



# MYANMAR

| <b>MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE</b>            | For 2016   | For 2015   |
|---|------------|------------|
| <b>Problem understood</b>                           | 2          | 4          |
| <b>Target date for completion of mine clearance</b> | 1          | 1          |
| <b>Targeted clearance</b>                           | 1          | 0          |
| <b>Efficient clearance</b>                          | 1          | 0          |
| <b>National funding of programme</b>                | 1          | 1          |
| <b>Timely clearance</b>                             | 1          | 0          |
| <b>Land release system in place</b>                 | 2          | 4          |
| <b>National mine action standards</b>               | 3          | 3          |
| <b>Reporting on progress</b>                        | 1          | 1          |
| <b>Improving performance</b>                        | 1          | 4          |
| <b>PERFORMANCE SCORE: VERY POOR</b>                 | <b>1.4</b> | <b>1.8</b> |

## PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Myanmar has still not taken steps to create a functioning national mine action programme. It authorised the first non-technical survey in 2016, but does not permit marking of hazardous areas or clearance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Myanmar should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- The Myanmar army (Tatmadaw) should stop all use of mines.
- Myanmar should appoint a government focal point of contact for mine action as a first step to creating a fully-fledged mine action authority and preparing a strategic plan.
- Myanmar should adopt mine action standards.
- Myanmar should expand non-technical survey of hazardous areas and permit marking and clearance.

## CONTAMINATION

Myanmar is heavily mine-affected as a result of conflicts between the Tatmadaw 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 (out 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

Additional mine use occurred in 2017 when the Tatmadaw reportedly planted anti-personnel mines on the border between northern Rakhine State and Bangladesh and during a military campaign in August and September.<sup>3</sup>

No estimate exists of the extent of contamination but suspected hazardous 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.

Myanmar's Mine Risks Working Group (MRWG) recorded 161 mine/explosive remnants of war (ERW) casualties in 2016: 41 killed and 120 injured. Half these casualties (20 dead, 79 injured) occurred in Shan State and another 55 casualties (18 dead, 37 injured) in Kachin State.<sup>4</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The government set up a Myanmar Mine Action Centre (MMAC) under the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) in 2013 but the centre was never fully staffed. The MPC was dissolved at the end of March 2016 and replaced by a National Reconciliation and Peace Centre which reports to the head of government. State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, however, said concluding a National Ceasefire Agreement with non-state actors was a precondition for proceeding to survey and clearance and would be her administration's priority.<sup>5</sup> The government formed since March 2016 under her leadership had not, as at September 2017, formulated a clear direction for mine action or established a centre to coordinate it.<sup>6</sup>

The Department of Social Work leads the MRWG, co-chaired with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which comprises 10 ministries and 41

international and national organisations. The group meets quarterly and focuses on risk education and victim assistance. In the process it has overseen the first steps to systematic survey of mine contamination.

### Operators

International demining organisations, including DanChurchAid (DCA), Danish Demining Group (DDG), The HALO Trust, Handicap International, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), have offices in Yangon and some provincial centres and through community liaison or risk education have been able to build up knowledge of the location of hazardous areas in some states.

## LAND RELEASE

Operators have not received authorisation to conduct marking or clearance from either the government or ethnic minority authorities but the Department of Social Work approved full non-technical survey in specified government-controlled areas for the first time in 2016.

MAG, after two years of risk education and community safety mapping in Kayah State, received authorisation from the Department of Social Work for a pilot survey in government-controlled areas, which it conducted between July and October 2016 focusing on 16 villages of Loikaw township. Teams surveyed 30 of 47 hazardous areas covering 44,828m<sup>2</sup> identifying contamination by anti-personnel mines and ERW. In December, the Department authorised MAG to conduct non-technical survey in 74 villages across 6 townships. By the end of June 2017, MAG had surveyed 78 hazardous areas covering 77,782m<sup>2</sup>. MAG found mines particularly in the vicinity of electricity pylons, even those outside conflict areas, underscoring the importance of investigating areas around other key infrastructure.<sup>7</sup>

In 2017, MAG had five community liaison teams working full-time on non-technical survey in all seven of Kayah state's townships. It had four survey teams in Shan state working out of Taunggyi and conducting full non-technical survey in three townships and community mapping in two others. It also had two teams undertaking initial

community surveys in Kayin State as well as working with a local partner doing similar baseline surveys in non-government controlled areas, and three teams in the southern Tanintharyi region.<sup>8</sup>

The HALO Trust had conducted risk education under an MoU with the Department of Social Work authorising it to work in all seven townships of Kayin state and some townships of Bago, Mon, Kachin, and Shan states. In 2016, it opened offices in Hpa-An in Kayin state, and in Lashio in northern Shan state. The MoU was amended in July 2017 expanding the approved operating area to include 18 townships of Shan state and authorising it to conduct non-technical survey. The HALO Trust was working in three townships of Kayin state (Hlaingbwe, Hpa-An, and Thandaungyi) and deployed three survey teams to map polygons. It planned to convert risk education teams to survey and to increase the number of survey teams to between six and eight. In Shan state, HALO Trust was conducting risk education and waiting for funding to begin non-technical survey.<sup>9</sup>

DDG, which has six teams conducting risk education in Kachin, northern Shan, and Kayah states also received Department of Social Work authorisation to undertake non-technical survey in Kayah state's Demoso township where it deployed two teams with three surveyors each starting in May 2017.<sup>10</sup>

## 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.

- 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 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.
- 3 Amnesty International, "Myanmar Army landmines along border with Bangladesh pose deadly threat to fleeing Rohingya", 9 September 2017; Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Landmines Deadly for Fleeing Rohingya", 23 September 2017.
- 4 "Strategic Workplan 2017", Mine Risks Working Group, undated but 2017, p. 16.
- 5 Roger Fasth and Pascal Simon, "Mine Action in Myanmar", *Journal of Mine Action*, Issue 19.2, July 2015.
- 6 Interviews with Aksel Steen-Nilsen, Country Director, NPA; Greg Crowther, Regional Director, South and South East Asia, MAG, in Phnom Penh, 1 May 2017; and email from Melissa Andersson, Programme Manager, NPA, Yangon, 27 September 2017.
- 7 Interview with Greg Crowther, MAG, Phnom Penh 1 May 2017; "Preliminary results of MAG's Non-Technical Survey in Kayah State," received by email from Greg Crowther, MAG, 2 May 2017; Greg Crowther, Josephine Dresner, and Michael Aaron, "Mine Action in Burma, Building Trust and Incremental Gains", *Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction*, Center for International Stabilization and Recovery, James Madison University, United States, Issue 21.2, July 2017.
- 8 Email from Bekim Shala, Country Director, MAG, 27 September 2017.
- 9 Email from Samuel Fricker, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 25 September 2017.
- 10 Email from Pascal Simon, Programme Manager, DDG, 28 September 2017; Danish Refugee Council/DDG, "Deployment and activities in Myanmar," July 2017.