

AFGHANISTAN



CLEARING CLUSTER MUNITION REMNANTS 2020

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2022
ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

KEY DATA

CLUSTER MUNITION CONTAMINATION: LIGHT

NATIONAL ESTIMATE

5.8 km²

SUBMUNITION CLEARANCE IN 2019

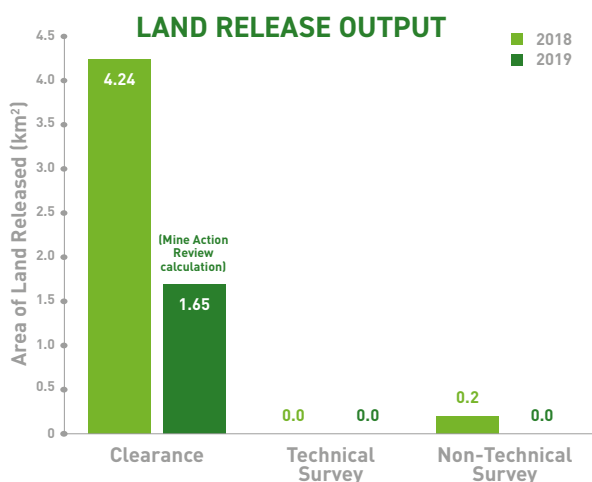
1.65 km²

(MINE ACTION REVIEW CALCULATION)

SUBMUNITIONS DESTROYED IN 2019

273

(INCLUDING 187 THROUGH SPOT TASKS)



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Afghanistan added four previously unrecorded cluster munition hazards to the database in 2019, more than the amount of cluster munition-contaminated areas released and resulting in a rise in the amount of contamination remaining. Clearance dropped significantly in 2019 from the previous year's level, attributed by the Directorate of Mine Action (DMAC) to funding constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Afghanistan should ensure funding, if necessary from national sources or alternative donors, to achieve the earliest possible completion of cluster munition remnants (CMR) clearance and fulfilment of Article 4 before its deadline.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2019)	Score (2018)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	9	9	Afghanistan has a small amount of known cluster munition-contaminated area to clear to fulfil its Article 4 obligations although it continues to identify previously unrecorded hazards, underscoring the possibility further areas for clearance will emerge over time.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	8	8	The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) is nationally managed but most DMAC salaries and operations are funded by international donors and CMR clearance has been funded by one donor, the United States.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	6	6	DMAC is committed to mainstreaming gender which features in the 2016–20 strategic plan but national operators have made slow progress putting the plan into practice. While women are hired in community liaison and risk education as well as administrative positions, only one operator has employed women in clearance and recruitment of women in Afghanistan's deeply conservative society continues to be limited. Mixed-gender explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and survey teams are, however, working across the country.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	8	8	DMAC has an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation database and is preparing to upgrade to IMSMA Core with support from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Operators say DMAC's data entry can be slow but it provides a range of reports and extensive disaggregated information. Afghanistan routinely submits comprehensive Article 7 transparency reports, though often late.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	8	8	DMAC's national work plan for 2020 provided for clearance of all remaining seven cluster munition-contaminated areas, subject to availability of funding and access to tasks in conflict-affected areas. Two hazardous areas added in 2020 might also be cleared in 2020 depending on funding. DMAC remains confident of completing clearance by late 2021.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	7	7	The MAPA has national mine action standards in Dari and English that are subject to regular review. CMR survey and clearance are addressed in AMAS 06.02 (Battle Area Clearance).
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	8	8	The amount of cluster munition-contaminated area released in 2019 dropped by one third compared to the previous year, which DMAC attributed to lower funding. But it remains confident of completing clearance by October 2021, several months ahead of its Article 4 deadline of 1 March 2022.
Average Score	7.8	7.8	Overall Programme Performance: GOOD

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

- Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA)
- Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC)
- Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan (AREA)
- Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA)
- Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA)
- Mine Detection Centre
- Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Demining Group (DDG)
- The HALO Trust
- Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD)

OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Afghanistan had more area affected by cluster munition remnants (CMR) at the end of 2019 than a year earlier after non-technical survey resulted in the addition to the database of four hazardous areas in eastern areas covering almost 3.26km². This raised the estimate of total CMR contamination to seven areas affecting more than 5.8km² (see Table 1), 41% more area than at the end of 2018.¹ DMAC added two more CMR-contaminated areas in Nangahar province to the database in June 2020. These two confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) covered a total of 1.67km².²

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area (at end 2019)

Province	District	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Nangarhar	Pachier Agam	3	2,559,660
Paktia	Zurmat	4	3,259,627
Totals		7	5,819,287

The additions in 2019 and 2020 point to the continuing possibility survey will reveal additional previously unrecorded contamination. DMAC reported assigning a survey team to check reports of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) in remote parts of Panjshir province.³

All remaining CHAs are said to contain remnants of the 1,228 cluster munitions containing some 248,056 BLU-97B submunitions dropped by the United States between October 2001 and early 2002.⁴ Operators conducting demining and battle area clearance tasks also report encountering scattered Soviet-era cluster munitions dropped during the decade-long war in the 1980s.⁵

CMR make up only a small part of Afghanistan's extensive explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination, which includes a wide range of other unexploded ordnance (UXO). There are also hundreds of square kilometres of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mine contamination, including mines of an improvised nature (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines 2020* report on Afghanistan for further information).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA), originally established in 1989, is led by DMAC, which comes under the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority. DMAC fulfils the role of a national mine action centre. From its headquarters in Kabul and seven regional offices, DMAC manages and coordinates the work of national and international implementing partners.

DMAC provides strategic planning and annual work plans, sets priorities and standards, accredits operators, conducts quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC), manages the mine action database, and conducts resource mobilisation. It coordinates closely with operators through technical working groups that address planning and priority setting, survey, mechanical clearance, risk education and victim assistance. In 2018, it set up a separate technical working group to deal with AIMS.⁶

The MAPA is nationally managed but in 2019 remained almost entirely internationally funded. Since 2012, it has transitioned from being a project of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to national management, a process formally completed with the transfer of the last positions from UNMAS to DMAC in June 2018. The government paid salaries of 13 members of DMAC's total staff of 144 people. Most of the remainder are paid by UNMAS and a small number (27) by the international Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF).⁷ The government earmarked a payment of AFS20 million (approximately US\$250,000) for a humanitarian mine clearance project for the first time in 2019 but lengthy bureaucratic procedures meant the funding was not received until 2020.⁸ The government pledged additional funding of about US\$500,000 in 2020 for demining operations in Nangahar province's Achin district.⁹

UNMAS continued to support DMAC in 2019 employing 32 national and 3 international staff in 2019 providing technical advice, training, and capacity building. It expected to add two more international and one national staff in 2020. It also remained a major channel of funding, providing US\$17.4 million to the MAPA through the VTF for projects including survey, clearance, quality assurance, and risk education.¹⁰

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The MAPA has had a policy of including gender in mine action since 2014 and set gender mainstreaming as one of four goals of its 2016–20 strategic plan. It states that “achievable targets, reflecting prevailing circumstances and conditions, will be adopted to support and encourage progress wherever possible.”¹¹

Progress in promoting gender and diversity, however, appears to be slow. DMAC employed only four women among its staff of 194 as of the middle of 2019 while the MAPA employed only 167 women out of a total workforce of 6,772.¹² Women work in operational as well as administrative roles but employing women in field operations in particular remains challenging in Afghanistan’s deeply conservative society. Female deminers were employed for the first time in 2018 but operate in only one province, Bamyan. Mixed-gender explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and survey teams are, however, working across the country.

