



The Link: Connecting Mine Action and Livelihoods

Evaluation of the HALO Trust CSSF Mine Action and Livelihoods
Development Programme (2016-2020)

June 2020



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Front cover photo: Samuel Hall / Nicholas Ross, 2019. A farmer irrigating an Afghanaid supported orchard, planted on HALO Trust mine/ERW released land in Samangan.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFN	Afghanis (currency)
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
AP	Anti-personnel (mine)
AV	Anti-vehicle (mine)
CDC	Community Development Council
CP	Community Profile
CSI	Coping Strategies Index
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DAIL	Directorate(s) of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
DfID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DMAC	Directorate of Mine Action Coordination
EORE	Explosive Ordnance Risk Education
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICS	Individual Case Study
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IM	Improvised Mine
IMAS	International Mine Action Standards
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
MA	Mine Action
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MALI	Mine Action and Livelihoods (Programme)
MAPA	Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	National Priority Programme
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RE	Risk Education
UK	United Kingdom
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

A mine action and livelihoods development partnership programme running from 2016-2020, led by the HALO Trust in Afghanistan

Afghanistan remains one of the most landmine contaminated countries globally after successive wars and conflict,¹ and the human, social and economic cost of mines in the country, as well as globally, are well documented.² The HALO Trust, along with the broader mine action sector, have been clearing mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) hazards in Afghanistan for over three decades. As mine action stakeholders work towards a mine-free Afghanistan in a country experiencing active conflict and pervasive economic difficulties, **there are growing imperatives to link clearance of mines *from* the land, with the livelihoods and development of people and communities *on* that land afterwards.**

In response to this imperative, the HALO Trust joined with DACAAR and Afghanaid to implement a programme combining mine action and livelihoods/development activities, in what constituted a new **partnership approach** for the three organisations in Afghanistan. The programme was funded by the United Kingdom Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), and was implemented from 2016-2020 in six Afghan provinces: Kabul, Logar, Khost, Baghlan, Balkh and Samangan. The programme comprised of HALO Trust mine action, with either DACAAR or Afghanaid implementing rural agricultural and/or water, sanitation and health (WASH) activities following mine/ERW clearance operations in or near a number of the demined communities.

The mine action and livelihoods programme was designed and delivered in response to particular CSSF objectives that, at the time, was development oriented and called for inclusion of development activities in mine action programming. In broader mine action, the socio-economic impact of clearance is well measured and documented as improving the livelihood opportunities for affected communities and reducing the risk of accidents. This evaluation report focuses on the specific programming and impact of the integrated demining and development project.

Samuel Hall conducted an evaluation of the programme for the HALO Trust as the programme concluded, reviewing literature and conducting primary data collection and analysis from November 2019 to March 2020. The research ***emphasised a community-based mixed methods approach to evaluate the programme from beneficiaries' perspectives***, and placed community members' feedback at the centre of the evaluation.

Results of the Evaluation Research

The research found that the partnership approach between mine action and livelihoods development proved to be a sum greater than the individual parts. Mine action was a requisite for the effectiveness of the rural development activities that proceeded from landmine/ERW clearance. Mine action allowed the agricultural seed distribution and training to have more impact with land released from contaminations. On the other hand, mine action alone, without the development programming, would not have had the same levels of impact on improved livelihoods and income. Higher value crops and increased agricultural yields through the development programming, along with enhanced water distribution, meant that the communities where mine action and

¹ The estimated extent of landmine contamination at the end of 2017 had Afghanistan as one of the few countries in the highest, "massive" category of more than 100km². Landmine Monitor 2018: Contamination and Clearance

² See for example: Frost, A., et al. (2017). The effect of explosive remnants of war on global public health: a systematic mixed-studies review using narrative synthesis. *The Lancet*. June 01, 2017, Vol. 2, Issue 6, E286-E296; and Fiederlein, S., and Rzegocki, S., (2019). "The Human and Financial Costs of the Explosive Remnants of War in Afghanistan". *Costs of War*. September 19, 2019.


livelihoods programming was deployed in tandem experienced accelerated earnings in-line with the programme integration assumptions.

The findings on the programming itself were mostly positive, highlighting coordination amongst the implementing partners and also with other actors such as government. There were further opportunities identified in the evaluation of the programming. This includes the potential to increase communications and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) directly with women, as well as implementing better accountability, quality assurance and referral mechanisms in response to feedback from some community members in the mixed methods research about concentration of land and aid distribution.

The evaluation of outcomes and impact revealed that the programme intentions were broadly met, with a high proportion (65%) of beneficiaries³ reporting income increases compared to before the joint intervention. There is evidence that some households’ incomes may increase further in future years, as agricultural yields rise, for instance, as the high value ferula crop is harvested four years after planting in Samangan. The evaluation found evidence that the programme positively impacted communities where both the mine action and the partnership interventions were carried out in other ways. The livelihoods/development interventions increased water access for both potable drinking water and irrigation, as well as the agricultural yields from the village. The mine action released contaminated lands for agriculture and livestock grazing, as well as other essential activities such as fuel and natural resource collection. Community members felt far safer, and the psychosocial relief from the decreased chances of injury or death were particularly prevalent amongst women.

Linking the future of mine action and livelihoods development

Based on the research, Samuel Hall formulated recommendations for future mine action and livelihoods development partnership initiatives.

Partnerships and future links between mine action and development		
1	Continue to pursue partnerships linking mine action and post-demining livelihoods and development	
2	Focus on synergies between HALO Trust and development / livelihoods implementing partners	
MEAL to guide linked programming		
3	Emphasise learning and place it at the heart of future partnership initiatives	
4	Enhance programme accountability mechanisms	
Programming for long-term livelihoods improvements		
5	Continue to prioritise contextually relevant mine action and livelihoods activities	
6	Increase focus on what comes <i>after</i> immediate land use	

There is continued potential for the mine action and livelihoods partnership approach to be a core part of programming that transforms beneficiaries lives and their communities in the future, with communities proximate to mine/ERW contaminations standing to particularly benefit from increased and enhanced partnership programming. As mine action stakeholders work towards a mine-free Afghanistan, the need to maximise impacts from mine action and the positives found in the Samuel Hall evaluation mean that HALO Trust should continue to find ways to integrate mine action and development. This in turn will contribute directly to improving livelihoods and development in the communities HALO Trust work in and with.

³ Combine Samuel Hall survey participants, including both phone and in-person survey respondents (n=316).

1. A New Partnership Approach for Mine Action and Livelihoods

*Asooda az ghawgha shodam
Az bas ke khordam khoon-e dil
Chun ghoncha az ham shodam*

Ahmad Zahir (1946-1979) – *Tanha shodam tanha*

The HALO Trust Mine Action and Livelihoods 2016-2020 programme in Afghanistan, backed by the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), intended to bridge the gap⁴ between mine clearance and livelihoods activities. While the three implementing partners, HALO Trust, Afghanaid and Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), have been conducting mine action or development and livelihoods programming for decades in Afghanistan⁵, the mine action-development approach constituted a novel type of programming partnership for the country. The partnership approach improved the integration of mine action with development, with the joint goal to improve the livelihoods of individuals and communities affected by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

As funding for the mine action sector is decreasing, from approximately US\$100 million per year in the late 2000s and early 2010s⁶ to US\$40 million per year in 2016 and 2017⁷, and as stakeholders are seeking to maximise the impact from contamination clearance, this type of programming is expected to become increasingly prevalent in the decade ahead. Samuel Hall conducted an independent evaluation, as the Mine Action and Livelihoods programme concluded, to better understand programme performance, outcomes and impact, and generate learning to improve the mine action-development partnership approach in the future.

1.1. Mine Action and Development in Afghanistan

Mine action activities in Afghanistan have been through four critical phases since they started more than 30 years ago. The current context proves the need to address the often-neglected link between the mine action and development agendas.

Traditionally, mine action in Afghanistan has been considered an essential pre-cursor to humanitarian and/or development efforts in communities affected by mine/explosive remnants of war (ERW) contaminations.⁸ As development efforts continue to be hampered by conflict, political uncertainties and slow- and sudden-onset natural disasters combined with issues of corruption, gender restrictions and localised disputes⁹, collaboration between the two sectors is critical to support development priorities. With a shortfall in available funding^{10,11}, yet pressing demining needs, **the need to understand the impact from mine removal on livelihoods and development gains** can clarify that mine action is not only a lifesaving requirement, it is also a requirement for development work.

⁴ See for instance: Millard, Ananda., and Harpviken, Kristian. (2000). Reassessing the Impact of Humanitarian Mine Action, UNDP and PRIO.

⁵ HALO Trust have been operating in Afghanistan since 1988, Afghanaid since 1983, and DACAAR since 1984.

⁶ GICHD / Paterson, Ted., (2012). Transitioning Mine Action Programmes to National Ownership: Afghanistan. Geneva, November 2012;

⁷ DMAC (2018). Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) Annual Report, 1396/2017.

⁸ Ted Paterson, Barry Pound & Abdul Qudous Ziaee (2013).

⁹ World Bank (2020), Navigating a Sea of Uncertainty: Afghanistan Development Update January 2020.

¹⁰ Samuel Hall (2014). "Mine Action in Afghanistan: A Success Story in Danger. An Evaluation of UNMAS in Afghanistan".

¹¹ The secured funding for the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) in 2016 and 2017 (approximately US\$40 million each year) were less than half of the funding target and funds required to be on track for total landmine and ERW removal in Afghanistan (US\$94 million and US\$110 million in 2016 and 2017 respectively). DMAC (2018). Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) Annual Report, 1396/2017.

Since the 1990s, mine action in Afghanistan has evolved through four overarching phases: from urgent reconstruction efforts towards the vision of a mine-free Afghanistan as of the late 2010s. Yet, to date, only one of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces – Bamiyan – has been declared mine-free. Overall, 1,495 communities across 33 provinces remain affected by mines and ERW.

Figure 1 Timeline of mine action in Afghanistan 1990-2020. Photographs are for illustrative purposes and are from previous publications. From left-to-right: West Kabul reconstruction 1995-1999 (HALO Trust); Devil’s Garden, Herat 2001-2006 (HALO Trust); Bagram, Kabul (VoA 2017); Tangee Sayidan, Kabul 2017 (ITF / Arne Hodalič)



Mine action in Afghanistan is currently looking towards activities such as the clearance of abandoned improvised mines, along with weapons and ammunition disposal, which are designed to enhance security and stability for communities who have been recently affected by conflict. Removal of explosive hazards allows displaced families to return home, and for business and agricultural livelihoods to restart. Mine action operations also provides employment for former combatants, supporting the reintegration process.¹² Together, the immediate and intermediate outcomes of mine action contribute to increased peace and stability, and improve the resilience of communities against future shocks.

Mine action activities, including HALO Trust operations, have shown critical successes but achieving a mine free Afghanistan by 2023 remains an important but unrealistic target. Since the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) was initiated in 1989, almost 80% of recorded contaminations have been cleared or otherwise cancelled.^{13,14} This accounts for over 31,860 hazardous areas across 2,850 square kilometres, and, more importantly, represents land release for over 2,990 communities. However, there have been successive but distinct contaminations during the Soviet-Afghanistan War (1979-1989), the Afghan civil war (1989-2001) and the ongoing armed conflict between armed opposition groups such as the Taliban and Afghan military supported by international armed forces, that require sustained efforts and funding.

¹² Samuel Hall/GICHD (2012), HALO Trust’s Reintegration of Former Combatants into Demining, Afghanistan Case Study.

¹³ UNMAS (2019), Afghanistan Impact.

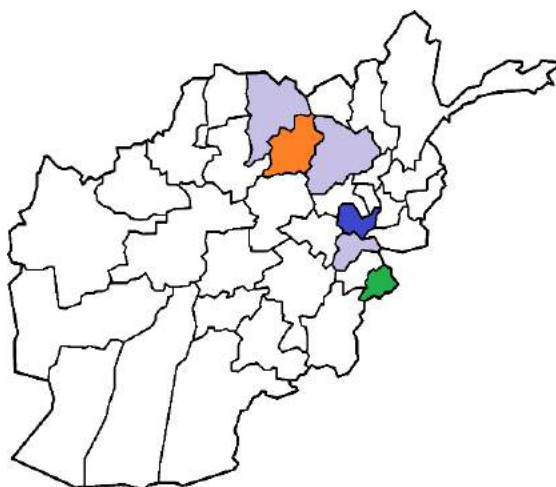
¹⁴ DMAC (2018), Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) Annual Report, 1396/2017.

1.2. HALO Trust CSSF Programme Background

The Mine Action and Livelihoods Afghanistan programme was funded by the United Kingdom Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), and was implemented over four years from December 2016 to March 2020. HALO Trust was the lead implementer and partnered with DACAAR (in Khost) and Afghanaid (in Samangan and Logar) - with HALO Trust mine action activities preceding development and livelihoods programming in a number of the communities with land released by mines/ERW.

The programme was rolled out in communities across six provinces: Baghlan, Balkh, Kabul, Khost, Logar, and Samangan (Map 1). Not all mine action areas were accompanied by development activities. Development activities mostly took place in Years 2 and 3 (2017-2019), while HALO Trust mine action activities occurred across the four years.

Map 1. Geographic coverage of the HALO Trust CSSF Programme



An Overview of the Results Framework (Including Changes)

Impact, outcome and output statements and indicators underwent minor revisions as the programme progressed through the four years.

