

# AFGHANISTAN



## CLEARING THE MINES 2020

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2023  
NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

### KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)  
MINE CONTAMINATION:

**MASSIVE, 150 KM<sup>2</sup>**  
(MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE)

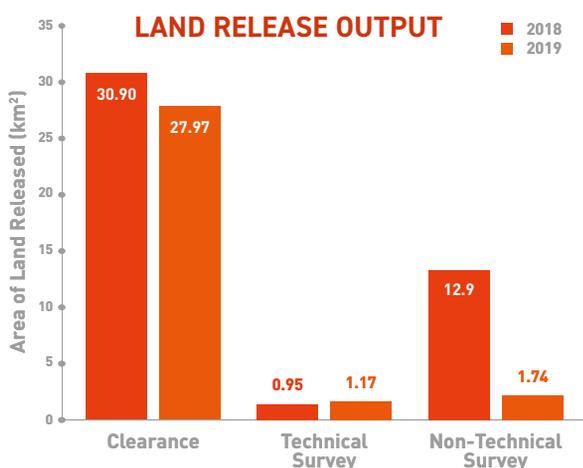
AP MINE  
CLEARANCE IN 2019

**27.97 KM<sup>2</sup>**

AP MINES  
DESTROYED IN 2019

**7,807**

(INCLUDING 334 DESTROYED  
IN SPOT TASKS)



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **LOW**

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The amount of land released in 2019 dipped from the previous year although by a slightly smaller percentage than the drop in international donor funding. The Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) introduced a national standard for clearing mines of an improvised nature (called "Abandoned Improvised Mines" (AIMs)) in March 2019 and focused more attention on their survey and clearance.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- DMAC should review land release standards and practices to encourage greater application of non-technical survey/cancellation and technical survey/area reduction.
- Afghanistan should revise and update its Article 5 deadline extension request to provide a timeline to take account of lower levels of donor funding and the additional challenge of mines of an improvised nature.
- The Afghan government should provide funding to mine action, particularly in areas where survey and clearance facilitate priority national development projects.

## ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2019)	Score (2018)	Performance Commentary
<b>UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION</b> (20% of overall score)	7	7	Afghanistan has a good, if still incomplete, knowledge of pre-2001 anti-personnel mine contamination but continues to add significant amounts of previously unrecorded mined area to the database. There is only rudimentary knowledge of post-2001 contamination, including improvised mines, which may now be more extensive in extent and pose the main threat to civilians.
<b>NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT</b> (10% of overall score)	8	8	The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) completed its transition to national management in 2018 but DMAC salaries are largely donor funded and the government has not yet made a significant financial contribution to the programme. A modest payment pledged in 2019 was received in 2020 and was followed by a pledge of further government funding for clearance.
<b>GENDER AND DIVERSITY</b> (10% of overall score)	6	6	DMAC mainstreamed gender and diversity in its 2016–2020 strategic plan. Practice in implementing partners lags behind formal commitment to the goals while custom in deeply conservative Afghan society limits the extent of women's recruitment, particularly in operations. Two female teams who conducted demining in Bamyán were reassigned to battle area tasks in the same province; women have not been able to work as deminers elsewhere. Mixed-gender explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and survey teams are, however, working across the country.
<b>INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING</b> (10% of overall score)	8	8	DMAC has an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation database that provides a range of reports and extensive disaggregated information. DMAC continues to work with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) preparing to upgrade to IMSMA Core and to adopt new mobile data gathering technologies. Operators say DMAC's data entry can be slow. Afghanistan routinely submits comprehensive Article 7 transparency reports though often late. National operators are not proactive reporting on their operations.
<b>PLANNING AND TASKING</b> (10% of overall score)	8	8	Afghanistan produced a model extension request in 2012 and although funding shortfalls and insecurity ensure the MAPA will not achieve its objectives DMAC produced detailed work plans in consultation with operators that seek to address emerging challenges.
<b>LAND RELEASE SYSTEM</b> (20% of overall score)	6	6	The MAPA has national mine action standards in Dari and English that are subject to regular review and in 2019 it introduced new standards for clearance of mines of an improvised nature. Land release is achieved almost entirely by full clearance and DMAC consulted the GICHD with a view to increasing operational efficiency.
<b>LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE</b> (20% of overall score)	7	7	The MAPA has released an average of more than 25km <sup>2</sup> a year through clearance over the last five years and reached that level again in 2019 despite financial and security challenges.
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>Overall Programme Performance: GOOD</b>

## DEMINING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
- 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 and Dog Centre (MDC)
- Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR)
- 22 commercial companies accredited in 2019, one company (Trust Demining Company) reported active in anti-personnel mine clearance

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

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

### OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Afghanistan had more than 207km<sup>2</sup> of contamination by conventional and improvised anti-personnel mines at the end of 2019 (see Table 1), making it among the world's most heavily mined countries.<sup>1</sup> A definitive understanding of the extent of its contamination remains elusive due to conflict that continues to restrict survey while also adding contamination by mines of an improvised nature.

