ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF LANDMINES AND EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR IN PAKISTAN

November 2012

SPADO
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Executive Summary

Pakistan has one of the world’s highest levels of casualties due to landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) as a result of contamination along its borders with India and Afghanistan and the increasing use of such devices in escalating conflicts between the army and armed non-State actors in Pakistan’s tribal areas and in Baluchistan.

The number of annual casualties identified by NGO monitoring and media reports has jumped from 111 in 2002 to 636 in 2011, most of them civilians, and the actual toll is almost certainly higher. There is no official mechanism for collecting casualty data and many casualties occur in remote areas where access to medical and rehabilitation services is difficult. As in Afghanistan, anti-vehicle mines and victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pose a growing threat.

The Sustainable Peace and Development Organization’s research finds that most of the casualties are men of an economically active age whose death or injury imposes severe strain on their families and communities in what are some of the country’s poorest areas through both the expense of treatment and loss of income. Injury and disability also exact a heavy toll on casualties through depression, post traumatic stress and social stigmatization, particularly severe for women.

This report seeks to provide more information, and encourage the Government of Pakistan to acknowledge more fully the extent of the problem of landmines and explosive remnants of war, and help to address their impact on civilians. It is hoped that the current lack of humanitarian mine action can also be addressed. The Government restricts mine clearance and explosive ordnance disposal to Pakistan’s army and police. The security forces do not release details of their activities though the extent of these appears limited. No survey of mine or ERW contamination has ever been conducted, in part due to insecurity in affected areas, and no official mechanism exists to coordinate or support the limited range of humanitarian mine action open to national or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Already constrained in where they can work by insecurity, NGOs also contend with a Government system of issuing permits that is complex, slow and can end in denial of permission with no explanation of the reasons.

In this environment, NGOs have undertaken mine risk education, initially in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and since 2009 increasingly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where it has been possible to reach some of the population displaced from neighbouring tribal areas that would otherwise have been inaccessible. From the end of 2011, however, lack of funding by international donors and Government permission has led to a sharp scaling-down of these activities.

Victim assistance is one area of mine action where the situation is moving in the right direction. The Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in July 2011. The State provides critical support through the services available in public hospitals used by close to two-thirds of victims. However, there are no specialized medical or surgical facilities for landmine and other casualties close to mine-affected areas and limited facilities for psychological support or physical rehabilitation and training of survivors.

The report encourages the Government of Pakistan to recognize the scale of the problem, establish a humanitarian mine action centre to coordinate responses to the growing threat of explosive devices, and take other practical measures such as setting up a central register of incidents involving mines and ERW and casualties. The report also calls on armed non-State actors to halt use of landmines and IEDs and take immediate steps to reduce the threat to civilians by informing local communities of hazards, and mapping and marking their location. It urges international donors and organizations to support and provide expertise for humanitarian mine action and to integrate it into development programmes.

Acronyms

AFIRM Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine
AJK Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Pakistan-administered Kashmir)
ANSA armed non-State actor
AVM Anti-vehicle mine
BEST Basic Education and Employable Skill Training
BISP Benazir Income Support Program
BLA Baluchistan Liberation Army
BRA Baluchistan Republican Army
CBM Confidence Building Measure
CCW Convention on Conventional Weapons
CNIC Computerized National Identity Card
CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DI Dera Ismail
EC European Commission
EOD Explosive Ordinance Disposal
ERW Explosive Remnants of War
FATA Federally Administered Tribal Area
FSD Swiss Foundation for Mine Action
HHRD Helping Hand for Relief and Development
HI Handicap International
ICBL International Campaign to Ban Landmines
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP Internally Displaced Person
IED Improvised Explosive Device
KPK Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LCD Leonard Cheshire Disability
LoC Line of Control
MAG Mines Advisory Group
MSF Médecins Sans Frontières
MRE Mine Risk Education
NGO non-Governmental organization
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OPPC Orthotic, Prosthetic and Physiotherapy Centre
PHF Pakistan Humanitarian Forum
PIPOS Pakistan Institute of Prosthetic and Orthotic Sciences
PWD People with Disabilities
RI Response International
SPADD Sustainable Peace and Development Organization
TTP Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
US United States
UXO unexploded ordnance
WRA Weapons Removal and Abatement
Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO), with the support of Geneva Call, conducted field research in communities heavily affected by landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and explosive remnants of war (ERW); for example the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Baluchistan. SPADO’s focal point for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, SPADO, Pakistan’s Department of Social Protection and Advocacy for Disabled (SPADO), Pakistan’s official position, set out in its reports under Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), is that it does not have a problem with un-cleared landmines. The latest of these reports, dated 31 March 2012, explains that the Pakistan army has not laid any mines since the 2001-2002 border tensions with India and reports that all those mines have since been cleared and destroyed. Since 2002, no further information is available about landmine use or whether indeed any other mined areas still exist.

Mine clearance projects are still present along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir over which Pakistan and India fought three wars. Pakistan’s CCW reports in previous years have acknowledged the continued presence of mines used in the 1980s by troops of the former Soviet Union in areas bordering Afghanistan. More recent conflicts in KPK, FATA and Baluchistan have led to the use of landmines and other explosive devices, mostly by armed non-State actors (ANSAcs), resulting in increased contamination and risks to the local communities.

This has become brutally evident in a nearly six-fold rise in the number of casualties reported in the past decade from 111 in 2002 to 636 in 2011. Civilians are falling victim while travelling along roads in rural areas, women as they work in the fields, and children on their way to school. The mounting psychological impact is apparent in the growing fear of inhabitants of conflict-affected areas expressed of farming their land or even walking around their locality. Some poor families have felt compelled to invest their meagre cash resources buying detectors so they can check the paths to their houses. Yet no humanitarian mine clearance programme is being conducted in Pakistan and medical support and rehabilitation services are in acute short supply.

Lack of information on the dangers civilians face has compounded their plight. No survey has been conducted of the impact of landmines and other explosive devices in Pakistan. The only reporting available has come from the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor annual overview of Pakistan’s landmine and ERW situation, which does not provide a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the problem or fully capture the human cost. Nor does it make recommendations to humanitarian actors on how to address outstanding needs.

