



MYANMAR

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2015

For 2014

Problem understood	4	2
Target date for completion of mine clearance	1	2
Targeted clearance	0	2
Efficient clearance	0	1
National funding of programme	1	2
Timely clearance	0	1
Land release system in place	4	2
National mine action standards	3	4
Reporting on progress	1	2
Improving performance	4	2
PERFORMANCE SCORE: VERY POOR	1.8	2.0

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Myanmar is the lowest ranked mine action programme in this year's report, with the government's refusal to allow mine clearance preventing a peace dividend from being realised. There was evidence of improvement in mid-2016, however, as Mines Advisory Group (MAG) was allowed to conduct non-technical survey (NTS) in Kayah state.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Myanmar should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and clear all mined areas as a matter of priority.
- Myanmar should activate a mine action centre to provide an official focal point for mine action, take the lead in gathering data on contamination and victims, and coordinate with stakeholders in developing a response.
- Myanmar should consider interim use of state-level coordination and information-sharing structures while national-level coordination mechanisms are developed.

CONTAMINATION

Myanmar is heavily mine-affected as a result of conflicts between the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's army) and numerous non-state armed groups affiliated with ethnic minorities which started after independence in 1948. Mined areas are located in areas of Myanmar adjacent to borders with Bangladesh, China, and Thailand, but are a particular threat in northern and eastern parts of the country.

Some 55 townships (of a total of 325) in 10 states and regions are believed to suffer from some degree of mine contamination, primarily from anti-personnel mines.¹ Karen (Kayin) state and Pegu (Bago) division are among those with the heaviest mine contamination and the highest number of recorded victims. Townships on the Indian border of Chin state and in the Sagaing region also reportedly have suspected hazardous areas (SHAs).²

No estimate exists of the extent of contamination but possible mined areas have been reported in the following states and townships:

- Kayah state: all seven townships
- Kayin state: all seven townships
- Kachin state: Chipwi, Hpakant, Mansi, Mogaung, Momauk, Myitkyina, Tsawlaw, and Waingmaw
- Mon state: Bilin, Kyaikto, Mawlamyine, Thanbyuzayat, Thaton, and Ye
- Bago region: Kyaukkyi, Shwekyin, Tantabin, and Taungoo
- Rakhine state: Maungdaw
- Shan state: Hopong, Hsenwi, Hsihseng, Konkyan, Kyaukme, Langkho, Loilen, Mawkmai, Mongpan, Mongton, Monghpyak, Namhsan Tachileik, Namtu, Nanhkan, Yaksawk, and Ywangan
- Tanintharyi region: Bokpyin, Dawei, Tanintharyi, Thayetchaung, and Yebyu
- Chin state and Sagaing region.

1 Myanmar is divided into states and regions. States are the "home area" of ethnic groups. Other areas, which are not identified with a specific ethnic group, are administrative regions. The former military junta changed the name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989 and also changed the names of some states. Many ethnic groups within the country still prefer to use the name Burma. Internal state and division names are given in their common form or with the name adopted by the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in parentheses.

2 Research conducted by Landmine Monitor. Data sources included casualty information, sightings of mine warnings, and reports by NGOs and other organisations of use, as well as interviews with field staff and armed forces personnel. The survey included casualty data from January 2007 through September 2015 and data from other informants from January 2008 through September 2015.

An explosive remnants of war (ERW) victim survey conducted for Danish Demining Group (DDG) in two states in 2015 concluded that most casualties in Kayah state had occurred many years ago and that the number of casualties in recent years was low. Researchers were informed of four accidents in 2014 and two in 2015. MAG has been conducting risk education in all seven townships in Kayah, integrating data collection and mapping of suspected contaminated areas as part of this work. Communities were targeted based on existing information and conflict history. Assessments were subsequently conducted by MAG field teams; from a sample of 87 communities surveyed during 2015–16, three-quarters presented evidence of contamination in the community itself or in areas regularly used for livelihood activities such as agriculture, hunting, or travelling to adjacent villages. Based on 2015 census data, this sample represents just under 15% of communities in Kayah State.³ In Kachin state, where conflict resumed in 2011, the study found most accidents (90%) had taken place in the last four years with 60% occurring in the last two years, particularly in 2014. It found the heaviest concentration of incidents in Mansi and Momauk townships. Most of the mines found in those areas were handmade and activated by tripwires.⁴

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The government agreed set up a Myanmar Mine Action Centre (MMAC) under the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) in 2013 but the centre was never fully staffed and the government said concluding a National Ceasefire Agreement with non-state actors was a precondition for proceeding to survey and clearance.⁵ The government formed since March 2016 under the leadership of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi had not, as at September, formulated a clear direction for mine action.⁶

The MPC was dissolved at the end of March 2016 and replaced by a National Reconciliation and Peace Centre which reports to the state counsellor who said negotiations over a National Ceasefire Agreement would be her administration's priority. The Department of Social Welfare has regularly convened a technical working group which focuses on risk education and victim assistance. No government department has responsibility for developing a programme of survey or clearance.⁷

Strategic Planning

A technical working group comprising MPC officials and international humanitarian operators completed work on a draft national mine action strategy in 2013 but the government has yet to approve them.

Operators

International demining organisations, including DanChurchAid (DCA), DDG, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), HALO Trust, MAG, Handicap International, and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), have offices in Yangon, but operators have not received authorisation to conduct marking or clearance from either the government or non-state actors.⁸

LAND RELEASE

NPA conducted NTS at the Karen National Union (KNU)'s request at four villages in April 2015, following on from three surveys undertaken in Kayin and Mon state in early 2014 which did not identify any mined area. The 2015 surveys, one in Kyaukkyi Township, Bago Region, and three in Thandaunggi township, Kayin state, did not identify any mined areas though it recorded 24 mine accidents during the previous two years. NPA continued discussions with the KNU on additional survey.⁹

No mine clearance by government-accredited humanitarian demining organisations has occurred in Myanmar. Sporadic and unregulated mine removal has been reported in recent years by the Tatmadaw, villagers, and ethnic minority organisations.

Progress in 2016

MAG began conducting NTS in government-controlled areas of Kayah state in July 2016. As at 30 September 2016, MAG had surveyed 12 villages in two villages tracts – Lawpita and Hparlaung, both in Loikaw township. A total of 35 SHAs were identified. MAG planned to continue NTS in Kayah state, pending agreement of the next target location with the state-level Department of Social Welfare.¹⁰

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Myanmar is not a state party to the APMBC. However, it has obligations under customary international human rights law, particularly by virtue of its duty to protect life, to clear anti-personnel mines as soon as possible.

3 Email from Greg Crowther, Regional Director, South and South East Asia, MAG, 31 October 2016.

4 Pascal Simon, "Landmine and Explosive Remnants of War Victims Survey in Kachin State and Kayah State, Myanmar," Danish Refugee Council/Danish Demining Group, 6 March 2015, pp. 7, 14 & 18.

5 Roger Fasth and Pascal Simon, "Mine Action in Myanmar", *Journal of Mine Action*, Issue 19.2, July 2015.

6 Interview with Greg Crowther, MAG, Phnom Penh, 9 May 2016; email from Melissa Andersson, Programme Manager, NPA, Yangon, 17 August 2016; telephone interview with Roger Fasth, Desk Officer, DDG, 31 August 2016.

7 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, Yangon, 17 August 2016.

8 Email from Aksel Steen-Nilsen, NPA, Yangon, 23 September 2014.

9 Interview with Aksel Steen-Nilsen, NPA, Yangon, 3 April 2015 and email, 25 May 2015; and email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 2016.

10 Email from Greg Crowther, MAG, 31 October 2016.