

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

More than 3km<sup>2</sup> of battle area were cleared in emergency clearance in 2019, along with the destruction of more than 7,000 unexploded submunitions. In April 2020, YEMAC opened a coordination centre in Aden intended to strengthen programme management in areas controlled by the internationally recognised government.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Yemen should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- Yemen should comply with its obligations under international human rights law to clear cluster munition remnants (CMR) on territory under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Yemen Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) should expand support for international operators to accelerate training, survey and clearance.
- YEMAC should increase transparency by publishing regular, comprehensive reports on developments in its management, planning, and implementation of mine action.

## UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

YEMAC has reported the presence of CMR in six governorates but the extent is not known. Contamination is believed to be heavy in Saada and al-Jawf governorates as well as in Amran, Hodeida, Mawit, and Sana'a governorates, including in Sana'a City.<sup>1</sup>

Yemen had CMR contamination before 2015 but the escalation of armed conflict since 26 March 2015 has significantly increased both its extent and the threat to the civilian population, mainly as a result of airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition.<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch said it had recorded Saudi air strikes using cluster munitions dating back to 2009.<sup>3</sup> In December 2016, the organisation reported that 18 coalition attacks using cluster munitions since 2015 had killed at least 18 civilians and injured 74 more.<sup>4</sup>

Human rights groups have documented the use of United States (US) BLU-63 (Sana'a City), BLU-97 combined effect submunitions (Saada governorate), CBU-58 and CBU-105 sensor-fused munitions (Amran and Sana'a governorates), Brazilian Astros II munitions (Saada governorate and city), and British BL755 submunitions (Hajjah governorate). They have also reported use of ZP-39 artillery-delivered submunitions of indeterminate origin.<sup>5</sup>

No air strikes using cluster munitions by the Saudi-led coalition have been recorded since May 2017.<sup>6</sup> The coalition, however, has continued air strikes into 2019, contributing to Yemen's already significant contamination by explosive remnants of war (ERW), including a wide range of rockets, mortars, and artillery shells.<sup>7</sup> There is also a significant threat from anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, including mines of an improvised nature (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines 2020* report for details).

## NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Management of mine action in Yemen is divided along the lines of the conflict that erupted in March 2015 between the Houthi (Ansar Allah) movement controlling the capital Sana'a and much of the north and west, and the internationally recognised government (IRG), operationally based in Aden and the south. The Sana'a-based inter-ministerial National Mine Action Committee (NMAC), which previously formulated national mine action policy, is no longer recognised by the IRG, which reported it had disbanded in 2019. In the south, YEMAC has fulfilled the double role of regulator responsible for policy and planning while also serving as the sole national operator.<sup>8</sup>

YEMAC was established in Sana'a in January 1999 as a national mine action agency and nominally maintains a national role today, with more than 1,000 staff working in 20 of Yemen's 21 governorates as at late 2019.<sup>9</sup> In practice, however, YEMAC has split into two, centred round Sana'a and Aden. The Sana'a office employed around 500 staff, working in northern governorates controlled by the Houthi forces. From Aden, YEMAC operated with some 550 staff mainly active in 2019 in Abyan, Aden, Amran, Lahej, and Taiz governorates.<sup>10</sup>

In April 2020, YEMAC opened a coordination centre in Aden intended to strengthen programme management in areas controlled by the IRG. The centre is intended to facilitate cooperation with international organisations and will have responsibility for accrediting them. It will also have departments for planning, information management, and quality assurance/quality control.<sup>11</sup> The centre convened its first coordination meeting on 9 April 2020, but is expected to take up to 18 months to become fully operational as staff undergo training.<sup>12</sup>

YEMAC is supported by Regional Executive Mine Action Branches (REMBAs) in Aden, set up in 1999; al-Mukalla (Hadramout governorate), which opened in March 2004; and Saada (April 2016).<sup>13</sup> The extent to which they are still operational is not clear. YEMAC also has an office in Mokha and in 2019 opened offices in Taiz to support operations around Hodeida and in Marib for operations in al-Jawf governorate.<sup>14</sup> YEMAC said it had set up "skeleton" offices using its own resources pending receipt of financial support for them from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).<sup>15</sup>

