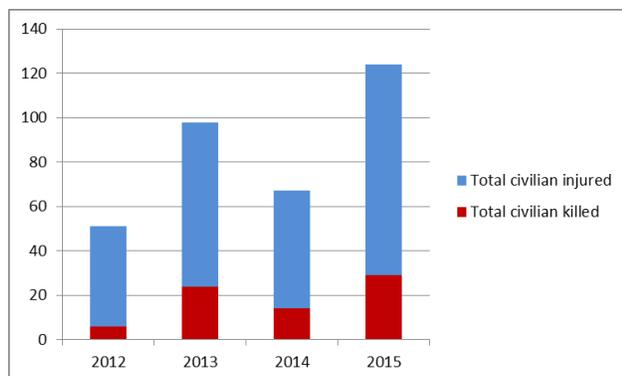




UNMAS

Assistance to victims of explosive hazards in northern Mali Gao and Timbuktu regions

In northern Mali, many people are victims of explosive remnants of war (ERW), landmines and improvised explosive devices (IED). Since February 2012, 28 people have been killed and 136 injured by explosive remnants of war, while an additional 36 have been killed and 116 injured by improvised explosive devices since July 2013.



Survivors of explosive incidents often sustain permanent injuries, which can require a significantly adapted lifestyle.

One of the main pillars of action for UNMAS' humanitarian response is to assist victims of incidents related to explosive hazards. This is done through coordination with humanitarian, development and governmental stakeholders, in order to improve the system of identification and referral of victims, as well as by supporting physical rehabilitation and socio-economic support to persons with disabilities via a key partner.

Moreover, UNMAS centralizes information related to incidents and victims in line with international standards for data collection. This enables the production of statistics and detailed analysis which help to assess needs and to ensure a strategic humanitarian response.

In September 2014, UNMAS started to support a project, implemented by Handicap International, to assist survivors of incidents caused by explosive hazards, as well as other persons with disabilities, in the regions of Gao and Timbuktu, which are heavily affected by explosive threats. This project aims at responding to their physical as well as socio-economic needs, including physiotherapy and rehabilitation services, and prosthetic devices, as well as economic and social insertion.

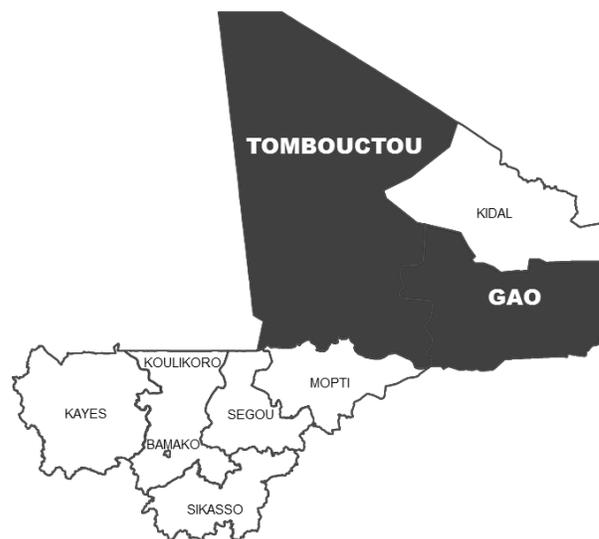
The victim assistance project

With the overall objective to contribute to the reduction of the physical and socio-economic impact of physical impairment, this project aims at improving access of persons with disabilities incapacities, including victims of explosive incidents, to qualitative services.

These efforts both strengthened and increased the efficiency of existing mechanisms and services, especially through the provision of training and equipment to existing human resources.

Identification and referral of the victims

Handicap International provided training for 225 people on the identification and referral of persons with disabilities. The people trained represent different spheres, including teachers, representatives of the civil protection service and from health and social sectors, as well as local and municipal representatives, which allowed to cover almost the entire area of intervention.



Due to the implementation of a multi-actor strategy, which enabled to share resources, the project reached the target beneficiaries by using expenditures only for training and awareness raising activities.

The people trained are now able to report incidents and identify victims within their communities, and to refer to an existing structure. It is during this referral process that the needs of survivors of explosive incidents are identified. Handicap International's mobile teams then develop a personalized action plan with each beneficiary,

which is then followed by individual support in the implementation of their project.

From September 2014 to September 2015, all victims of incidents caused by explosive remnants of war, accessible in the two regions of intervention, were met, their needs were evaluated, and individual action plans to take into account their needs and expectations were developed.



