

Afghanistan

FSD clears landmines and assists landmine victims in Darvoz, a remote part of Afghanistan best accessed from the Tajik side.

Afghanistan continues to suffer from one of the highest levels of contamination from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in the world, resulting from nearly continuous armed conflict over the past three-plus decades. To compound Afghanistan's difficulties, the release of land from Taliban strongholds has resulted in the identification of more hazardous areas than were previously known to exist, emphasizing the need for continued donor funding and increased attention to the severity of the problem affecting the civilian population and the socioeconomic success of Afghanistan. Surveys also continue to find new areas of legacy mine contamination; the national mine action authority (DMAC) added 92km² of mine and ERW contamination to the database in 2017 and reported 20km² affected by abandoned improvised mines.

Mines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination in Afghanistan has caused vast numbers of casualties over the last 30 years since records began with over 32,500 deaths on record. Contamination reported by DMAC, not including firing ranges, is over 1,100 square kilometres, with 168 square kilometres of that contamination being in the northern regions where FSD works; this represents 15% of the contamination however the region contains some of the highest numbers of victims and casualties and some of the lowest financial support for victim assistance and economic development.

As of October 2019, there have been a total of 596 casualties and victims of ERW and mines recorded by FSD in the four districts of the Darwaz region namely Darwaz (Nusai), Darwazbala (Maymay), Shaki and Khawan; these districts account for some 15% of the population of Badakhshan Province.

FSD's history of operations in Afghanistan stretches back to 2001 with mine action support teams for WFP and UN OCHA in Kandahar. More recently FSD has executed operations in Darwaz Province since 2010 under funding from both the German PATRIP Foundation and also from the US Department of State (PM/WRA) for the deployment of mine action teams, multi-purpose EOD and clearance teams and even weapons and ammunition disposal (WAD) teams.

As of 31 Sep 2019, FSD has cleared over 450,000 m² of battle area clearance and 2,300,000 m² of mined areas in the remote mountainous regions of Badakhshan with over 29,000 A/P mines destroyed and more than 12,300 items of ERW/UXO. FSD also runs a stand-alone mine victim assistance project in Badakhshan Province which estimates to reach over 100 victims and survivors.