UNDP provides technical and administrative support to YEMAC through a project carried out by three international and ten national staff working from a number of different offices. The UN supported mine action in Yemen from 1999 to 2003 through a programme implemented by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). From 2003, the programme came under full national management. UNDP deployed an international adviser to YEMAC at the end of 2014 to support planning and programme management. By the end of 2019, its Sanaa office comprised two international staff, including a chief technical adviser, and three national staff; in Aden it had four international and two national staff. UNDP also had national field staff in Hodaydah, Mokha and Mukalla.<sup>16</sup>

Yemen's mine action is funded by international donors. UNDP estimated Yemen's annual funding needs at some US\$16 million. At the end of 2019, total donor funding provided or pledged amounted to \$20.8 million up to the end of June 2021.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Saudi Arabia's King Salman Fund agreed with Dynasafe Middle East Project Management in 2018 to finance a US\$40 million demining project.<sup>18</sup> The fund provided a further US\$30.5 million for the project for the year from 1 June 2019 to 30 May 2020<sup>19</sup> and in June 2020 said it would fund the operation for a third year.<sup>20</sup>

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Yemen made no reference to gender and diversity in the mine action plans and priorities set out in its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in 2019.

UNDP reported placing emphasis on mainstreaming gender principles into plans aiming for equal participation as beneficiaries, employees, and decision-makers in mine action. UNDP's goals included ensuring survey information is collected by organisations representing women and girls as well as men and boys; that data are disaggregated by gender and age; and that risk education materials address the risks associated with all gender roles.<sup>21</sup>

The extent to which YEMAC has embraced these ideas is unclear. In 2019, it rejected a suggestion that women might be included in training for demining teams. Employment of women in mine action, however, faces significant obstacles, in part due to their position as responsible for family care. DDG was unable some women candidates for recruitment in the face of resistance from family members. Women in management positions often face bullying and disrespect from male subordinates.<sup>22</sup>

Among international operators, Danish Demining Group (DDG) employed a female international as head of programme and six women nationals among its 25 staff in 2019. Women employees included a risk education/non-technical survey officer and four risk education staff, three of whom were also trained as surveyors. DDG also employed a woman medic.<sup>23</sup>

Risk education is conducted separately for women, often by women staff, to encourage women's participation. DDG has found that including women in non-technical survey/community liaison activities is difficult as men often take the lead in field activities and tend to overlook the participation of women.<sup>24</sup>

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

YEMAC with support from UNDP and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) was preparing a major upgrade of its information management in 2020. YEMAC has operated an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database but its 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline extension request described it as "outdated" and "not usable".<sup>25</sup> The GICHD prepared to install IMSMA Core funded by the United States and UNDP, which added an information specialist to its Aden staff in 2019, expecting a soft launch of the system in mid-2020.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, UNDP also worked with YEMAC on developing data collection forms.<sup>27</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

Yemen does not have a current strategic plan or annual work plans for tackling mines, CMR, or ERW. Mine action in 2019 and 2020 continued to be conducted on an emergency basis. Yemen's recent conflicts "have changed the extent and complexity of contamination dramatically and in many cases, YEMAC is neither trained nor equipped to deal."<sup>28</sup>

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Yemen's national mine action standards were based on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) when they were drawn up in 2007, predating most of Yemen's CMR contamination. YEMAC has acknowledged that the standards were obsolete and said standing operating procedures (SOPs) based on the standards were not consistently applied by its clearance personnel.<sup>29</sup> YEMAC was in contact with the GICHD on developing national standards and the new coordination centre, as one of its first acts, started reviewing a draft of interim national standards.<sup>30</sup>

### OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

YEMAC is believed to have conducted most of the CMR clearance to date as the only operator working in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, which are the main areas of CMR contamination. YEMAC also remained Yemen's biggest operator, with the number of personnel reportedly rising to more than 1,000 in 2019. They included around 500 staff in the north who were active in Sana'a, the northern-most governorate of Saada, bordering Saudi Arabia, and northern districts of Almaran governorate.<sup>31</sup>

SafeLane/Dynasafe, the only international organisation conducting clearance in 2019, with funding of US\$40 million from Saudi Arabia's government through the King Salman Relief and Rehabilitation Fund, reported employing 19 internationals in 2019 along with some 304 national staff, mainly seconded from YEMAC.<sup>32</sup> It expected the number of personnel to rise to around 400 in the course of 2019 and reported operating 32 multi-task teams working on the west coast and in Lahej, Marib, and Shabwah governorates.<sup>33</sup> SafeLane's operating results are not recorded in YEMAC's database and it did not respond to Mine Action Review's request for information.

