HALO Trust's Reintegration of Former Combatants into Demining

MINE ACTION AND ARMED VIOLENCE REDUCTION

Afghanistan

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GICHD | CIDHG

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), an international expert organisation legally based in Switzerland as a non-profit foundation, works for the elimination of mines, explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards, such as unsafe munitions stockpiles. The GICHD provides advice and capacity development support, undertakes applied research, disseminates knowledge and best practices and develops standards. In cooperation with its partners, the GICHD's work enables national and local authorities in affected countries to effectively and efficiently plan, coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate safe mine action programmes, as well as to implement the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and other relevant instruments of international law. The GICHD follows the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

With a country presence in Afghanistan dating back to 1988, HALO Trust is one of the oldest actors in the demining sector. It is also the largest demining agency operating in the country, with activities in both humanitarian mine clearance and weapons and ammunition disposal (WAD).[2] It employs a staff of 3,200 individuals that work in 44 districts in fifteen provinces.[3]

In 2010, HALO Trust was responsible for the clearance of 34 per cent of all land cleared and 43 per cent of all mines destroyed in Afghanistan.[4] In that same year, HALO Trust recruited a pilot group of former combatants in coordination with the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP). The APRP is a programme that "aims to entice fighters to leave the battlefield in return for security, jobs and other incentives – provided they renounce violence, respect the Afghan constitution and cut ties with al-Qaida".[5]

HALO Trust has since reintegrated more than 300 former Taliban and Hezbi Islami combatants in Baghlan and Kunduz provinces[6] into its demining ranks and trained them as community-based deminers. This case study examines the work that HALO Trust has done to support the APRP's reintegration of former combatants through Community Based Demining (CBD).

CONTEXT

Demining context

Afghanistan has the oldest mine action programme in the world. Since its inception in 1988, mine/ Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) operators have cleared 16,950 hazards covering 1,445 square kilometres. Despite significant progress, much work remains to be done. As of June 2012, there remain 5,489 hazardous areas covering 563 square kilometres and it is estimated that this will require an additional ten years to clear.[7] That area affects 1,847 communities. Meanwhile, casualties have been in sharp decline as a result of clearance and Mine Risk Education (MRE), yet still remain among the highest rates in the world.[8] There were 671 Afghans killed or injured by landmines or ERW in 2010, 60 per cent of whom were children.[9]

Political context

Signed in December 2001, the Bonn Agreement was "entered into only by the victors, and was signed against the backdrop of a continually internationally led war in the country." [10] Factions present at the conference were invited based on their perceived power and common opposition to the Taliban,[11] rather than common interests or values. The resulting "imposed settlement," in which the victorious group imposes a settlement over another, has been fragile due to the exclusion of 'the losers' (the Taliban) and the fragmentation of the victors' values, vision and goals. The former has led to ongoing conflict with insurgent groups, while the latter has undermined the legitimacy and authority of the government in the eyes of the Afghan people.[12] The government's legitimacy has also been undermined by widespread internal corruption, including close ties with local warlords.

Community Based Demining (CBD) in Afghanistan

CBD is a demining strategy whereby deminers are recruited locally from contaminated communities. First employed in Afghanistan in 2008, CBD is advantageous to communities and demining agencies alike. It enables greater local ownership of mine action, provides employment opportunities, and allows demining agencies to operate in areas previously deemed too insecure.

After successful implementation in Lashkar Gah (Helmand Province) in 2008, the approach quickly spread to other parts of the country. Total demining personnel hired directly from impacted communities peaked in 2010 at 1,310 persons. It has since declined slightly due to a corresponding decrease in the number of high priority areas for clearance located in insecure areas.[13]

The community based approach has expanded beyond clearance to other components of mine action including MRE. With community based MRE, local volunteers are trained to educate individuals within their community on the risk of mines and ERW, and liaise with survey/clearance teams. Reintegrees are currently not involved in MRE; however, the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) is currently working to encourage greater crossover between clearance and MRE through the training of deminers to deliver MRE messages. Therefore, reintegrees may be involved in delivering MRE messages in the future.

HALO Trust is unique in its approach to CBD as it recruits locally, but then expects recruits to deploy to other areas in Afghanistan after clearance in the area of origin has been completed. Other demining agencies often end contracts with community based deminers once local clearance is completed. While some individuals prefer to only work in their home district, HALO Trust has found that a majority of their local recruits are willing to travel. Migratory labour practices are not uncommon in other sectors in Afghanistan (eg agriculture and construction), and many deminers feel the steady salary, paid leave and benefits of demining compensate for the inconvenience of working away from home.

