

HIGHLIGHTS

- After one year on the job, the Humanitarian Coordinator Toby Lanzer speaks about the huge disparities he sees, aid worker security and his personal commitment to Afghanistan.
- While the number of mine casualties is on the rise, funding for mine action in Afghanistan dropped by 65 per cent over the past five years.
- ACBAR's Twinning Program successfully teams up international and national NGOs to build capacities to the benefit of both counterparts.
- Lack of basic services in three informal settlements in Nangarhar is exacerbated with new conflict displacements and arrivals from Pakistan.



180 Afghans were injured, maimed or killed by mines and explosives every month in 2017. Photo: DMAC/UNMAS

In this issue

- Interview with HC Toby Lanzer P.1
- A mine victim no longer a victim P.3
- Putting national NGOs in the forefront P.4
- One school for 2,000 students P.5

“It is a very tough place for aid agencies”

The Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, Toby Lanzer, took up his function one year ago. Now, the top humanitarian official talks about his first 12 months in country, discussions in donor capitals, changes in the security environment, Twitter and what UN and NGOs can expect from him in the future. The interview was edited for length and clarity.

OCHA: What stands out about Afghanistan to you after one year?

Toby Lanzer: One striking issue are the disparities between life in Kabul, a few other urban centres and the rest of the country. Sitting in the heart of Kabul, working closely with senior Government officials, the international and NGO community, I am exposed to the vision and plan to create a more peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. But there is a gap between that and what the average citizen of the country lives every day. And there is an even greater gap between this vision and the plan and what people feel who were struck by violence, displaced by conflict or forced to return to this country.

That is why humanitarian action remains so necessary, so relevant and yet amongst senior officials, including myself, often understated. We are all so focused on the future – peace, stability and prosperity – that sometimes not enough attention is paid to the suffering of today. It has taken me a long time to understand that because I sit in the middle of the green zone. In my first year here, I managed to visit almost 20 provinces, increasingly by road, to connect with the girls and the women, the boys and the men of this country. And what they tell me is “Yes, slowly things are getting better, but we are suffering”.



Toby Lanzer (left) speaks with the mother of a severely malnourished girl in a hospital in Tirinkot, Uruzgan. Photo: OCHA/Philippe Kropf

What has been your main challenge as Humanitarian Coordinator?

Amongst my different interlocutors [including from the development and political portfolio] much of the conversation is about the search for a political resolution – peace – and nothing is more important for the tomorrow of this country. The thing is that today, there are people going hungry. The hardest thing for me was to understand the scale and the depth of suffering because much of my time was focused on the development agenda, on peace, on elections. But the humanitarian agenda in Afghanistan is as important and will benefit from more of my attention in my second year here.

With all the strategic plans and frameworks that you are involved in that aim at improving the situation in Afghanistan, what do you want to achieve personally? How far do you want to go with and for the people of Afghanistan?

Far! I will always try my hardest in settings where I think there is hope and where I think there is a national capacity to manage situations. And clearly there is [in Afghanistan] and there is a plan to put in place a system that will enable the government to meet its responsibility. And so, I am willing to invest a lot of my energy, my time and to use my networks to draw attention to the good things that are happening in Afghanistan.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING 6.3% FUNDED

430 million
requested (US\$)

27 million
Received (US\$)

<http://fts.unocha.org>
by 11 April 2018





Toby Lanzer began his appointment as the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) as well as Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative (DSRSG) for Afghanistan in March 2017. Prior to this, he was UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel from July 2015 to February 2017.

Since 1992, he has held various positions within the UN system, having served as DSRSG in South Sudan; Chief of Staff of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT); Humanitarian Coordinator for Darfur, Sudan; UNDP Resident Representative in the Central African Republic (CAR); Chief of the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), based in UN headquarters, as well as the Head of OCHA in both the Russian Federation and Georgia. Mr. Lanzer has also worked on human rights issues for NGOs in Brazil and Chile.

