

Pakistan: The Landmine Problem in Federally Administered Tribal Areas

After a decade of fighting, the effects of conflict beyond Pakistan's border with Afghanistan are seen everyday in border regions. With little government aid available, agencies like HSD are taking the initiative in the country's battle against mines.

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The ravages of the decade-long armed conflict in Afghanistan between the Soviets and anti-communist forces were not confined to Afghanistan. Rather, its ill effects spilled over to neighboring countries. One effected country of note was Pakistan, which was used as a base for war activities. Pakistan served as a home to arms depots and camps for training guerillas, and as a passageway for logistic supplies and other activities for the coordination of the war effort. In addition, throngs of refugees crossed the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in search of safe harbor, rendering the border weaker and weaker throughout the war.

One of the most detrimental effects of the Afghani war on Pakistan was the thousands of landmines left behind in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA). Soviet troops dropped mines and bombs in FATA border towns in order to intimidate the local population and prevent any support of anti-communist forces. Although the Afghan war broke out in December 1979, it wasn't until the early-1980s that the landmine problem surfaced in the FATA. Of the seven tribal Agencies of the FATA, Bajaur and Kurram were the most effected, counting an alarming number of casualties.

Bajaur and Kurram have witnessed some of the worst casualties, which affected not just soldiers but women and children, as well. An entire disabled population now exists—a change that has effected the socioeconomic fabric of the area. While the FATA was socially underdeveloped previous to the war, it has regressed further as a result of mines. The region's inadequate health services must deal with a public health situation of tragic proportions. Agricultural land has been rendered un-productive. Once productive men responsible for earning livelihoods have not only been rendered unproductive, but have become liabilities. Children have been forced to perform hard labor and beg on the streets.

In order to assess the depth of Pakistan's landmine problem, 1997 Nobel co-laureate Rae McGrath, an authority on landmines, visited Human Survival and Development (HSD) in the summer of 2000 at the behest of the Swiss Federation for Mine Clearance and Swiss



■ Shaima, 9, waits to have her prostheses adjusted at the ICRC workshop. c/o ICRC/Adrian Brooks

Foundation for Landmine Victim Aid (HSD donors). McGrath visited the affected areas, met with locals and interviewed victims. He compiled a detailed assessment report that proffered suggestions and recommendations, substantiated our assertions and initial research, and called for support for a mine action project in response to the humanitarian disaster in FATA.

Following McGrath's assessment, HSD initiated a mine action program in Bajaur Agency through funding from the Swiss Federation for Mine Clearance and the Swiss Foundation for Landmine Victim Aid. This program is



■ ICRC orthopedic center in Wazir Akilbar Khan. c/o ICRC/Zalmai Ahad

dedicated to the safety and integrated rehabilitation of mine victims of FATA, functioning apart from the humanitarian mine clearance effort. Specifically, the program consists of Basic Mine Awareness (BMA) and Risk Avoidance (RA) education and physical and socioeconomic rehabilitation of the mine victims. Locals are also interviewed throughout the program to determine household data. At present, HSD is engaged in BMA and RA and collection of household data. It has recorded data for 599 mine victims and educated about 25,000 locals.

Rehabilitation

HSD's philosophy on rehabilitation goes beyond the practice of mere physical rehabilitation, the provision of means of mobility, and prosthesis/orthotics. It also involves the integration of socioeconomic rehabilitation. For this purpose, HSD has planned in its project to provide the victims with skill development training and micro credits to establish and operate viable and profitable micro enterprises. In this way, the mine victims will be able to earn steady incomes to support themselves and their

families and become reintegrated into the household, community, and society.

To aid in rehabilitation efforts, HSD has installed a mine victim database. The database is part of a larger management information system (MIS) that includes, besides the database for mine victims, a geographical information system (GIS). In addition to that, it has a package for HSD finance. A package for administration will also be developed, while a database for BMA and RA education is being perfected. HSD has also proffered a progress report on the conduction of operational activities commenced on August 2, 2000.