Reintegration and mine action

It is important to note that HALO Trust's community-based demining approach is not the only example of mine action support for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). Demining has been promoted as a "first-line response" to be used in the initial stages of DDR, as it is a labour-intensive activity that can render quick results.[14] It has already been applied in other contexts as diverse as Sri Lanka and Bosnia.[15]

Mine action and DDR collaboration also has a history in the Afghan context. Mine Action For Peace (MAFP), a UN Joint Programme, operated from 2004-2006. MAFP was part of the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP), a DDR programme established with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan.[16]

DDR at that time targeted the Afghan Military Force (AMF), comprised of the pro-government militias that had helped remove the Taliban from power in 2001 and 2002.[17] Based on loyalties to individual commanders, the fragmented alliances of the group made it a potential threat to the country's stability. The ANBP was thus given the tasks of helping combatants return to civilian life, promoting national security and facilitating "the creation and deployment of the Afghan National Army."[18]

The MAFP package for former combatants included demining training, vocational training and literacy training, as well as thirteen months of guaranteed employment. The steady income and benefits proved attractive to reintegrees; 617 (75 per cent) were still working as deminers one month after the end of the programme, demonstrating a high retention potential within the mine action sector.[19]

Unlike the demining component, the vocational training yielded limited success. Participants were dissatisfied with the limited training choices (carpentry, tailoring and welding).[20] For some, it was a matter of preference. A former combatant explained to a representative of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) that after years of fighting in the field, sitting behind a sewing machine was simply not attractive. Others found that there was not enough demand for the newly taught skills and that it was difficult to enter these sectors and compete with established craftsmen.[21]

An unexpected outcome of the initiative was the self-initiated reconciliation that occurred amongst rivals with loyalties to different commanders. The deminers recognised that they would "not only have to work and train side by side, but also to trust each other in risky situations," which motivated reconciliation amongst former enemies.[22]

As this case study will show, the current reintegration process is significantly different from the past DDR activities. Whereas the MAFP created a parallel system for training and recruiting former combatants as deminers, while providing additional vocational training for unrelated sectors, the current approach used by HALO Trust integrates former combatants into its normal demining activities, focusing solely on demining. In addition to new programming, the combatant profiles and type of conflict in the current context present a new set of challenges for promoting peace and stability through the demining sector. However, lessons have certainly been learnt from this first experience of reintegrating former combatants into demining programmes in Afghanistan.

PROGRAMME RATIONALE

HALO Trust's mandate is to "alleviate suffering through the clearance of the debris of war."[23] When the APRP began in 2010, HALO Trust's management saw an opportunity to use demining to support the DDR process by employing former combatants as deminers.[24] They began a pilot programme in November 2010 in Baghlan province[25] using their own funding to train and hire 52 reintegrees as deminers. This move was based on their belief that by promoting peace and stability in their areas of operation, they are able to better perform their core activities, while helping to achieve broader peacebuilding goals.

Working with the APRP has helped HALO Trust open up avenues of communication with previously inaccessible communities. HALO Trust uses these avenues to disseminate information about the work they do to help ensure the safety of all of their deminers as they work in insecure areas. While demining is largely respected as an honourable and neutral profession in Afghanistan,[26] misconceptions still exist about deminers, notably in communities that have not yet had contact with demining agencies. Several interviewed reintegrees admitted that either they or their communities had negative perceptions of deminers before joining HALO. These views had been changed as a result of the APRP demining initiatives.

> *Before the people of our village had negative opinions about deminers. They have changed their views because we (deminers) give them information about the work we do.* — Reintegrated deminer, age 40

> *When I was a combatant, I thought that deminers were not good people because I thought they were wasting their time spending their days and nights in the field and just collecting their salary. After I joined the training, my mind changed, and I understood that the work of demining is hard and useful for people and even for animals.* — Reintegrated deminer, age 30

HALO Trust also benefits from the knowledge reintegrees acquired as combatants.[27] Their knowledge of landmines, ERW and the strategies used to employ them, makes former combatants valuable assets for demining agencies. Out of six reintegrees interviewed for this case study, five felt that their experiences as combatants had prepared them to work with mines and ERW and to handle the challenges of the field. As one deminer explained, "My former experience helped me to recognise the mines and unexploded ordnance. It also helped me to work in the mountains, desert, and in different climates."

In addition to improved community relations, HALO Trust recognises the potential for attracting funding for activities that can serve both demining and DDR objectives. As many donors are currently cutting back on spending, dual-purpose activities provide extra value for money.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The APRP is designed to "entice fighters to leave the battlefield in return for security, jobs and other incentives."[28] There are three stages defined in the reintegration process: i) social outreach, ii) demobilisation and iii) community recovery. The demining activities fall within the third phase, which is designed to demonstrate to the community the benefits of maintaining peace.[29]

Most of the community recovery activities are channelled through line ministry partners in order to build the capacity and legitimacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA), while providing services, training and employment opportunities that benefit the community at large. However, this process is very time consuming. To ensure that communities can quickly see the benefits of their participation in the peace and reintegration process, small grants projects are administered through Community Development Committees.

Community based demining helps fill the gap between the short-term small grants, which are mainly small infrastructure projects, and the long-term capacity building of the line ministries. It yields immediate benefits to the reintegrees and community participants that are trained as deminers who begin receiving a salary from the first day of training. In less than a month, a survey and clearance team is active in clearing land for the benefit of other community members. HALO Trust hires community-based deminers as part of their core capacity teams[30]; therefore, if clearance around the district is complete, the deminers are expected to deploy to a neighbouring district. While this is a drawback for some who would only wish to work in their home district, most HALO Trust employees are eager to have the opportunity to travel, and especially in exchange for a steady income, benefits and paid holiday leave.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Social outreach, demobilisation and selection

The APRP is led by the High Peace Council (HPC) and implemented by a Joint Secretariat.[31] Much of the implementation takes place at the provincial and district level, guided by Provincial Peace Councils and provincial governors and supported by Provincial Joint Secretariat Teams. At the local level, the APRP works through existing structures including District Development Assemblies and Community Development Committees.[32]

