

AFGHANISTAN

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2023
 (NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE)

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2015

For 2014

	For 2015	For 2014
Problem understood	8	8
Target date for completion of clearance	6	7
Targeted clearance	7	7
Efficient clearance	7	7
National funding of programme	5	5
Timely clearance	7	7
Land release system	8	8
National mine action standards	6	6
Reporting on progress	7	7
Improving performance	5	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	6.6	6.7

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Afghanistan's mine action programme performance dipped in 2015 with the amount of land released plunging by almost one half compared to 2014, reflecting a sharp downward trend in mine action funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) should present revised milestones for clearance reflecting reduced levels of donor funding and clarify the implications for fulfilling its extended Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline.
- After a decade of discussion, Afghanistan should finalise and adopt the national mine action law.

CONTAMINATION

Afghanistan is one of the countries most affected by mines, mainly the result of the decade-long war of resistance that followed the Soviet invasion of 1979, the 1992–96 internal armed conflict, and the continuing conflicts between the government in Kabul and the Taliban and other armed groups.

Despite the progress of clearance operations, the amount of land known to be mine-contaminated has risen in each of the last three years (see Table 1) as a result of new information on mine hazards collected in the course of continuing survey. In 2015, survey added 32km² of anti-personnel mined area and 39.5km² of anti-vehicle mined area in 23 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. As at the end of 2015, the Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (MACCA) reported that anti-personnel mines affected a total of 251km² of territory, though Afghanistan's Article 7 transparency report for 2015 put the figure at 239km².¹ MACCA estimated that by the end of March 2016, 917 anti-personnel mine hazards covering 75.37km² were located within one kilometre of a community centre.²

Table 1: Remaining contamination in 2013-15³

Type of contamination	Hazardous areas		Area (km ²)			
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Anti-personnel mines	2,981	2,825	2,765	240	230.8	251.37
Anti-vehicle mines	1,140	1,156	1,243	236	255.9	274.54
Improvised explosive devices*	28	19	23	5	3.54	5.18
ERW**	179	254	279	35	37.8	63.13
Totals	4,328	4,254	4,310	516	528.04	594.22

* Abandoned IEDs only. These devices include improvised mines

** Not including International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) firing ranges.

The MAPA estimated that mines and ERW block some 77km² of agricultural land, 361km² of grazing land, 29km² of residential areas, 89km² of roads and 4km² of water sources.⁴

1 Email from MACCA, 27 April 2016; APMBC Article 7 Report (for 2015), Form F.

2 MAPA, "Operational Workplan for 1395", undated but 2016, p. 11.

3 Data provided by the MACCA, 11 February 2014, 30 April 2015 and 27 April 2016.

4 MAPA, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399", Kabul, undated but 2016, p. 9.

IEDs placed by anti-government groups posed the greatest explosive threat to Afghan civilians, including pressure-plate IEDs (PPIEDs) which are victim activated and are anti-personnel mines prohibited under the APMBC. The MAPA reported that 86% of ERW casualties reported in 2015 were caused by PPIEDs.⁵ The extent of PPIED contamination is not known.

The total number of civilian IED casualties documented by the United Nations dropped 20% in 2015 compared to the previous year to 2,368 (including 713 killed and 1,655 injured), but casualties from PPIEDs (improvised mines) were 35% higher in 2015 than 2014, causing 1,051 civilian casualties (459 killed, 592 injured). In many instances these were placed in agricultural areas, on footpaths, and on roadsides frequented by civilians, the UN reported. Other ERW caused 431 civilian casualties (127 killed, 304 injured) in 2015, of whom 85% were children.⁶

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The MAPA is in a process of transition to national control and developing the institutional framework to support it. From 2001, the MAPA was led by MACCA, a project of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) implemented by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and under international management. From 1 April 2012, MACCA came under Afghan management supported by an UNMAS project office.⁷ Afghanistan's Article 5 extension request in 2012 said the aim was to "absorb a reduced MACCA structure into the civil service or to create a new structure within the government for the specific management of mine action."⁸