FATA Breakdown

FATA is a collection of seven agencies, which, unfortunately, have been neglected by successive governments in Pakistan for the last 50 years. The policy of status quo has prevailed in these areas, disallowing any concrete social progress. FATA is geographically linked to the NWFP and constitutes these seven tribal agencies (six of which share a freely passed border with Afghanistan): South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Kurram, Orakzai, Khyber, Mohmand and Bajaur. Located within the seven districts are six tribal areas or Frontier Regions, which constitute an area of 27,220 sq. km, or 2.6 percent of the total area of Pakistan: Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki, Tank, and Dera Ismail Khan. The region consists of 3.1 million generally conservative, religious people.

Bajaur Agency

Bajaur valley (area of 600 sq. miles) is a hilly area located northwest of Malakand. The approximate population of 364,000 comprises two main tribes—the Tarkhanis and Utmankhels.

BMA and RA

BMA aims to reduce casualties by promoting safe behavior and facilitating appropriate responses to the problem. In general, programs provide information on the identification of mines and UXO and the dangers they pose, and seek to teach safe behavior to civilians living in or moving into mine-affected areas. This includes guidance on how to recognize a potentially mine or UXO-contaminated area, as well as what to do if someone accidentally finds himself in the middle of a mine field. Instruction in basic first aid for mine victims is often a part of the program.

Teaching BMA and RA, especially to the most vulnerable groups, is important in Bajaur due to its landmine situation. About two mine-related incidents

occur weekly in the area, generally as a result of a lack of mine awareness training. Children and women are among the most vulnerable groups that have become mine victims. BMA and RA, which were instituted in Bajaur on August 2, 2000, are also an important pillar of HSD mine action strategy. In the absence of these educational programs, the magnitude of the mine threat is multiplied.

In an area with an unusually high death ratio, the HSD field team prioritizes the teaching of first aid as part of its mine awareness program. Measures taught include stopping profuse bleeding and learning to guard against infections, shocks or other typical afflictions. HSD performs this training in an attempt to remedy the lack of first aid training in the community and a lack of effective transport. In general, casualties must be initially transported to the local hospital for first aid and then to the provincial metropolis hospital for treatment. By the time victims reach the hospital, colossal amounts of blood are lost. HSD's training would allow victims' initial treatment to be done on site.

To combat this problem on another level, HSD has also secured two ambulances through its donors. These will be stationed in close proximity to the community of Bajaur to pass casualties to an equipped medical center. One of them is ready to be sent from Geneva.

Since August 2000, HSD has educated about 30,000 community members in schools, Madrassas (religious schools), mosques, hujras (places for men to gather), and bazaars. The community has now largely accepted the mine awareness program and is cooperating with HSD teams. Children, in particular, are displaying keen interest in the class because of the easy and culturally appropriate medium of communication—Pushto—the local language. Due to the cultural practice of excluding women during mine awareness sessions in the schools, mosques and public places, the HSD team urges the audience to transmit the lessons to the females of the community, as well. After several meetings between the HSD executive director and other staff members with community elders and religious groups, the team has been allowed to gain access to the female children in the schools and mosques for conducting awareness classes.

Throughout the course of HSD field activities, we have observed that the community has a few strange and dangerous ways of responding to landmines and casualties. Our team discovered that members of the community use whey (yogurt beaten to liquid form) over a victim's wounds. This is not an isolated occurrence, but a widely practiced exercise—a fact borne by the household survey HSD conducted. Admittedly, this is harmful practice. HSD is attempting to raise awareness in the community against the potential harm held by this practice. A second dangerous practice widely seen in Bajaur is the shooting of



mines with a gun or stoning mines as a mine clearing strategy, as determined by HSD surveys. Finally, a few of the community members have bought poor quality mine detectors from the black market and used them in inappropriate manners. With no formal training from a mine action expert, the result has been a number of accidents. The community is also not familiar with any safe victim evacuation methods. Multiple casualties often result from the presence of multiple mines in the vicinity of the victim.

Mine Awareness Materials

HSD developed its mine awareness material after considering the needs and suffering of the local community. It includes wooden mine models (appropriately painted) of the common types of mines found and used in the region. In addition, there are two kinds of posters—one depicting common types of mines found and used in the region and the other showing landscapes with mine problems. Both these tools are used for instruction in the field. The clear and simple message on the printed materials appears to be assimilated by the community.