The gender strategy and Afghanistan’s national mine action standards (AMAS) for community liaison underscore the importance of including women and girls as well as boys and men in non-technical survey, and pre- and post-clearance impact assessments and for equal access to employment for women. The strategy called for implementing partners (IPs) to identify forums in which to access under-represented groups, including women and girls, and to ensure data collection and reporting was disaggregated for gender and age.¹³ The AMAS also refer to the importance of consulting representatives of different groups, such as tribal and religious leaders.¹⁴ EORE teams are required to include a female and male trainer.¹⁵

DMAC has a technical working group on gender and diversity working with IPs to promote implementation. DMAC’s review of IP project proposals also ensures gender issues are considered in operational planning. It operates a hotline taking calls from affected communities which it said also allows interests of minorities to be taken into account.¹⁶

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

DMAC operates an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation database (IMSMA NG) database and continued working with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) in 2019 on cleaning up data as well as preparing to upgrade the database to IMSMA Core. DMAC expected the transfer to be completed in 2021.¹⁷ DMAC also worked with the GICHD on installing the Mine Action Reporting System (MARS), a mobile system designed for data entry in the field. DMAC conducted two workshops with UNMAS and IPs to introduce the system, which was due to go into service after IPs completed field testing in 2020. DMAC had planned to introduce a cloud-based data warehouse in 2020 but reported the project was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁸

Afghanistan submits comprehensive Article 7 reports annually and DMAC’s information department produces a range of monthly, quarterly, and annual reports as well as reports on request and maps.¹⁹ DMAC also holds monthly data coordination meetings which IPs said had resulted in improvements, but that entry of survey and clearance data continued to be slow because of a shortage of trained information management staff in DMAC.

PLANNING AND TASKING

DMAC’s strategic plan for 2016–20 sets out four basic aims²⁰ but identifies mine clearance as an “overarching goal”. Afghanistan’s Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline extension request, drawn up with participation of implementing partners, foresaw completion of clearance of all known mine and ERW contamination by the requested Article 5 deadline of 2023 and this remains a benchmark against which DMAC measures progress.

DMAC also sets annual work plan with more specific targets determined by a matrix of indicators that takes account of civilian incidents, blockages caused by contamination, proximity to communities, and device types. For Afghan year 1398 (1 April 2019–30 March 2020), they included building capacity for tackling abandoned improvised mines, strengthening the quality management system, setting up a research and development unit to explore the application of new technologies, investigating new tools and methods for survey, finalising a policy on liability, and setting up a database to record details of all trained deminers.²¹ A shortfall in donor funding and insecurity ensures Afghanistan will not meet its APMBC Article 5 deadline but DMAC still aims to complete CMR clearance within its CCM Article 4 deadline.²²

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Afghanistan has comprehensive national mine action standards that are International Mine Action Standard (IMAS)-compatible and subject to regular review. CMR survey and clearance are addressed in AMAS 06.02 (Battle Area Clearance).²³

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Two national IPs cleared CMR in 2019. Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA) conducted five of the six tasks during the year and Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC) the other.²⁴ Most operators tackle some residual CMR in the course of clearing mined and battle areas.

Only manual clearance of CMR is conducted in Afghanistan.

DEMINER SAFETY

No accidents occurred during cluster munition clearance in 2019 but insecurity continued to pose a major threat to the sector and blocked access to many areas. The MAPA reported 22 security incidents in 2019 in the course of which three deminers were killed and a fourth was injured. DMAC said the three deminers who died were killed in an airstrike while working on their land. Fourteen deminers were abducted as part of extortion attempts by armed groups but later released unharmed after negotiations by community elders.²⁵

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

Afghanistan released 2.72km² of cluster munition-contaminated area in 2019, all of it through clearance.²⁶ However, of the 2.72km² cleared, Mine Action Review considered 1.65km² to be CMR clearance and 1.07km² to be clearance of other ERW.

