

YEMEN

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2020
 (NOT ON TRACK TO MEET THE DEADLINE)

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	For 2015	For 2014
Problem understood	3	4
Target date for completion of mine clearance	3	3
Targeted clearance	4	5
Efficient clearance	3	5
National funding of programme	2	4
Timely clearance	2	4
Land release system in place	5	5
National mine action standards	6	6
Reporting on progress	4	4
Improving performance	3	3
PERFORMANCE SCORE: VERY POOR	3.5	4.3

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

The escalation of conflict after March 2015 has resulted in further mine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination while at the same time halting systematic mine clearance operations and disrupting prospects for implementing plans set out in Yemen's second Article 5 deadline extension request.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) should draw up a plan for the resumption of mine clearance, setting out priorities for survey and clearance.
- YEMAC should increase survey and clearance capacity.
- YEMAC teams should be trained in and apply land release methodologies.

CONTAMINATION

Yemen is contaminated with mines from conflicts in 1962–69 and 1970–83, the mines that were laid in border areas between North and South Yemen before they unified in 1990, and those used in successive conflicts that erupted since 1994, including the conflict that flared in March 2015.¹ The extent of Yemen's contamination is not known.

A Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) completed in 2000 identified suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) containing mines and ERW covering an estimated 922km² and affecting 592 mine villages across 18 of Yemen's 21 governorates. Yemen's first Article 5 deadline extension request stated in 2008 that 710km² had been released and 457 areas covering 213km² remained to be "addressed".²

However, additional mine contamination resulted from the 2010 insurgency in northern Sada'a governorate led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi³ and the 2011 insurgency around southern Abyan by militants belonging to Ansar al-Sharia, linked to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.⁴ YEMAC reported that insurgents in Sa'ada had laid improvised mines, later clearing some but missing

others.⁵ In 2011, under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's Republican Guard reportedly laid thousands of mines in the Bani Jarmoz area near Sana'a. The number of mines and extent of area affected remain to be determined. Information provided to YEMAC by local inhabitants in February 2014 suggested 25 villages were impacted.⁶ The United Nations said mines were laid in the conflict that escalated in March 2015 in areas controlled by Houthi rebels and associated forces.⁷

Yemen's second Article 5 deadline extension request, submitted in December 2013, stated that 107 mined areas covering some 8km² were confirmed to contain anti-personnel mines while 438 SHAs covering a further 338km².⁸ It added it had still to survey the governorates of Amran, Hajjah, and Sana'a.⁹ Yemen's most recent Article 7 transparency report, for the year to the end of March 2014, claimed that 20 of Yemen's 21 governorates are affected by anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines and estimated contamination at almost 433km². Most of the remaining areas were in Abyan, Ibb, and Sa'ada governorates.¹⁰

1 Email from Mansour al-Azi, Director, YEMAC, 28 August 2011.

2 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.

3 APMBC Article 7 Report (for year to 31 March 2010), Form I.

4 "Yemen: Landmines stall IDP returns in the south", *IRIN*, 28 June 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95752/YEMEN-Landmines-stall-IDP-returns-in-south>.

5 Article 7 Report (for year to 31 March 2012), Form I.

6 "Yemen Initial Report to the President of the Thirteenth Meeting of States Parties", submitted by Kassem Ahmed al-Aggam, Chairman, National Mine Action Committee, 30 March 2014.

7 "Situation of human rights in Yemen", Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN doc. A/HRC/33/38, 4 August 2016, p. 10.

8 Data presented in the extension request suggests that three governorates accounted for 87% of the total mined area: Sa'ada had 274 SHAs covering 115km², Shabwah 11 SHAs covering 92km², and Abyan 42 SHAs covering more than 87km².

9 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 17 December 2013, p. 12.

10 Article 7 Report (for year to 31 March 2014), Form C.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Yemen established a National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) in June 1998 by prime ministerial decree to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine action strategy.¹¹ NMAC, chaired by the Minister of State (a member of the cabinet), brought together representatives of seven concerned ministries. The government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi was driven from power in Yemen in February 2015 and moved to Saudi Arabia, putting in question future mine action institutional arrangements.

YEMAC was established in Sana'a in January 1999 as NMAC's implementing body with responsibility for coordinating mine action in the country.¹² It is supported by a Regional Executive Mine Action Branch (REMAB) and a National Training Centre in Aden also set up in 1999 and another REMAB in al-Mukalla (Hadramout governorate) added in March 2004. REMABs are responsible for field implementation of the national mine action plan.