HSD is using places like mosques, schools and hujras for conducting its BMA and RA classes. Such locations ensure maximum attendance of all age groups of the community. Children and teachers are the target group in

■ Women must receive mine awareness education separately from the male population. c/o Faiz Muhammad Fayyaz

schools. In mosques, mullahs (religious groups) and other male members of the community assemble for prayers five times a day. In hujras, the elders of the community and youth commonly get together for entertainment. The aim is to maximize the reach of the classes and ensure that the composition is wide ranging.

HSD BMA and RA education team uses class teaching methodology for instructions. As per the tenet of BMA and RA education, HSD's team has made it a point not to touch the dummy mines in presence of children who have a proclivity to imitate and tamper with novel things. Mines are laid before children are allowed to arrive in the class and a wand is used to point to mines.

Child-to-Child and Child-to-Woman Technique

HSD has employed child-to-child and child-to-woman techniques in order to spread its BMA and RA messages. Children have strong learning faculties, as compared to adults. They are active and energetic, hence efficient and effective transmitters. Curiosity is a part of their built-in behavior pattern. We have discovered that the feedback from the children in Bajaur is mostly encouraging. Pushto serves as a very smooth, efficient and effective vehicle of communication. Children are also helpful in carrying our message to women.

Children make up about 45 percent of the total subjects HSD has covered so far. Their vulnerability is apparent in that they constitute 27 percent of the recorded casualties (see *Household Survey* table). HSD is using child-to-woman and male-to-female techniques to transmit and extend its message to women. As the community is very touchy on the issue of women, it is difficult to reach out to them.

■ A father carries the body of his son who was killed in a mine explosion. c/o AP.



Case Studies

Mohammad Zaman is one of six children of Rehman of Bar Gabaray, Tehsil Mamund, Bajaur Agency. On May 12, 1987, Mohammad brought home a piece of UXO. Due to a lack of mine awareness education, he did not foresee the danger inherent in the UXO. He struck the UXO with stones until it went off. It was at a time when his parents and siblings were busy with their routine household chores. As a result of the explosion, he, his mother and his sister died instantly, while his father and another sister sustained serious injuries.

On Dec. 15, 2000, a large, Russian-made UXO exploded while children were playing with it at the residence of Hakim Khan of Gabaray. The explosion claimed the lives of six innocent children. The bodies of the children were badly mutilated. Another child was badly injured.

However, HSD has managed to access some female schools where female teachers received our message. These teachers can also serve as effective transmitters. Moreover, feedback we have received from the community indicates that a child-to-women/male-to-female technique is proving to be fairly effective. Meanwhile, HSD is attempting to devise an efficient and effective way to transmit BMA and RA messages to women.

Household survey

The extent of the landmine problem in FATA warrants significant concern—a fact that was ignored for years by the government at the worst possible time. It officially recognized the problem for the first time in reports submitted to the CCW in December 1999.

HSD recognized the imperative need to address the problems FATA. It formed a general theoretical perspective of the problem, and laid it forth nationally and internationally. Fortunately, it has succeeded not only in securing recognition for the problem, but also in securing funds for a project to rehabilitate the landmine victims of FATA.