Funding comes primarily from international donors and is channelled through the APRP Reintegration Finance Mechanism, which is managed jointly by the GIRoA, UNDP and donor countries. Additional funds come from the US funded Afghanistan Reintegration Program (ARP), "which is designed to be used for gap filling, fast implementation and capacity building."[33]

When the APRP refers reintegrees to participating demining agencies, it has already gone through the first two stages of the reintegration process: social outreach and demobilisation. In the social outreach phase, "communities (supported by the government) reach out to insurgents, work to resolve grievances, and encourage them to stop fighting and rejoin their communities peacefully and permanently."[34] In the demobilisation phase, reintegrees are vetted, enrolled and provided a stipend for transition assistance.[35]

After demobilisation, reintegrees and other members of the community are given different training and employment options. APRP activities have a target of 50 per cent reintegrees and 50 per cent community members in all of their activities.[36] By including both former combatants and non-combatants, the APRP is careful not to "reward" those who participated in conflict or exacerbate tensions within the community. Reintegration activities represent a small component of the APRP's activities, which strive to benefit communities and not individuals.

Individuals that wish to become deminers must also meet the criteria of the participating demining agency. There are currently two demining agencies participating in the APRP, HALO Trust and the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR).[37] HALO Trust requires that all participants have a national identity card, a health check and the guarantee or approval of village elders. The participants must also be between the ages of 18 and 40.

Target beneficiaries

The reintegrees of the APRP are distinctly different from the reintegrees of DDR activities of 2004-2006. First, the fighting for the AMF ended with the fall of the Taliban; the reason to fight no longer existed for many combatants at that time. In the current context, insurgents are still engaged in a fight against the government and international forces.[38] Thus, the stakes are much higher for combatants to lay down their arms in a context of on-going conflict. Second, many members of the AMF were former mujahedin who had fought against the Soviets in the 1980s, receiving "strong communal support for their armed struggle and were seen as taking part in a jihad (holy war) against an invader."[39] The current conflict is much more divisive, making the reintegration process much more difficult to navigate. Third, the current reintegrees are generally less educated than those from the AMF, making training and job placement more difficult.[40]

Reintegrees that choose the demining track, as opposed to other APRP training or employment activities are often attracted by the size and regularity of a deminer salary. The standard salary for deminers at HALO Trust is 262 USD per month in 2012, plus a stipend for food and accommodation. Economic motivations are one of the drivers of vulnerable individuals joining the insurgency, which often pays cash for services rendered. Combatants that agree to demobilise are typically those that were motivated by financial reasons, rather than ideology.[41]

The reputation of demining agencies as neutral actors and the opportunity to serve the community are also cited by reintegrees as reasons for choosing demining. When combatants cease to fight, they can feel a loss of pride and power, which can threaten the success of the reintegration process.[42] Demining is a respected profession in most Afghan communities, and deminers often derive a strong sense of pride from engaging in a profession that involves risk-taking and serves the community. When combined with the economic benefits, the intangible benefits of demining play a significant role in the recruitment and retention of reintegrees.

> *I decided to become a deminer because it has a good salary and vacation. Also, demining organisations are charity organisations and do not have ties to any political factions. People benefit from the work of deminers, and also the deminers have a good reputation in the community.* – Reintegrated deminer and medic, age 35

Training and employment

There is very little that distinguishes the training and employment of reintegrees from that of regular deminers at HALO Trust. Most aspects are the same with the exception of the start date of the deminer salary and the length of training. Therefore, the cost for HALO Trust to train and hire former combatants is nearly the same as for normal recruits, and Standard Operating Procedures are the same. Unlike normal recruits, reintegrees receive a full salary as of the first day of training, as opposed to the regular stipend, so as to discourage a return to fighting for economic gain. Differences in salary between normal and APRP recruits would likely result in tensions, but as the APRP recruits are trained separately, this has mitigated perceptions of inequality.

The reintegree training itself is identical to regular training in terms of content; however, extra training days are added as needed for the theory component of the training. The extra days accommodate the high rate of illiteracy amongst current reintegrees.[43] More time is spent repeating lessons and quizzing participants on the previous days lessons, bringing the average number of days spent on theory to a total of seven to nine days, rather than the standard five. Literacy training is informally provided to reintegrees on a volunteer basis by demining team commanders. Several of the reintegrees interviewed for this case study were benefitting from this literacy initiative. There are no modifications made to the practical training, and the entire training lasts between three to four weeks. Reintegrees are trained to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Level Four (IMAS Level 1), in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).

Unlike the MAFP initiative in 2004-2006, the current reintegration package does not include additional vocational training.[44] With at least a decade of mine and ERW clearance still needed in Afghanistan, HALO Trust considers that demining provides a medium and even a long-term employment option.[45] According to Dr. Farid Homayoun, Programme Manager of HALO Trust Afghanistan, "HALO Trust will be here for the long term until we solve the problems of mines and ERWs in Afghanistan, in line with the recent 10 year extension request under the Ottawa Convention and the vision of the Government of Afghanistan for Mine Action."[46]

When reintegrees graduate from the training, they are assigned to demining teams that are deployed in the same way as all other HALO Trust teams, following a schedule of three weeks of work followed by one week of home leave. The teams begin with a community based demining (CBD) approach, in order to demonstrate the benefits of participating in the APRP to the community and provide employment close to home. If there are no areas in the immediate vicinity to be cleared, or if local contaminated land is not accessible due to seasonal climate conditions, the team may be deployed to another district or province. To date, the reintegrees from Baghlan and Kunduz have worked in Badakhshan and Takhar, in addition to their home provinces. While not all reintegrees have remained deminers, HALO Trust does not have any record of APRP reintegrees returning to active combat.