Access to emergency medical care

When civilians are wounded in incidents involving explosive hazards, UNMAS ensures a rapid response to the medical needs, which is done through close coordination with the humanitarian mine action partners present in the area of the incident, as well as with other organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and medical NGOs. Most of the time, this coordination enables a quick transfer of the victim(s) to a hospital or to the nearest health facility.

Access to special care in physiotherapy

With this project, the capacities of existing rehabilitation centers have been strengthened, or rehabilitated, through:

- The training of medical and paramedic personnel, including physiotherapists and orthopedists for the two regional orthopedic and functional rehabilitation centers (CRAORF) in Gao and Timbuktu, in collaboration with regional hospitals and the national orthopedic rehabilitation center of Mali (CNAOM)
- Equipment for the rehabilitation centers, including with medical and orthopedic equipment.



This project, which aims at strengthening local capacities in the long term, ensured adequate care to 224 patients (including 126 in physiotherapy and 98 with prosthetics), though the CRAORFs in Gao and Timbuktu, from September 2014 to September 2015, which corresponds to a monthly increase of 68% of their capacities. This can also be explained by the financial support provided by Handicap International to the patients, enabling access to health services at no cost to them or their families. Quality control is conducted with the beneficiaries who expressed their satisfaction with the services delivered.



By strengthening the technical and material capacities, and therefore the role of the CRAORF, their service offer acquired better visibility within the population, but also vis-a-vis the Malian authorities, as well as to the humanitarian and development stakeholders.

Income generating activities

Handicap International also implemented an activity to facilitate economic insertion of persons with disabilities. To achieve this, financial subsidies are provided, with support to develop projects aiming at enhancing their level of income and, by doing so, their living conditions. A total of 160 people benefited from this support, including all victims of ERW, IEDs and small arms light weapons (89 persons) who were identified during the project period, as well as 72 other persons with disabilities.

A survey was conducted with the beneficiaries to measure the impact of this activity, and indicate an improvement of the living conditions of the beneficiaries.

These activities assisted by:

- Contributing to ensure food security of their households, with an average daily income of 1,250 F CFA (according to the World Bank, in 2015 monthly incomes in Mali are an average of 38,000 F CFA per month);
- Investing between 10,000 F CFA to 85,000 F CFA for the purchase of clothes for themselves or their family;
- Investing between 15 000 F CFA to 30 000 F CFA in health care for their family, for 44% of the persons interrogated;

- Covering expenses related to education, non-food items, as well as home maintenance.



Souleymane Abderhamane, victim of ERW, returned to a normal life thanks to the support of Handicap International, Gao, May 2015

In the long term, it is estimated that 67% of beneficiaries can pursue their income generating activities autonomously. Ongoing viability will depend mainly on the level of engagement of the beneficiary after the individual monitoring phase, but also on external factors, such as socio-political and security stability, and the cost of medical care.

Social inclusion and psycho-social support activities

This project has enabled the beneficiaries to become active within their social environment and to take part in their own development, restoring their own dignity.

Through this project, UNMAS and Handicap International are also advocating to promote full participation of persons with disabilities in inclusive societies.

Portrait

Hawa Maiga was preparing lunch on Sunday 18 January 2015, when her 10 year old son, Moussa, was injured after tampering with an IED that he thought was a phone hidden next to a tree, in the center of Gao town. Moussa's arm was seriously injured and he had to go to the hospital for surgery. When he returned home, Handicap International teams supported him and his family, through regular visits, psychosocial support and free medical care. As Moussa's mother is the head of household and is raising her children alone, she received a subsidy to support her own cosmetics business, allowing her to save enough of her salary to be able to support her family. Moussa wants to become a driver when he grows up, is now back in school and is starting to resume a normal life.



Difficulties in the implementation of the project

This project encountered many difficulties during its implementation phase, mainly due to the lack of personnel available within the CRAORF, and to the difficult access to beneficiaries because of the security conditions in the areas of intervention.

To solve this problem, the mobile teams of the CRAORF were deployed and managed to visit the beneficiaries directly. By involving local stakeholders to conduct this individual monitoring, the project ensured the durability of the care system, as well as the reduction of operating costs.

Lack of resources in this sector

The projects aimed at supporting victims of explosive hazards, and other persons with reduced physical or social capacities, face financial difficulties, which impedes the implementation of a long term development strategy. This project, funded by UNMAS and implemented by Handicap International, ended on 30 September 2015. The ICRC, through a project supporting the CNAOM and CRAORF, will ensure the continuity of this work, and will deliver qualitative rehabilitation services, including prosthetic devices and physiotherapy, by personnel trained according to existing standards.

However, the question of funding for socio-economic integration activities, for victims of armed conflict and other persons with disabilities, within a local capacity development strategy remains critical.

