

UNMAS Proposal for AusAID Support to Mine Action in Afghanistan

AusAID Design Summary and Implementation Document

1. Introduction

At the London Conference on Afghanistan in January 2010, Minister Smith announced a \$20 million, four year commitment to mine action in Afghanistan. To meet this commitment, AusAID entered into discussions with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to develop a program of support. UNMAS, through its coordinating body the Mine Action Coordination Centre to Afghanistan (MACCA), has managed coordination of mine action in Afghanistan since 2002 and has been the key partner for Australia's support to the sector.

Australia's most recent commitment to mine action in Afghanistan will build on the \$15 million contribution made since 2007. The most recent program funded by AusAID is due for completion in March 2011 and has three main areas of support: coordination; mine action implementation; and victim assistance (see Attachment A).

2. Rationale for AusAID Participation

2.1 Australia's Strategy for Mine Action

Since signing the Mine Ban Convention in 1997, Australia has actively contributed to global efforts to protect civilians from the threat and impact of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Australia's mine action assistance focuses on the most heavily affected countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In the period to 2009, Australia contributed over \$175 million to mine action activities in 16 affected countries.

In August 2009, the Australian Government launched the *Mine Action Strategy for the Australian Aid Program* in which it pledged a further \$100 million to mine action over the four years to 2014. The goal of the strategy is to:

Reduce the threat of socioeconomic impact of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

The intended outcomes are:

1. Improved quality of life for victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERW)
2. Reduced number of deaths and injuries from landmines, cluster munitions and ERW
3. Enhanced capacity of countries to manage their mine action programs
4. Effective leadership and advocacy by Australia on mine action.

The strategy specifies seven guiding principles for Australia's mine action assistance (see Attachment B).

2.2 Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Afghanistan

AusAID has recently released the *Strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan 2010-2012* (Attachment C). This strategy states that Australia's overall development objective in Afghanistan is to:

Build the Afghan Government's capacity to deliver basic services and provide economic opportunities to its people.

Under this strategy, AusAID bases its support to Afghanistan on four pillars:

- enhancing basic service delivery in health and education
- supporting rural development and livelihoods
- improving governance and the effectiveness of the Afghan Government
- supporting vulnerable populations.

Assistance to mine action is situated under the fourth pillar of the strategy – supporting vulnerable populations.

2.3 Australia's strategy for a disability

In 2008, Australia launched its first disability strategy for the aid program – *Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australia aid program*. The strategy aims to ensure that policies and programs are shaped to better take account of the requirements of people with a disability. This strategy is particularly applicable in Afghanistan where almost three per cent of people have a severe disability.

3. Proposed Program

The *Proposal to Support Mine Action in Afghanistan*, submitted by UNMAS in December 2010, outlines a four year program with the overall objective of contributing to the stabilisation, reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. The project specific objectives are:

- Coordination of all stakeholders towards achieving annual Integrated Operational Plans
- National capacity support of the Department of Mine Clearance and other ministries as requested by the Afghan Government
- Survey clearance of mine and ERW hazard
- Increased awareness of mines and ERW risk within local populations
- Increased awareness of the abilities of people injured by mines/ERW and reduction of stigmatisation of disability

The \$20 million program will be delivered over four years commencing in April 2011. If fully funded, the activity will be the largest ever Australian supported mine action activity and will constitute twenty per cent of Australia's mine action commitment over 2010-14.

It is anticipated that funding will be paid in four annual tranches of \$5 million over the financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15. Contributions in out years will be subject to satisfactory reporting from UNMAS.

3.1 Implementation

The program will be coordinated by MACCA and the UNOPS contracting office located within MACCA. Mine action activities will be delivered by Implementing Partners accredited to work in Afghanistan.

The Proposal is an overarching framework that allows for programming priorities, gaps and opportunities to be addressed during the course of the program. Activities are not specified in the Proposal but will be identified during implementation from proposals submitted by Implementing Partners.

MACCA undertakes project monitoring on behalf of donors and the Afghan Government. MACCA regional offices carry out Quality Assurance inspections which aim to ensure that demining operations are safe, effective and efficient and in accordance with mine action standards. In addition, MACCA employs two monitoring and evaluation tools which aim to measure the quality of the work as well as progress against stated objectives.

3.2 Reporting

Australia is signatory to the *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD). This 2003 initiative aims to ensure that international responses to humanitarian crises are effective and consistent with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. In line with GHD principles, AusAID should ensure that reporting requirements for humanitarian activities are not burdensome.

The Proposal does not include information on regular reporting by UNMAS to AusAID. However, for previous UNMAS activities funded by AusAID, UNMAS has submitted mid-term reports indicating progress achieved and funds disbursed and a final completion report. In addition, narrative and financial reports have been included in the UN annual multi-donor reports. It is envisaged that similar reporting arrangements will be put in place for this program. Annual reports will be required prior to payment of tranches and a final report will be done after completion of the program.

3.3 Risk Management

There are no low risk activities in Afghanistan. However the program aligns well with Australia's strategies for development and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, contributing to the fourth pillar of Australia's strategy – supporting vulnerable populations – whilst also supporting rural development and government capacity. It contributes to the four outcomes of the *Strategy for Mine Action* and it includes a focus on people with disability, in line with Australia's 2008 *Development for All* strategy. As outlined in the proposal, the program also contributes to the objectives of the Afghan Government's Mine Action strategy.

This proposal maps out a coordinated and flexible approach to mine action in Afghanistan. As the body responsible for the coordination of all mine action activities in Afghanistan, MACCA is in a good position to determine how and where support can be best utilized. MACCA has built relationships with Implementing Partners and established systems to ensure that proposals from Implementing Partners are relevant and offer value for money. The flexibility of the program will help it respond quickly and appropriately to the fluid context of Afghanistan.

MACCA has been designated by the Afghan Government to work directly with the Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) which means that MACCA is well placed to contribute to capacity building within DMC. Gains in capacity made under previous programs can be built upon and consolidated under this program.

In comparison to previous mine action programs in Afghanistan funded by AusAID, this program is to be implemented over a longer period. This will contribute to the effectiveness of the program, providing security of funding and staffing, reduced administrative requirements and will allow for longer-term planning.

By partnering with the United Nations, AusAID can be assured that quality processes and systems for financial accountability are in place. Furthermore, payments in future years will be subject to satisfactory progress being made toward the objectives of the program.

4. Issues

The Proposal identifies the provinces of Khost, Kandahar and Ghor as suitable for demining operations under this program. As Australia has an interest in Uruzgan, AusAID requested that UNMAS provide some additional detail on the status of demining in that province. UNMAS reports that all known minefields in the centre of Uruzgan have been removed. Beyond this there are nine registered hazards - 3 minefields and 6 battlefields in Tarin Kowt and Chora. The Tarin Kowt minefields can be covered by a team that has already been funded by another donor. Demining activities are not currently possible in Chora due to the security situation.

The proposed program aims to clear 7.8 sq km of known hazard over 4 years at a cost of \$10 million. The cost of clearance is determined very much by the specific context so it is not possible to establish comparative rates. However UNMAS calculates that at a cost of \$1.28 per square metre, this proposal offers good value for money for clearance in Afghanistan.

Attachments

- A UNMAS 2009 Proposal for support of mine action in Afghanistan
- B Mine Action Strategy for the Australian Aid Program
- C Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Afghanistan 2010-2012