Table 1. The HALO Trust CSSF Programme's Impact

Impact Statements		
Year 1 (2017)	Year 2 (2018)	Year 3 (2019)
Increased economic growth and reduced poverty in Afghanistan	Contribute to the achievement of four Sustainable Development Goals (end poverty; end hunger; gender equality; and decent work and economic growth) in Afghanistan	Strengthened local economies through improved livelihoods

The results framework indicators also changed across the four-year programme to better reflect the programming (Table 2). The impact indicators were reduced from one focus on poverty to the percentage of beneficiaries reporting increases in income.

After the CSSF Year 2 Annual Review, capacity building activities, which originally formed a core component of the programme, were suspended. As HALO Trust are an implementation partner and stakeholder to the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) managed by the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC), these activities were perceived as not aligned with the capacity building aims already included in the MAPA plans. As a result, and to avoid duplication, the capacity building component was shifted out of the programme stream.¹⁵

¹⁵ Key Informant Interviews with programme implementers and stakeholders

Table 2. Overview of changes in indicators of the HALO Trust CCSSF programme

	Year 1 – 2016-2017	Years 3-4 – 2019-2020
IMPACT INDICATORS	<p>1. Total income generated from project activities (income gained from cleared land or other income generating activities, from development projects, and local staff salaries)</p> <p>2. Trend in poverty rate (nationally or in the project districts if available)</p>	<p>1. Percentage of surveyed beneficiaries reporting an increase in income after mine clearance and livelihood activities</p>
OUTCOME INDICATORS #1 (LAND RELEASE)	<p>1.1. No. of direct and indirect beneficiaries of land released (% female, disaggregated by % of IDPs and/or refugee returnees and by province in narrative)</p> <p>1.2. Percentage and number of direct beneficiary households surveyed reporting improved access to land for i) residential ii) agriculture iii) community purposes post-clearance (% of which are IDPs and/or refugee returnees, disaggregated by province in narrative)</p> <p>1.3. Percentage and number of direct beneficiary households surveyed reporting increased access to basic services (categories to be defined later) post-clearance (% of which are IDPs and/or refugee returnees, disaggregated by province in narrative)</p>	<p>1.1. No. of direct and indirect beneficiaries of land released</p> <p>1.2. Percentage and number of direct beneficiary households surveyed reporting improved access to land for i) residential ii) agriculture iii) community purposes post-clearance</p> <p>1.3. Percentage and number of direct beneficiary households surveyed reporting increased access to basic services post-clearance</p>
OUTCOME INDICATORS #1 (CASUALTY DECREASE)	<p>2.1. No. of casualties caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance segregated by province and gender</p>	<p>2.1. No. of casualties caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance</p>
OUTCOME INDICATORS #3 (CAPACITY BUILDING / DEV.)	<p>3.1. No. of regional offices providing an improved service to the mine action sector through improved data management and reduced time to release surveyed areas</p>	<p>3.1. Percentage of development project beneficiaries surveyed reporting collecting water from newly constructed water points</p> <p>3.2. Percentage of surveyed households that benefited from development projects reporting improved access to irrigation water</p> <p>3.3. Percentage of trained farmers who participated in development projects reporting applying gained skills and knowledge (disaggregated by gender)</p>

On the main, the overall goal of the programme remained the same – to enhance livelihoods (through an indicator measurement of increases in income) with a continued focus on gender and diversity mainstreaming. There were additional outcome goals on land release, and increasing access to services and a declining trend in mine/ERW casualties, as foundational to HALO Trust’s mine action activities across all locations. In select communities, Afghanistan and DACAAR would conduct rural development activities, with the combined programme approach designed to contribute to an improvement in livelihoods.

Photo 1 DACAAR assisted flood water route in Khost near to previously mine-affected communities



The mine action activities were focussed on hazard clearance and land release. In select locations, DACAAR and Afghanaid followed ERW/mine clearance with livelihoods development activities. There was a range of activities between the different organisations and different locations, dependent on what was considered contextually relevant and based on needs assessments and close working relationships with communities to identify needs aligned with the programme objectives. The major livelihoods development activities were agricultural development, seed distribution and training through the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) led by DACAAR. Afghanaid also included poultry distribution in Samangan and Logar, and DACAAR led on irrigation culvert construction in Khost.

A Note on Terminology: Development, Livelihoods and Programme Labels

Development and livelihoods were used somewhat interchangeably in programming. Development is a contested term, and its understandings in the mine action and Afghan context are especially fraught, given the blurring between emergency, recovery and longer-term development situations. Chambers and Conway (1991) define livelihoods thus: *“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.”*¹ The programming DACAAR and Afghanaid carried out were mainly rural livelihoods activities, with a focus on agriculture, including seed and poultry distribution and training. It also included natural resource management (NRM) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities, which were accompanied by the construction of flood management and irrigation culverts in some communities.

2. Evaluation Methodology

The Samuel Hall Mine Action and Livelihoods Programme Evaluation commenced in December 2019 and ran for four months, concluding in March 2020. The research approach was community-centred and used mixed-methods. This consisted of drawing in the experience of community members themselves to better understand the mine action and livelihoods programme, how it was conducted in different locations, and the outcomes and impacts of the programme. The evaluation consisted of:

Desk research - The research team reviewed internal project documents which included yearly reports and case studies. A literature review was also undertaken, especially pertaining to mine action's links to development.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) - KIIs were conducted with implementation partner staff (HALO Trust, Afghanaid and DACAAR), the UK Embassy in Kabul, DMAC and local district government officials.

Primary fieldwork in 6 communities across 3 provinces - Primary research included community profiles, focus group discussions, individual case studies and in-person quantitative surveys.

Call centre survey - In-person data collection was supplemented by phone surveys conducted through Samuel Hall's call centre. 276 Afghanaid and DACAAR beneficiaries were called from across all livelihoods sites.

Analysis - Analysis of the transcripts, other qualitative data and quantitative data was undertaken by the Samuel Hall research team.

Table 3. Data Collection Targets and Totals

Tools ¹⁶	KHOST		SAMANGAN		CALL CENTRE		TOTAL	
	Target	Conducted	Target	Conducted	Target	Conducted	Target	Conducted
KIIs	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	7
Community Profiles	2	3	2	2	-	-	4	5
In-person surveys	20	67	20	58	-	-	80	125
Phone surveys	-	-	-	-	140	276	140	276
FGDs	4	6	4	4	-	-	8	10
Case Studies	4	4	4	4	-	-	8	8

2.1. Community samples

In-person primary research was conducted in all the six communities in the three provinces of Kabul, Khost and Samangan. The research tools were tested during a pilot in Kabul which brought in data from a village where there was mine action, but no specific MALI development programming. The other communities were areas where HALO Trust performed demining activities followed by DACAAR livelihoods interventions in Khost, and Afghanaid programming in Samangan.

Table 4. In-person Fieldwork Locations

Kabul (Pilot)	Khost	Samangan
Baghgray	Narraï	Hasankhail
Khaki Jabar	Gurbuz	Hazrat Sultan
	Baghikhel, Gurbuz	Faizabad Feroz Nakcheer
	Shahid Kalay, Gurbuz	

¹⁶ Note that this report may refer to 'in-person' survey responses ($n=125$), 'phone' survey responses ($n=276$), or 'combined' responses, the last meaning questions answered by participants in both phone and in-person surveys ($n=401$).

2.2. Community perspectives and understandings

The evaluation emphasised a **community-based mixed methods approach to evaluate the programme from beneficiaries' perspectives**, and putting community members' feedback at the centre of the evaluation. The communities offered examples and insights towards answering the research questions, understanding the demining-development partnerships approach and potential examples on how to improve future programming. The following methods were used to collect data from a community perspective:

Community Profile. A community profile was conducted with the village community leader (*malik*) to gain a high-level overview of village developments and how these related to mine action/development programmes. The Community Profile was a key step in securing access and participant buy-in, with the *malik* supporting some of the logistical organisation of the primary research.¹⁷

Community mapping. The evaluation drew in data on the **human geography** of the village and the MALI programme. Community maps were drawn, showing where mine action took place in the village. For some villages (such as the Samangan case study on ferula income below), the hand-drawn map (see Map 2) was crossed with satellite images for a better understanding of the physical layout for mine action and development programming.

Qualitative research. The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Individual Case Studies (ICS) drew on a range of perspectives: Direct programme beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, gender-balanced, and a range of age groups and if applicable, professions. In each community, female enumerators worked with female community members, and likewise, male enumerators with male community members. The qualitative research tools were semi-structured and covered a range of thematic areas related to the mine action and livelihoods programming.

Photo 2 A malik pointing to land released from mines, with Afghanaid supported agriculture in Samangan



Map 2 Baghikhail, Khost Community Map. The red area remains mined



Photo 3 Male Focus Group Discussion. Khost



¹⁷ Samuel Hall was also thankful to draw on the support from the three implementing partners, HALO Trust in Kabul, DACAAR in Khost and Afghanaid in Samangan.

Quantitative surveys. In-person surveys were conducted with over 30 community members in each of the four primary fieldwork villages (two in Khost, two in Samangan) and were split by gender. While not statistically significant, the in-person surveys added an element of quantitative depth to the research, with the aim to find out whether some of the experiences detailed in the qualitative research were reflected more widely in the community. This was in recognition that the views presented in the qualitative research might represent one angle, but miss out on wider perspectives across the village, including non-beneficiaries and different types of households.

Photo 4 Conducting a survey with onlookers in Samangan



The in-person quantitative data collection was supplemented by phone surveys run from the Samuel Hall call centre, using a shortened version of the same survey for brevity and conducted with beneficiary phone lists provided by DACAAR and Afghanaid.¹⁸ This brought in data from more villages and provinces where DACAAR and Afghanaid conducted livelihoods programming.

2.3. Limitations and Constraints

The evaluation originally envisioned a quasi-scientific element, with the intended inclusion of a control group to compare communities where mine action was undertaken *without* the associated livelihoods programming, matched to communities that experienced both mine action *and* livelihoods programming. During the fieldwork, the evaluation team found that many communities had development programming of some kind.¹⁹ Other confounding factors, such as different land use activities post-mine clearance and different time periods of mine action and development, led the research team to deem a comparative lens inappropriate, potentially giving the veneer of scientific validity in a post-facto evaluation.

Scope, security, access and other logistical issues also constrained the evaluation. For example, Rui Du Ab, a southern district of Samangan, was the largest demining area under the CSSF programme stream.²⁰ The ability of trained female enumerators, adept at both qualitative and quantitative research, to travel and stay in Rui Du Ab was limited by cultural factors, while the wider team was limited by logistical issues such as blockages on the winter roads. There were also limitations on access and undivided participation of some government officials due to disputes over election results during the fieldwork phase.

The research team's mitigation measures included deriving a deeper understanding of the partnership approach using the mixed methodology with primary and secondary data from programme stakeholders and directly from a broad range of community members in beneficiary villages. This focus on communities where the joint mine action and livelihoods development programming took place was then situated within the broader body of mine action research, both within Afghanistan²¹ and globally, where the majority of mine action programming has not entailed direct joint programming with livelihoods development partners.

¹⁸ All 276 phone survey participants were male, except for one woman.

¹⁹ For instance, an initial target community with mine action and no livelihoods programming was Chenar G'ai in Samangan, but Afghanaid Samangan told researchers upon arrival in Samangan that there were Afghanaid development activities in that village.

²⁰ Discussions with HALO Trust

²¹ Samuel Hall, (2014). "Mine Action in Afghanistan: A Success Story in Danger. An Evaluation of UNMAS in Afghanistan".

3. Findings on the Partnership Approach

The evaluation found evidence that mine action and development were linked meaningfully, with mine action unlocking subsequent livelihoods programme gains, and representing an opportune time for development actors to insert into long-mine affected communities. The partnership approach, which combined mine action and agricultural livelihoods activities, was found to be contextually relevant to the rural beneficiaries and their communities.

- **The mine action was found to be key in allowing livelihoods development programming to take place, and the development programming was an important intervention to meet the underlying aims of the programme** to enhance livelihoods.
- **There were adaptations and learning across the programme cycle on the new partnership approach.** This included bridging understandings on beneficiary selection, monitoring and evaluation, and operational alignment.
- **Mine/ERW clearance and agricultural livelihoods activities were particularly relevant to the target communities.** Dependent on government, donor and IP priorities, future programming could explore enhancing or commencing additional programming activity areas or modalities such as NRM, resilience and/or cash. Two years a constrained timeframe for livelihoods interventions.



3.1. Linking mine action and livelihoods: A sum greater than individual parts

There is extensive historical research documenting the necessity for linking mine action and development.²² The UK-funded, HALO-trust led mine action-livelihoods programme stream responded to these calls to more-closely integrate the two areas, working with two development organisations, Afghanaid and DACAAR, to connect mine clearance and risk education with rural livelihoods programming.

Mine action a pre-requisite or amplifier for subsequent development

Landmines and other explosive remnants of war inhibit rehabilitation and reconstruction, agriculture, health, education, water supply, infrastructure development, environmental protection, industrial and commercial growth, and domestic and foreign investment.

Harpviken and Isaksen, 2004. "Reclaiming the Fields of War: Mainstreaming Mine action in Development".¹

The evaluation found that efforts to enhance livelihoods without mine action would have been severely hampered – from the threat of those landmines; issues of land scarcity; and the deep feelings of insecurity articulated by research participants. Beneficiary community members voiced that one of the main preconditions for development organisations being able to conduct activities effectively was mine action. HALO Trust operations provided the requisite environment where development activities could take place: both for security - *"development project personnel who are not warned of the dangers [of mines] can become casualties"*²³; and for the land release allowing livelihoods interventions to take place effectively.