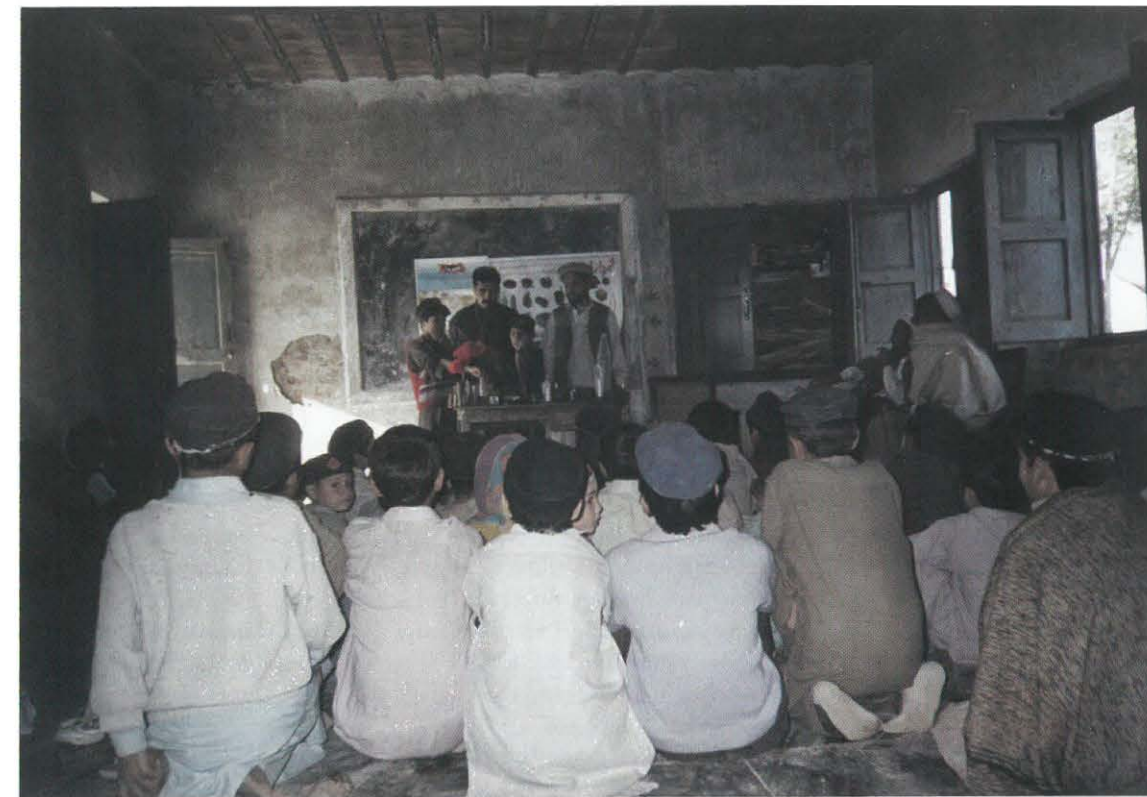
HSD aims to achieve comprehensive rehabilitation of mine victims to help them return to normalcy. This will be possible through their physical, social and economic rehabilitation. Physical rehabilitation will involve the provision of prostheses and means of mobility, whereas

socioeconomic rehabilitation shall require providing the victims with support to earn steady, decent income.

The HSD project provides skills development training and micro finances for this purpose. The victims are supported to run viable, profitable micro enterprises that produce steady incomes. They will be helped to perform normal social functions so that they will be accepted by society. We required a large base of knowledge and data for the planning of these activities. Obviously, an interview with household survey was made to collect all the data needed for planning these activities.

Database

It is imperative that the planning and execution of the database portion of the mine action project include information on the physical and socioeconomic rehabilitation of mine victims. Data has to be gathered and wielded not only to ascertain the extent and nature of physical disabilities, but also to determine the socioeconomic status of the community. Only then can the provision of prostheses, skill development training, and micro credits be planned and executed. It is obvious that HSD needs a database for the processing and analysis of such a big volume of data. It would take a great effort on the part of HSD staff to wield such a large volume of data manually, let alone process and analyze information, without the database HSD has assembled on incidents from August to October 2000.



The table shows the distribution of casualties by death, amputations, and injury. It is evident that Mamund Tehsil of Bajaur Agency has been one of the most affected by landmines. It has one of the most alarming death tolls: 220. There were also 186 amputations and 63 injuries. Nawagai Tehsil has also counted 33 deaths and 30 amputations. The death ratio would not have been so high had there been efficient transports to carry the victims to an equipped landmine casualty medical center following incidents. In Bajaur, it usually takes one and a half to four hours before a victim receives first aid. By the time victims reach an equipped medical center, they have lost large amounts of blood and their injuries often become infected.