Each team is comprised of 22 deminers, half of whom are reintegrees, and four commanders. Amongst the deminers, three are also trained as paramedics and one serves as a driver. All reintegrees begin as regular deminers; however, they are able to advance within the ranks. Reintegrees carry out basic clearance, but not survey work. Those that demonstrate aptitude over time can be promoted, but they are typically those who are literate prior to joining. One of the interviewed deminers had received training as a paramedic, and others have achieved the rank of Section Commander. The reintegrees and regular deminers generally work well together once integrated into teams. HALO Trust has not encountered conflicts thus far between the two categories of deminers.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Control (QC)

Accredited by the MACCA, HALO Trust abides by IMAS. HALO Trust believes that each member of a demining team shares in the responsibility of maintaining a high standard of quality. In the field, Quality Control (QC) is conducted with a minimum of three inspections per lane performed by the deminer, section commander and team leader. Supervisors perform random checks as part of HALO's internal Quality Assurance (QA). Monitoring and evaluation does not differ for teams with reintegrees and regular demining teams and no difference has been found in the work efficiency of the two groups. HALO Trust reports on the performance of both groups to the MACCA and the respective donor. The MACCA oversees the quality management systems of all demining agencies operating in Afghanistan to ensure that mine action is conducted safely and in accordance with Afghanistan Mine Action Standards (AMAS), which are developed based on IMAS. Thus far, the project has not been evaluated by external auditors.

Information Management

Data relating to land clearance and release is collected and evaluated using the latest version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), the UN-approved information system for collecting standardised mine action data. The MACCA and all MAPA members have the software. Data is shared and cross-checked on a monthly basis. In addition to implementing partners, data is shared with the GIRoA and international military forces.

Specific data pertaining to reintegrees (eg reintegree clearance and retention) is not collected separately from data collected for regular demining operations. Once reintegrees graduate from their training, they are integrated into teams with regular deminers. This is consistent with the current APRP approach, which involves little follow-up with reintegrees after the initial training or placement. HALO Trust keeps records on the reintegree deminers in case they leave, change team, location, position, etc. HALO Trust also keeps track of the attrition rate by month, which also includes reintegrees.

PROGRAMME RESULTS

Impact on reintegrees and their households

The results of the reintegration into the mine action sector have an immediate impact on the lives of participants. Reintegrees begin receiving a salary from day one of demining training, immediately relieving pressure to return to conflict for monetary reasons. Most of the reintegrees interviewed for the case study claimed that their economic situation was fine when working as a combatant, indicating that they were indeed getting money for their participation in insurgent activities. The regularity of their demining work and salary, however, has improved their economic situation somewhat from when they were combatants, which bodes well for the future retention of these deminers. According to HALO Trust, their retention rate of reintegrees within the demining sector is 70 per cent.[47]

Interviewees also claimed that their personal security and mobility improved after demobilisation. Prior to reintegration, many of the combatants were unable to travel freely, even in their own communities, for fear of being arrested. Reintegrees are given political amnesty for any insurgent offences, which allows them to travel more easily. However, criminal offences may be prosecuted after the demobilisation phase.[48] Reintegrees still face the risk of retribution from insurgents that perceive them to be traitors to their cause.[49] They also recognise that should the balance of power shift in their home communities, their security would be further put at risk.

Nevertheless, the combined improvements in mobility and salary are currently having a positive impact on the reintegrees' family well-being. Most interviewed reintegrees reported increased access to health care and education for their families after the reintegration process.

> *My job has had a good impact on my family life. I get a regular salary and I meet my family needs. My children have access to education and health services and my personal security is good now.* – Reintegrated deminer, 41

Reintegrated deminers are also proud of the contributions they make to the community. Interviewed deminers all said they would encourage relatives (only male) to become deminers, not only for the economic benefits, but also for the chance to serve their communities and their country through mine action.

Impact on communities

Communities benefit first and foremost from the clearance of contaminated land, which occurs regardless of the type of demining team. In addition to saving lives and limbs, clearance enables economic development and improves the mobility of affected communities.

The added benefit of teams with reintegrees is the reconciliation that is achieved when former enemies learn to work together toward a common goal. Discussed further in the followingSection on Gender and Diversity, self-initiated reconciliation is a common result amongst demining teams. Deminers must be able to trust one another fully to work safely in the field. Therefore, teams composed of reintegrees and community members often overcome tensions and past conflict without outside intervention or conflict management. "The people who are working in demining, they are our brothers," explained an interviewed reintegree. "There is no difference between us because we have the same aim – to clear the mines and serve our people. We are from the same country, and we are all Muslim."