This report by SPADO, with the support of Geneva Call, seeks to help fill the gap, drawing on eight weeks of detailed research on the impact of landmines and other explosive devices and years of experience in Pakistan engaging with local communities.

Part One sets out the background and causes of continuing landmine use in Pakistan from the conflict with India over Kashmir since Pakistan’s independence in 1947 to the insurgencies along the border with Afghanistan and turbulent politics in Balochistan. Part Two examines the impact of landmines and other explosive devices, who they are killing and maiming, and where, and the economic and social impact on already poor families losing their breadwinner or struggling to support disabled family members, hospitals made all the greater in areas where conflict severely limits access to medical services and support.

The next two sections consider what efforts are underway to address the menace of mines and ERW. Part Three looks at the meagre scope of mine action in Pakistan, limited to clearance and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) by security forces, which do not report on the scope or outcome of their activities, and Mine Risk Education (MRE) by national and international humanitarian organizations, constrained by government policy, insecurity in affected areas and acutely short donor funding. Part Four contrasts the progressive policy initiatives Pakistan has taken in ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) last year and the burgeoning demand for medical services and rehabilitation, particularly in border areas with the limited range of support and services available to mine survivors from Government hospitals and NGOs, and the challenges for those seeking to deliver it in the face of a complex security emergency.

The report concludes with Recommendations to the Government, international donors and to nongovernmental actors urging the establishment of a mine action centre, owned and led by the Government but coordinating and promoting humanitarian mine action among all relevant stakeholders including the Army, provincial governments and humanitarian organizations. It calls on international organizations to include mine action in development projects, proposes steps to promote MRE in schools and the community and seeks to address the needs of mine survivors by, among other measures, creating a central registry of casualties caused by landmines and other explosive devices.

Methodology

Conflict and high levels of insecurity, particularly in FATA, KPK and Baluchistan posed a significant challenge. Military operations under way in FATA during the research phase for this report resulted in mass displacement of the local population. Baluchistan’s law and order status is the worst in memory and a recent trend towards abducting NGO personnel for ransom prevented access by the survey team to some affected areas. Access to internally displaced persons (IDPs), however, made it possible to obtain first-hand information on conditions in communities in some areas it would not otherwise have been possible to reach.

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Camp for internally displaced people in Dir

Introduction

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1. Background

Pakistan’s landmine and other explosive devices challenge originated in its conflicts with India since 1947 and the decade-long Soviet War in Afghanistan (1979-1989).

There is still a problem of residual contamination along the LoC in Pakistan-administered Kashmir – Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Since Partition in 1947, Pakistan and India have fought three wars and many border skirmishes over Kashmir. Both sides laid massive quantities of mines along the LoC, which divides Kashmir, and along other parts of their common border, maintaining large long-term minefields at the time, which have since been cleared, leaving the LoC. Pakistan and India both assert that all mines planted along the LoC are properly fenced and marked complying with the requirements of Protocol II of the CCW to which both are parties but rain, snow and landslides have resulted in migration of mines reportedly causing regular casualties along and close to the LoC and deterring agricultural activity.

Along Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan and inside its tribal areas, Soviet forces used landmines to discourage the local Pashtun population and various Jihadi groups from participating in the war. The first landmine casualties were reported in FATA in 1980, a year after the Soviet invasion. Since then thousands of civilians have become victims of landmines and other explosive ordnance.

The effects of the Afghan war on the region did not finish with the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, but rather led to more conflict between various Jihadi factions fighting over who would rule Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan since the intervention in 2001 led by the United States (US), and Pakistan military engagements in FATA against Taliban militants have further contributed to the widespread use of landmines and other explosive devices by ANSAs in the region. In addition, the easy availability of landmines smuggled from Afghanistan has resulted in their use in tribal and family conflicts in FATA.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation’s (NATO) intervention in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s alignment with the US in its war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban resulted in an armed Jihadi movement against the State of Pakistan in the tribal areas led from 2007, by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is also referred to as the Taliban movement of Pakistan. The Pakistan army conducted major military operations against TTP from 2006 to 2010 in FATA and the districts of Swat, Dir, Shangla and Buner in KP. The conflict displaced millions of local inhabitants and added further contamination by landmines and ERW causing frequent incidents that resulted in civilian deaths and injuries.

ANSAs affiliated with TTP placed mines in the towns and villages of KPK and FATA which they controlled to counter Pakistan Army attempts to drive them out. Residents of Mingora town, the epicentre of the fighting, said that Taliban militants had laid landmines in the town and prevented many civilians from fleeing, using them as “human shields” to deter attack. High loss of civilian life was also reported to result from to further contamination following air strikes and artillery bombardments. There are regular reports of continued use of landmines and other explosive devices against the Pakistan security forces in FATA and in other tribal and sectarian conflicts.

The human cost of the conflict in FATA has been severe. Hundreds of people have been killed or injured by landmines and other explosive devices, more than half of them civilians. SPADO reports that in 2011 there were at least 636 casualties from landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and victim-activated IEDs.

No estimate exists of the extent of contamination, but the evidence is that it has increased as a result both of fighting and natural disasters. The devastating floods of 2010 dislocated mines and other dangerous items from the hills of South Waziristan and washed them down to the nearby districts of Tank and Dera Ismail (DI) Khan, contaminating vast areas of land that were previously safe. The UXO and landmines left behind as flood waters receded have caused civilian casualties, including women and children.

A third area affected by landmines and other explosive devices is Baluchistan, Pakistan’s largest province in terms of area, but smallest in terms of population. It is also the poorest of Pakistan’s provinces and troubled by a long-running conflict between Government security forces and insurgent groups seeking autonomy and power over the province’s natural resources.

The Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), Baluchistan Republican Army (BRA) and Lashkar-e-Baluchsitan are reported to be involved in deploying increasing numbers of landmines and other explosive devices targeting Government infrastructure including railways, electricity and telephone towers, gas pipelines and outposts of the Pakistan Army and the Frontier Corps. In Baluchistan, as in FATA, the landmine threat appears to have been exacerbated by the widespread availability of devices smuggled with other weapons from Afghanistan. The continued use of landmines in anti-Government insurgency and in other tribal and sectarian disputes has resulted in frequent casualties.

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2. Mine Use and Impact

The steady increase in the number of people killed and injured by landmines and other explosive devices in Pakistan in the past decade partly reflects improved reporting but also attests to the mounting human cost of escalating conflict between the Government and insurgent groups. The graph below shows for example a spike in the number of casualties in 2006 corresponding to the beginning of military operations conducted against the TTP. SPADO’s monitoring of media reports identified 636 casualties in 2011, including 223 fatalities, up from total reported casualties of 394 the previous year. This represents the highest number of casualties of any year since 2001, and can be attributed both to the response of ANSAs following military operations in FATA and KPK coupled with refugee returns and the dispersal of landmines as a result of the 2010 flooding. There was also a significant increase in casualties in Baluchistan over the same year due to an increase in ANSA activities. By early October 2012, sources monitored by SPADO had identified a further 231 casualties, including 115 deaths and 116 injuries.

In FATA and Baluchistan, mines are used by ANSAs as both defensive and offensive weapons targeting Government security forces, and also in inter-tribal and sectarian conflicts and personal disputes. ANSAs have used landmines to protect their bases and strategic mountain positions and to attack security forces. ANSAs have blown up electricity pylons and left mines around them to prevent their repair. In addition, tribal elders have been targeted by ANSAs, with mines placed near their homes or on roads they use. In tribal and family feuds, people have placed anti-personnel mines (APMs) in the fields of their enemies. Eight of the victims surveyed by SPADO as part of this project reported their accidents as a result of these types of feuds. Smugglers have placed mines on remote pathways used by competitors, but which are also used by tribesmen collecting taxes.

Civilians bear the brunt

Nearly half of the total casualties in 2011 were caused by anti-vehicle mines (AVMs) and 22% by APMs. The intended targets of the AVMs are military convoys, but frequently involve civilian traffic. Other explosive weapons, particularly IEDs, are used in a similar way by ANSAs against security forces and have reportedly inflicted heavy casualties on them, but are also used in tribal and sectarian disputes. Other hazards include UXO and ‘toy bombs’.

“I came to see my childhood friend who lives very near to the LoC. His house is situated on the hilltop so I had to walk to his home. To my regret I used a little-frequented route to his house, and even at times lost sight of his house. I wanted to re-live the memories of my childhood and we often used to use these remote routes for a thrill. On the way, I stepped on a landmine and it exploded. I fell unconscious and when I came to my senses I was in the hospital. When I was told that I had lost both my legs I couldn’t stop the tears. My whole family started crying. But it was the will of Allah so what can one say? But I hope and pray that no one else goes through the agony and suffering that I have been through.”

Survey Respondent, aged 35, AJK

In 2011, casualties occurred in all FATA’s seven tribal agencies bordering Afghanistan and in KPK districts adjoining the tribal belt, especially DI Khan, Kohat, Hangu, Tank, Lower and Upper Dir. Most casualties occurred in areas of conflict, but severe flooding in 2010 carried mines and other explosive devices from the mountains of South Waziristan to previously uncontaminated parts of Tank and DI Khan resulting in casualties when floodwaters receded and local inhabitants returned to their land. After FATA, the highest casualty numbers were found in Baluchistan in the districts of Nasirabad, Jaffarabad, Chaman, Dera Bugti, Kohlu, Quetta and Sibi.
Across Pakistan, most victims of mines and other explosive devices are civilians who make up 57% of the casualties recorded by SPADO’s monitoring of the media in 2011. Members of the security forces accounted for 230 – more than one-third – of the overall casualties in the reports monitored by SPADO. ANGAs, which are responsible for planting most mines, also sustained casualties, including 36 killed and six injured.

Adult men are the most at risk, accounting for 514 (81%) of the total recorded victims in 2011, and 91% of the civilian casualties, reflecting the more active role performed by men outside the home according to local culture and traditions. Among respondents in SPADO’s survey of victims, 56% were men between the ages of 31 and 50, a group which tends to be their family breadwinners. Data shows that it is economic need that brings them into contact with mines and other explosive devices. Another 21% were between the ages of 21 and 30, which is also an economically active age group. Most respondents were involved in farming and animal husbandry, and were undertaking these tasks at the time of their accident. Collecting firewood and scrap metal are also identified as risk activities. Other casualties were travelling, an activity that becomes high-risk in areas of conflict due to the increased use of AVMs and IEDs.

Boys, who engage in activities outside the house, accounted for 75 casualties. Women and girls, whose movements are more restricted to their home, make up 22 and 25 of the casualties respectively. There are also references to casualties from ‘toy bombs’ – explosive devices that are said to look like umbrellas or flashlights – which have mostly affected children, as in a case in Hangu district of KPK, when one person was killed and another injured by the explosion of a ‘toy-bomb’ that children had picked up in the fields. In the most conflicted and mine-affected areas, poor children engaged in collecting and selling scrap metal are also particularly at risk.

What happens next: the social impact

The concentration of mine and ERW contamination in conflicted areas of FATA and Baluchistan means that accidents inflict severe hardship on the country’s poorest families and remote rural communities with little access to medical support or economic opportunity. Since most victims of mines and other explosive devices are men who are their family’s main breadwinner, death or disability has drastic consequences for their relatives and community. Those who survive face, first, the expense of hospital treatment and then the lifelong effects of injuries that will limit or end their ability to work. Pakistan has no social safety net available to assist the vulnerable and although some compensation and support may be available from the Government or humanitarian organizations to support survivors’ economic reintegration, the burden of support falls on their immediate family, relatives, and community.