In 2008, an inter-ministerial board had assigned the lead role in mine action to the Department of Mine Clearance, a department of the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) which reports to the Office of the Second Vice President, but at the time the DMC lacked the capacity to take over management which continued to be led by MACCA. In 2015 the DMC was renamed the Directorate for Mine Action Coordination (DMAC), embarking on measures to expand its capacity and functions. Also in 2015, President Ashraf Ghani appointed Ahmad Barmak as State Minister for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs and chairman of ANDMA and he has proposed to the president that the authority become a ministry.⁹

DMAC started 2016 with 15 headquarters staff in Kabul and expected the number to rise to 58 in 2016, working in four departments covering quality management, planning, operations and administration and employed on government salaries.¹⁰ It also had 51 quality management inspectors undertaking quality assurance of demining operations and the clearance of ISAF firing ranges, as well as two information management specialists, two communications officers and two staff associates, employed under UN contracts. MACCA, responding to sharp falls in funding, had reduced its staff from 393 in 2012 to 145 by the start of 2016.¹¹ DMAC expected to absorb all MACCA personnel by June 2017.¹²

An inter-ministerial committee and MACCA drafted a mine action law in 2005 but it was never enacted. The draft law, now annexed to a Disaster Management Law, has been approved by the Ministry of Justice and sent to the Prime Minister's Office for review but has still not been presented to parliament.¹³

Strategic Planning

Afghanistan set out a clearance plan for the 10 years to March 2023 in the Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in March 2012 and revised in August of the same year. It planned to complete clearance of all known areas contaminated with anti-vehicle mines and other ERW as well as anti-personnel mines. It consolidated the 4,442 mine and ERW hazards then remaining into 308 projects, an approach intended to facilitate monitoring of progress and resource mobilisation. Projects would be tackled according to their priority as determined by their impact, measured against a set of impact indicators.¹⁴

The MAPA, however, has to adjust these targets to reflect a sharp downturn in funding for mine clearance, which has resulted in lower levels of clearance. At the level of funding received in 2015, MACCA estimated it would take a further 12 years to complete clearance.¹⁵ MACCA planned to issue a new strategic plan in Afghan year 1395 covering the ensuing five years.¹⁶

The MAPA adopted a five-year strategic plan for 1395–1399 (1 April 2016 – 31 March 2020) focused on "mainstreaming development in mine action" to mitigate the sharp downturn in donor funding experienced since 2011.¹⁷ It set out four goals: facilitating development; engagement with other sectors; "the five pillars of mine action", incorporating preventive action (survey, clearance, stockpile destruction, risk education and advocacy) and responsive action (promoting needs of mine accident victims in government policies and budgets); and gender and diversity mainstreaming.

5 Ibid., p. 10.

6 UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan UNAMA, "Afghanistan, Annual Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict", Kabul, February 2016, pp. 4, 22–23, and 37–38.

7 Interviews with Alan MacDonald, Programme Director, MACCA, in Geneva, 23 March 2012, and with Abigail Hartley, Programme Manager, UNMAS, Kabul, 7 May 2012.

8 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2012, p. 65; interviews with Mohammad Sediq Rashid, Director, MACCA, and Abigail Hartley, UNMAS, in Geneva, 5 December 2012, and Kabul, 19 May 2013.

9 Email from Mohammad Shafiq Yusufi, Director, Department of Mine Action Coordination, ANDMA, 21 July 2016.

10 Interview with Mohammad Shafiq Yusufi, DMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.

11 Email from Abdel Qudos Ziaee, Operations Manager, MACCA, 30 April 2015.

12 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

13 Ibid.

14 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2012, pp. 167–75.

15 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

16 MAPA, "Annual Operational Work Plan 1395", undated but 2016, p. 1.

17 MAPA, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399", Kabul, undated but 2016.

The plan also set out 33 objectives and 108 associated actions. These included having mine action incorporated into Afghanistan's National Priority Programmes and Sustainable Development Goals; integrating mine action into the activities of line ministries, improving fundraising; completing survey; and keeping implementation of Afghanistan's Article 5 extension request on track. On the basis of a mid-2015 review, it concluded the MAPA needed \$391.7 million to implement the plan, including \$353.4 million for clearance, \$24.8 million for "coordination" (quality assurance, planning and prioritization, information management, advocacy and resource mobilization), \$3.6 million for survey, and \$5.6 million for risk education.¹⁸