With a focus on community recovery, the APRP avoids measuring outputs such as numbers of reintegrees as indicators of success. Rather, it tries to measure the impact on general security and stability in the participating communities by tracking security incidents, studying the return of displaced households back to communities of origin, and by gathering feedback from stakeholders at the district and provincial level. However, the impact of the APRP, and its sustainability, cannot be determined just two years after the programme was first approved.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Gender mainstreaming is extremely difficult for a reintegration programme in the demining sector. Not only are most combatants male, but demining itself is also a male-dominated sector due to extreme gender segregation practiced within Afghan society. Demining requires deployments to the field with regular overnight stays and demanding physical labour, both considered taboo for Afghan women in the presence of men outside of the immediate family.

Afghan women still work in mine action, but their involvement often involves office work or MRE. Those women that deliver MRE at the community level are often recruited with male relatives that can serve as *maharams* (chaperones), so that the team can be sent out to the field in pairs. A woman travelling alone would be unacceptable and very vulnerable to attacks in many parts of the country.

Finding female combatants, not to mention female combatants willing to reintegrate and become deminers, would be extremely unlikely if not impossible within the current Afghan context. However, women should not be overlooked in reintegration processes simply because they are more often the victim than the perpetrator of violence. As men are more often engaged directly in conflict, they suffer a majority of the direct impacts. However, women suffer disproportionately from the indirect effects of conflict, such as increased levels of domestic violence and health problems related to a lack of access to health care.[50]

Just as community recovery strives to benefit former combatants and non-combatants alike to avoid exacerbating tensions, the APRP needs to ensure that opportunities for training and employment are offered to women, so as not to exacerbate gender inequalities by offering opportunities for advancement only to men.[51]

These opportunities need to be adapted to the needs of women living within Afghan society to ensure their participation and safety, which is why demining may not be the most appropriate sector. Rather, the APRP should strive to balance opportunities for men and women. When demining is offered as an option to reintegrees and community members, a culturally acceptable option for training and employment should be made available for female relatives of reintegrees and other women in the community.

As for diversity, the reintegrees of the APRP represent a variety of ethnic and tribal backgrounds. As selection depends on the willingness of insurgent groups to join the peace process, the APRP has little control over the ethnic representation within the programme. However, by mixing reintegrees with regular deminers of different ethnic and tribal backgrounds,[52] HALO Trust promotes mutual understanding and reconciliation amongst former enemies.

"We are from different ethnic backgrounds and different provinces, but there are not any political or racial tensions between us because when we work, nobody can help us except our fellow deminers," explained a reintegrated deminer. "We all have one aim, and we work together." The risk-taking involved in demining demands that deminers trust the members of their team completely. The necessity of trust and teamwork appears to be especially conducive to facilitating reconciliation.

HALO Trust is also careful to respect local customs and beliefs. Within the camps for demining teams deployed out of their home community, the deminers select a knowledgeable deminer or other staff living in the camp who knows enough about Islamic rituals as their Imam or Camp Mullah to lead daily prayers. The Imam or Mullah does not get paid for this extra service that he provides. This enables the deminers to continue to practice their religious beliefs when deployed away from home.

DONOR SUPPORT

Donor support for HALO Trust's work reintegrating former combatants has come from the governments of Germany and Japan. Proposals are currently pending with additional donors to expand reintegration activities into new provinces, notably Herat. The initial pilot project was funded by HALO Trust out of its general fund for mine clearance. After the pilot project yielded positive results, Germany began funding HALO Trust's reintegration activities, followed by Japan, through its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GAGP) initiative.

The location of the reintegration focus (Baghlan and Kunduz) thus far has been in part due to donor interest for specific geographic regions in Afghanistan.[53] Locations are also selected by the APRP based on where combatants are willing to take part in the process.[54] If pending proposals are approved, Herat will be the next geographic focus for replication of the programme by HALO Trust.

Table 1 | Total HALO Trust Reintegrees

	DONOR	DATE OF TRAINING	NO. OF REINTEGREES
1.	HALO Trust	November 2010	52
2.	Germany	May 2011	131
3.	Germany	July 2011	39
4.	Japan	April 2012	80
	Retention rate: 70% [55]		

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Although this case study focused on the work of HALO Trust with the APRP, lessons can be drawn from both the current reintegration efforts and those of the ANBP in 2004-2006.

Equal pay needed for reintegrees and regular deminers

A lesson learnt from the initial reintegration of former combatants through the ANBP was that reintegrated deminers should be paid the same wages as regular deminers. Due to the need to stretch reintegration funds to maximise employment, former combatants hired through the ANBP were paid less than deminers hired for core capacity teams. Participants regularly complained that the salaries were insufficient. They were paid roughly 60 USD per month, one-third of the average deminer salaries at the time. This led to a lack of motivation amongst reintegrated deminers and affected work performance.[56]

This has since been remedied; current reintegrees are given the standard wages provided to all HALO Trust deminers. Interviewed reintegrees were satisfied with their wages and expressed enthusiasm about their work as deminers. Job and salary satisfaction are important for ensuring reintegrees do not return to combat. Several of the interviewed reintegrees claimed that their fellow reintegrees would not return to fighting because of the salary they now receive from demining.

> *When we joined the peace programme, we were a group of 46 people. They do demining in different groups and places now. Because they get a salary, they would never want to do the military work again as a combatant.* — Reintegrated deminer, age 26

As reintegrated deminers are mixed with regular deminers, data has not been gathered about the clearance of reintegrees. Therefore, an objective comparison of productivity, and the potential impact of salary, cannot be made at this time.