He holds a post-graduate certificate in forced migration, a master's degree in international affairs with a specialization in economic and political development, and a bachelor's degree in history. He was educated at the University of Oxford, as well as Columbia University and the University of New Hampshire.

 Follow him on Twitter @tobylanzer.

"The case we make must be compassionate, yet compelling and concerted. Our messaging is getting better but we are not there yet."

"I have no place to talk about resilience where everyone is more resilient than I could ever hope to be."

The past year was marked by a record high number of civilian casualties, several high-profile attacks including one on a NGO compound in Jalalabad. In your view, what has changed for the humanitarian community – for UN and NGOs?

I am not sure I would separate the two. It is important to remember that as terrible as the 31 May explosion was, and as awful as the January attacks were, these are just three incidents in a long list of tragedies that have befallen the people of this country, including the NGOs. Look at what happened to MSF in 2015 [when the hospital in Kunduz was bombed] or what happened to ICRC in February 2017 [when 6 staff members were killed and 2 abducted]. The security environment has become more complex with more players. This evolution complicates the setting and the extent to which we are safe. And every time we are less safe, we lose contact with communities. And every time we lose contact with communities and elders, we become less safe. [Afghanistan] is a very tough place for aid agencies to work. One of the hardest in which I have been.

What do you do to help the UN Agencies and NGOs to stay and deliver?

The humanitarian imperative demands that NGOs and UN Agencies are as close to suffering communities as possible. To enable that, we need to have conversations with all parties to the conflict. Those conversations are a major component of what I do. Managing risk as opposed to avoiding risk is a major part of what I do. Enabling UN Agencies to drive along roads as opposed to travelling by helicopter is something I promote to connect us to communities and reduce costs. Both of which I hope to enable us to provide more assistance to the people who need it most.

You toured the European capitals, meeting politicians and donors at the highest levels. Is Afghanistan on their radar? Are you rattling at a closed door?

I knocked on the door, it is open and I will be walking through it more frequently. That said, everyone in Afghanistan needs to recognize that Afghanistan is one of a dozen countries where humanitarian needs are high. Donor capitals are stretched. The case we make must be compassionate, yet compelling and concerted. Our messaging is getting better, but we are not there yet.

I never have worked in a country before where there is so much development financing in the absence of peace. That is a good thing, but we need to leverage the interest of development donors to gain at the same time a bit more compassion for the suffering today.

You are active on Twitter. Why do you tweet and what message do you want to share with your more than 20,000 Followers?

I mix Tweets on humanitarian, development and cultural issues. I am really into positive messaging, to show a side of Afghanistan that is not only negative. I tweet pictures of people I meet, children, mountains or jewelry – things that lets people identify themselves with Afghanistan. I use two hashtags that I came up with: #AfghanistanCan and #BeautifulAFG. I do not know exactly what it is, but I am picking up more followers and getting lots of interaction in the past few weeks.

You have said that for the first year, you will listen and learn. What can we expect for your second year? And what will you tell the humanitarian partners?

I will continue listening more than I talk. One cannot learn enough about this country in one year and my commitment is multi-year, like the Humanitarian Response Plan. I will keep listening but I will be saying a few more things, too.

What will you be telling the humanitarian community?

A handful of NGOs here deserve enormous credit for being close to communities in rural areas and saving lives. I will do everything I can to help them to stay, protect and deliver and to enable a few more NGOs to replicate that very good practice.

Anything else you want to add and share with the readers?

I never liked the word resilience and I don't use it here [in Afghanistan]. I have no place to talk about resilience where everyone is more resilient than I could ever hope to be. I admire the strength, the pride, the commitment of the people of Afghanistan to survive the 40th year of violence. Amid this misery, listening to a father who says "I want my girl to go to school" proves to me that there is real hope for this country and this hope lies within the strength of its people.



