed for DMC	DMC staff attended courses in IT, English Evaluating Mine Action Workshop
Accreditation transitioned	...made progress in 1388	DMC participated in accreditation of 9 demining companies		
Custody and maintenance of AMAS transitioned	80% of the AMAS were translated into local languages.	The approval of AMAS by GoA is now in progress	1 st meeting with Afghanistan National Standards Agency (ANSA) – agreed to submit AMAS for potential adoption	
Mine Action Law enacted (not mentioned in 1388)			Agreed with Justice Ministry to start with decree, then law decree drafted; still needs approval and dissemination	
Quality Assurance plans prepared by DMC	* DMC conducted 80 QA and monitoring visits of demining. * DMC represented on Boards of Inquiry for two demining accidents	A review of government requirements for QA is planned for 1389		
Support to coordination for MRE transferred	DMC and MACCA have formed a joint MRE department. DMC leads inter-ministerial outreach activities with technical support fostered by the MACCA	*DMC and MoE have a strong working relationship... *DMC actively involved in MRE Training of Trainer workshops and MRE monitoring		
Land cleared/cancelled audited by DMC			Audit of cleared and cancelled land – 177 field visits plus 20% desk audit	

Outputs Planned for 1388	Achievements in 1388	Comments Report for 1388	Achievements in 1389	Plan 1390
Inter-ministerial board chaired by DMC	DMC chairs the Inter-ministerial Board (IMB) with minimal support from MACCA			
Article 7 Report prepared and submitted to Ministry of Foreign Affairs by DMC	DMC prepared and finalized the Mine Ban Treaty's Article 7 report on behalf of the MoFA, with the technical support of the MACCA	It is hoped that in 1389, with sufficient capacity development, DMC will be able to prepare this with minimal support from MACCA	With MACCA technical support, DMC prepared and finalized the Mine Ban Treaty's Article 7 report on behalf of MoFA	It is hoped that in 1390, with sufficient capacity development, DMC will be able to prepare this with minimal support from MACCA.
Contracting entity established within DMC		Investigations into GoA processes in terms of how a mine action contracting facility would be handled are ongoing and it is hoped that this will be concluded in 1389		