The main sources of livelihood for people living in these areas are remittances from family members working overseas and jobs in the Government sector. Animal husbandry and agriculture are the other main sources of income. People who have some skills run small businesses of their own, and daily labouring is quite common. Landmine survivors often have to stop working due to their injuries or have to change their occupation due to reduced mobility as a result of their accident. Only a few are not forced to change their livelihood activities.14

Pakistan’s culture and social norms help to mitigate the economic impact of disability on mine survivors. In rural communities, people still live in joint family systems. Family members pool their resources. This means that victims are not considered a burden on the family. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents in SPADO’s survey said that their accident had not negatively affected their relationship with their family, which continued to respect and care for them. Nearly one-quarter of respondents, however, do sense a change in the attitude of family members towards them.

Respondents said friends or family members are the main sources of financial help when times are hard.

Owning farmland is also an important asset. United Nations (UN) agencies and various NGOs play a role in helping people in FATA and KPK to meet their lifelong needs. The practice of Zakat (giving alms) also helps people in need.

But landmine and ERW accidents leave other scars: the vast majority of the survey respondents said that their incident had affected them psychologically. They felt emotionally weak, less stable than before, and said they were constantly haunted by fear of losing another family member to the same sort of device. SPADO teams have noted that most victims suffered depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders, social stigmatization, feelings of inferiority and loss of hope. Only a small percentage of the victims interviewed said they did not suffer some psychological effects following their experience.

The implications of injury due to mines and other explosive devices are most severe for women in rural and traditional communities such as those surveyed. In these areas they contract marriages at a young age, and consider their marital status as one of the most important aspects of their lives. Married women and mothers who are responsible for taking care of their children, cooking, looking after the home and their husband become unable to perform such activities and men in many cases marry another woman. For single women who are disabled, it is difficult to marry.

While many respondents (37%) said relations with other members of their community remained cordial and unaffected by their accident and disability, more than half (56%) said relations with their community changed. The remaining respondents were unable to comment either way. Much of the rural population is illiterate and communities are often insensitive to the sufferings of people with disabilities (PWDs) and unaware of their rights. The importance and significance of a person is judged by his or her active role in the family and community both financially and physically. Among the most hurtful responses of some community members is to start calling PWDs derogatory names, to the point that community members don’t even remember their given names.

"I have become very worried and mentally I am very disturbed that my family or village members could also be injured or killed in the future as our village members also cultivate their land and tend animals"

Survey Respondent aged 19, Ummar, FR Tank

The implications of injury due to mines and other explosive devices are most severe for women in rural and traditional communities such as those surveyed. In these areas they contract marriages at a young age, and consider their marital status as one of the most important aspects of their lives. Married women and mothers who are responsible for taking care of their children, cooking, looking after the home and their husband become unable to perform such activities and men in many cases marry another woman. For single women who are disabled, it is difficult to marry.

"People openly laugh at me and call me names"

Survey Respondent, aged 32, Barchinari Bajaur Agency

Survey Respondent, aged 25, Gara Baloch District, Tank

Survey Respondent, aged 19, Ummar, FR Tank

Survey Respondent, aged 19, Ummar, FR Tank

Survey Respondent, aged 19, Ummar, FR Tank

Survey Respondent, aged 19, Ummar, FR Tank

By Tayyab Hussain stepped on a mine moved downhill by the floods, DI Khan, KPK, October 2010

Survey Respondent, aged 32, Barchinari Bajaur Agency

Survey Respondent, aged 32, Barchinari Bajaur Agency

Survey Respondent, aged 32, Barchinari Bajaur Agency
3. Mine Risk Education and Mine Clearance

Pakistan has among the highest number of mine and ERW casualties in the world, but the Government of Pakistan has yet to recognize the need for humanitarian mine action. It does not permit NGOs to undertake any humanitarian clearance of mines or other explosive devices. No survey of contamination has occurred and no mechanism exists for coordinating mine action interventions. With the exception of victim assistance, the only area of activity in which NGOs are permitted to engage is MRE, but organizations willing to undertake it face enormous challenges.

Insecurity resulting from multiple conflicts, including the war in Afghanistan, hostilities between the Government and ANSAs, and sectarian and tribal violence, restricts access to hazardous areas. Moreover, the attitude of the Government and religious leaders towards NGOs makes it difficult for them to work closely and efficiently with local communities. Obtaining the Government ‘No Objection Certificate’ that is needed to work in affected areas is difficult and can take many months, sometimes even years. Adding to the challenges, donors have so far offered only limited funding support.

The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for both laying and clearing mines. The Army Corps of Engineers, the Frontier Corps and the police are the only ones in Pakistan conducting ad hoc mine clearance and EOD. However, none have released detailed information on their mine clearance and EOD activities. The army was reported to have conducted demining operations in the area of Chamalang in Balochistan in 2009, clearing anti-vehicle and other unspecified mines. Army engineers and the Frontier Corps are also said to have undertaken demining operations in FATA and the Swat Valley in 2009. In addition, there is a bomb disposal unit in each province that works under the police department. The personnel of the bomb disposal squad are responsible for defusing IEDs, UXO and landmines. The communities call or approach the local police when a device is discovered, which then sends an expert to defuse the device.

Before 2009, little attention was paid to MRE, with the exception of a Response International (RI) project undertaken in Poonch, Kotli and Bhimber districts of AJK between 2005-2007 funded by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and a combined Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Islamic Relief project also in AJK from 2004-2006. Support for MRE rose briefly with the humanitarian emergency created by escalation of armed conflict in 2009-2010 together with massive flooding in 2010 which displaced millions of people, particularly in FATA and KPK. In the ensuing humanitarian response, donors provided a total of US$3,357,471 for MRE in Pakistan in 2010, 82% more than in 2009. As in 2009, the European Commission (EC) provided the largest contribution of €1.7 million ($2.25 million), with two additional States providing over $500,000 each.

In the absence of any other mine action coordinating mechanism in Pakistan, organizations undertaking risk education set up a MRE Working Group in 2009, with the support of UNICEF. The group met monthly to coordinate activities and develop strategies, discussing all aspects of planning and implementation, including lessons learned, constraints and resource mobilization. A sub-group also met on a regular basis to work on more technical aspects of MRE, including joint messaging. For example, RI, which had pioneered the first production of MRE material, both technical and illustrated, specific to ordnance and landmines deployed in Pakistan, shared this material with the sub-group. Up to the end of 2011 membership comprised all the humanitarian organizations involved in MRE in Pakistan, including the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), SPADO, MAG, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), RI and Handicap International (HI).