■ Statistics show that males aged 12–18 form a particularly vulnerable demographic group. c/o Faiz Muhammad Fayyaz

Casualties (Tehsil)

| Tehsil | Casualties | | | Total Casualties | Percentage | | | Total Percent |
|--------------|------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| | Death | Injury | Amputations | | Death | Injury | Amputation | |
| Khar | 1 | 5 | 18 | 24 | 4.17 | 20.83 | 75.00 | 100.00 |
| Mamund | 220 | 63 | 186 | 469 | 46.91 | 13.43 | 39.66 | 100.00 |
| Salarzai | 5 | 2 | 15 | 22 | 22.73 | 9.09 | 68.18 | 100.00 |
| Utmankhel | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| Nawagai | 33 | 15 | 30 | 78 | 42.31 | 19.23 | 38.46 | 100.00 |
| Barang | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 100.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| Total | 260 | 85 | 250 | 595 | 43.70 | 14.29 | 42.02 | 100.00 |

Under these circumstances, it is not difficult to understand the high death and amputation rates in Bajaur.

As seen in the previous table, the percentage of female landmine victims in Bajaur, as compared to other landmine-affected countries or regions, is on the higher side. This could be a result of the local gender division in labor (that excludes women) and the resulting significant role of women in the local agrarian economy. Women generally help in harvesting, collecting firewood, cutting fodder for the cattle, and carrying water to the home. They are also responsible for tending cattle. All of these activities increase their vulnerability to mine incidents. Subsequent data on this matter should help HSD in coming up with concrete findings and conclusions to replace the current provisional and hypothetical findings.

From the table, it is apparent that Bajaur became infested with landmines after the breakout of the Afghan war in late-1979. Through forthcoming data, HSD will attempt to interpret the wide fluctuation of incidents in the 1990s. The cause of this fluctuation from the 1980s to the 1990s is currently unclear. HSD will refrain from drawing any conclusions from this data until more conclusive research is completed.

However, our hypothesis is that those who had migrated to safer places in the 1980s returned to their homes in the 1990s, when Soviet troops left Afghanistan and the areas near the border came under the control of the Mujahideen, who were struggling to gain control of Pakistan.

The overall death and amputation numbers are also on the high side compared to other mine affected countries. According to Handicap International's 1997 report on Cambodia, the rates of death, amputations and injury were 20, 22 and 58 percent, respectively. Out of the total 1,369 casualties, deaths, amputations and injuries numbered 271, 307 and 791, respectively. In Bajaur, the death and amputation percentages for 1997 were 44.9 percent and 37.76 percent (out of 98 incidents), respectively. The ratios for death and amputation in Bajaur are double that of Cambodia. Injuries accounted for 58 percent of casualties in Cambodia, compared to 17.35 percent of casualties in Bajaur.

Activity during Casualty

It stands out from the data that the presence of landmines in Bajaur is impeding agricultural activity, as the largest number (158) out of 584 accidents has occurred during farming and the number of casualties (58) while crossing agricultural fields is the third largest figure. This is not surprising, as agriculture is the mainstay of Bajaur's economy. Most people are engaged in farming and thus

Victims by Gender (Bajaur Agency)

| S # | Gender | No. of Incidents | Percent |
|-----|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Male | 389 | 65.40 |
| 2 | Female | 206 | 34.60 |
| | Total | 595 | 100.00 |

run the risk of being injured by a mine. The second largest figure is that of casualties during walking (107). People fall victim to mines while going to mosque, fetching water and during other routine walks for indispensable things. Children have been hit by mines while playing (29). Others have been crippled (25) while collecting firewood, an activity very common in an agricultural, tribal economy. While the number of incidents resulting from mine tampering is not large (10), this is a common occurrence in the community. In some instances, though, parents may have refrained from divulging the fact that an accident occurred during tampering due to a fear of losing compensation from HSD.

