



## The Landmine Problem

Afghanistan's mine and UXO (unexploded ordnance) problem is the consequence of more than 30 years of war: the Soviet invasion (1979-1989), civil fighting (1989-2001) and the military operations against Al-Qaida and Taliban (October 2001-present). The continuous strife has left some 722 km<sup>2</sup> of land contamination with landmines and UXO - affecting 2,837 communities and 17% of the total population. The U.S. led intervention in Afghanistan has resulted in the increased use of cluster munitions. This contamination, coupled with Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) has increased the suspected hazardous area from previous estimates. Additionally, Improvised Explosive Devices continue to plague both coalition forces and civilians alike.



### Humanitarian Demining Programs

Afghanistan's Mine Action Program is one of the oldest and largest demining programs in the world. Established in 1989 the Mine Action Program currently employs some 8,000 Afghans. Despite growing security concerns, demining organizations collectively cleared 173km<sup>2</sup> of land in 2007. Mine clearance rose 6% and battle area clearance rose by 35%. Until recently, the Mine Detection

Center was the sole national Afghan mine-clearance NGO utilizing MDDs in Afghanistan. A recent effort among donor nations, the United Nations and the Afghan government is broadening the scope of mine action capabilities, to include mine detection dogs, within each of the five national NGOs.

## The Marshall Legacy Institute's Program

To date, MLI has donated nine mine detection dogs to two Afghan demining organizations. With funding from the Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, MLI donated three MDDs to the Demining Agency For Afghanistan (DAFA) in September 2007 and six MDDs to the Organization for Mine Action and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR) in June 2008. MLI will continue to raise funding and awareness among the U.S. population to send nine more of these valuable canines to mine clearance organizations in Afghanistan in early spring of 2009, and plans to send up to 75 MDDs to Afghanistan over the next five years. MLI has also launched a CHAMPS (Children Against Mines Program) International campaign in Afghanistan in partnership with Help the Afghan Children. One school in the United States has already begun communicating via Yahoo Video Messenger with a school in Afghanistan. The purpose of CHAMPS International Afghanistan is to promote good will, global citizenship, raise awareness about the landmine problem in Afghanistan, and to raise money to provide rehabilitation to young Afghan landmine survivors.

### Sources of Additional Information

- *Landmine Monitor Report 2008*, Human Rights Watch/International Campaign to Ban Landmines
- *To Walk the Earth in Safety*, U.S. Department of State