**Table 1: Mined area by type of contamination (at end 2019)<sup>2</sup>**

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total areas	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Anti-personnel mines	1,662	119,920,460	179	50,902,554	1,841	170,823,014
Improvised mines	218	15,565,719	42	21,222,215	260	36,787,934
<b>AP mine total</b>	<b>1,880</b>	<b>135,486,179</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>72,124,769</b>	<b>2,101</b>	<b>207,610,948</b>
Anti-vehicle mines	936	164,455,642	327	146,561,256	1,263	311,016,898
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,816</b>	<b>299,941,821</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>218,686,025</b>	<b>3,364</b>	<b>518,627,846</b>

CHAs = Confirmed Hazardous Areas SHAs = Suspected Hazardous Areas

Afghanistan reported anti-personnel mine contamination dating from before 2001 at 170.8km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2019 (see Table 1), down from 178km<sup>2</sup> a year earlier as a result of land released through survey and clearance during 2019. DMAC also reported a total of 36.8km<sup>2</sup> of improvised mine contamination. These estimates, however, significantly understate levels of contamination.

In the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline extension request that Afghanistan submitted in 2012 it proposed to conduct non-technical survey in all 400 of the country's districts. By the end of 2016, it had completed surveying 295 districts but suspended the project due to funding shortfalls and insecurity, leaving 105 remaining to be surveyed. Since then, some surveyed districts have additional contamination as a result of continued fighting and there is little doubt that districts that have yet to be surveyed will add further contamination to the database.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 2: Pre-2001 anti-personnel mined area by region (at end 2019)<sup>4</sup>**

Region	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total CHA/SHA	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Central	415	26,332,126	35	4,852,466	450	31,184,592
East	124	11,830,306	5	534,900	129	12,365,206
North	216	7,596,773	9	2,451,375	225	10,048,148
North East	616	41,362,130	15	8,965,142	631	50,327,272
South	83	11,376,468	60	8,977,770	143	20,354,238
South East	146	11,388,016	30	5,750,344	176	17,138,360
West	62	10,034,641	25	19,370,557	87	29,405,198
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,662</b>	<b>119,920,460</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>50,902,554</b>	<b>1,841</b>	<b>170,823,014</b>

Most mines emplaced in recent years are improvised devices, which now pose a greater humanitarian threat than factory-made anti-personnel mines.<sup>5</sup> The conflict in which they are being used has also prevented an accurate determination of the extent of improvised contamination but DMAC is clear that it far exceeds the 36.8km<sup>2</sup> so far recorded in the database (see Table 3). Afghanistan reported in May 2019 that an area of 465km<sup>2</sup> may be affected by abandoned improvised mines.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 3: Abandoned improvised mine contamination by region (at end 2019)**

Region	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total CHA/SHA	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Central	2	591,675	0	0	2	591,675
East	59	1,514,384	10	374,585	69	1,888,969
North	2	988,874	0	0	2	988,874
North East	15	355,271	7	99,231	22	454,502
South	138	12,116,490	25	20,748,399	163	32,864,889
<b>Totals</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>15,566,694</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>21,222,215</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>36,788,909</b>

Most of Afghanistan's known mine contamination resulted from the decade-long war of resistance that followed the Soviet invasion of 1979, the 1992–96 internal armed conflict, and the 1996–2001 fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. The intervention of the United States (US)-led coalition in late 2001 added considerable quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Continuing conflict between the government and the Taliban and other armed groups is still adding contamination.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the challenge from landmines, Afghanistan contends with huge areas affected by explosive remnants of war (ERW). DMAC reported total mine and ERW contamination of 1,603km<sup>2</sup> remaining at the end of 2019, of which it said nearly two-thirds occurred after 2001. It included North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) firing ranges covering 630km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>8</sup>

DMAC has also identified 299km<sup>2</sup> of what it designates as "initial hazardous areas". Most areas were subjected to a form of rapid survey at the request of the National Security Council but need further survey before they can be recorded as SHAs or CHAs. More than 60% of the total area is attributed to ERW but it includes 63km<sup>2</sup> of suspected AIM contamination located largely in the south, 6km<sup>2</sup> of anti-personnel mined area located largely in central provinces, and 48km<sup>2</sup> of anti-vehicle mined area, almost entirely located in the south.<sup>9</sup>