The annual International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April is an opportunity for the world to reflect on both the progress made and the challenges remaining in Afghanistan and across the globe in clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance which continue to endanger civilians.



In Afghanistan, DMAC and UNMAS marked the day with an event in Kabul, where Dr. Abdullah Abdulla, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan paid tribute to the heroes defusing mines "with cooperation of friendly countries and international organizations and their commitment to humanity and saving people's lives". Photo: CE office.

A victim of a landmine not a victim anymore

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) contributed to this article

Mahpekai was eight years old when she stepped on a landmine. "I was collecting wood close to my home in Jalalabad Province and suddenly there was a massive explosion," she remembers years later as a grown woman. "I did not know there were any mines there". Mahpekai lost both her legs.

After the incident, she stopped going to school, stayed at home and didn't play with other children anymore. Mahpekai spent the remainder of her childhood isolated at her family's house. It was more than half a decade later that somebody told her family about a place north of Kabul where she could learn how to walk again.

After years of isolation, a turn-around in the rehabilitation centre

She started going to one of about 20 rehabilitation centres across the country. There, she was fitted with prosthetic legs and learned how to walk again, literally step by step, six days a week.

Waiting to be picked up by relatives or her father after the therapy sessions, she sat for hours in the waiting hall watching students of physical rehabilitation in vocational training through the open door of the classroom.

"I remembered dreaming about being in that room and learning with them," says Mahpekai today. "But I could not even read so how could that dream ever come true?"

However, at the age of 15, while learning how to walk at the rehabilitation centre she also started to learn how read and write thanks to the female director of the rehabilitation centre. "Mahpekai was such a bright young woman, I knew I wanted to help her strive." Four years later, Mahpekai finished school and joined the vocational training in the same rehabilitation centre.



Dr. Siddiqi (Mahpekai) with a patient in the rehabilitation centre she works. Photo: UNMAS/Sandra Quiroz

The isolated girl who had lost her legs and dreams had become an empowered, confident woman, determined to dedicate her life and career to helping other victims of landmines. Today Mahpekai, or Dr. Siddiqi as they call her at the rehabilitation centre, studies medicine at university. "I am not a disabled person. I am a professional. And that is how the medical staff and the patients see me," she stresses.

Severe budget crunch and handing over responsibilities to Afghan authorities

After four decades of conflict, Afghanistan remains a sad example of the devastation wreaked by landmines. Even more concerning: Over the past five years, the number of civilian casualties has risen from 425 in 2012 to nearly 2,200 in 2017 or 180 casualties on average every month.

Dr. Siddiqi is committed to help as many of these victims as she can to recover from the devastating effects. "Many survivors struggle to believe what has happened to them, because it is too painful to think about it. I am a survivor and I know it is possible to overcome all the challenges."

UNMAS has been focusing on securing the means to provide immediate, short-term support to those victims and is supporting the Afghan Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) to develop a national strategy to assist victims. However, while the number of casualties has hit record highs, funding for mine action in Afghanistan has dropped by 65 per cent (close to \$40 million in 2017, down from \$113 million in 2012), drastically undercutting UNMAS' ability to address critical humanitarian needs.

This year, UNMAS will hand over managing the national mine action programme to DMAC, established in 2012 as part of the Afghan National Disaster Management Agency (ANDMA). End of last year, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan also took over the presidency of the [Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention \(APMBC\)](#), or the Ottawa Treaty, that aims at eliminating anti-personnel landmines around the world.



MINE ACTION IS VITAL FOR
**ADVANCING PROTECTION,
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**



A social media campaign led by @dmac_afg and @UNMAS was amplified by UN and NGO partners inside and outside of Afghanistan.



MINE ACTION IS
CRITICAL TO
**ENABLING AND
SUSTAINING PEACE**



Step by step to more localised aid

ACBAR contributed to this article

Local NGOs are often better placed to respond to communities in need compared to international NGOs or UN Agencies but lack capacity and funding to do so on scale. In 2016, key donors, UN Agencies and NGOs agreed upon the **Grand Bargain**: a package of reforms to emergency aid delivery and financing.