Victims by Age (Bajaur Agency)

| S# | Age Group | # of Incidents | Percentage |
|----|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 0 - 10 Years | 92 | 15.46 |
| 2 | 11 - 18 Years | 81 | 13.61 |
| 3 | 19 - 30 Years | 168 | 28.24 |
| 4 | 31 - 40 Years | 112 | 18.82 |
| 5 | 41 - 50 Years | 81 | 13.61 |
| 6 | 51 - 60 Year | 43 | 7.23 |
| 7 | Above 60 Years | 18 | 3.03 |
| | Total | 595 | 100.00 |

It is highly evident that landmines interfere with daily life in Bajaur. Mines and UXO have injured no one during non-essential activities. The socioeconomic status of the region has been altered immeasurably. Even some children have been prevented from attending school for fear that they will encounter mines while en route. This, in an a place where the literacy level is already threatened.

Methodology

Designing and Development of Interview Schedule

With the help of its field staff, HSD developed a suitable interview schedule after thoroughly studying the landmine problem in Bajaur. It had help from the already tested tools of Handicap International, the guidelines of Physicians for Human Rights and other similar

organizations working for the collection of data on landmine victims.

Training and Orientation of Field Staff

The HSD field staff was duly trained and oriented before deployment in the field. Dr. Anwar Hussein, assistant professor at NWFP Agriculture University's Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Peshawar, Pakistan, held sessions with field staff and trained them in interview techniques. Dr. Hussein is also a member of the HSD Board of Directors. Rae McGrath has continued to aid HSD as a consultant, using his rich and versatile experience to help the staff.

Initiating Volunteerism in the Community

HSD has initiated the trend of volunteerism in the community and received a positive response from the community. Various members of the community, ranging from farmers to students, have shown keen interest in volunteering with HSD. They have offered their services on a humanitarian and service basis for the noble enterprise.

Currently, HSD is working to train volunteers from the community, common people, schoolteachers, religious

teachers and leaders, and the youth to carry out humanitarian jobs on a volunteer basis. This is particularly essential when it comes to training people to treat fellow citizens through first aid.

As a final note, it would benefit HSD's mine awareness program to find women volunteers among the community who could act as liaisons between other females in Bajaur. As was earlier expressed, the female segment of the population is effected on a daily basis by mines, but is prevented by their social standing from participating in mine awareness training. This situation must be addressed if the mine situation in Pakistan's FATA is to improve. ■

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Victims by Year (Bajaur Agency)

| Year | Casualties | | | Total Casualties | Percentage | | |
|------|------------|----------|-------------|------------------|------------|--------|------------|
| | Death | Injuries | Amputations | | Death | Injury | Amputation |
| 1980 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| 1980 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 45.45 | 18.18 | 36.36 |
| 1982 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 57.14 | 0.00 | 42.86 |
| 1983 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| 1984 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 60.00 | 0.00 | 40.00 |
| 1985 | 3 | 1 | 11 | 15 | 20.00 | 6.67 | 73.33 |
| 1986 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 88.89 | 5.56 | 5.56 |
| 1987 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 69.23 | 15.38 | 15.38 |
| 1988 | 18 | 2 | 9 | 29 | 62.07 | 6.90 | 31.03 |
| 1989 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 55.56 | 0.00 | 44.44 |
| 1990 | 29 | 11 | 34 | 74 | 39.19 | 14.86 | 45.95 |
| 1991 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 54.55 | 18.18 | 27.27 |
| 1992 | 14 | 1 | 18 | 33 | 42.42 | 3.03 | 54.55 |
| 1993 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 18 | 38.89 | 11.11 | 50.00 |
| 1994 | 19 | 8 | 11 | 38 | 50.00 | 21.05 | 28.95 |
| 1995 | 19 | 7 | 27 | 53 | 35.85 | 13.21 | 50.94 |
| 1996 | 13 | 8 | 22 | 43 | 30.23 | 18.60 | 51.16 |
| 1997 | 44 | 17 | 37 | 98 | 44.90 | 17.35 | 37.76 |
| 1998 | 28 | 7 | 23 | 58 | 48.28 | 12.07 | 39.66 |
| 1999 | 12 | 3 | 14 | 29 | 41.38 | 10.34 | 48.28 |
| 2000 | 6 | 11 | 13 | 30 | 20.00 | 36.67 | 43.33 |

**All charts and graphs supplied by the author.*