## NEW CONTAMINATION

DMAC added 56km<sup>2</sup> of previously unrecorded ERW contamination to its database as a result of survey in 2019. It included nearly 21.7km<sup>2</sup> of anti-personnel or mixed mine contamination, almost entirely dating back to before 2001 and 3.2km<sup>2</sup> of abandoned improvised mines resulting from recent conflict.<sup>10</sup>

## 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 a separate technical working group was set up to deal with AIMS.<sup>11</sup>

The MAPA is nationally managed but in 2019 remained almost entirely internationally funded. Since 2012, it has transitioned from being a project of the UN 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 with 27 paid by the International Trust Fund.<sup>12</sup> The government earmarked a payment of AFS 20 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.<sup>13</sup> The government pledged additional funding of about US\$500,000 in 2020 for demining operations in Nangahar province's Achin district.<sup>14</sup>

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 Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) for projects including survey, clearance, quality assurance, and risk education. UNMAS reported advising DMAC on developing standards for survey and clearance of AIM and co-hosted with HALO Trust a workshop in Kabul on non-technical survey of AIM-affected areas. It conducted workshops in Kabul covering operational planning, conflict sensitivity training, and mainstreaming gender in mine action and a series of workshops on negotiating humanitarian access held in Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif. It also led an overhaul of explosive ordnance risk education.<sup>15</sup>

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) provided third party monitoring of all mine action and conventional weapons disposal projects funded by the US Department of State working with 18 staff, including 6 internationals. In 2019, it monitored 15 contracts worth approximately US\$13 million: 1 grant for non-technical survey and 14 other grants for non-technical survey and clearance.<sup>16</sup>

## 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.”<sup>17</sup>

Progress 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> The AMAS also refer to the importance of consulting representatives of different groups, such as tribal and religious leaders.<sup>20</sup> Explosive ordnance risk education teams are required to include a female and male trainer but deploying women as deminers has so far been achieved only in one province, Bamyan, because of cultural sensitivities.<sup>21</sup>

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.<sup>22</sup>

Converting policy into practice, however, remains a challenge. DMAC’s gender focal point resigned in October 2018 and the post remained vacant for almost a year. The next appointee stayed half a year before leaving for personal reasons at the end of March. Similar issues hold back progress among IPs. DMAC reported that IPs did not have a dedicated gender focal point and constantly rotated the role among staff with other duties.<sup>23</sup>

For Danish Demining Group (DDG) – the first and only IP to employ female deminers – women made up 61 of its 487 staff (12%). DDG increased its female demining component from one team of eight to two teams totalling sixteen, plus two women paramedics in 2019. The teams worked in Bamyan and after completing demining were assigned to battle area clearance of firing ranges in the same province.<sup>24</sup> DDG employed another 29 women as risk educators and facilitators, four as community engagement officers, and two as QA officers, along with five cleaners and a cook.<sup>25</sup> The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), working in the remote north-eastern province of Badakshan, said local religious tradition prevented it from employing any women.<sup>26</sup>

The HALO Trust’s end-year staff of 2,521 included 23 women and it anticipated a slight increase in their number in 2020. HALO employed women in mixed-gender quick-response teams, risk education, and impact monitoring, but also underscored social and cultural challenges to women working in the field. In HALO Afghanistan’s head office and regional offices women also worked in information management, donor relations, and finance. Its field surveys contain specific questions to ensure inclusion of different groups in the community.<sup>27</sup>

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## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

DMAC operates an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) NG database and continued working with the 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.<sup>28</sup> DMAC also worked with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (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.<sup>29</sup>

Afghanistan consistently submits comprehensive Article 7 reports and DMAC’s information department produces a range of monthly, quarterly, and annual reports as well as reports on request and maps.<sup>30</sup> 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.

Afghanistan continues to measure the progress of mine clearance and international funding that supports it against targets set in its Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in April 2012. The request earned praise as a model for its comprehensive overview of all aspects of Afghanistan’s response to explosive hazards, including milestones for clearance. After seven years of the extension period, Afghanistan had received 71 per cent of projected funding<sup>31</sup> and corresponding clearance targets were in need of updating to match financial circumstances.