Escalating political turmoil and conflict in Yemen since 2014 together with lack of funding have severely impaired YEMAC's abilities to discharge its responsibilities.¹³ YEMAC became de facto two organisations split between the southern city of Aden, controlled by the Saudi-led coalition and Yemen's internationally recognised but exiled government, and the capital Sana'a, under the control of the Houthi. Heavy fighting between the two in 2015 severely hampered communications and coordination between YEMAC's headquarters and its Aden branch.¹⁴ From Sana'a, YEMAC planned to undertake operations in 2016 in five governorates of central and north Yemen (Amran, Hajjah, Sana'a, Sa'ada, and Taiz), depending on security. YEMAC Aden sub-office planned operations in Abyan, Aden, Al Bayda, Lahej, and Taiz, and in and around Mukulla in Hadramout.¹⁵

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) provides an international technical advisor to work with NMAC and YEMAC to help develop a national strategy, set priorities, and define national standards under a four-year programme agreed in 2013 and due to run until the end of February 2017. The project has two national staff in Sana'a and one each in Aden and Sa'ada.¹⁶

Strategic Planning

Yemen's 2013 request for a second five-year extension to its Article 5 deadline projected clearance of more than 1.6km² of mined area a year between June 2014 and May 2019, and allowed another year for clearing any additional hazards identified during the extension period. The request called for total expenditure of more than \$65 million over the five years, equivalent to more than \$13 million a year, compared with average annual expenditure of less than \$2 million over the past five years.¹⁷ These targets, however, were overtaken by the escalating turmoil in 2014 and the conflict that erupted at the end of March 2015.

LAND RELEASE

YEMAC conducted some emergency spot clearance in 2015, but conflict and lack of funds disrupted operations and no systematic mine survey and clearance took place. Emergency operations were conducted by small mobile teams in Sana'a and Amran, focusing on clearing unexploded ordnance in and around schools. Engineers serving with the Saudi-led coalition are also reported to have undertaken some mine clearance, for example at Aden's Khormaksar airport. Legacy minefields were not considered a priority.¹⁸

YEMAC activities started to acquire funding and some momentum, recording clearance of 33,888m² in the first half of the year, most of it in May and June 2016. However, for maximum impact teams focused on small, high-threat spot tasks close to populated areas. In addition, teams were aiming to clear abandoned explosive ordnance and old stockpiles to prevent harvesting. Legacy minefields were not a priority.¹⁹

11 Article 7 Report, Form I, 31 March 2009.

12 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.

13 Interviews with mine action stakeholders requesting anonymity, February–June 2015.

14 Interviews with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February 2016; UNDP, "Support to eliminate the impact from mines and ERW – Phase IV, Annual Progress Report 2014", undated but 2015.

15 Email from Stephen Bryant, UNDP, 5 October 2016.

16 Ibid., 31 July 2016.

17 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 17 December 2013, p. 15; UNDP, "Support to Eliminate the Impact of Mines and Explosive Remnants of War in Yemen, Phase IV, Annual Progress Report 2014", undated but 2015, p. 13.

18 Interviews with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, 17 February 2016; and with Stephen Bryant, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February and 19 May 2016; "Grant Progress Report, Q4 2015", UNDP, received by email from Stephen Bryant, UNDP, 25 May 2016.

19 Email from Stephen Bryant, UNDP, 31 July 2016.

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the five-year extension granted in 2014), Yemen is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 March 2020. This is Yemen's second extension to its Article 5 deadline and it will not meet this new deadline.

Yemen's second extension request acknowledged from the outset that it was largely "based on speculation" and operations in 2014 fell well short of the extension request target of clearing 1.6km² a year, hampered by insecurity and by an acute shortage of funds.²⁰ The sharp escalation in conflict after March 2015 has halted systematic mine clearance and reduced YEMAC to emergency clearance of mostly ERW and not mines.

Table 1: Mine clearance in 2011–15²¹

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2015	0
2014	0.34
2013	1.16
2012	2.10
2011	N/R
Total	3.60

N/R = Not reported

²⁰ Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 17 December 2013, p. 15.

²¹ Compiled by Mine Action Review from data provided by YEMAC (2012–13) and UNDP (2014). No results were reported for 2010 or 2011.