²² Ted Paterson, (2004). "Time to go MAD" in Stuart Maslen, Mine Action After Diana: Progress in the Struggle Against Landmines. University of Michigan Press. See also: GICHD and UNDP (2002). Socio-Economic Approaches to Mine Action: An Operational Handbook.

²³ Keeley, R. (2003). Understanding Landmines and Mine Action. September 2003.

“Mine action is linked with development programs because if the land is not clear, then no [development] organisation can come and work for us.”

Female community member in Baghikhel, Khost [FGD7]

In each of the four locations where primary fieldwork took place in Samangan and Khost, livelihoods/development programming would either have been difficult, or not nearly as effective without the mine action that preceded it. In the beneficiary villages, available agricultural and grazing land was already being utilised at high rates by the village. Without mine action, rural agricultural livelihoods/development activities may have improved yields on already-utilised land, crop values, as well as have addressed some of the gender imbalances in access to livelihoods and income, but the maximum effects would have been curtailed by the lack of land available for the interventions. In the two Samangan villages where primary data collection occurred, the mine clearance released and freed up areas where the Afghanistanid interventions could take place. In Faizabad village, Afghanistanid supported ferula cultivation would not have been possible, or would have been on a minor-scale, were it not for the mine action that released land owned by the village in the nearby mountain areas (Community Case Study box below).

In another Samangan community, Hasankhail Mangtash village in Hazrat Sultan District, **orchards and gardens for nuts and fruit were cultivated on the cleared land**, with Afghanistanid inputs on agricultural seed distribution, agricultural inputs and farming methods (cover photograph). Before HALO Trust mine clearance, landmines/ERW were either inside the village itself or immediately outside the village residential areas. Landmines/ERW clearance meant that people could build residential houses on cleared land, as well as increase income-generating agriculture with support from Afghanistanid.

[The] development projects built wells, surrounding [irrigation] walls and provided livestock for our villagers to upscale their animal husbandry. They also distributed chickens for some households through which they make an income now. This has been a big impact on our village. When there was no demining, there were no organisations coming here, but now any organisation that wants to help can come here and work with us.

Male community member in Baghikhel, Khost [FGD8]

Livelihoods development was not limited to formal development programming. Indeed, the impact was often reported to extend much beyond the immediate lands that were released from mine hazard contaminations. In Hasankhail Mangtash village, Afghanistanid did not conduct any WASH or canal irrigation work as part of the programme intervention in the village, but community members took it upon themselves to repair irrigation canals that had hitherto been too dangerous to clear because of the landmines in the area. This repair meant an expansion in cultivation and harvest yield. In Khost province, roads were being built and attributed to mine action that allowed development to take place. *“They have just flattened our road and laid sand on it and the work is still ongoing. Thanks to HALO Trust for cleaning the mines in our area because before that no one would want to come here and work for us.”²⁴*

²⁴ FGD7 [Female Community member in Khost]

The devil’s dung in Samangan - long-term expected income boosts in Faizabad village Community Case Study

A beneficiary community in Samangan expect a turbo-boost in income from the recently planted asafoetida ferula crop (known as the “devil’s dung”, or *hing* to Afghans). The Samangan village, Faizabad, in Feroz Nakchir district, is situated in a valley with mine clearance taking place on flat mountain-top fields nearby. Mined since the fighting between mujahedeen and the Soviet Union military, the villagers reported having land documents for the tenure and ownership of the land given in the time of King Zahir Shah (r. 1933-1973).

Land in the valley is scarce, and taken up by residences or orchards for growing grapes. Land on another mountain towards the north is also being cleared of landmines, and land there is used for pistachio farms. The land directly outside of the village residential area (seen closest, in the photo below) belongs to the Afghan government (seen in the photo below), hence it is not used for agriculture, but only for livestock grazing.

As a result of HALO Trust land clearance, community members could drive vehicles out of the valley and along the mountain-top until they reached the newly released flat fields. This expanded the agricultural area from 1000 to 2500 *jerib* of land (from two square kilometres of farmland to five). 80% of villagers were reported to have ownership over plots of the cleared land. Community members used this land to increase their yield of wheat, but also dedicated much of the land to *hing*, with the resilient seed variety being distributed by Afghanistan. The crop takes four years to grow, and was planted after mine clearance in 2018, with expected harvest in 2022.

As many as 80 of the villagers in Faizabad have travelled to Central Asian states Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to harvest *hing* for Afghan companies. As labourers, they are paid US\$8 per kilogram harvested in Central Asia. *Hing* used to grow in the same mountains outside the village, but was overharvested and completely depleted around 2010. The quality of the seeds for sale on the open market in Afghanistan were reported to be very poor, making the Afghanistan intervention highly valued.

There was excitement in the village around expectations that the *hing* harvest would offer substantial income streams after harvest in 2022. Harvested *hing*, in the form of milk, sells for AFN 7000 – 8000 per kilogram (equivalent to approximately US\$100 per kilogram of milk).¹

Photo 5. A ferula farmer pointing beyond the government pasture land to the mountains, atop which is an area cleared by HALO Trust and now planted with ferula seeds distributed by Afghanistan



Development programming at a crucial juncture after landmines/ERW clearance

While the example of community-led irrigation infrastructure repair in Hasankhail Mangtash and road-building in Khost show the possibilities of mine action alone, **the development programming that came after the clearance of landmines/ERW was widely held to be an important driver in enhancing income and livelihoods development.** DACAAR built irrigation canals, culverts and water distribution networks following mine action in beneficiary villages in Khost, addressing dire needs in the communities. The water and irrigation projects combined with DACAAR-led greenhouse construction and Farmer Field Schools, boosting agricultural outputs in the target villages after landmines/ERW clearance. As one woman in Khost described: *“Mine action and development are linked because without mine action, no one would be able to cultivate the land.”*²⁵ Mine action was understood to be an imperative in allowing much of the development programming to follow suit and be effective, which in turn led to direct livelihoods gains in the targeted communities.

Photo 6. Baghikhail Water Distribution Network built with the support of DACAAR after mine action in the area



With the mine action and rural agricultural activities proving relevant (discussed below), one direct area where an improvement in livelihoods and income could be seen was the increase in agricultural yields. **Agricultural yields** increased for many community members because of (a) the access to increased agricultural land from mine clearance, and also (b) agricultural support activities, such as seed distribution, agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and training support by the development implementing partners. A man in Samangan summarised *“Our agriculture yield has improved. Previously we wouldn’t cultivate a lot of wheat because of land mines but now we do that.”*²⁶ A women in Khost surmised the same. *“Everyone cultivates the [released] land and uses it. The lower part is used for wheat and the upper part for vegetables. After mine action, people are using this land.”*²⁷ In the same discussion, another woman noted that some families now have vegetable gardens while some have planted orchards directly on the land which was released, which would have not been possible before the hazard clearance.²⁸ However, the vegetable gardens and orchards were part of the development partner’s interventions in the area. **78 of the 105 (74%) in-person survey participants who answered this question responded that increased income was one of the direct effects of the development programming in their community.**²⁹ Livelihoods development programming components allowed for more effective use of the land that was cleared, contributing directly to the outcomes and impact intentiones to improve livelihoods and income, in this case from agricultural yields.

The programme assumption was that integrating mine action with development would mean that beyond outputs in mines removed, metres square cleared and beneficiaries involved in activities, the partnership approach would lead to outcomes and impact in livelihoods that were better than if the activities were done separately. With the mine action and rural agricultural activities proving relevant (discussed below), one direct area where an improvement in livelihoods and income could be seen was the increase in agricultural yields. **Agricultural yields** increased for many community members because of (a) the access to increased agricultural land from mine clearance, and also (b) agricultural support activities, such as seed distribution, agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and training support by the development implementing partners. A man in Samangan summarised *“Our agriculture yield has improved. Previously we wouldn’t cultivate a lot of wheat because of land mines but now we do that.”*²⁶ A women in Khost surmised the same. *“Everyone cultivates the [released] land and uses it. The lower part is used for wheat and the upper part for vegetables. After mine action, people are using this land.”*²⁷ In the same discussion, another woman noted that some families now have vegetable gardens while some have planted orchards directly on the land which was released, which would have not been possible before the hazard clearance.²⁸ However, the vegetable gardens and orchards were part of the development partner’s interventions in the area. **78 of the 105 (74%) in-person survey participants who answered this question responded that increased income was one of the direct effects of the development programming in their community.**²⁹ Livelihoods development programming components allowed for more effective use of the land that was cleared, contributing directly to the outcomes and impact intentiones to improve livelihoods and income, in this case from agricultural yields.

²⁵ FGD7 [Female community member in Khost]

²⁶ FGD4 [Male community member, Samangan]

²⁷ FGD7 [Female community member, Khost]

²⁸ FGD7 [Female community member, Khost]

²⁹ A sub-group (n=105) of the total in-person survey respondents, due to conditional responses.

Heightened livelihoods/development needs. Landmine/ERW contaminations debilitate sustainable livelihoods development in the communities in which they are proximate to, along with the wider ramifications on regions and countries where they are present.³⁰ Mine action gives the access and the impetus for development actors to identify these needs after communities have experienced prolonged exposure to the full spectrum of negative effects associated with landmines.³¹ Almost all of the landmines/ERW that were cleared in the mine action-livelihoods programme stream were legacy mines from the Soviet War in the 1980s or the Afghan civil war in the 1990s, meaning the communities had lost access to their lands, suffered casualties when venturing over the lands, and had inhibited opportunities for development, for between twenty and thirty years. The pre-mine clearance socio-economic surveys carried out by HALO Trust and the development partners demonstrated these needs clearly. The pre-intervention surveys included the Coping Strategies Index (CSI), a measurement of the negative coping strategies employed by households (discussed at further depth in Findings on Outcome and Impact, below). A CSI score of 0-3 indicates no or low negative coping; 4-9 medium levels of negative coping, and score above 10 indicate high negative coping. **The average household CSI score in beneficiary communities before the programme commenced was 21.52.**³² The communities where mine action takes place face acute needs, with these concerns cited as a major reason behind the calls for enhanced integration of mine action into development.

“It is evident that landmines and unexploded ordnance constitute a serious obstacle to human development.”

Harpviken and Isaksen, (2004). “Reclaiming the Fields of War: Mainstreaming Mine action in Development”.

The opportune time for livelihoods development. With communities emerging from the negative effects of mine action, the evaluation found the development programming drove livelihoods improvements. In the community case study of Faizabad (above), community leaders were asked what they would have done had mine action occurred without Afghanistan development programming. They indicated that without the resilient ferula crop seed inputs, they would have planted wheat instead, supplementing the wheat already grown by the village. The village would have benefitted regardless, but the livelihoods development support allowed the beneficiary village *options* and the opportunity to boost income and livelihoods far beyond what would have been possible with mine action alone.

“Development does not happen automatically once land or infrastructure is declared safe for productive use. Mine action provides the space and opportunity to build livelihoods.”

DFID, (2013). “Clearing a path to development. The UK government’s approach to landmines and explosive remnants of war in developing countries.”

Conversely, communities with only the mine action intervention without the subsequent development programming experience benefits associated with the landmines/ERW clearance, but miss out on opportunities that the partnership programming provides. A village in Khaki Jabar district of Kabul which HALO Trust conducted mine action in, but did not have the associated livelihoods development components, showed some of these limitations in community gains. *“A school was built here 12 years ago and it’s a boys’ school. There are*

³⁰ Bier, G.L. (2003), "The economic impact of landmines on developing countries", International Journal of Social Economics, Vol. 30 No. 5, pp. 651-662; and Chiovelli

³¹ Including negative effects on health; psychosocial wellbeing; mobility; land access; and connectivity.

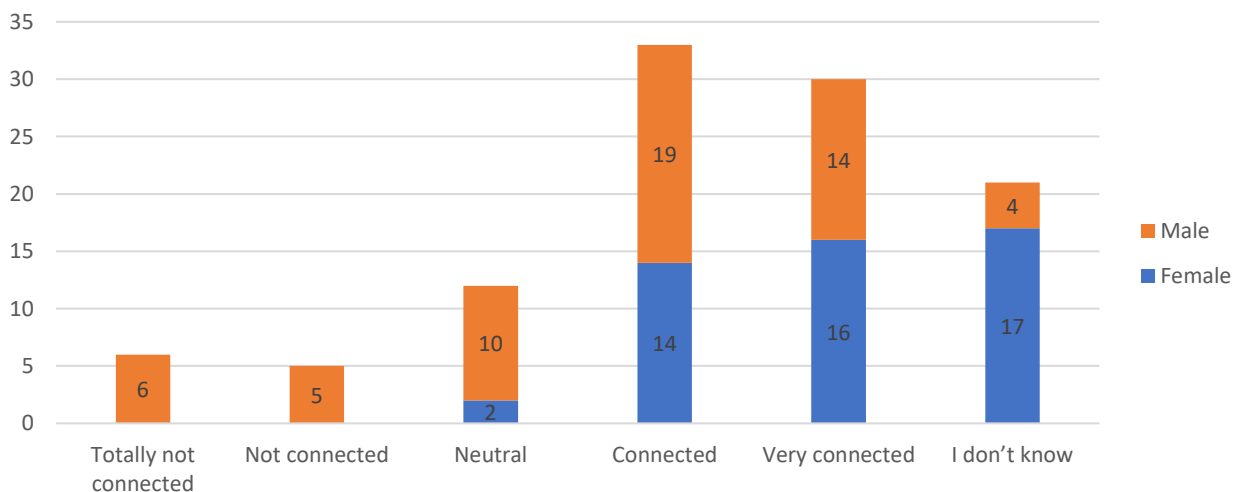
³² Internal reporting: HALO Trust, (2019). Socio-economic report.