RI in partnership with the US Department of State/Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA) launched an emergency MRE project in Swat valley in December 2009 following the intense military action taken by the Government of Pakistan against the TTP. RI reported that it was able to reach approximately 50% of the affected area and its population of more than 1 million people.

SPADO carried out community-based projects with the support of UNICEF and FSD in the conflict-affected districts of Swat, Buner and Dir, providing MRE to more than 229,500 people between October 2009 and March 2011. By then, with the higher level of international interest in Pakistan’s humanitarian needs, it had significantly expanded the scope of its activities, working in partnership with other mine action and humanitarian organizations.
From January 2011 to November 2011, FSD worked in Pakistan in partnership with Basic Education and Employable Skill Training (BEST) delivering MRE to IDPs returning to villages and towns in South Swat Valley. In addition, FSD implemented MRE activities in the KPK Districts of Buner, Dir and Shangla and in Bajaur and Mohmand agencies in FATA. The FSD team worked closely with local authorities and other stakeholders to integrate MRE into relief and development plans and ensure that demining benefited the local population. FSD trained 12 teams of men and women from the concerned districts, each team consisting of four field officers who visited the authorities, communities, civil societies, associations, and schools and informed the population about UXO threats.

SPADO and MAG conducted an MRE project in the KPK districts of DI Khan, Kohat, Tank and Hangu, in 2011, training 140 community focal points, including 79 men and 61 women. The focal points were local elders, active community members, teachers and health workers who facilitated access for MRE teams and distributed material and messages to communities not accessible to NGOs. They were trained in MRE, identification of mines and ERW and first aid. When landmines and ERW were found, the community focal points would coordinate with the local administration and police for their removal. Female focal points delivered MRE to women, but faced threats to their security which forced some to stop working. In addition to addressing the districts’ local population, the project delivered 4,207 direct MRE sessions to IDPs from South Waziristan, Kurram and Orakzai Agencies between mid-February and mid-November to a total of 142,392 individuals, including 36,084 adults and 106,308 children. In addition, it distributed a wide range of educational material in the form of leaflets, brochures, posters and stickers. In a similar project with UNICEF, SPADO provided training for more than 41,000 people in DI Khan and Tank, including training for local media, teachers and community focal points.

Among other organizations providing MRE, HI began operating in August 2009 providing MRE targeting mainly IDPs in camps in the FATA and KPK. The ICRC conducted sessions for over 69,000 individuals in 2011, including IDPs living in camps and with host families in KPK and FATA and, working in partnership with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, for inhabitants of three affected districts adjacent to the LoC in AJK. By 2012, however, the level of MRE activity had fallen sharply. SPADO’s projects with MAG and FSD ended at the end of 2011 when funding from the EC dried up due to the inability to monitor field activities. HI ceased its operation in mid-2012. The ICRC also significantly reduced its activities after failing to obtain Government permission for access to certain areas and after the abduction and murder of a staff member in May. Mine action receives little support from the UN and is not on the agenda of most donors, primarily because of lack of access and monitoring possibilities. While MRE has reached most of the affected population in AJK and the conflict-affected districts of KPK (e.g. Swat, Dir, Buner and Shangla) mainly through education of IDPs, the major need remains FATA and Baluchistan, where the majority of casualties have been reported, but which are inaccessible due to security concerns and the presence of ANSAs.

‘I received education/information about landmines/UXO and safe behaviour from SPADO and they give me brochures, posters and stickers. I also tell these lessons to my family, but if this work had started 10 years ago then today I wouldn’t be disabled’

Survey Respondent, aged 31, Jannata Teshil Sarwaki, South Waziristan

This programme shrinks leaves an enormous need for MRE in an extremely challenging environment with high levels of conflict and casualties, high expectations of the population and an extremely large area to cover. Despite the programmes undertaken in the last three years, close to two-thirds (62%) of respondents in SPADO’s survey, the large majority of which live outside the MRE target areas, said that they had not heard any safe behaviour messages, nor were they aware of any mine action being conducted in their areas. Most respondents believe that people lack information about mines and other explosive devices and may tamper with them out of curiosity. They also believe risk awareness programmes can be highly effective in reducing casualties.

‘All male and female members of the family are aware of such life-saving messages and risk education sessions, but with great heart breaking sorrow I received these messages only after the anti-personnel mine incident happened to me’

Survey Respondent, aged 25, Gara Baloch District, Tank

However, responses revealed some apprehensions about NGOs within these communities, particularly those NGOs, local or foreign, that are funded by international donors. These attitudes reflected suspicions on the part of the Government and some religious groups that these organizations are working against the teachings of Islam, and local Islamic culture and traditions. The scandal arising from the US Government’s use of a vaccination programme to identify Osama bin Laden, has further stigmatized humanitarian organizations as potential spies. It also partially explains why some respondents noted that in conflict areas NGOs remain ANSA targets. Since 2009, attacks against international organizations have increased, with 19 aid workers killed and more than 20 abducted across the country according to Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF). It was therefore felt by respondents that for awareness campaigns to be most successful, it was important to involve Malikis (known and respected in the community) and religious leaders of the affected communities.
4. Victim Assistance

Pakistan has recently taken important steps towards improving the situation of the disabled. On 5 July 2011, it ratified the CRPD which aims to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities at all levels, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Implementation of the Convention is now mandatory for the Government of Pakistan, which must compile a detailed progress report for submission to the UN Secretary-General before 30th June, 2013.23

Since ratifying the CRPD, the Government has initiated steps toward its practical implementation. In this regard, the Directorate General of Special Education & Social Welfare recently organized the first National Consultative Seminar on implementing the Convention on June 14, 2012, bringing together key Government and non-governmental stakeholders to strengthen their participation and coordination in service delivery and to discuss strategies for promoting the rights of the disabled.24 A National Committee is being constituted with representation from all provinces, line ministries, divisions, departments, national and international NGOs, and, above all, persons with disabilities, to formulate an action plan on CRPD.