Training must be adapted to the needs and skills of the reintegrees

The profiles of combatants targeted with the ANBP and the APRP differed significantly, despite a common country of origin and less than a decade between the implementation of each programme. For a demining programme to take on the training and employment of reintegrees, it needs to be prepared to adjust its approach to the needs of the participants.

In addition to being less educated than the *mujahedin* fighters, the APRP reintegrees were found to be less regimented. Reintegrees often had trouble adjusting to the structure and rules required for demining at the beginning of training, which resulted in poor attitudes and defiance against trainers. HALO Trust found that with patience and additional time spent with reintegrees, either reviewing theory or explaining the purpose of their work, they slowly earned the respect and trust of the reintegrees and raised their capacity to that of the regular demining recruits.[57]

Demining has proven to be a means of direct targeting with clear benefits

Many of the other APRP activities, such as building the capacity of line ministries, require significant time to demonstrate results to reintegrees and communities. In comparison, the benefits of the demining reintegration begin on the first day of training, making it an ideal activity to introduce to a community while waiting for the results of longer-term activities to come to fruition. Community-based demining only requires three to four weeks of training before teams are operational. Moreover, both the community and reintegrees understand the benefits of demining for the community at large, which is not always the case for other APRP activities. While demining will still remain a small component of the overall APRP, it has proved itself to be an important and effective means of demonstrating the benefits of peace to participating communities.

Maintaining neutrality while reintegrating combatants could prove challenging

The use of demining as a reintegration tool poses a significant risk to the neutral reputation the mine action community has worked hard to maintain through multiple regime changes in Afghanistan over the past 24 years. The employment of former combatants of an ongoing insurgency could be perceived by some as a partisan act siding with the GIRoA.

HALO Trust feels it can mitigate this risk by communicating the neutrality of its activities, which benefit all, as well as its transparent procedures (eg task prioritisation procedures) through community liaison. The management at HALO Trust also believes that waiting for a nationwide peace agreement will take too long; they believe it is important to seize opportunities as they present themselves to give former combatants productive and dignified jobs that serve communities. In doing so, HALO Trust can contribute to greater peace and security in the communities in which they operate.

The MACCA feels the best strategy is to maintain the low profile of reintegration activities within the demining sector, emphasising the community-based approaches used in this process rather than the reintegration itself when sharing information. Thus far, the MACCA, HALO Trust and OMAR have not encountered any specific risks or threats as a result of the reintegration of former combatants into demining agencies; nevertheless, they are proceeding with caution. This issue will require close monitoring, as reputations are much more easily destroyed than built.

Initiating DDR before a peace agreement with warring parties is not only a challenge to the demining component, but to the entire process of peace and reintegration. While some say reintegration holds some potential as a tool for instigating peace, this argument has been criticised by those that believe DDR can only reinforce peace, not create it.[58]

CONCLUSION

The reintegration of former combatants from the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan presents opportunities and risks to participating mine action agencies and the mine action community at large. Based on a community based approach, the current reintegration can be viewed as an inclusive process that promotes stability, income generation and reconciliation at a local level. However, without a political settlement inclusive of all warring parties, Afghanistan is likely to remain conflict-ridden and insecure. This instability will continue to create hurdles for mine/ERW operators, though HALO Trust remains convinced that properly managed clearance operations, particularly those targeting the remote rural communities largely excluded by political process and still most impacted by legacy minefields from the 80s and 90s, will continue to be a significant catalyst towards poverty alleviation, and thus a compelling use of increasingly scarce donor funds.

ENDNOTES

[1] This case study was written by Samuel Hall Consulting for GICHD and is based on in-country research undertaken in July/August 2012.

[2] HALO Trust's WAD activities in Afghanistan began in 2003. It previously focused solely on humanitarian demining.

[3] HALO Trust mainly operates in the Central, Northern and Western regions, ie Heart, although they have maintained a liaison office since 2010 in Lashkar Gah district town.

[4] According to IMSMA data from 2012.

[5] Derksen, Deedee (2011), "Impact or Illusion? Reintegration under the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program," Peace Brief No. 106, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C.

[6] These two provinces were selected for the initial reintegration activities in the demining sector based on the concentration of former combatants willing to participate in the APRP and the geographic interest of donors.

[7] This ten year estimated is based on the assumption that the current level of funding is not reduced more than 6% year on year and security allows mine action to function in all affected areas of the country. Source: MACCA, October 2012.

[8] In 2010, casualties from mines, victim-activated Improvised Explosive Devices, cluster munition remnants and other ERW in Afghanistan outranked those of any other country. (Source: Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor (2011), Landmine Monitor Report 2011, Mines Action Canada.)

[9] MACCA (2012), "Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) Fast Facts: Data as of 1st quarter 1391 / June 2012," MACCA, Kabul.

[10] Strand, Arne (2004), "Transforming Local Relationships: Reintegration of Combatants through Mine Action in Afghanistan." Preparing the Ground for Peace. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2004. 39-54.

[11] OECD (2011), From Power Struggles to Sustainable Peace: Understanding Political Settlements, International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Based on an internal document on Community Based Demining provided by the MACCA.

[14] ILO (2009), Socio-Economic Reintegration of Ex-Combatants, ILO Programme for Crisis Response and Reconstruction (ILO/CRISIS), Geneva.