*no plans to build anything else here but I hope they will build a clinic. We are all supportive of HALO Trust, but no one else has assisted us.*³³ As communities emerge from the shadow cast by mine action, this experience matches mine action research literature which has called for further coordination between mine action and the development that can come after contamination clearance.

These opportunities include livelihoods and development dynamics that would have had little chance of occurring were it not for formal programme. Apart from the innovative agricultural inputs above (ferula in Samangan, while DACAAR also pioneered saffron in Khost³⁴), livelihoods/development programming also addressed the **important gender dynamic**. DACAAR ran Farmer Field Schools, with a minimum 40% female participation rate, and Afghanaid distributed hens for household egg production. Development programming targeted beneficiaries based on vulnerability needs assessments and on gender, allowing livelihoods gains to take place amongst poorer community members and women where this would not likely have occurred in standalone mine action programming.

Many research participants linked the mine action activities and livelihoods activities that took place clearly. 118 out of 182 (65%) of phone survey participants who responded to this question said the mine action and the development programme were either connected (40) or very connected (78).³⁵ Similar numbers emerged in the in-person surveys: 63 in-person survey participants (59%) out of the 107 responding to the same question said that mine action and the livelihoods/development programming were either “connected” or “very connected”, 11 (10%) said they were not connected or totally not connected, while 21 said they did not know.³⁶ **While mine action performed alone would have led to many benefits for those in beneficiary communities, which have long been documented in mine action programming, mine action also acts as a precursor and unlocks an opportunity for partnership development interventions that make tangible impacts in Afghans’ livelihoods.**

Figure 1. In-person survey on the connection between mine action and the development programming (n=107).



³³ FGD1 [Female community member, Kabul]

³⁴ There were mixed reviews on the success of the saffron introduction in Khost, discussed in the outcomes and impact section.

³⁵ This does mean conversely that 40 phone survey participants, or 22% of the sample, responded that the two were not connected.

³⁶ Note that these figures do not represent the full n (n=107) of responses to this question – see Figure 1 for all responses.

Bridging mine action and development in practice

The partnership approach was a new type of joint programming for the three actors in Afghanistan, and HALO Trust and the two development partners bridged gaps between the two sectors. While there have long been calls “to go MAD”³⁷ (MAD standing for mine action-development), forging meaningful links between MA and development required conceptual and practical efforts by HALO Trust, Afghanaid and DACAAR to make the partnership approach work in implementation.

The start of the partnership between HALO Trust, DACAAR and Afghanaid was not only new for the individual organisations, but also relatively novel for the mine action and development sectors in Afghanistan more broadly.³⁸ Therefore, somewhat naturally, there were differences or gaps in approach, conceptual understandings and programming operations between implementing partners (IPs) during the inception phase of the programme.³⁹ In order to bridge these gaps, the partners instituted monthly steering meetings between the three organisations. There were also significant bridging efforts on the conceptual and implementation gaps. For instance, on operations, the partners realised that livelihoods programming would meet outcome/impact objectives even if it was not carried out *directly* on the land that was cleared of mines/ERW. Similarly, agreements were reached on monitoring and evaluation, beneficiary selection and time periods of intervention, which resulted in shared learning for all teams over the four-year lifespan of the partnership programme. While the commencement phase of the programme revealed some discrepancies between the implementing partners, continued coordination efforts resulted in the development of an effective partnership.

3.2. Mine action followed by rural agriculture is particularly relevant

The mixture of programming aimed at rural agriculture following mine action was found to be relevant to the individual beneficiaries and their communities, as there was broad evidence that the mine action was considered a long-term and essential fulfilment for the communities, opening up further livelihood opportunities in agriculture, grazing and gathering.

The beneficiary communities across the programme stream were all in rural areas, and while income streams were diverse (encompassing services, daily wage labouring, small business, professions and remittances, especially in Khost)⁴⁰, the major livelihoods were agrarian. Thus, the mine action that released the land and the livelihoods development activities that supported agriculture on that land afterwards made sense to the local populations and their contexts.

³⁷ Ted Paterson, (2004). “Time to go MAD” in Stuart Maslen, *Mine Action After Diana: Progress in the Struggle Against Landmines*. University of Michigan Press.

³⁸ HALO Trust Afghanistan coordinate as part of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA). HALO Trust also work together with organisations such as GICHD and other mine action groups.

³⁹ KII1, KII4 and KII5 with Implementing Partners (HALO Trust, Afghanaid and DACAAR)

⁴⁰ Quantitative data on income sources

Photo 7. DACAAR supported greenhouse in Khost



Tangible outcomes in Khost: Seeds, greenhouses, culvert, cucumbers, spinach, turnips, etc.

“We have been assisted a lot in this village. We have received improved seeds, greenhouse, culvert, a water pump and others.”⁴¹

“They made a greenhouse for us which is very effective for us. In one day, we might collect around 350 kilograms of cucumbers to sell. The DACAAR organisation also provided us with some other assistance including improved seeds of spinach, turnips and others.”⁴²

The Samangan Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) Acting Director noted that the partnership programme fit in with the National Comprehensive Agriculture Development Priority Programme (one of the national priority programmes or NPPs). The mine action and linked livelihoods programme aimed for, and succeeded in, increasing agricultural production and output as per the Agriculture NPP. He expanded on the connection with the NPPs by discussing how the programme: (1) built the farmers’ economy; (2) increased livelihoods; (3) supported nutrition; and (4) improved the ecosystem.⁴³

The communities had invariably experienced hindered sustainable livelihoods development for prolonged periods of time. This was in no small part due to landmines/ERW contaminations surrounding - or even *in* - communities, preventing safe land access and usage. The partnership approach was found to be relevant in both addressing an underlying cause (landmines), as well as directly working to increase incomes and livelihoods development with communities.

⁴¹ FGD10 [Male community member, Khost]

⁴² FGD10 [Male community member, Khost]

⁴³ KII6 [Samangan Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL)]

4. Findings on the Programming

The partnership programming met their output targets across the four years of programming, both in mine clearance and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), and in the livelihood development outputs for beneficiaries participating in agricultural activities.⁴⁴ The evaluation of the programming used gender and conflict-sensitive lenses to understand implementation from the community perspective, with a view to how partnership programming can be improved upon in future.

- **Community communications were strong with men across all communities, but were less so with women where consultations between HALO Trust and female community members were uneven.** Both the community consultations and dialogue *before* operations commences and *after* mine/ERW clearance had concluded had strong liaison with men and a lack of communication with women.
- There were encouraging signs of **coordination with local governance structures** including with community development councils (CDCs) and provincial/district government authorities.
- **Accountability, quality control and referral pathways should be strengthened.** There were examples of land and aid distribution issues from some research participants, and a gap in communicating these with the programme stakeholders.

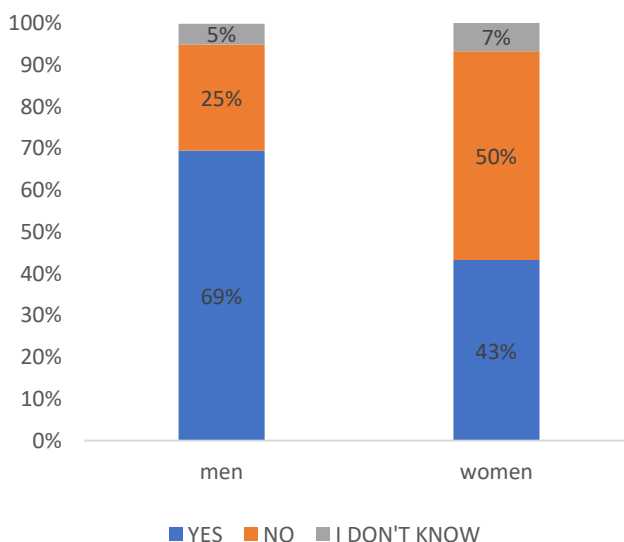
4.1. Community consultations – broad amongst men, lacking with women

The programme proved strong community liaison mechanisms and collaboration with local villages, but these consultations were almost exclusively with male community members due to a lack of outreach to women.

Community consultations were found to have been broad amongst males and inclusive of elders and youth, the community leader (*malik* or *wakil*) and elders or community councils (*shura*). Research participants discussed how the village residents contributed their knowledge of where minefields were located and where they would like land to be cleared of hazards.

While most communities professed satisfaction with the selection of the land, some research participants were unhappy with the chosen areas. FGD participants in a community in Khost said that the mine action organisation did not follow village consultation advice on where to demine, with participants claiming demining was done in an already cleared area.⁴⁵ Despite the widespread misgivings in the discussion, the same participants did express positive outcomes deriving from the

Figure 2. In-person surveys: Were you consulted in Land Clearance Operations? (n=124).



⁴⁴ Internal project reporting and Key Informant Interviews

⁴⁵ "Our youth and elders showed the organisation the areas that had mines did not follow our plan and did what they wanted to do. They cleared the areas that were already cleared before. We told them that the land was already cleared but they said that they would start their work from there; they finished their work once they reached the actual danger zone of mines". FGD8 [Male community members, Khost]

mine action. HALO’s operational records, which are externally verified by DMAC, confirmed that clearance work in this community had not been duplicated. This assertion likely arose due to a misunderstanding between beneficiaries and the HALO liaison about the location of mined areas.⁴⁶ However, it highlights the importance of effective and sustained communication with beneficiary villages, to provide feedback after initial consultations.

The involvement of women in community consultation and planning was uneven. There was only a small number of examples of women who had taken part in dialogue before mine action operations began. Almost all female participants said the men were consulted, but not them. When women reported that “our village was consulted”, the planning process did not actually include their gender group. *“I was not involved in it, but our men were. The men would tell us that this area would be cleaned of mines.”*⁴⁷ The same gender gap was found at the end of mine clearance activities (see section 3.3).

While generally, Afghan women in rural areas face restrictions in their mobility and participation in activities outside of the home, in some of the communities surveyed both men, and women themselves called for women’s involvement in community consultations and dialogue. In most of the communities where primary research was conducted, women collected water, gathered fuel for cooking and heating, and shepherded livestock. They were also understood to be involved in decision-making on children collecting water, gathering fuel and shepherding livestock in or near the villages.

*Mine organisations should also consult with our women and inform them of the dangers of mines so that they can teach that to our children and save them.*⁴⁸

*“The other issue is that whenever an NGO comes to our village, they should have a message for the women, because our men don’t provide us full information about everything. If a lady comes, she will be able to provide us full information about everything. All of our women and girls have grown up illiterate, but now we want our little girls not to grown up illiterate or blind like us.”*⁴⁹

Although HALO employs mixed-gender survey and outreach teams, prior consultation is generally done by the all-male demining team. In some conservative areas, where men cannot communicate with women for cultural reasons, female staff should be involved in consultations so they can reach women in the community.

⁴⁶ Communications with HALO Trust

⁴⁷ FGD1 [Female community member, Kabul]

⁴⁸ FGD8 [Male community member, Khost]

⁴⁹ FGD9 [Female community member, Khost]

4.2. Informing the community of mine action completion

Strong community communications with men and a lack of information sharing with women also emerged upon completion of the mine action activities.

Men in communities were roundly informed upon completion of the mine action activities, either in mosques or directly by HALO Trust. Many women however only heard about completion of the mine action programme through male relatives: Husbands, fathers, sons, or brothers. *“People mentioned it in the mosque and I heard it from my son that the mine action was completed.”*⁵⁰ *“The community leader told the Mullah Imam who then informed all the men in the mosque; the men then informed families.”*⁵¹

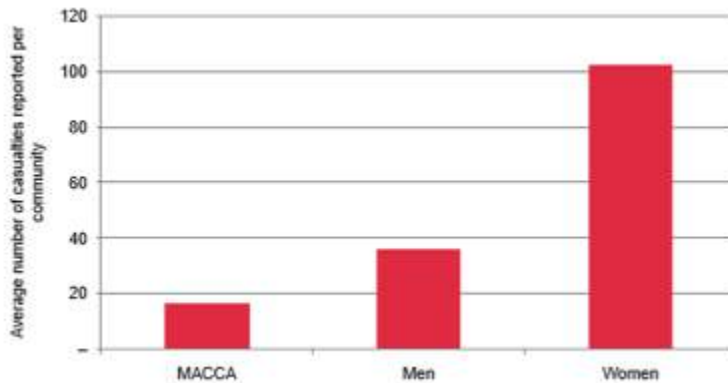
Photo 8. White painted rocks in Khost marking areas cleared of mine/ERW hazards



Research participants were able to explain in-depth the use of different colour markers painted on rocks (Photo 8). *“When they taught us, they specified three colours for us: 1) Yellow meaning they have not worked in that area yet, 2) red meaning there is mines there and should be avoided, 3) white meaning the area has been cleaned and one can move freely there. They also showed us pictures of mines and informed us not to get near to such things.”*⁵² Research participants expressed high confidence and trust in being able to use the land after clearance was completed.

The lack of communication directly with women poses several protection challenges.

Figure 3. Graph from Paterson, Pound and Ziaee (2013), *Landmines and Livelihoods in Afghanistan: Evaluating the Benefits of Mine Action*. Graph: Perceptions of danger from mines/UXO.



Firstly, it can limit women’s safety and protection if they are not fully cognisant of the different areas that have been cleared, and importantly, of different areas that still hold mine/ERW hazards.