The Government, mindful of the rights of PWDs, had already taken a number of steps before ratifying CRPD; introducing a National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2002 and then a National Plan of Action (2006) to implement it. The Plan aims to determine the extent of disabilities and their causes, improve vocational and medical rehabilitation services, and promote inclusive education for children with special needs. It also seeks to reinforce vocational training, improve employment opportunities and develop legislation to support PWDs as well as creating a barrier-free physical environment, providing sports facilities and increasing support for NGO service delivery, particularly in rural areas.25

Despite these significant policy advances, there are no specialized medical, surgical or first aid facilities for landmine and other casualties close to the mine-affected areas in Pakistan, and local hospitals are not adequately equipped to respond to the needs of survivors.26 There are not enough trained staff, medicines and equipment, ambulances or first aid services, partly due to a lack of funding and the absence of infrastructure. Seriously injured people, including landmine casualties, are referred to the hospitals in provincial capitals or to the sub-provincial centres. Pakistan’s approach to disability treats PWDs in the same way regardless of the cause of the disability. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education and its National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons are responsible for protecting the rights of all persons with disabilities. With the help of a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), which carries a special logo, PWDs have access to a range of services: the Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education provides free education and school uniforms to PWDs below the age of 18. PWDs receive free medical care and rail and air fares are available at a 50% discount.27 Those with physical handicaps can import cars free of duty and there is a 2% quota for PWDs in government jobs.28

The Ministry of Social Welfare is also responsible for providing vocational training and supporting physical rehabilitation and operates a national training centre in Islamabad for that purpose. However, these services are only available to PWDs aged over 18. Moreover, limited funding and outreach makes access difficult for many families. It provides prosthetic and orthotic devices but these have to be funded either by Pakistan Baithul Mal or Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).29 Conflict in FATA and KPK has created huge demand for victim assistance and in response several international and national organizations have increased the availability of services in affected areas, including emergency medical services and new physical rehabilitation centres.

The Government of Pakistan has a medical support plan for emergency medical evacuation of military landmine and ERW casualties to army medical units and field hospitals in affected areas. Rehabilitation services for military landmine and ERW survivors are available through army hospitals. Complicated cases are referred to the Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFIRM), but admission waiting lists of up to a year were reported in 2010 because of shortages of staff and lack of funds. Those who were admitted typically waited several months before receiving a prosthetic. The quality of the prosthetic devices available depended on the rank of the soldier rather than on his needs.30 Few psychological support and economic integration programmes are available. HI provides psychosocial support, which began as part of its emergency relief program in 2009. Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) provides counselling for all persons with disabilities in conflict-affected areas. LCD launched a livelihoods project in KPK in 2010 for persons with disabilities, aiming to include 1,500 beneficiaries. The ICRC provides small grants and business training through the Muzaffarabad Physical Rehabilitation Centre.
In 2010, SPADO expanded its efforts to connect survivors in KP and FATA to all available victim assistance services, but it was forced to end its operations in conflict-affected areas after the Government cancelled its permission to work there. The Government gave no reason for turning down its application for a Non-Objection Certificate.

In Quetta, Baluchistan’s main city, Orthotic, Prosthetic and Physiotherapy Centre (OPPC) provides free prosthetic limbs attracting large numbers of visitors every day, particularly since the closure of prosthetic services by the Christian Hospital in Quetta. However, it treats 4,000 to 5,000 patients a year, providing wheelchairs and other devices free of cost to poorer patients.

Quetta’s Alkhidmat Hospital, which is run by charities, also provides free prosthetic limbs and assistive devices to both Pakistan and Afghan nationals. It conducts orthopaedic surgery free of charge, treats fractures and dislocations and provides physiotherapy, coping with about 3,000 patients a year.14

Perceptions of victim assistance in the community
SPADO’s survey found that most respondents (62%) sought treatment of mine/ERW injuries in Government hospitals, which provide free care and medication, 27% used both Government hospitals and private clinics, and 11% went exclusively to private clinics.

Survivors consider that the Government plays a critical role in care and treatment, but were also critical of the quality of service provided. Some said the hospital procedures were very complicated and some respondents believed that one needed contacts in Government to receive the assistance needed. Most respondents looked favourably on the role of NGOs providing medical treatment and victim assistance, although a few considered that NGOs were just creating photo opportunities for their own benefit. Private clinics and hospitals provided better care and medication than Government facilities, respondents said, but they were also much more expensive.

Pakistan’s security services played a very important role, transporting the injured to hospitals in conflict-affected areas, respondents said, but they played little if any role in victim assistance. Religious charities and political parties played no part at all in victim assistance and respondents thought they could be more involved because they were well accepted by communities in areas of conflict. Respondents said advocacy groups “tried to look busy” but also played no part in helping victims and expressed a desire to see them become more engaged.

It is their families, all respondents said, that play a major role in providing sympathy, care and psychological support as well as financial assistance.

Significant numbers of civilians continue to be killed or injured every year due to the presence of mines and ERW in Pakistan, and the numbers are rising rather than decreasing. While some contamination can be attributed to previous wars and inter-communal violence, mines and other devices are increasingly used in conflicts between ANSAs and the Government.

It is urgent to address the humanitarian needs of mine-affected communities in Pakistan. Yet this very activity is severely hampered by the insecurity and ongoing conflicts in affected areas, predominately FATA, PKP and Baluchistan and by the very limited funding available for mine action. There also appears to be reluctance at the Government level to address the problem or to support and facilitate other organisations doing so.

Despite these challenges, some mine action has taken place, including victim assistance, MRE and ad hoc clearance by Government security forces. Victim assistance is perhaps most advanced, with the Government taking significant steps in this direction, including the ratification of the CRPD. As this report demonstrates, much still remains to be done to ensure services are available in or nearer to conflict-affected areas.