The MAPA's operational work plan for 1394 (1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016) aimed for clearance of 75.4km² of affected land but this was dependant on attracting funding of \$65.9 million. MACCA reported it received only 62% of this amount and achieved 64% of targeted clearance. Despite this setback, the MAPA's work plan for 1395 (2016–2017) targeted clearance of almost 91km² of contaminated land with the release of 941 hazards, leading to 233 communities and 27 districts being declared free of mines.¹⁹

Operators

Most mine clearance is conducted by five long-established national and three international NGOs. The Afghan NGOs are: Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA), Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), Mine Detection and Dog Centre (MDDC), and the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR); the most active international NGOs are Danish Demining Group (DDG) and HALO Trust. Since 2012, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) has had a small operation near the border with Tajikistan.²⁰ Another humanitarian operator, Agency for Rehabilitation & Energy Conservation for Afghanistan (AREA), received accreditation in 2014.²¹

A total of 24 commercial companies were accredited in 2015, but only 10 operated during the year and of these only Sterling Demining Afghanistan was active throughout the year, working on clearing ISAF firing ranges. None worked on anti-personnel mine clearance.²²

As a result of funding cuts, implementing partner capacity had fallen by more than half over the course of three years to just under 5,400 personnel by the end of Afghan year 1393 (1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015).²³ By September 2015, the number of people employed in mine action for humanitarian purposes had dropped to about 4,000 and the number engaged by Sterling Demining Afghanistan on clearing ERW from ISAF/NATO firing ranges had risen to around 5,000.²⁴

LAND RELEASE

The amount of land released in 2015 plunged, reflecting a sharp downward trend in the amount of funding for mine action. A total of 37km² was released in 2015 down from 77km² the previous year. The MAPA remains one of the world's biggest mine action programmes, receiving a total of \$47.6 million in 1394 (ending 30 March 2016), but this was well short of the \$72.8 million requirement for 2015 set out in Afghanistan's Article 5 extension request.²⁵

Survey in 2015

Afghanistan started a "Mine and ERW Impact Free Community Survey" (MEIFCS) in 2012 envisaging it would take two years to complete. The survey has found many more communities than in the official gazetteer, which provided the basis for planning, and at the same time has had to contend with less funding, less manpower, and more constraints on access as a result of heightened insecurity.

In 2015, 14 teams conducted the survey, half the number in the previous year, of which HALO provided 12 teams which visited 2,516 communities in 13 provinces, covering most area in Balkh just north of Kabul and Logar province south of the capital. HALO reported it completed survey of seven districts.²⁶ FSD provided two teams that worked only in Badakhshan. The survey covered a total of 4,398 communities, of which only 1,643 were in the gazetteer. Teams cancelled 36 hazards covering 2.1km² but also identified 148 additional areas of contamination covering 30.7km².²⁷

Table 2: Mined areas identified in 2015²⁸

SHAs identified	Estimated total area (m ²)	CHAs identified	Estimated total area (m ²)
54	6,631,792	94	24,090,290

18 Ibid., pp. 2–6, 26.

19 MAPA, "Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan Newsletter", July 2015, p. 2; email from MACCA, 1 May 2016; and MAPA "Annual Operational Work Plan 1395", undated but 2016, p. 2.

20 Email from MACCA, 10 May 2011.

21 Email from Abdel Qudos Ziaee, MACCA, 30 April 2015.

22 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

23 "Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan, Annual Report 1393", undated but 2015, p. 7.

24 Telephone interview with Mohammad Sediq Rashid, MACCA, 13 October 2015.

25 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2012, p.208.

26 Email from Farid Hodayoun, Country Director, HALO Trust, 14 May 2016.

27 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

28 Ibid.

Clearance in 2015

Operators cleared 35.4km² of mined area in 2015 (see Table 3), 43% less than the previous year, the third successive year of falling clearance and the lowest result recorded since 2007. The number of anti-personnel mines destroyed was little more than one-third of the previous year's result, partly an effect of operators moving onto more remote and sparsely contaminated minefields, as well as reduced capacity resulting from funding constraints.²⁹