Amongst its commitments, the Grand Bargain aims at making principled humanitarian action “as local as possible” and “to engage with local responders in a spirit of partnership”. Further, 25 per cent of all humanitarian funding shall go to national NGOs directly or via OCHA’s Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs).

In Afghanistan, the **Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR)** was ahead of the curve in 2015 when it launched the Twinning Program to pair national NGOs with international NGOs with **funding from the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID)**. In the Twinning Program, ACBAR and international NGOs mentor and guide their national counterparts on institutional management, humanitarian practices and strategy.

National NGOs access funding

Among the key objectives of the Twinning Program are the increased participation of national NGO in the Clusters, improved capacity of national NGOs to access funding by the CBPF in Afghanistan, the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)-Afghanistan, and other humanitarian funds, and to ensure all NGOs follow international humanitarian principles.

As one of the major pillars of the CHF Accountability Framework, the two step Eligibility Process aims to ensure that the CHF managing agent, OCHA’s Humanitarian Financing Unit (HFU), is equipped with the necessary information about the capacities of the international and national NGOs that have access to CHF-funding and that appropriate assurance mechanisms can be applied in case a grant is awarded.

After three years in the Twinning Program, 12 of the 27 national partners have successfully completed the first step, the Due Diligence Review, and two have also undergone and successfully completed the second step, the Partner Capacity Assessment.

The national NGO **New Consultancy and Relief Organization (NCRO)**, active in humanitarian activities for more than two decades, was paired with the German NGO Welthungerhilfe (WHH) at the end of 2016. “WHH contributed to our policy review, training of staff, the assessment of our M&E and finance departments,” said Sayed Ghufuran, NCRO’s country director. “In one of the projects funded by WHH, they worked together with us on procurement and reporting.”

“The Twinning program fits perfectly into our mandate and commitment to build the capacity of local NGOs in Afghanistan, engaging them in all the steps of the process and emphasising the need for the local partner to become the owner of its own success,” explained his counterpart Marisa Perello, acting Country Director of WHH in Afghanistan.

NCRO is now eligible for funding by the CHF-Afghanistan and has submitted proposals under four allocations, of which the NGO was successfully funded three times.

Tripled funding for national NGOs within three years

The programme is however not a one-way street, as ACBAR’s Director Fiona Gall points out: “We can see that our international NGOs have benefitted from finding new national NGO partners to increase humanitarian access in hard to reach areas, to widen their portfolio of expertise and to meet their international commitments to local partnership.”

The will and dedication to fund national partners and increase their capacities to access funding is proven by the numbers: in 2017, the CHF-Afghanistan allocated US\$8 million to 11 national NGOs, up from \$1.8 million to 1 national NGO in 2014 when CHF-Afghanistan was established. Further, the Humanitarian Coordinator, Toby Lanzer, focused the CHF second standard allocation of 2017 on multi-sector humanitarian action in 45 hard to reach districts – districts where national partners have comparative advantages to international NGOs regarding access to and acceptance of communities.

The Grand Bargain aims at making humanitarian action “as local as possible” and “to engage with local responders in a spirit of partnership”.

“The Twinning program fits perfectly into our mandate and commitment to build the capacity of local NGOs, engaging them in all the steps of the process and emphasising the need for the local partner to become the owner of its own success.”

The **Twining Program** signs a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ACBAR, the national and the international NGO that contains the responsibilities and activities of all three partners.

The international NGO builds capacities of staff of the national NGO on subjects ranging from reporting, bookkeeping, proposal writing, project management, development of internal policies, gender inclusion and other areas. In addition, the INGO offers opportunities for field visits and strategic management meetings.