While MRE was undertaken among IDPs starting in 2009, these programmes were never able to reach the most mine-affected communities directly, and have been dramatically scaled back over the last 18 months. But MRE can never be a sustainable substitute for a comprehensive humanitarian mine clearance programme to remove the risk from people’s lives entirely. Until that happens, mines will continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of communities in affected areas.

The Government of Pakistan has a clear responsibility to take the lead on humanitarian mine action in the country, but must not be left to take on that task alone. It can and should seek assistance from the international community, specifically other Governments, the UN and international mine action agencies. Local organisations should also be involved, especially those that have gained the respect and trust of affected communities. Yet, until mines and other explosive devices are no longer being used, most specifically by the ANSAs, the problem will continue.

**Conclusion**
Recommendations:

To the Government of Pakistan

At the international and national political level:
- The Federal Government should acknowledge the problem caused by landmines and ERW and begin taking steps to address this. A key step would be to establish a national centre to undertake humanitarian mine action and coordinate implementation with Provincial Governments. The centre should be granted the independence and authority to seek the necessary resources to address landmines and ERW contamination, carry out impact and technical surveys, mandate and facilitate humanitarian clearance and EOD training, and seek assistance from the international community and humanitarian mine action organizations as needed.
- The Federal Government should begin the process for accession to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. One step could be to submit a voluntary Article 7 report, another could be to address the landmine issue in the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) with the Government of India.
- The process humanitarian organizations must follow to obtain Government approval for new programmes and projects is not clear. The Federal and Provincial Governments should therefore clarify the proper procedure and steps these organizations need to take in order to gain permission to work, specifically in contaminated areas.

With regard to MRE:
- The Government should ensure that MRE is reaching all affected communities. This would entail expediting approvals for MRE projects by both local and international organizations, as well as ensuring that proper coordination is maintained to allow for maximum coverage.
- In contaminated and affected areas, MRE should be delivered as part of school curricula.

With regard to mine clearance:
- While the Pakistan Army and, to a lesser extent, police are capable of clearing landmines and ERW on an ad hoc basis, the Government should ensure that all field-level units in conflict-affected areas are properly equipped and trained in humanitarian mine clearance and EOD. The Government could seek assistance from the international community and mine action agencies. The Government should also consider allowing humanitarian mine action agencies to offer their many years of experience and assist in the clearance process.
- The Provincial Governments, local army and police should develop a rapid response mechanism for clearing landmines or ERW discovered by a community, and local communities should be informed about the proper channels of communication.
- With regard to victim assistance:
  - Timely and effective medical and physical rehabilitation services for landmine and ERW victims, as well as people with other disabilities, are essential. Therefore, steps should be made to ensure access to proper medical facilities that can provide first aid as well as surgery for landmine and ERW victims close to conflict-affected communities. The Government should consider shifting the assistance of the international community or international NGOs as necessary to ensure proper care is provided.
  - The Provincial Governments should each establish a central database and registration process for victims of landmines and ERW, in order to adequately track, plan for and provide service delivery. It is important that referral protocols on how victims can access Government services are developed. A robust outreach programme to informed survivors and their families of available services should be initiated. Local NGOs could work with the Government in order to ensure maximum coverage.
  - As part of efforts to address the needs of disabled people in general and landmine and ERW victims in particular, the Government should do its best to ensure public buildings are handicap accessible.
  - The Government should increase its support to NGOs providing services to persons with disabilities in rural areas through social welfare and other line departments. This will help NGOs to reach the neediest people and coordinate with relevant government institutions to provide efficient and effective services to the PWDs.
  - No mechanism exists to link PWDs to the organizations that provide services. The Government should develop linkages with relevant organizations at district, provincial and federal levels. This will also help in pooling of resources and sharing of ideas and knowledge between Government and NGOs.
  - Although the Government in some cases provides mine and ERW victims cash compensation and free medical services in Government hospitals, no comprehensive social security is available to victims and their families. The Government should provide basic needs, i.e. education, skills training, nutrition and micro credit schemes to the victims and their families.
- To the international community, donors and international humanitarian actors:
  - A clear divide should be maintained between the provision of humanitarian assistance and any intelligence gathering, otherwise, the security of all humanitarian providers and beneficiaries are at risk.
  - Donor Governments should engage the Pakistan Government in a dialogue on the provision of humanitarian mine action, offering support and expertise as necessary.
  - International humanitarian actors should involve local organizations in the development and implementation of humanitarian projects, specifically MRE and victim assistance, as they have more acceptance within the local communities. Their capacities to manage and deliver assistance should be strengthened.
  - Development work carried out in contaminated areas should integrate mine action.
  - There is a great need for free medical care and assistive devices for all landmine and ERW victims, as well as other people with disabilities. Donors and international organizations should work with the Government to ensure this becomes a reality.
  - The UN Protection Cluster in Pakistan should integrate mine action in humanitarian responses where relevant (i.e. in flood response), and help identify gaps and facilitate coordination among the humanitarian actors. Documentation produced by the cluster and its members should also highlight the mine action needs. In addition, it could increase advocacy efforts towards strengthening the Government’s response to mine action, and assist in resource mobilization.
  - The UN Protection Cluster in Pakistan should report on the presence of mines and ERW and the threat they pose to civilians and in country reports, especially when it concerns the return process or other development or rehabilitation activities for IDPs.

To armed non-State actors
- ANSAs must halt all acts of intimidation, kidnapping and attacking of humanitarian personnel, including those working on humanitarian mine action in accordance with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law.
- ANSAs should all allow and facilitate humanitarian mine action activities.