SURVEY IN 2019

No cluster munition-contaminated area was cancelled or reduced through survey in 2019. Instead, non-technical survey identified four hazardous areas in the remote north-eastern areas covering a total of 3,259,627m².²⁷

CLEARANCE IN 2019

Although DMAC reported a total of 2.72km² for 2019, Mine Action Review does not consider the 1km² of clearance by DAFA in Nangarhar province as CMR clearance but as clearance of other ERW since only two submunitions were destroyed among total destruction of 1,207 items of unexploded ordnance. The 1.65km² considered by Mine Action Review as CMR clearance in 2019 was therefore a significant drop on the 4.24km² cleared the previous year, a decline that DMAC attributed to reduced funding. The 5.82km² of clearance recorded in Afghanistan's initial Article 7 Report (covering 2019)²⁸ represented the total area of tasks completed in 2019, including some started in 2018, and included area cleared in the previous year.²⁹

Contamination on the six tasks tackled in 2019, resulted in clearance of 86 submunitions, compared with 217 destroyed in 2018. Another 187 remnants were destroyed in spot tasks, three times the number destroyed in spot tasks in 2018.³⁰

Table 2: CMR clearance in 2019 (as reported by DMAC)³¹

Operator	Province	Areas cleared	Total subsurface clearance (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	UXO destroyed
ATC	Takhar	1	160,655	3	81
DAFA	Nangarhar	1	1,072,230	2	1,205
DAFA	Takhar	4	1,488,370	81	210
Totals		6	2,721,255	86	1,496

UXO = unexploded ordnance other than submunitions

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Afghanistan had more cluster munition-contaminated area to clear at the start of 2020 than a year earlier following the addition of four hazards to the database in 2019 bringing the total to seven. DMAC added two more CHAs totalling 1.67km² in June 2020. DMAC said it had received pledges of funding from the United States for clearance of CHAs in Paktia and from UNMAS for clearance of the CHAs in Nangahar.³² As a result, DMAC remained confident that Afghanistan would meet its March 2022 Article 4 deadline and set a target of completing clearance by the end of October 2021.³³

The main question marks over achieving that goal remained funding and security. Afghanistan reported the United States had agreed to fund clearance of the seven remaining cluster munition-contaminated areas during 2020.³⁴ It also expressed the hope that peace negotiations between the government and Taliban would help to facilitate access to cluster munition hazards in areas of conflict.

Table 3: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2019	1.65
2018	4.24
2017	2.89
2016	0
2015	0
Total	8.78

- 1 Email from Fazel Rahman, Project Manager Operations, DMAC, 25 February 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
- 2 Emails from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, Head of Planning and Programme, DMAC, 31 August and 1 September 2020.
- 3 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Email from DMAC, 11 April 2018; Statement of Afghanistan, CCM intersessional meetings (Clearance and Risk Education Session), Geneva, 15 April 2013.
- 6 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, DMAC, 3 April 2019.
- 7 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 20 July 2020.
- 8 Ibid. The funding was allocated for clearance of a total of 403,423m² in two districts of south-eastern Khost province.
- 9 Email from Mohammed Shafiq Yousufi, DMAC, 20 July 2020.
- 10 Email from Sohaila Hashemi, Communications and Advocacy Officer, UNMAS, 13 May 2020.
- 11 DMAC, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395-1399 (2016-2020), State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, undated but 2016, p. 17.
- 12 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 19. DMAC reported that at the end of 2019 it employed 144 staff and total manpower of MAPA humanitarian IPs amounted to 6,338. Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 13 DMAC, "Gender mainstreaming strategy of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan", undated but 2013, pp. 3-9.
- 14 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 17.
- 15 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 28 April 2020.
- 18 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 28 April 2020.
- 19 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 16.
- 20 The four goals are to: 1) facilitate development; 2) integrate mine action into other sectors such as health, education, agriculture and economic development; 3) prevent and mitigate the effects of landmines through clearance, risk education, victim assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction; and 4) mainstream gender and diversity.
- 21 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, DMAC, 3 April 2019.
- 22 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 28 April 2020.
- 23 Statement by Mohammed Shafiq, GICHD workshop, Geneva, 26 March 2019.
- 24 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
- 29 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 27 September 2020.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Emails from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 31 August and 1 September 2020.
- 33 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020; Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form F.
- 34 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020; Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form I.