



## Afghan farmers and villagers help rid communities of landmines – UN



1 February 2010 – Farmers and villagers are taking part in United Nations-backed efforts to rid Afghanistan of landmines, which is also providing a much-needed boost to their incomes.

An average of 40 people are injured or killed every month by mines in the Asian nation, down from 150 per month three years ago.

But 40 “is still high and puts Afghanistan at the top of countries affected by mines” and explosive remnants of war (ERW), or unexploded bombs, said Haider Reza, Programme Director of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), supported by the UN and the Afghan Government.

Last year alone, more than 100 people were killed and many more injured in incidents related to mines or ERW.

In eight of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, people are being trained as de-miners to clear mines in their own communities.

“I think it is good for us that we de-mine our own communities since we know where the minefields are better than anyone and it is good that the programme has created jobs for us,” said a farmer from the Spena Kalacha village of Kandahar province.

Over the past 20 years, 15,000 hazard areas across Afghanistan have been cleared, with 84 districts and 1,370 communities having been declared mine-free.

“This is very, very considerable,” Mr. Reza noted.

In 2009, 1,299 minefields and 121 battle areas were cleared, with over 50,000 anti-personnel mines, some 700 anti-tank mines and over one million ERW destroyed.

“We would like to assist families and ordinary people on the ground to have an income by working on their land, on their farms, and by grazing their animals,” the MACCA official stressed.

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