To local and national organizations
- As indicated in SPADO’s interviews, local communities are at times insensitive to the suffering of landmine and ERW victims, not to mention other people with disabilities, and the support they need. Local NGOs are well placed to promote awareness on this issue among affected communities.
- Local organizations working in insecure areas often keep a low-profile and work in isolation. However, to adequately address mine action, there is a need to interact and coordinate with other organizations engaged in similar projects in order to produce maximum results.
- NGOs should consider developing micro-credit schemes for people with disabilities, including landmine and ERW victims, as part of a broader effort to expand and reinforce vocational training, employment and economic rehabilitation. Where possible, these endeavours should be linked to Government efforts of the same.
- There is a need to follow up MRE projects. One method could be to run safety messages in radio broadcasts in efforts to refresh people’s memories.
- An effort should be made to mobilise national opinion on the issue of landmines and ERW, raising the voice of victims in order to put pressure on the Government to respond to the rights of peoples with disabilities. This should be done through a coalition formed to work with the Government on solutions to the problem.
- A public campaign should be launched to raise awareness of the negative impact caused by landmines and ERW.

To armed non-State actors
- ANSAs should halt the use of all victim-activated landmines and IEDs.
- ANSAs should stop the use of anti-vehicle mines and similar devices in civilian areas in order to avoid unintended harm to the population.
- ANSAs should take immediate steps to safeguard civilians from the indiscriminate effects of mines and other explosive devices, by mapping and marking their location and informing local communities, in preparation to undertaking or facilitating the clearance of these devices.
- ANSAs must halt all acts of intimidation, kidnapping and attacking of humanitarian personnel, including those working on humanitarian mine action in accordance with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law.
- ANSAs should allow and facilitate humanitarian mine action activities.
Notes

Certain Conventional Weapons”, “CCW”) – Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as
ch/80256EDD00689594%28httpAssets%29/9348C3D30F45465B12575E5D8666713/$file/Pakistan_APII+NAR+2012.pdf (access 15/10/12).

Certain Conventional Weapons”, “CCW”) – Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as
unog.ch/80256EDD00689594%28httpAssets%29/9348C3D30F45465B12575E5D8666713/$file/Pakistan_APII+NAR+2006.pdf (access 15/10/12). UN
Certain Conventional Weapons”, “CCW”) – Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as
ch/80256EDD00689594%28httpAssets%29/EA48876F69F40FCAC12573850504950/$file/Pakistan.pdf (last visited 15/10/12).

3It is difficult to identify the full range of explosive devices used or left over following the various armed clashes across the country, as
media and Government reports do not go into details. However, it is evident that IEDs as well as other ERW are also present.

4SPADO has collected into a database information from the media on casualties by landmines and victim-activated IEDs, unexploded
ordnance (UXO) and booby traps for the period 2011 and 2012. This information is based on the data contained therein.

5Joint Staff Headquarters, Strategic Plans Division, ACDA Directorate. 2002. Letter to Coordinator, Pakistan Campaign to Ban Landmines.
04 April 2002. Reproduced in Landmine Monitor Report 2002 in Pakistan chapter under the tile “Past Use”. Available at: http://www.the-

6A landmine victim, as defined in the Guiding Principles for Victim Assistance compiled by the Working Group on Victim Assistance of the
International Campaign to Ban Landmines, is anyone, either individually or collectively, that has suffered physical, emotional and psycholo-
gical injury, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights through acts or omissions related to mine utilization.
Thus, mine victims include directly impacted individuals, their families, and communities affected by mines. Information available on www.
icbl.org.


8It is difficult to identify the full range of explosive devices used or left over following the various armed clashes across the country, as
media and Government reports do not go into details. However, it is evident that IEDs as well as other ERW are also present.

9Ibid.

10Shandana Aurangzeb Durrani, UNICEF Pakistan. 2010. UNICEF responds to unexploded ordnance threat in aftermath of Pakistan flood

11SPADO database.

12Ibid.

13The tribal areas include South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Orakzai, Kurram, Mohmand, Bajaur and Khyber agency.

14Farman Ali, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Pakistan. 9 November, 2010, UNICEF responds to the unexploded ordnance threat in


16According to landmine victims surveyed by SPADO.


20Email received from Philip Gavin, Chief Executive Officer of Response International on 8 November 2012.


24Ibid.

25Ibid.

26Mr. Mazoor Ahmad, Administrator Orthotic, Prosthetic and Physiotherapy Center (OPPC). 2012. Interview, Islamabad, 12 August 2012.

27Mr. Jawad Afzal, Director Coordination, Directorate General of Special Education and Social Welfare. 2012. Interview, Islamabad, 12 August 2012.


29Mr. Jawad Afzal, Director Coordination, Directorate General of Special Education and Social Welfare. 2012. Interview, Islamabad, 12 August 2012.

30Luiza Khazhgerina, Weapons Contamination Officer, IRC Pakistan. 2012. Interview and e-mail, 03 October, 2012.


32Ibid.

33Mr. Mazoor Ahmad, Administrator Orthotic, Prosthetic and Physiotherapy Center (OPPC). 2012. Interview, Quetta Baluchistan, 20 September, 2012.

Geneva Call is a neutral and impartial humanitarian non-governmental organization that engages with armed non-State actors (ANSAs) to promote their respect for international humanitarian norms in armed conflicts and other situations of violence, in particular regarding the protection of civilians. Geneva Call gives ANSAs the opportunity to adhere to and respect the norms of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL).

To achieve this, Geneva Call seeks a formal undertaking by ANSAs, inviting them to sign and comply with a Deed of Commitment to respect these norms. Signatory ANSAs agree that Geneva Call will monitor and verify their compliance.

Geneva Call is currently focusing its efforts on banning the use of anti-personnel (AP) mines; protecting children from the effects of armed conflict; prohibiting sexual violence in armed conflict, and working towards the elimination of gender discrimination. Geneva Call also responds to ANSA requests to help build their knowledge of and capacities to implement IHL and IHRL. Geneva Call conducts on-going conflict analysis and ANSA profiling; engages in dialogue and maintains long-term relationships with ANSAs; carries out advocacy, and provides training and capacity building to support its objectives. Geneva Call may also provide other assistance and services within communities where ANSAs operate, where this contributes to confidence-building and indirect engagement with ANSAs.

Pursuant to common article 3 to the Geneva Conventions, Geneva Call’s work is complementary to that of other stakeholders, with whom it seeks to co-ordinate. Where relevant, Geneva Call collaborates with such organizations and with local community organizations.

www.genevacall.org