### DEMINER SAFETY

Yemen's mine action programme personnel have sustained heavy casualties in the past two years from landmines and improvised explosive devices. Casualties attributable to CMR are, however, not known.

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Operating in a context of continuing conflict, YEMAC gives priority to delivering an emergency response to mitigate the threat to civilians posed by all forms of explosive hazard rather than focusing on specific devices or large area clearance.

YEMAC reportedly cleared a total area of 3,115,830m<sup>2</sup> of mine- and ERW-affected area, including CMR-contaminated area, in 2019. In the process it destroyed 7,071 unexploded submunitions, compared with 79 reported destroyed the previous year.<sup>34</sup>

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- 1 Interviews with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, 17 February 2016; and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in Geneva, 6 February 2017.
- 2 UNDP, Grant Progress Report for 1 October–31 December 2015, 25 January 2016.
- 3 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015, at: [bit.ly/32sdP0x](http://bit.ly/32sdP0x).
- 4 Human Rights Watch, "Brazil-made cluster munitions wound children", 23 December 2016, at: [bit.ly/32ub4vE](http://bit.ly/32ub4vE).
- 5 Ibid.; Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015; Amnesty International, "Yemen: children among civilians killed and maimed in cluster bomb 'minefields'", 23 May 2016; and Legal Centre for Rights and Development, Sana'a, "The bombing of civilians and residential neighbourhoods with international forbidden weapons (cluster munitions)", undated but 2018.
- 6 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014", UN doc. A/HRC/36/33, 5 September 2017, p. 9.
- 7 See, e.g., Briefing to the United Nations (UN) Security Council by Mark Lowcock, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York, 15 April 2019.
- 8 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 7 Report (covering 2018), Form A.
- 9 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, pp. 7, 14.
- 10 Interview with Ameen Saleh Alaqlili, Director, YEMAC, in Geneva, 13 February 2020.
- 11 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, p. 12.
- 12 Email from Stephen Robinson, Senior Technical Adviser, UNDP, 27 May 2020.
- 13 Email from Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP, 22 July 2018.
- 14 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 5 and 22; and email from Stephen Robinson, UNDP, 21 July 2020.
- 15 APMBC Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form D.
- 16 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, p. 9; and interview with Stephen Robinson, UNDP, in Geneva, 20 July 2020.
- 17 Ibid., p. 27; UNDP, Phase V, "Emergency Mine Action Project", Project Document, p. 1.
- 18 Email from Chris Clark, Global Operations Director, Dynasafe MineTech, 6 August 2018.
- 19 "Report of the Assistance Provided by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center to the Republic of Yemen", undated but 2020, p. 89.
- 20 SafeLane Global, Press release, 3 June 2020.
- 21 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, p. 21.
- 22 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, Regional Programme Advisor – Middle East, DDG, 16 April 2020.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 10.
- 26 Email from Stephen Robinson, UNDP, 27 May 2020.
- 27 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, p. 12.
- 28 Ibid., p. 21.
- 29 Ibid., p. 17; and 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 16.
- 30 Email from Stephen Robinson, UNDP, 27 May 2020.
- 31 Interview with Ameen Saleh Alaqlili, YEMAC, in Geneva, 13 February 2020; UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, p. 28.
- 32 Email from Chris Clark, SafeLane Global, 17 April 2019.
- 33 Information from SafeLane Global website, accessed at [bit.ly/2Xcc8mp](http://bit.ly/2Xcc8mp).
- 34 UNDP, "Emergency Mine Action Project, Annual Progress Report 2019", 20 January 2020, p. 14.