ACBAR manages the overall Twinning Program, provides mentoring and funds for humanitarian assessments as well as policy and proposal review. Once a year, ACBAR does a SWOT-analysis with the national NGOs that are used to prepare the annual MoU and a strategic work plan.

“The Twinning Program has strengthened relationships between national and international NGOs in a competitive environment and given a solid foundation to national NGOs.”

Last year, an estimated 50,000 Afghans arrived from Pakistan and remained in the Eastern Region and more than 120,000 internally displaced people sheltered alone in Nangarhar.

“We treat about 3,000 patients every month, 700 more than the capacity of the health centre.”

Trainings on proposal-writing, gender mainstreaming and humanitarian standards

Besides pairing national NGOs with an international counterpart, ACBAR also builds capacities through trainings for all national NGOs in the Twinning Program. In the past three years, national NGOs could participate in more than 80 days of trainings on subjects including humanitarian Sphere standards, disability awareness, financial management, anti-corruption, gender mainstreaming, proposal writing and management training sessions focusing on integrity, financial management, and project cycle management.

“This programme has strengthened relationships between national and international NGOs in a competitive environment and given a solid foundation to national NGOs. It should be replicated in other countries by other fora and coordination bodies,” said Fiona Gall.

One school for 2,000 girls and boys

Already weakened in a country ravaged by four decades of conflict, basic social services are under [mounting pressure in the Eastern Region](#) with the arrival of Afghan citizens from Pakistan and conflict displacements.

Last year, an estimated 50,000 Afghans arrived from Pakistan and remained in the Eastern Region along with more than 120,000 Afghans were internally displaced and sheltered in Nangarhar, totalling an increase of more than 10 per cent of the estimated population of the whole province.

“With the arrival of newly displaced families and returnees from Pakistan, we do not have enough space for all the students”, said Abdul Akbar Moneeb, the director of Hejratabad High School, one of only two schools in a cluster of three informal settlements in Rodat District, nestled beside the highway connecting Jalalabad City with Torkham at the border with Pakistan.

More than 2,000 girls and boys go to school in two shifts. The older students sit at wooden desks in the school building built by the residents but there is no space for the first graders inside.

Instead, sitting on the ground, the boys learn in tents behind the school and the girls under a sun roof in the courtyard.

The three settlements, the first one established back in the 1990s, is currently home to around 33,000 people, returnees from Pakistan, prolonged and recent internally displaced Afghans and poor host Afghan families.

Overworked health clinic staff with no drinking water and no toilets

The basic health centre faces a similar challenge as the school: “We treat about 3,000 patients every month, 700 more than the capacity of the health centre,” the clinic manager explains while dozens of women with their children crowd under the roof of the health clinic that provided some shade, waiting for their consultation.

The medical staff provide basic medical services, including malnutrition screening and treatment of children, and a midwife looks after expecting mothers and ensures safe deliveries of babies. The more serious cases are referred to the next hospital in Jalalabad City.

“In the past months, we have seen more malnourished children, notably with the families that recently arrived from Pakistan,” the manager said.

The basic health centre is in substandard condition, lacks access to safe drinking water and has no sanitation facilities. Health services in the informal settlements are reinforced by mobile health teams, but overall remain largely insufficient.



Three classes of girls in first grader learn under a sun roof in the school yard of Hejratabad High School. Photo: OCHA/Kropf



Malnutrition screening and treatment are integrated into the health centre. Photo: OCHA/Kropf