Two Implementing Partners (IPs), HALO Trust and MDC, accounted for more than three-quarters of the total area cleared in 2015. MDC, in addition to humanitarian clearance continued to work on infrastructure tasks linked to development of Aynak copper mining. Four other national operators (ATC, DAFA, MCPA, and OMAR), which have borne the brunt of financial cuts in the past three years, together accounted for 20% of the area cleared in 2015. Only community-based demining in areas of fragile security expanded with the number of teams rising from 24 at the end of 2014 to 49 at the end of 2015, and the amount of funding from a little under \$3 million in 2014 to \$8.3 million going to clearance.³⁰

Among the international operators, DDG had to stand down 13 clearance sections and 130 deminers in response to funding cuts, which resulted in mined area clearance falling by two-thirds from 2014, though it also cleared 1.4km² of battle area and undertook close to two-thirds of the explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) tasks called in on a MACCA hotline.³¹

HALO Trust also stood down 11 demining teams in 2015 as a result of a drop in funding but with some 2,300 staff it remained much the biggest humanitarian operator in Afghanistan, accounting for approximately half the total mined area released. It also cleared only marginally less (2%) area than the previous year as a result of higher productivity and by undertaking more clearance of areas affected by anti-vehicle mines. HALO envisaged a drop in funding in 2016 leaving uncertain whether it would be able to maintain staffing at the same level as the previous year.³²

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2015³³

Operator	Areas released	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
ATC	33	1,753,164	361	5	299
DAFA	47	3,137,675	153	36	3,098
DDG	15	708,378	196	2	601
FSD	3	14,183	10	0	4
HALO Trust ³⁴	224	17,172,835	3,000	284	721
MCPA	21	1,647,016	52	47	0
MDC	76	10,127,883	638	107	463
OMAR	30	793,337	76	0	121
SDC	1	23,350	0	0	0
Totals	450	35,377,821	4,486	481	5,307

APM = Anti-personnel AVM = Anti-vehicle UXO = Unexploded ordnance

29 Ibid.

30 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

31 Email from Megan Latimer, Programme and Operations Coordinator, Afghanistan & Colombia, DDG, 13 June 2016.

32 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 14 May 2016.

33 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

34 HALO Trust reported that it cleared 317 mined areas covering 21.84km² and destroying 3,724 anti-personnel mines, 316 anti-vehicle mines, and 99 items of UXO.

Deminer Safety

One deminer was killed and nine injured in demining incidents in 2015 but conflict and criminality took a much higher toll. Eight MAPA personnel were killed and a further thirty-four were injured in security incidents involving armed criminals as well as armed opposition groups. Another 63 personnel were abducted, although all were eventually released. Additionally, mine action organisations had taken from them a total of 11 vehicles and a range of other equipment, including radios, detectors, GPS devices, helmets and body armour.³⁵

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (and in accordance with the 10-year extension granted by states parties in 2009), to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 March 2023. It is not on track to meet the deadline.

Afghanistan's Article 5 extension request submitted in 2012 set out a detailed timeline for completing clearance of mined and battle area in 2022 (1401). Afghanistan will miss those targets as a result of a combination of factors, notably a sharp downturn in funding for the MAPA. In 2014, it received \$42.9 million, and in 2015, \$47.6 million, only 60% of the \$72.8 million budgeted for that year in the extension request. Despite this abrupt downturn in receipts, the strategic plan continued to target funding far in excess of recent donor support, including \$92.4 million in 2016, \$84.4 million in 2017 and \$77.7 million in 2017.³⁶

Table 4: Mine clearance in 2011–15

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2015	35.38
2014	62.87
2013	60.11
2012	77.15
2011	68.04
2010	64.76
Total	368.31

Other factors adding to uncertainty include continued new discoveries of mined areas which meant the outstanding area requiring clearance was 11.5km² greater at the end of 2015 than two years earlier despite clearance of close to 100km² in the interval. Escalating insecurity is also hampering survey and clearance in wider areas.³⁷ Afghanistan's 2016–2020 strategic plan also flagged concern that use of PPIEDs, if continued at the same level as in the recent years, could contribute to delays in meeting Afghanistan's Article 5 deadline. It observed that the continuing conflict prevents clearance of operational items by the MAPA to avoid jeopardising its status as a neutral actor and because of problems of access to the devices in areas of conflict.³⁸

35 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

36 MAPA, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399", Kabul, undated but 2016, p. 27.

37 Email from MACCA, 1 May 2016.

38 MAPA, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399", Kabul, undated but 2016, p. 22.