Secondly, it represents a missed opportunity to realise the full benefits of psychosocial relief (see Section 4). Paterson, Pound and Ziaee’s *Afghanistan Landmines and Livelihoods* journal article in 2013 (Figure), women have a much higher perception of casualties from mines/UXO. According to the study, this also means a potential higher psychological burden, in spite of a lower exposure to risk *specifically because of women’s seclusion and dependence on second-hand information.*⁵³ Because women in beneficiary villages were not informed directly, a full understanding of the mine action components of the programme may not have been conveyed. To address challenges in communicating with women beneficiaries, HALO should deploy more female staff in the field, and be aware of the challenges mine contamination causes to women specifically, so they can stress the need for female consultations to community leaders.

⁵⁰ FGD1 [Female community member, Kabul]

⁵¹ FGD3 [Female community member, Samangan]

⁵² FGD8 [Male community member, Khost]

⁵³ Paterson, Ted., Pound, Barry., and Ziaee, Abdul Qudous. (2013).

4.3. Strong coordination with other actors including Citizens' Charter and government

HALO Trust and the two livelihoods IPs adapted quickly to communicate the aims of the programme to stakeholders, notably at the provincial and district level, and continued to foster an understanding of the joint approach and the reasons behind specific community selection.

The mine action and livelihoods programme implementing partners collaborated with existing initiatives and worked well with different government counterparts. For instance, in Khost, DACAAR first worked with the provincial governor to agree on linking WASH programming in Gurbuz District to mine action. DACAAR then secured an agreement within Gurbuz, whereby different tribes agreed to share aid equally. DACAAR and communities discussed the need to link their activities on mine with WASH projects as those could not be distributed evenly across the district.

More generally, both Afghanistanid and DACAAR worked with Community Development Councils (CDCs), and maintained strong relationships with the relevant district and provincial level governments, especially the Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL).⁵⁴ The Samangan DAIL said that closer ties could be forged between HALO Trust and provincial level authorities outside of DMAC/ANDMA, for instance, bringing DAIL into the planning and design phase to give them a better understanding of where will be demined, especially considering the relevance to agriculture and land.⁵⁵

Implementing Partners strengthened collaborations with the government to adjust the new partnership approach on community selection. IPs had to adjust and harmonise their understanding of where the specific livelihoods activities would take place: Directly on the land that was demined? Or in the village(s) nearby to the released land? Major adjustments were needed at the different government levels as well (district, provincial, national). Authorities wanted aid activities to be spread across districts or provinces, with DACAAR summarising government thinking for aid to be “a little for a lot, as opposed to a lot for a little.”⁵⁶ This meant that a period of awareness-raising by the IPs on the link in the programme between mine-affected communities and the livelihoods/development components was needed.

4.4. Land and conflict mitigation

The research proved overall low levels of conflict related to the programme, and while there were some reports of land disputes and tensions arising from land release, conflict-sensitive programming was found to predominate.

Research participants in Baraki Barak district in Logar province said that they were not allowed to use the released land because of militarised activities in the area: either checkpoints and police did not allow the use of the released land, or the possibility of Taliban attacks in the area prevented land use. In another area of the same district, phone respondents reported land had been grabbed by *kuchi* nomads who would not allow other people to use the land.

The large majority of research participants noted that tensions during mine action were rare. Only 8 of 262 phone survey respondents (3%) who answered this question indicated that tensions arose *during* the mine action, although a larger percentage of in-person survey respondents who answered the same question on

⁵⁴ KII5 DACAAR, KII4 Afghanistanid, KII6 Samangan DAIL, KII7 Khost District Government

⁵⁵ KII6 Samangan DAIL. The Acting Director previously worked with HALO Trust for three years.

⁵⁶ KII5 DACAAR

tensions, 17 of 122 (14%), said that tensions arose.⁵⁷ Likewise, when asked how the mine action activities influenced peace and coexistence in the community, the overwhelming majority – 362 out of 386 (94%) – of combined survey participants⁵⁸ from both phone and in-person surveys who were responding to the same question on peace and coexistence, responded that it either “increased” or “strongly increased” levels of peace and co-existence in the village.

In general, HALO Trust’s conflict lens was effective. Land issues in Afghanistan are complex but implementing partners noted that areas near urban centres are potentially at higher risk of dispute and land-grabbing due to increased land value.⁵⁹

4.5. Kuchi nomads

Nomadic kuchis benefited from the programme through improved safety and increased use of the hazard released lands.

45% of phone participants (124 of 262) listed kuchi nomads among those that used or frequented the cleared land most.⁶⁰ This was one demonstration that the mine action component of the programme opened up tracts of land which *kuchi* groups use and/or frequent. In Baghgray village in Khaki Jabar District of Kabul, approximately 30-50 *kuchi* nomads migrate through the area and are present for a third of the year (migrating towards the eastern lowlands in the autumn months and the Hazarajat central highlands in the spring months). The *malik* noted that the village and the *kuchis* have good relations, though the permanent Baghgray villagers do not allow the *kuchi* animals in the direct areas surrounding the village, because the village have their own animals grazing there. After mine/ERW clearance, more grazing land was available. “*You go that side of the mountains, they’re cleared,*” pointed out the *malik*. There is now less conflict because of this according to the *malik*.⁶¹

Photo 9. Kuchi camp site, Khost



⁵⁷ Note in both cases the lower *n* for responses is due to conditional responses in the survey (i.e. not all respondents answered this question).

⁵⁸ Inclusive of both respondents to in-person and phone surveys (*n*=386).

⁵⁹ KII5 DACAAR

⁶⁰ Multiple choices were possible

⁶¹ Community Profile 1 [Kabul]

4.6. Accountability, Quality Control and Referral Pathways

Access to livelihoods assistance was often provided by community leaders and incidents of nepotism were reported, while referral pathways were ineffective, and not approachable for female villagers.

This could be considered a common problem in aid distribution in Afghanistan. Access is secured often through community leaders, and even governance mechanisms such as elected *shuras* or CDCs usually have cross-over with existing, local power structures within communities or villages.

A number of primary research participants reported that livelihoods assistance was distributed by or with major input by the *malik* or *wakil* (community leader). There were some reports across different research tools that aid would be distributed to the community leaders' relatives. Indeed, 76 out of 191⁶² (40%) phone survey respondents who answered this question said that people were selected to take part in development programming, amongst other considerations, based on "connections".⁶³ A similar percentage (30 of 108, or 27%) of in-person surveys responding to the same question regarding selection of participants in programming reported the same phenomenon.⁶⁴ In one of the fieldwork locations, survey respondents reported issues of programme beneficiary selection and aid distribution. The community members raised concerns, but were also fearful of reprisals from others in the community. This was said to be a factor in the type of information shared during qualitative discussions, with FGD and case study participants either more likely to report positive feelings towards aid programming, or fearful of speaking up in a group setting.

Given the conflicting interests involved in beneficiary selection, and the difficulty in assessing the needs of different community members without inadvertently causing conflict, livelihoods projects should seek to be as inclusive as possible of marginalised groups, to mitigate the problems involved.

There is also a gendered element in accountability and potential referral pathways. When asked about avenues for feedback to programme implementation organisations, one woman responded: "*We are women and we are not involved in these things.*"⁶⁵ Potential accountability, quality assurance and referral pathways are explored at greater depth in the recommendations section, including stronger, gender inclusive IP feedback mechanisms and potential partnerships with the United Nations *Awaaz* hotline.

⁶² Please note that the lower *n* for responses is due to conditional responses in the survey (i.e. not all respondents answered this question).

⁶³ How were development programme participants selected, with multiple answers possible.

⁶⁴ Please note that the lower *n* for responses is due to conditional responses in the survey (i.e. not all respondents answered this question).

⁶⁵ FGD3 [Female community member, Samangan]

5. Findings on Outcomes and Impacts



The outcomes and impacts of the programme were found to be well aligned to the programme objectives – an improvement in livelihoods. Incomes broadly rose, even with confounding issues in measurement and extraneous factors. Income increases were linked to higher agricultural yields, more released land for livestock, and better opportunities to access resources such as mazari palm and wood. The outcome objectives of decreasing casualty rates from mines/ERW was imbued with community voices of lives and limbs lost in the past, and the associated feelings of psychosocial relief from the mine hazard removals.

There were **broad livelihoods improvements and increases in income**, with multivariate factors which included increased agriculture, livestock rearing and other income sources directly from the released lands.

While there were differences in the extent of income gains between the Samuel Hall primary research and internal programming data collection, there was **evidence that the mine action and livelihoods programming contributed to improved livelihoods as per the major impact goal.**

The psychosocial relief from mine/ERW released land for community members was also evident as research participants discussed the negative ramifications **on lives, limbs and health** from previous mine accidents

5.1. Lives, limbs and the human costs of mines

While the programmes overarching goals were related to economic growth and poverty reduction instead of an explicit focus on humanitarian and lifesaving demining, a decline in casualty rates was a major outcome purpose of the programme.

Each community had stories to tell related to village members being killed or maimed by mines/ERW. *“There was one case in our village where a child was collecting firewood from the mountain and was hit by a mine. His hand got hurt and no one [from government or NGOs] helped him. They went to the hospital on their own and healed at home.”⁶⁶*

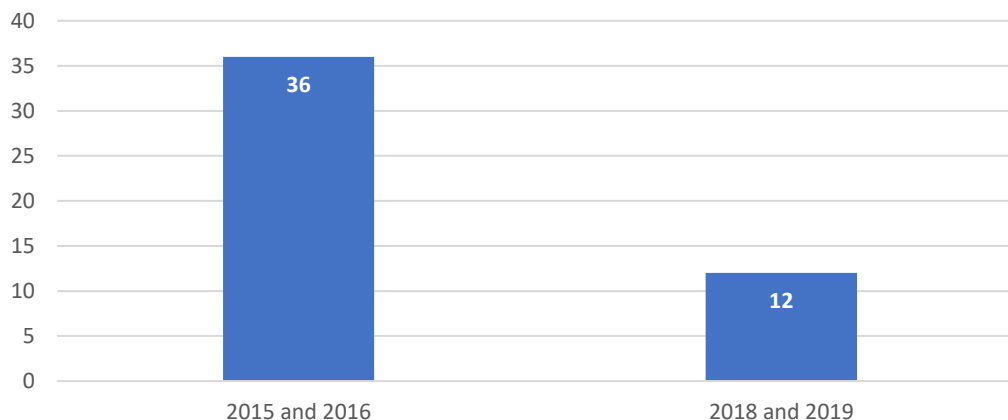
The HALO Trust-led programme’s demining meant that shepherds and community members gathering fuel, including youth and children, would be at reduced risk of similar life-threatening risks in the future. *“When a youth from the village went up the mountain, he lost his leg to a mine and that scared everyone. The villagers wrote a petition to the district centre and then the HALO Trust organisation came here and started demining. Now, our children can go to the mountain without any fear and we are very happy about that.”⁶⁷*

Analysis of casualty rates at the district level through indicated a declining trend in areas where the demining took place. Mine/ERW clearance occurred in districts at different times across the four-year programme. Ruyi Du Ab district in Samangan, a district with one of the highest area clearance operations in the whole programme stream recorded ten mine accidents (not including seven IM accidents) from 2010-2014, and none since 2014, including the period of the demining programme. Single districts represent a very small sample size for comparisons. However, comparative analysis of two-year time periods before and after programme clearance in the four districts that were cleared in the initial year of the programme (2017), **showed a decrease from 36 casualties recorded in 2015-16, to 12 casualties in 2018-19** (Figure 4).

⁶⁶ FGD8 [Male community member, Khost]

⁶⁷ FGD7 [Female community member, Khost]

Figure 4. Total casualties in the 2-year period before mine action compared to 2-year period after mine action in 2017: Aybak (Samangan); Tala Wa Barfak (Baghlan); Khaki Jabar (Kabul); and Gurbuz (Khost).

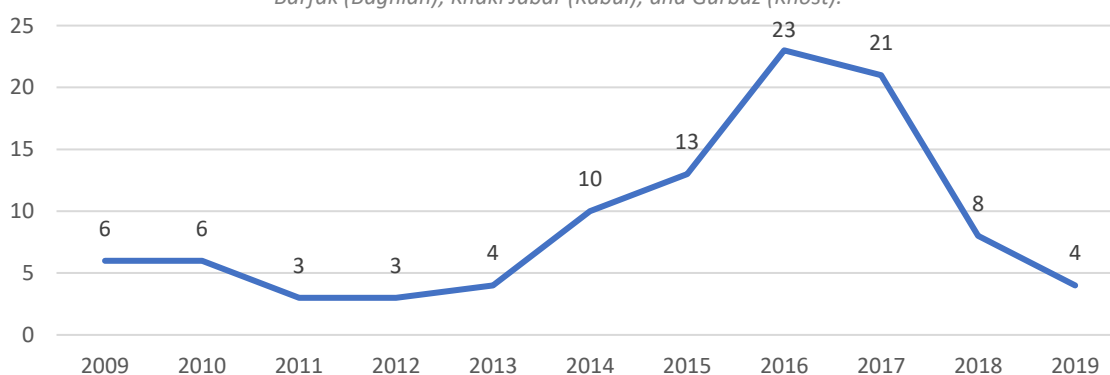


Measuring declines in casualty rates

HALO Trust reporting has previously noted the limitations in measuring declining casualty rates.⁶⁸ For clarity, the Samuel Hall research did not include casualties of improvised mine (IM). The HALO Trust mine action was understood to be focussed on removing explosive remnants of war (ERW) and legacy minefields, as opposed to IMs.⁶⁹ In 2017, IM casualties accounted for 1093 out of a total of 2300 total mine casualties (47.5%), ERW 1124, with the remaining casualties comprising 62 anti-personnel (AP) mine casualties and 21 anti-vehicle (AV) mine victims.⁷⁰

When tracked over a longer period, the casualty rates in the four initial demined districts indeed fell from highs in 2016, but only to levels recorded in the period before 2014 (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Annual casualty rates in four districts with CSSF mine action commencing at the start of 2017: Aybak (Samangan); Tala Wa Barfak (Baghlan); Khaki Jabar (Kabul); and Gurbuz (Khost).