[15] Fafo AIS / Landmine Action (2008), "Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Mine Action: Strategic Possibilities and Local Practicalities," Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies (Fafo AIS) and Landmine Action UK, Oslo and London.

[16] Naidoo, Sharmala, Ted Paterson, and Nara Weigel (2008), Linking Mine Action and Development Humanitarian and Development NGOs: Guidelines for Policy and Programme Development, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), Geneva.

[17] Zyck, Steven A. (2012), "Peace and Reintegration: An Introduction," Part 1 of a 4-Part Series on Peace and Reintegration in Afghanistan, Civil Military Fusion Center.

[18] Drawn from a PowerPoint presentation on the implementing partners structure within the DDR Process provided by the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA).

[19] Naidoo et al, 2008.

[20] Strand, 2004.

[21] Based on interview with representatives of the MACCA, 9 July 2012.

[22] Strand, 2004.

[23] Based on interview with Richard Boulter, Desk Officer – Weapons and Ammunition Disposal, HALO Trust, 8 July 2012.

[24] HALO Trust does not have a specific policy on human security or armed violence reduction. However, it has consistently shown a commitment to working with all sides of a conflict. How this is translated in each country has varied significantly according to the context and the nature of the conflict.

[25] Kunduz was later added as a second location. These two provinces were selected for the sites of reintegration activities in the demining sector based on the concentration of former combatants willing to participate in the APRP and the geographic interest of donors. A proposal is currently pending to expand activities to Herat province.

[26] Strand, 2004.

[27] It is not uncommon for former combatants to work for demining agencies, even without the assistance of an explicit DDR initiative. However, most former combatants working for the MAPA are from the Mujahedeen period and not the current insurgency.

[28] Derksen, 2011.

[29] ISAF (2012), "A Guide to the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program," Force Reintegration Cell of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Kabul.

[30] Core capacity teams are deployed throughout the country, as opposed to community-based teams which operate around their home communities.

[31] ISAF and the United Nations participate in the JS along with the Afghan government.

[32] Zyck, 2012.

[33] ISAF, 2012.

[34] ISAF, 2012.

[35] Transition assistance of 120 USD over three months is given to participants to help compensate for income formerly gained from participation in insurgent activities while they transition to civilian life.

[36] Based on interview with Malik Qais Mehri, Head of Development, APRP, 12 July 2012.

[37] OMAR was first established to provide MRE to Afghan refugees living in Afghanistan. In 1992, this Afghan NGO expanded its activities to include mine clearance and moved into Afghanistan. It now has 29 demining teams (27 core capacity, 2 CBD teams). It has offices in Logar and Kabul provinces. Its reintegration activities are currently conducted in Badghis (completed in 10th of September 2012 and APRP (reintegrees) demining project was already demobilized). It has employed 110 reintegrees using a similar approach to that of HALO Trust. The only significant difference is that HALO Trust recruits reintegrees to work within its core capacity teams, which requires deployment around the country, whereas OMAR only uses the reintegrees for CBD; A third organisation has submitted a proposal to begin reintegration activities. The proposal was pending when this case study was written.

[38] Based on informant interviews.

[39] Strand, 2004.

[40] Based on informant interviews.

[41] Based on Informant interviews.

[42] Zyck, 2012.

[43] Illiteracy is also common amongst regular deminers; however, the illiteracy amongst reintegrees has been particularly high. Regular deminers often have experience with combat, often as mujahideen, whether or not they were part of a reintegration programme.

[44] Vocational training is still provided by the APRP through the line ministries, but this remains separate from the demining component.

[45] Reintegrees are offered annual contracts, which is standard practice for HALO Trust. Permanent contracts are not offered to any staff as available positions are subject to the availability of donor funds.

[46] Based on e-mail correspondence with Dr. Farid Homayoun. .

[47] Some deminers choose not to continue in the sector as they prefer to work close to home. Others decide to pursue other livelihood activities. APRP currently focuses on initial reintegration and community recovery. Specific tracking of reintegrees after initial recovery activities is currently not conducted.

[48] ISAF, 2012.

[49] The demining agencies and their employees could also face potential retribution due to a perceived loss of neutrality. This issue is discussed further section 10.4. Neither HALO Trust nor OMAR have encountered such cases thus far. HALO Trust tries to prevent such events from happening by maintaining an open dialogue with the community and ensuring the community's support for their presence.

[50] World Bank (2011), World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development, World Bank, p. 60-61.

[51] Based on interview with representatives of International Network on Conflict and Fragility, OECD, 26 July 2012.

[52] Reintegrees into the demining sector have been primarily of Pashtun, Uzbek and Tajik origin.

[53] Based on interview with HALO Trust representatives.

[54] Based on interview with Malik Qais Mehri, Head of Development, APRP, 12 July 2012.

[55] All of the mine/ERW operators have a normal monthly attrition rate and the rate for reintegrees is not much different from the rest of the programme. Reintegrees who join the peace process will not return back to their previous ranks fearing their lives and retaliation from their former combatants.

[56] Based on informant interviews with MACCA representatives.

[57] Based on informant interviews with MACCA and HALO Trust representatives.

[58] Fusato, Massimo (2003), "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-combatants", Beyond Intractability, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder.