INCIDENTS IN 2018

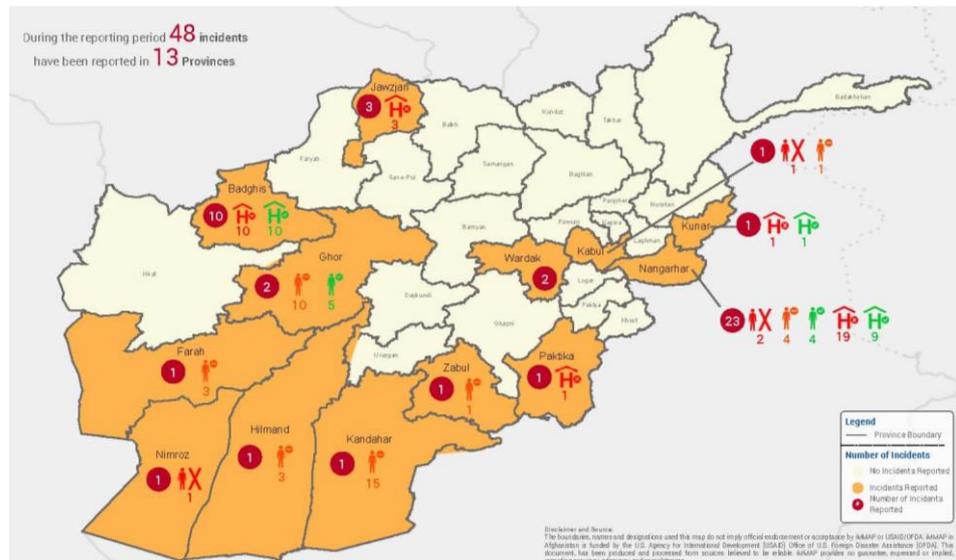
-  **61**
Incidents
-  **8**
Aid workers killed
-  **11**
Aid workers wounded
-  **21**
Aid workers abducted
-  **23**
Incidents against health facilities and workers

Humanitarian access and aid worker incidents

In March 2018, 24 incidents against aid workers, assets, activities and related to humanitarian access were recorded, double compared to 12 incidents reported in February 2018. Two aid workers were killed, none injured, two abducted and three detained. A total of 15 incidents were recorded against health facilities or health workers, bringing the total to eight for the first three months of this year.

Worrisome trend of violence against medical staff and health facilities

According to the Health Cluster, from December 2017 to March 2018, four health workers were killed, 38 detained or kidnapped of which 29 had still not been freed at the end of the reporting period. Incidents have been reported from 13 provinces, with the highest number being reported from Badghis (see map). A total of 34 health facilities were closed or destroyed of which 20 had re-opened by the end of the reporting period.



Incidents against health workers and closure of health facilities from December 2017 to March 2018. Source: Health Cluster / iMMAP

Humanitarian Financing Update

As of 10 April 2018, OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) reported a total of US\$61.6 million humanitarian funding for Afghanistan, of which \$27 million were reported against the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), representing 6.3 per cent coverage of the 2018 funding requirement of \$430 million to assist 2.8 million people.

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster has made the most progress so far, this year, receiving 23.8 per cent of their funding requirement, followed by the Health Sector with 9 per cent (see table).

Cluster / Sector	Requirement	Funding	Coverage
WASH	\$23.5M	\$5.6M	23.8%
Health	\$41.6M	\$3.9M	9.4%
Education in Emergencies	\$29.7M	\$2.3M	7.7%
Emergency Shelter & NFI	\$53M	\$3M	5.7%
Coordination	\$15.9M	\$642.4	4%

The five sectors with the highest coverage of requested funding. Source: FTS

The FTS-Team in Geneva continues its work with OCHA Afghanistan to reconcile the unspecified funding of more than \$8 million.

OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) aims to present a complete picture of all international humanitarian funding flows. The system relies upon the commitments to the Grand Bargain from donors, UN agencies and implementing partners regarding improved transparency through the comprehensive and timely reporting to FTS on the funding allocated to partners in Afghanistan.

For further information, please contact:

Maia McFadden, Head of Office a.i., OCHA Afghanistan, mcfaddenm@un.org

Philippe Kropf, Public Information Officer, OCHA Afghanistan, kropf@un.org, Tel (+93) 793 001 110

For more information, please visit www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int

 <https://www.facebook.com/UNOCHAafghanistan>

 <https://twitter.com/OCHAafg>