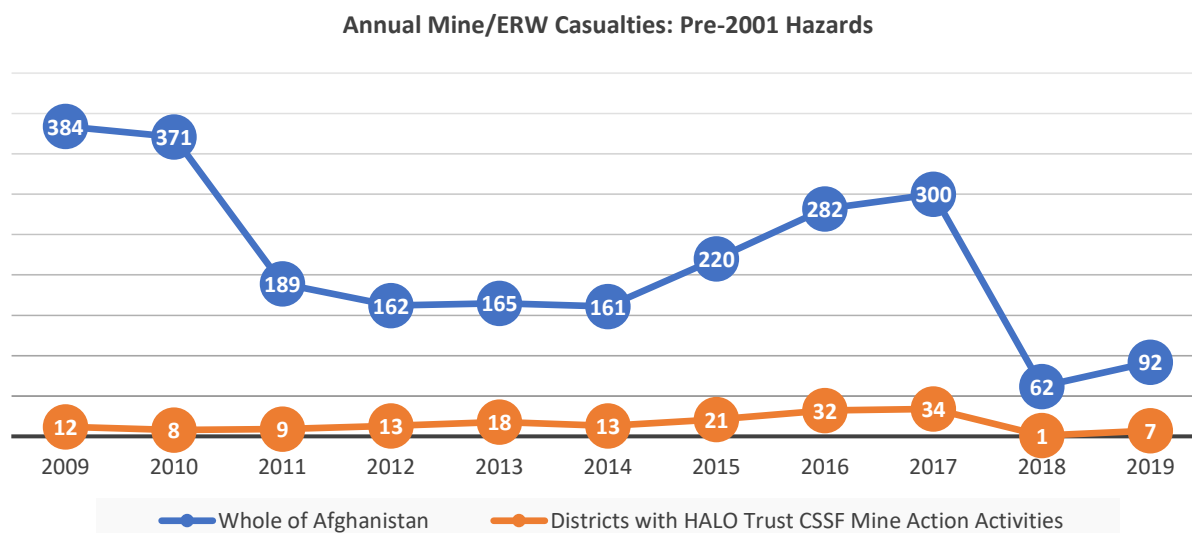
⁶⁸ "The statistics listed... should be interpreted with caution. Although CSSF funding will remove ERW and mines from surveyed polygons, newly identified areas of contamination, lesser prioritised minefields in the area, recent kinetic fighting, increased displacement and especially improvised explosive devices will impact casualty figures at all levels. However, in the communities where post-clearance household surveys were conducted, no human or livestock accidents were reported in the period after demining operations were completed." – HALO Trust CSSF Socio-Economic Report, 2019.

⁶⁹ Improvised Mines (IMs) involve large numbers of casualties, but entail difficulties in terms of mine action due to the political sensitivities associated with clearance.

⁷⁰ Landmine Monitor (2018), Afghanistan Casualties. Accessed at: <http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/afghanistan/casualties.aspx> on 1st of April, 2020

When analysing casualties across all districts where the HALO Trust conducted clearance activities in the CSSF programme stream, a similar downwards trend emerges in 2018 and 2019 (Figure 7).⁷¹ Special note must be paid here because many of the districts included in this analysis were not demined until 2018 and 2019 as part of the programme stream. The casualty count vis-à-vis wider Afghanistan-wide numbers shows less clarity, as there is a significant drop in pre-2001 hazard casualties (as well as overall casualties), country-wide in 2018 and 2019. However, the decrease in casualties in demined districts is still significant.

Figure 6. Annual casualties comparing the Whole of Afghanistan and all districts with HALO Trust CSSF Mine Action activities, from pre-2001 hazards. IMSMA Database.



5.2. Main performance indicator: improvement in income generation and livelihoods creation

The majority of respondents answered that their household income had increased since the mine action or that they were employing fewer negative coping strategies. The research evidence points to major contributions in enhancing livelihoods from the mine action and livelihoods programming.

HALO Trust Key Performance Indicator: Percentage of surveyed beneficiaries reporting an increase in income after mine clearance and livelihood activities – HALO Trust CSSF Impact Indicator, Year 3

The major goal of the programme was to improve livelihoods and local economies in the communities where mine action, and in some locations, development programming, were carried out. The research team collected many stories from people who expressed their satisfaction and hope: *“We are very happy and have income from those mountainous areas [that were demined] through collecting wood, stones and material for building houses and selling in the market.”*⁷²

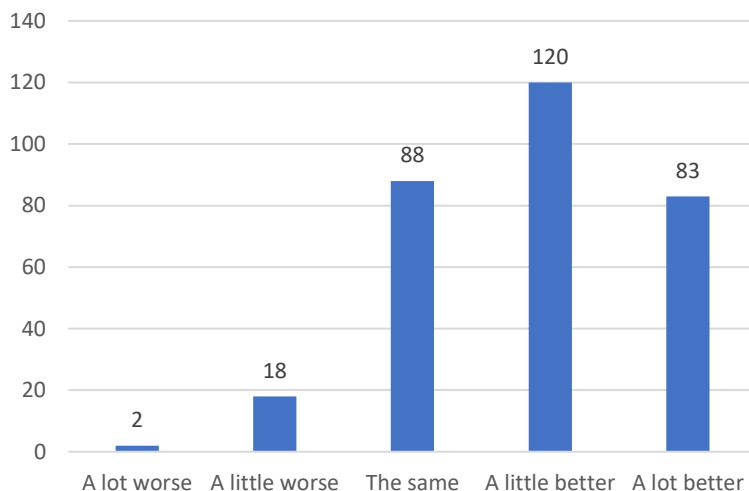
⁷¹ Aybak; Baraki Barak; Chahar Bolak; Dara-I-Sufi Bala; Feroz Nakchir; Gurbuz; Hazrati Sultan; Khaki Jabbar; Khulm; Khuram Wa Sarbagh; Marmul; Nahri Shahi; Nahrin; Ruyi Du Ab; Sholgara; Tala Wa Barfak.

⁷² ICS6 [Male community member, Khost]

The main performance indicator of the programme was an increase in income, used to measure the main goal of improving livelihoods.⁷³ First of all, it is important to put figures into a broader socio-economic perspective when using this indicator, as it can only provide at best a correlation – but not a causal evidence – between the treatment (mine action) and its intended outcome (increase in income).

Samuel Hall found that the majority of people surveyed in the beneficiary communities recorded increases in income after the mine action and livelihoods activities from the CSSF programme. 206 of 316 (65%) combined in-person and phone survey participants responded that their income status was either now “a little better” or “a lot better” compared to before the mine clearance activities. 90 of these combined phone and in-person participants (28%) responded that their income was the same, and 20 of these respondents (6%) answered that their household income status now was either “a little worse” or “a lot worse”.⁷⁴

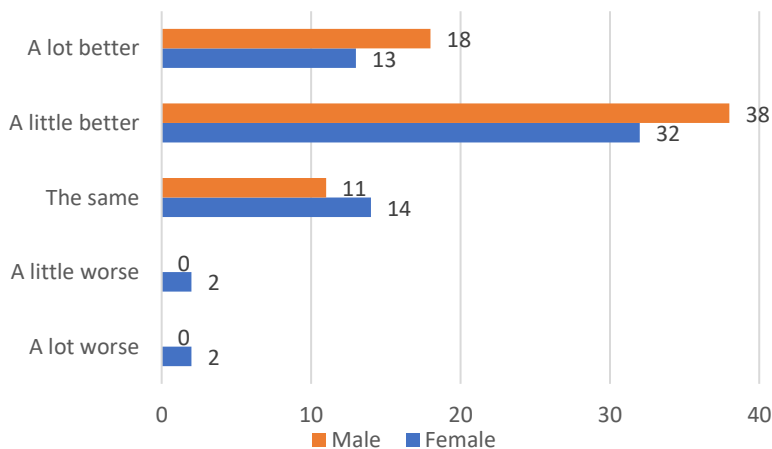
Figure 7. Household Income Status Compared to Before Mine Clearance. Combined Surveys.



This compares with the internal reporting figure of 99% in the Year 3 Annual Report and the Socio-economic report, of beneficiaries surveyed by HALO Trust, DACAAR and Afghanaid who reported an income increase in the pre- and post-testing (this differential is discussed in Section 5.3. Squaring the circle: measuring income generation and livelihoods creation).

In other instances, income remained the same: “My husband and child drove a taxi before the mine action operations and that is what they do now, so there is no change in our income.”⁷⁵ The split on economic status comparison by gender does not add significant variation. In-person surveys indicated a slightly lower number of women attesting the economic situation of the household is better than men (all phone survey respondents except for one were men).

Figure 8. Economic status now compared to before mine action. In-person Survey. (n=130)



⁷³ As discussed in the background to the project, the actual wording of impact statements and associated outcomes changed over the four years, but essentially referred to poverty reduction or enhanced livelihoods and income. The impact statement in Year 3 was: “Strengthened local economies through improved livelihoods”.

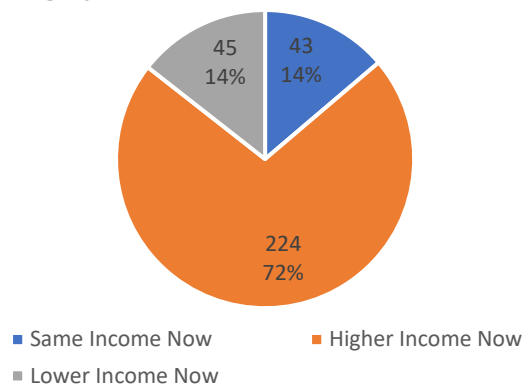
⁷⁴ “Compared to before the mine clearance, how is the current situation of your household total income status today compared to before the hazard was cleared?” Enumerators were trained on the specific comparison aspect of the question.

⁷⁵ FGD1 [Female community member in Kabul]

Income levels before, income levels after

Samuel Hall ran a “sanity check” series of questions on income, where participants were asked for their self-reported income now, and then later asked to think back to the year before mine/ERW clearance in their area from the programme and give an indicative figure for income then. The data (Figure 10) were roughly commensurate with the income status question (Figure 9), with most respondents stating higher income in Afghani (AFN) per month at the time of the survey vis-à-vis their stated amount for the time period before the mine/ERW clearance.

Figure 9. Income Figures Matched. Combined in-person and phone survey income figures. Number of participants and percentage of n=312.



Assessing the impact of the intervention through a strict economic lens can be misleading for at least two reasons:

- 1) income generating activities and livelihoods creation are probably a more tangible output of mine action but social, societal, and psychosocial dimensions are essential to the inclusion and resilience of former mines/ERW affected communities, and;
- 2) identifying income generation and livelihoods creation as a direct and linear outcome of mine action remains questionable (Section 4.2).

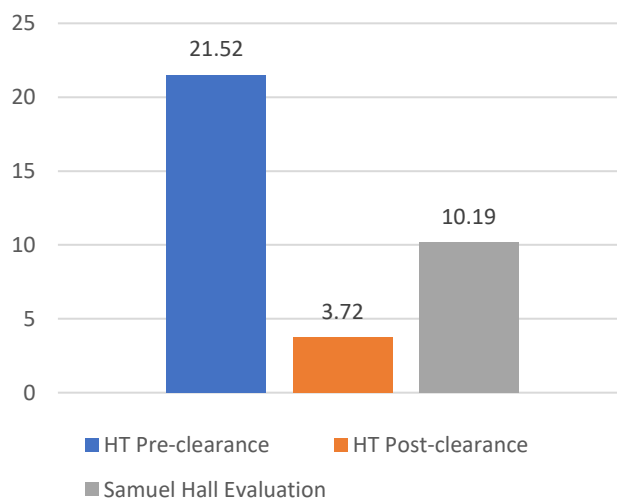
Proxies for income – the Coping Strategies Index (CSI)

HALO Trust and programme stakeholders recognised some of the issues surrounding sole measurements of self-reported income, and used a series of proxies including the Food Consumption Score (FCS) and Coping Strategies Index (CSI). The CSI is often used as a proxy indicator for household food insecurity, based on a list of negative coping behaviours. Afghanistan’s CSI scores are split in three categories:

- No or low negative coping: CSI= 0-3
- Medium negative coping: CSI = 4-9
- High negative coping: CSI ≥ 10

The HALO Trust socio-economic report calculated the CSI scores in depth, with an average pre-clearance score of 21.52 and the average post-clearance score dropping to 3.72. This is a large decrease, from extremely high negative coping to almost low negative coping. Samuel Hall ran the same series of questions during in-person surveys in the four primary fieldwork locations. The survey average CSI was 10.19⁷⁶ across 125 in-person surveys. **The proxy for incomes encouraging, and the reduction from the pre-clearance average score of 21.52 to any level between the HALO Trust post-clearance (3.72) and Samuel Hall CSI (10.19) is indicative of major changes in negative coping strategies in segments of the intervention and survey populations.**

Figure 10. Coping Strategies Index (CSI), HALO Trust surveys and Samuel Hall in-person surveys (n=125)



⁷⁶ Cleaning for four high outliers, the average Samuel Hall CSI reduced to 8.99.