ANNEX 1 | PEOPLE CONSULTED

Abdul Qadir Kakar | EOD Associate and focal point to the Ministry of Defence | MACCA

Abdullah | Trainer | HALO Trust Afghanistan

Agus Wandi | Programme Specialist | UNDP APRP

Dr Farid Homayoun | Programme Manager | HALO Trust Afghanistan

Eng. Mohammad Wakil | Chief of Staff | MACCA

Erwin van Veen | Policy Analyst | International Network on Conflict and Security | OECD

Habib Khan | Capacity Support Project Manager | MACCA

Malik Qais Mehri | Head of Development | Join Secretariat of High Peace Council | APRP

Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil | Area Manager of Central Area | MACCA

Mohammad Sediq Rashid | Chief of Operations | MACCA

Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi | Project Cycle Manager & Head of Programme Department | MACCA

Rahmatullah | Halo Trust Operations Officer | HALO Trust Afghanistan

Richard Boulter | Desk Officer Weapons and Ammunition Disposal | HALO Trust

Stephan Massing | Policy Analyst | International Network on Conflict and Security | OECD

Tim Porter | HALO Trust

Six interviews were conducted with former combatants currently working with HALO Trust as deminers in Baghlan | HALO Trust Afghanistan

ANNEX 2 | INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REINTEGRATED DEMINERS (ENGLISH VERSION)

BASIC INFO

A.	Telephone number	0 7
B.	Age	
C.	District of origin	
D.	Province of origin	
E.	When did you begin training as a deminer?	Month Year
F.	Previous occupation (What were they doing and where; who were they fighting)	
G.	Current job	1. Deminer 2. Team leader 3. Medic 4. Other (Specify)

MOTIVATIONS

1. Why did you decide to become a deminer?

2. What attracted you to this work?
(eg the type of activities, salary, benefits, vacation, respect)

Had you considered other training programmes or jobs proposed by the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP)?

If YES, which types of training/jobs did you consider? Why did you choose demining instead of these programmes?

If NO, why did you not consider other types of training or jobs?

SKILLS & SENSE OF DUTY

3. When you first went through training, which aspects of training did you find easy? Which aspects did you find difficult?

4. How many mines have you removed? Could you describe a demining experience of which you are very proud?

5. Do you think your knowledge and experience as a former combatant help you perform your current job as a deminer? Please explain.

PERCEPTIONS OF DEMINING

6. What do you like **most** about your job? What do you like **least** about your job?

7. What did you think of deminers and their work before joining HALO Trust? Did your perception or understanding of demining change after participating in the demining training?

8. Do you think **members of the communities you work** in understand the work of deminers? Do you think some people have any misconceptions about deminers?

9. Do you think members of **your community** understand the work of deminers? Do you think some people have any misconceptions about deminers?

10. Have you shared information about demining with family or members of your community? Why or why not?

ANNEX 2 | INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REINTEGRATED DEMINERS (ENGLISH VERSION)

RELATIONS WITH COLLEAGUES

11. Do you get along well with your demining colleagues? Why or why not?
Is there a difference in your relationship with other ex-combatants in your unit and the other deminers?

IMPACT ON HOUSEHOLDS

12. What was the economic situation of your household like before joining HALO Trust?
How is the economic situation of your household today?
Does demining serve as the main or only source of economic support for your family?

13. How has your job with HALO Trust had an impact, both positive and negative, on your life?
How has it had an impact on your family?
(personal security, income, education, perception by community, etc)

IMPACT ON GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

14. When you went to Kabul for training, was it the first time you had travelled to Kabul? What did you think of Kabul before you went? Did your opinion change after participating in the training in Kabul?

15. In addition to learning technical demining skills, did you learn any lessons from your experience training and working with HALO Trust? Please explain.

SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

16. How many former combatants were recruited along with you? Do you know if they are still working in demining? Please explain why you think they are still working or not working in demining.

17. If you could no longer work as a deminer, what would you do?

18. If you have sons or nephews, would you encourage them to become deminers? Why or why not?

ANNEX 3 | DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

In addition to those documents listed below, unpublished documents provided by the MACCA and HALO Trust were also consulted for the writing of this case study.

Derksen, Deedee (2011) | "Impact or Illusion? Reintegration under the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program" | Peace Brief No. 106 | United States Institute of Peace | Washington, D.C.

Fafo AIS / Landmine Action (2008) | "Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Mine Action: Strategic Possibilities and Local Practicalities" | Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies (Fafo AIS) and Landmine Action UK | Oslo and London

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OECD (2011) | *From Power Struggles to Sustainable Peace: Understanding Political Settlements* | International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) | Paris

Palau, Rainer Gonzalez (2012) | "Socio-Economic Reintegration and Livelihoods" | Part 3 of a 4-Part Series on Peace and Reintegration in Afghanistan | Civil Military Fusion Center

Strand, Arne (2004) | "Transforming Local Relationships: Reintegration of Combatants through Mine Action in Afghanistan" | *Preparing the Ground for Peace* | Oslo: International Peace Research Institute | 2004. 39-54

World Bank (2011) | *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* | World Bank | p. 60-61

Zyck, Steven A. (2012) | "Peace and Reintegration: An Introduction" | Part 1 of a 4-Part Series on Peace and Reintegration in Afghanistan | Civil Military Fusion Center

NOTES

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