5.3. Squaring the circle: measuring income generation and livelihoods creation

There are several reasons underlying differences in income figures between the implementing partner surveys and the independent evaluation.

1. The survey sampling and respondent pools were different.⁷⁷ This includes likely higher numbers of respondents that were not direct beneficiaries of the livelihoods programming segments (with the understanding that DACAAR and Afghanaid surveys were with livelihoods beneficiaries).
2. There are potential biases, including recall bias. Seasonality of income, and therefore perceptions in answering the questions could also be a factor. Samuel Hall's research took place at the end of winter when incomes may not have been as high as other times of the year, and vice versa for the programme data collection periods.
3. Samuel Hall's perceived independence⁷⁸ may mean respondents felt more comfortable in responding that their income had not increased.

Measuring income in Afghanistan comes with a set of difficulties. Major measurement factors include biases in self-reported income, difficulties in measurement techniques (such as implementation of finance diaries), as well as the seasonality of income, especially prevalent in rural Afghanistan and tied to non-monetary linked consumption and exchanges (including livestock and agricultural produce).

Extraneous factors in measuring income

Beyond these biases, extraneous factors can be considered in understanding changes in income in the context of the programme in Afghanistan between 2016-2020. A general rise in governance, increasing connectivity to markets (for instance, through road construction), and other programmes such as the Citizens' Charter, were also intended to strengthen local economies; they could also contribute to increases in income across the four years of the programme.

Economic headwinds from such factors as the 2018 drought, which was prevalent in Samangan, along with general economic stagnation or contraction in rural areas due to conflict and natural disaster denote that incomes could have potentially also decreased in communities in rural areas were it not for the programme interventions.⁷⁹ This means that the mine action and livelihoods programme may have actually worked to *prevent* incomes reducing and livelihoods deteriorating across the programme cycle.

Potential delays in income gains

There is also the potential for delayed livelihoods improvements, **with evidence pointing to further income increases in the future as a direct result of the programme.** Agricultural yields could increase over time after the initial livelihoods interventions which only finished two-three years prior to the evaluation. One such case is explored in the case study on ferula in Samangan, where the harvest is not expected until 2022 (see community case study on page 16). Along with the delay in direct income gains for beneficiary villages is the gap between the end of the programming (when the independent evaluation took place) and second-order economic effects. This includes improved incomes over time then strengthening the microeconomies in the villages. Recommendations in the final section of the evaluation include enhanced indicator techniques to better understand programme outcomes and impact.

⁷⁷ There would have been some cross-over, given Samuel Hall conducted phone surveys entirely with Afghanaid and DACAAR listed beneficiaries, and in-person surveys in four communities where both HALO Trust mine action and DACAAR/Afghanaid programming took place.

⁷⁸ While Samuel Hall may be perceived as more independent, with Samuel Hall survey enumerator stating this at the beginning of surveys, it should still be noted that it is likely that some research participants still connected Samuel Hall with the programme.

⁷⁹ World Bank (2020), Navigating a Sea of Uncertainty: Afghanistan Development Update January 2020; also, rural poverty levels trending upwards as seen in the Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization (CSO) and World Bank Afghanistan Living Conditions Surveys (ALCS).

5.4. Assessing tangible outcomes: optimising land use

Enhanced gains from agriculture, livestock, and wood and stone mining were cited for the increases in income during the evaluation research – with agricultural yields supported through development IPs.

Enhanced agriculture

Discussed in Section 3.3. on the tandem of mine action and development, agricultural yields grew as a result of both programming components. The HALO Trust clearance of landmines released land for agricultural use, while the Afghanistan and DACAAR agricultural activities contributed to increased yields with improved seed distribution and training.

Not all mine action occurred in lands considered suitable for agriculture. *“The area that has been cleared was not cultivated before and it is not cultivated now either. Now people use it as grazing land for animals and also collect firewood and stones from there.”*⁸⁰ Some agricultural uses were also not intensive, with research participants in Kabul noting that while there was some dispute and confusion over land ownership, it was not intense because little more than rain-fed barley could be grown in the area.⁸¹

There were **mixed reviews on saffron cultivation in Khost**. DACAAR claimed the innovation a success, with the cash crop being grown in Khost (and outside of the western region) for the first time, proving that saffron cultivation was feasible.¹ However, there were negative comments from research participants. Villagers in the Khost fieldwork communities said that saffron cultivation was a “failure”, “useless” and that there was a lack of training involved. One community member explained: *“When we grew saffron, there was a certain type of bug that hit the flowers and caused a lot of loss to our villagers. Everyone stopped cultivating saffron after that.”*¹ It points to the need of a longitudinal follow-up - involving communities, DACAAR, agricultural experts, and governmental counterparts to optimise the investment made and its subsequent impact

Enhanced livestock and pastoral grazing

Livestock grazing was cited as highly benefitting from hazard clearance, especially in areas where intensive, irrigated crops or dryland agriculture was not suitable. One highlighted example came from a man in Samangan who stated: *“Before the mine action, I had five sheep, but now I have 30 because I can take them grazing without any concerns.”*⁸² Many research participants said there was now more land, and less fear, in taking herds of livestock to graze on the cleared lands in the mountains. The development programming components did not include major livestock and pastoral activities, instead focussing on agriculture, water infrastructure support and hen distribution. This represents an opportunity for future investigation for development programming, given the significance of animal husbandry in the livelihoods of landmine-affected communities. The in-person surveys (125 total participants) had 100 households (80%) earning income from farming in the past year, and 72 households (58%) who earned income from animal husbandry.⁸³ With many remaining landmine/ERW contaminated areas being less suitable for agriculture than livestock, this is an area to explore alternative development activities in the future.

⁸⁰ FGD10 [Male community member, Khost]

⁸¹ FGD1 [Male community members, Kabul]

⁸² FGD4 [Male community member, Samangan]

⁸³ Multiple answers were possible for this question, explaining responses totalling over 100% of respondents. Indeed, almost all households who gained income from animal husbandry also had income from farming. The other major income source was manual labour (i.e. construction work), with 66 responses.

Photo 10. Sheep grazing in Khost. Fluctuations in price and the seasonality of sales and consumption means measuring income can be particularly difficult in the absence of advanced MEAL techniques.



Enhanced natural resource collection

Stone mining and wood collection from released land contributed to some households' incomes. This was separate to the livelihoods programming components. An increase in stone collection was cited widely in the Kabul pilot community, as well as the two villages in Khost, where the green stones available in the mountains were used in house construction. In Kabul, the primary stone miner explained that the rocks were used for (1) graves, (2) *taw khana* or traditional heating rooms, as well as (3) for houses, and could be sold in Kabul city. He would organise a group of men from the village to collect the rocks and fill his truck. He reported earning AFN10,000 per month, with the work being done four times through-out the year. This equates to approximately US\$130 per month, or US\$530 per year in earnings based on the mining for four months.⁸⁴ The man paid five labourers AFN400 per day (approximately US\$5).

The number of stone mining sites increased from one to five after mine/ERW clearance, and the stones in the released mountains were said to be of higher quality. Wood collection constituted a small income source for community members in Khost, mostly poorer households that resorted to this as an income stream. Better off households were able to buy fuel (either wood or liquefied petroleum gas), with participants pointing out this meant mine action benefited vulnerable households as they could now gain access to fuel from demined areas. Community members would have more wood and brush to collect for their fuel needs (for daily cooking, and winter woodfire).

Photo 11. Transporting brush by donkeys in Khost



⁸⁴ Noting the community member already had a truck but would also have to pay for fuel and other expenses

5.5. Assessing tangible outcomes: changes in women's lives

Women's lives were positively changed through the programme, with enhanced livelihoods opportunities and psychosocial relief stemming from lower threats of mine accidents to the community.

Photo 12. Mazari palm growing in Khost near cleared land



Women's livelihoods

Women's livelihoods and associated income levels had increased as part of the total household increases, but also through opportunities to access resources from released lands and participate in development programming. Women would engage in collecting wood or brush from the mountains (or their children would do so), made easier and safer after hazard clearance. Women also took their livestock grazing in the hazard released lands. In Khost, this meant more access to the *mazari palm*, gathered and crafted for income (Photos 12-13).⁸⁵

"Women have started bringing the [palm leaves] from the mountains... and their daughters started to weave baskets and they then sell them and earn money from that".⁸⁶

Women also reported being involved in agriculture to varying levels. The Afghanaid and DACAAR livelihoods programming components had minimum mandated levels of female participation, for example, 40% female participation and graduation rates in the DACAAR farmer field schools (FFS). Afghanaid distributed hens to 543 female beneficiaries in 367 families in Samangan and Logar. Afghanaid surveys reported over 230,000 eggs being sold at markets for a total of AFN 1,171,420 (equivalent to approximately US\$15,300, or about US\$40 per beneficiary family). Over 50,000 eggs were reported to be consumed by the families themselves. While the numbers could not be independently corroborated, there was mention of this programming component in the Samuel Hall primary research. *"During the mine action operation, Afghanaid distributed hens to people to raise and sell. We sold each egg for six Afghanis and used the money to buy hen feed and purchase items for our families."*⁸⁷ The Samangan DAIL Acting Director suggested this was one area where economies of scale could be found.⁸⁸ He suggested larger scale farms with linkages to the market, in-depth training and equipment support, with beneficiaries forming a group instead of dividing a limited number of hens amongst families would increase sustainability.

Photo 13. A final product mazari palm weaved mat



⁸⁵ A news report from 2014 confirmed the income potential from the palm leaves that proliferate in Khost, but with caveats that there is little organisation on the marketing and sales of the versatile goods and that they were potentially being overharvested. Shah, A (2014), "Afghan Palm Weavers Hope to Build Industry", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*. 9 June, 2014.

⁸⁶ FGD9 [Female community member, Khost]

⁸⁷ FGD3 [Female community member, Samangan]

⁸⁸ KII6 [Samangan Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL)]

Psychosocial Relief

Psychosocial relief from the decreased threat of harm to community members was widely discussed with the unanimous agreement in community members' psychosocial wellbeing increasing. Women reported a reduction in anxiety, connected to no longer having to worry intensely about children, male relatives or themselves undertaking activities near mine contaminated lands. With children at very high risks of mine accidents (55% of 2017 mine/ERW casualties in Afghanistan were children)⁸⁹, the alleviation of the psychological burden stemming from mine action was pronounced.

“There is a lot of difference in women’s situation. Previously, we would always worry about our children and men getting hit by mines but now we do not have to worry about that.”

Female community member, Samangan [FGD3]

“If you can imagine, living in a prison. We couldn’t go outside the village. My nephew went the wrong route [and his eye was irreparably injured by a mine accident]. In general, we are free now. Now, we can benefit from the land. It is also psychological – children, livestock, shepherds... can go everywhere.”

Baghgray, Kabul malik about the most significant change from mine action

⁸⁹ Landmine Monitor (2018), Afghanistan Casualties. Accessed at: <http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/afghanistan/casualties.aspx> on 1st of April, 2020

6. Conclusion and Forward Strategy: Linking the future in mine action and development

6.1. Conclusions: Strong programme performance for a new partnership approach, with further opportunities

The four-year mine action and livelihoods programme produced tangible outputs and gains towards programme objectives. Mine action and livelihoods initiative offered an opportunity to look beyond traditional measures of success in mine action (number of devices destroyed and number of metres cleared), and to understand interactions with what happens in the community *after* ERW clearance is completed.

The evaluation found evidence that the programme had prominent impacts on:

- ✓ Household income
- ✓ Abilities to provide non-income sustenance, such as in fuel collection
- ✓ Psychosocial relief
- ✓ A broader sense of opening up of horizons
- ✓ The opportunity to conduct the development programming




The lands in or surrounding villages are a major source of livelihood. The release, and in select locations, subsequent tied development programming, allowed for more land to be used for various purposes, whether agriculture, grazing or gathering resources.

No major negative consequences were reported. There were some examples of community disputes related to distribution of released land and access to the livelihoods programming components. However, gaps were identified. These include:

- ➔ Women's participation at different phases of the programme
- ➔ Reported issues in the distribution of land and aid in some location, tying to accountability, quality assurance and referral mechanisms.
- ➔ Impact measurement. Potential enhanced methods of measuring and understanding this linked programming in future.

The partnership approach proved to align with the underlying assumption that integrating mine action with development would bring about benefits for both (a) both the mine action and development components of the programme (Section 3. Findings on the Partnership Approach); (b) the three organisations involved, where there were gains in access, operations and shared learning, as well as (c) the beneficiary individual and communities who found the mine action and livelihoods development interventions relevant and beneficial.

6.2. Forward Strategy and Recommendations: A link of greater width and depth

Summary of Recommendations		
Partnerships and future links between mine action and development 		
1	Continue to pursue partnerships linking mine action and post-demining livelihoods and development	The programme provided a much called for, and needed, link between removing mine hazards <i>from</i> the land, with the development activities that occur <i>on</i> the land afterwards. Further formal links should continue to be pursued as HALO Trust and the MA sector work towards a mine-free Afghanistan.
2	Focus on synergies between HALO Trust and development / livelihoods implementing partners	Instead of separate activities, where mine action is followed by development components with little overlap, more crossover and combination(s) of strengths should be emphasised. For example, female development partner staff could take on larger roles in direct consultations with women in communities before and after clearance operations, and in risk education activities.
MEAL to guide linked programming 		
3	Emphasise learning and place it at the heart of future partnership initiatives	The HALO Trust should continue to expand their evaluation and learning, placing it at the core of their future partnership programming. This should include dedicating more resources towards collecting and analysing high quality data on livelihoods and development outcomes/impacts across all communities of intervention.
4	Enhance programme accountability mechanisms	Bolstering accountability mechanisms, including internal and external complaints and referral pathways, will strengthen programme delivery – especially in a post-COVID19 context where the <i>perception of outsiders</i> by communities and the question of <i>value for money</i> by donors will become essential.
Programming for long-term livelihoods improvements 		
5	Continue to prioritise contextually relevant mine action and livelihoods activities	The mine action was considered particularly relevant to communities in close proximity to mine/ERW hazard contaminations, as was the rural livelihoods activities centred on agriculture and WASH. Best-fit programming, working with communities as co-designers, should be continued in future partnerships.
6	Increase focus on what comes <i>after</i> immediate land use	The first shift from MA outputs to considering what happens after clearance has occurred. The next shift will be looking beyond livelihoods activities focussing on agricultural yield increases, to programme design that works with communities long-term, including on value chains and linking communities to markets.

Partnerships and future links between MA and development



Recommendation #1. Pursue partnerships for future links between mine action and post-demining livelihoods and development

Mine action is at heart of long-term transformations for the many communities facing the scourge of ERW. With MAPA stakeholders (including DMAC and donors), increasingly calling upon strong engagement between mine action and post-clearance development, and the strong start in programming, outcomes and impact highlighted in the evaluation, the HALO Trust should continue to explore partnerships with livelihoods actors as they work towards a mine free Afghanistan.

“Many villagers get what they need from this mountain and the land; Our life was very bad before mine action but now it has improved and we can cultivate our lands and use the mountain too.”⁹⁰

Photo 14. A man collecting fuel from mine cleared areas in Khost



1,495 communities

In Afghanistan that remain proximate to landmine/ERW contaminations. How do local communities, the Afghan government and the mine action/development sectors maximise impact as they are cleared of landmine hazards?

Recommendation #2. Focus on synergies between HALO Trust and development / livelihoods implementing partners

There is potential for renewed synergy in future partnerships between HALO Trust and livelihoods actors. Donors such as CSSF/DFID are funding more partnerships and consortia in Afghanistan and globally. This presents HALO Trust with an opportunity to draw on experiences from other partnerships and consortia, including lessons learned and toolkits. This would lead to better alignment of varying organisational objectives and operational processes. There are many potential synergies that can be found by directly linking the two agendas closer – rather than siloed sequencing of mine action first, and then livelihoods afterwards. **Some of these synergies were realised during the UK funded programme. Others, such as the potential role development partners could play in female community consultation and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), have further potential to be developed and realised in future.**

Increasing gender participation in mine action and livelihood programming

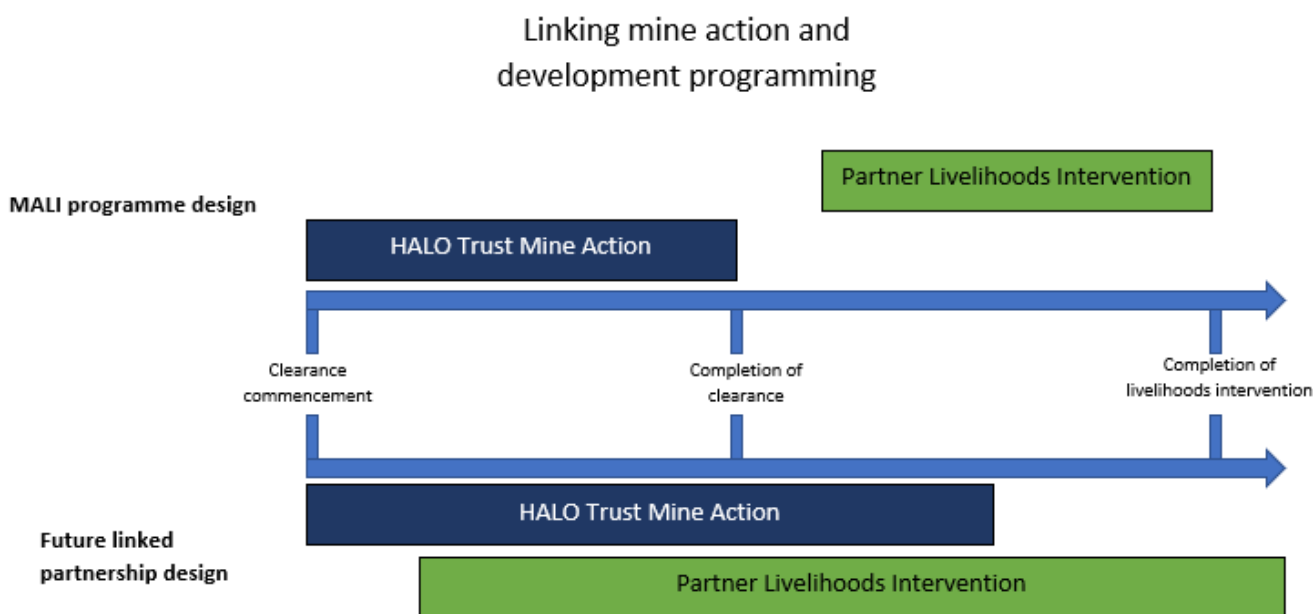
HALO Trust should increase the mine action capacity of the development partners, especially making use of female staff (such as the community liaisons or social organisers). For instance, the DACAAR or Afghanaid female staff members involved in the livelihoods components of the programme could have conducted community consultation and dialogue at the beginning of the programme, and announcements and information sharing at the conclusion of the mine clearance. This would have increased direct dialogue and information flows with women in beneficiary communities, instead of hearing information second-hand through male relatives.

⁹⁰ FGD7 [Female community member, Khost]

There is already precedent in “informal” explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) integration into the programmes of other humanitarian actors, where NGO field workers are trained in and deliver EORE alongside their own humanitarian communication programmes. In addition to this, or alternatively, the research indicated that there was further space for HALO Trust to engage directly through local governance structures such as Community Development Councils (CDCs), which have minimum mandated requirements

Broader links. The final goal in partnerships would be require that the partnership between HALO Trust, DACAAR and Afghanaid (or other potential IPs) have greater impact than the sum of individual organisation’s impact.

Figure 11. Enhancing links between the MA and livelihoods activities



MEAL to guide linked programming

Recommendation #3. Emphasise learning and place it at the heart of future partnership initiatives

Long-term measurement of the impact of mine action, including the multivariate outcomes and impacts from demined lands and development programme should be emphasised and guide future practice. This recommendation matches one of DFID’s guiding principles in mine action funding: *“More effort needs to be invested in monitoring and evaluating the impact of land clearance and mine risk education to inform future programming.”*⁹¹ The partnership approach offers opportunities for the HALO Trust to engage longer term in communities near mine/ERW removal and better understand the outcomes and impact of their work. HALO Trust and the MA sector have world class data management, output monitoring and reporting. With a

⁹¹ DFID, (2013). Clearing a path to development. The UK government’s approach to landmines and explosive remnants of war in developing countries.

partnership approach, there are opportunities for more robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL), including on what is working, what is not, and where and how HALO Trust and partners can best implement their programming components.

Recommendation #4. Enhance programme accountability mechanisms

Referral mechanisms. Longer-term presence through programmes *after* mine clearance represent an opportunity to track what happens to the land, and to livelihoods/development programme benefits, over time after release. One example in Samangan of allegations of concentrated land and aid distribution indicated the need for better referral pathways. HALO Trust and IPs should strengthen their feedback and complaints mechanisms. Another available referral pathway is the UNOPS-run *Awaaz*: The 401 toll-free hotline and humanitarian call-centre for needs and referrals. Even beyond programming, distributing the 401 number and associated knowledge would offer Afghans who may experience shocks or needs longer-term the knowledge for the *Awaaz* referral. Referral pathways should pay special attention to gender and the possibilities for women to communicate on the programming. *“The MA staff informed us that the clearance was completed in this area; they spoke to the elders and the youth and informed them. They did not have anyone assigned specifically for informing people or for collecting our complaints; sometimes villagers would go to them but the MA staff would not let them close to the area.”*⁹²

Programming for long-term livelihoods improvements

Recommendation #5. Continue to prioritise contextually relevant mine action and livelihoods activities

The four-year UK funded programme was a first for the IPs, and as the evaluation indicated, it was contextually relevant and made sense to focus on agricultural activities and associated WASH activities in the development programming components. With future partnerships, there is potential for a more expansive vision of impact from the joint mine-action and development programming, especially given mine action’s role as a precursor for sustainable development.

Strengthening resilience and responding to crises is one of the three major focuses for CSSF.⁹³ This is especially pertinent in Afghanistan, where shocks, including slow and sudden-onset natural disasters such as droughts and floods, are projected to continue in the coming decades. This was highlighted in the programme by the 2018 drought in Samangan affecting Afghan aid activities. Building community resilience could link closely with MA, with a greater emphasis on community level capacity to absorb and respond to shocks, along with co-defining and co-designing post MA development programming.

With HALO Trust taking on a larger role in post-programme impact measurements, the organisation could set greater parameters on the type of programming that would best contribute to impact and outcome objectives. For example, **cash transfers and graduation models** are increasingly prevalent modalities in UK Aid and other donor-funded programmes. A building evidence base on cash and graduation models’ efficacy favourably compares them to traditional livelihoods programmes, and could be explored further in future partnership programmes.⁹⁴ As discussed in Section 5.4. and livestock grazing outcomes and impact, **future development programming should explore what is most contextually relevant for the communities that interventions take**

⁹² FGD10 [Male community member, Khost]

⁹³ The other two apparent in the HALO Trust mine action and livelihoods programme, namely “Strengthening Global Peace, Security and Governance” and “Tackling Extreme Poverty and Helping the World’s most Vulnerable”

⁹⁴ Bastagli, F., Hagen-Zanker, J., Harman, L., Barca, V., Sturge, G., & Schmidt, T. (2019). The Impact of Cash Transfers: A Review of the Evidence from Low- and Middle-income Countries. *Journal of Social Policy*, 48(3), 569-594, and; Munshi S., Goldberg N., Karlan D., and de Montesquiou A. 2016. “Eliminating Extreme Poverty: Comparing the Cost-effectiveness of Livelihood, Cash Transfer, and Graduation Approaches.” Washington, D.C.: CGAP

place in. Many of the remaining landmine/ERW contaminated areas are located in more mountainous areas, less suited to agriculture than to livestock grazing. Hence, livelihoods programming that incorporates animal husbandry would be more relevant. Likewise, the third platform of peacebuilding in the “triple nexus” of humanitarian-development-peacebuilding would also fit well within the partnership approach and HALO Trust’s conflict-sensitivity emphasis. These could be local-peacebuilding and social cohesion activities that address some of the concerns in land use and livelihoods enhancement. The programme was a first step in a joint partnership approach, and while sticking to what IPs do best (mine action and rural livelihoods programming), a more expansive agenda could be adopted to increase impact in the communities that have been afflicted by proximate mine-ERW contaminations, often for decades.

Recommendation #6. Increased focus on what comes after immediate land use

There is also potential for longer-term engagement. The HALO Trust are used to completing projects to schedule, then focussing on other locations of pressing needs with mine contaminations. The partnership approach offers opportunities on longer-term understanding (even if through partnerships livelihoods/development aspects with HALO Trust MEAL and programmatic support), of the outcomes and impacts from programming in communities.

There has already been a shift in HALO Trust’s and the broader mine action sector’s thinking into what happens *after* mine/ERW clearance is completed. This is in the immediate sense, in the use of the land. However, there is strong potential to longer-term understandings and programming that result from mine action, and, a linked partnership approach, on the secondary and tertiary impacts. Linked to Recommendation #5, the HALO Trust future partnerships could focus on value chains and marketing of goods. *“It would be better to work on marketing in the future (marketing of crops, connecting farmers to markets and raising the profile of their agriculture). There is also a need for more research... Which crops would be resilient in dry and drought conditions?”*⁹⁵

Photo 15 A farmer tilling land in a mine-cleared community in Khost



⁹⁵ KII6 [Samangan DAIL]

Truly linking mine action with improved lives and livelihoods

There are an estimated 1,495 communities in Afghanistan that are still located within a 1-kilometre radius of a mine/ERW contamination, and many more worldwide. As a preeminent mine clearance organization, the HALO Trust will be involved in clearing many of these communities.

“In heavily contaminated areas, demining is a necessary precondition for the safe delivery of humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development services, and for people’s own efforts to rebuild their farms, businesses, and communities.”¹

“[The] development projects built wells, surrounding walls and provided livestock for our villagers to upscale their animal husbandry. They also distributed chicken for some households through which they make an income now. This has been a big impact on our village. When there was no demining, there were no organisations.”¹

In Afghanistan, in what Samuel Hall conceptualises as the fourth phase, the “last kilometre(s)” towards a mine-free country, where scarcer resources and funding means there are more demands for mine action organisations and the sector to demonstrate long-term impact. This is also an imperative in and of itself for the HALO Trust, in ensuring mine action work maximises positive impact for the people themselves in future programming. The partnership approach, linking mine action with the livelihoods development that comes after mine/ERW clearance, offers opportunities to continue to create tangible positive impacts in lives and communities affected by mines in Afghanistan. **This represents an opportunity for HALO Trust and mine action more broadly to position themselves as a key link in the transformative agenda in Afghanistan and globally.**

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