## PLANNING AND TASKING

The national strategic plan for 2016–20 reaffirms Afghanistan's broad commitment to the APMB and implementing its Article 5 obligations, but has four broad goals: facilitating development; engaging with other sectors and government departments to have them include mine action in their development plans; preventive action to reduce the impact of mines and ERW, including by enhanced resource mobilisation, completing survey of all communities, explosive ordnance risk education, and keeping its extension request work plan on track; and gender and diversity mainstreaming.<sup>32</sup>

DMAC's annual work plan sets more specific targets according to priorities determined by a matrix of indicators that takes account of blockages caused by contamination, proximity to communities, and device types. For Afghan year 1398 (1 April 2019–30 March 2020), DMAC targeted release of 44.7km<sup>2</sup> of pre-2001 mine and ERW contamination, non-technical survey of 29 districts, and post-demining impact assessments in 85 contaminated areas, along with 12 livelihood surveys.<sup>33</sup>

In 2020, DMAC's priorities for survey included areas where casualties occurred, with a focus on improvised mine casualties and districts where fighting raised the likelihood of explosive hazards. DMAC planned to focus more clearance resources on abandoned improvised mines.<sup>34</sup> The HALO Trust cleared a number of areas of improvised mines in 2019 as a pilot project and together with other IPs carried out training in survey and clearance in preparation for operations on a larger scale.<sup>35</sup> DMAC targets for 2020 included release of 19.5km<sup>2</sup> of areas affected by AIMS, 40km<sup>2</sup> affected by anti-personnel mines, and 45km<sup>2</sup> by anti-vehicle mines.<sup>36</sup>

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

The MAPA has comprehensive national mine action standards that DMAC reviews annually and amends in consultation with IPs.

The GICHD noted in a 2019 capacity assessment that DMAC is "proactive in introducing new AMAS as and when needed" but had not updated them regularly. It noted that most of the AMAS were developed between 2011 and 2013 and some chapters needed to be reviewed and updated to promote greater efficiency.<sup>37</sup> DMAC and the GICHD are due to review land release standards and are expected to undertake revisions to strengthen non-technical survey and increase operational efficiency.

DMAC introduced a policy and standing operating procedure (SOP) for environmental protection in mine action in 2018, and in 2019 Afghanistan became the first country programme to release a standard for tackling mines of an improvised nature. AMAS 06.10, Abandoned Improvised Mine Clearance, was released in March 2019 emphasising the neutrality of humanitarian mine action. The standard requires operators to get prior written consent from local authorities and other "key local stakeholders", including armed opposition groups, and confirmation by the party that laid devices that they are abandoned and that clearance may proceed. It stipulates clearance should take place only in a rural or semi-rural setting. All action to neutralise AIMS should be conducted remotely or semi-remotely, and where possible devices should be destroyed in situ.<sup>38</sup>

DMAC also updated AMAS 03.02 for planning and prioritisation in 2019, among other points developing procedures for IPs seeking to alter projects they have started.<sup>39</sup> HALO Trust was due to deliver an AIM survey and clearance training course for national IPs in 2020 covering basic and advanced non-technical survey; basic, intermediate and advanced clearance; a train-the-trainer course; and an AIM QM course for DMAC personnel.<sup>40</sup>

The very high percentage of land released through full clearance – consistently around 90% of total land release – has called into question the efficiency of the MAPA's land release practices. A GICHD assessment in 2019 observed that the emphasis on costs-per-square-metre cleared in tendering and contractual arrangements did not encourage operators to apply the full range of land release options, including survey. It recommended operations should be based on stronger evidence-based decision-making and that a review of land release applications should probe the reasons for the high percentage of full clearance and consider possible alternatives. To increase efficiency, it also recommended standardised training in non-technical survey and technical survey.<sup>41</sup>

## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

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Mine survey and clearance are conducted mainly by six national and three international IPs. The MAPA operated with a total of 346 operational teams in 2019: 204 manual clearance teams, 33 mechanical clearance teams, 40 survey teams, 35 explosive ordnance risk education teams, 31 teams conducting explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and weapons and ammunition disposal, and 3 victim assistance teams. DMAC reported total manpower of 7,050 engaged in all areas of mine action in 2019 (including risk education and victim assistance) and expected the number to rise in 2020.<sup>42</sup>

After a big expansion in capacity in 2018, DDG employed a total staff of 487, including 324 in operations, conducting survey and clearance in eight provinces, including Bamiyan, Baghlan, Balkh, Kabul, Kunar, Nangarhar, Panjshir, and Samangan. DDG was the only IP employing women deminers, deploying two teams in Bamiyan province, but also had 29 women working as risk education instructors.<sup>43</sup>

FSD worked in remote northern Badakhshan province bordering Tajikistan with total capacity of 53 staff in 2019. This consisted of two teams accredited for non-technical survey, EOD, and mine clearance, and one risk education team. Despite the small size of the operation it clears large numbers of the small Soviet-era Butterfly mines that contaminate the area. FSD teams travel cross-border from Tajikistan to reach their operating area and because of logistical and access difficulties for DMAC staff FSD is quality assured by the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre.<sup>44</sup>

The HALO Trust remained much the biggest operator in Afghanistan although the total number of employees decreased from 2,885 staff at the start of the year to 2,521 at the end, mainly because of the end of a five-year United Kingdom-funded contract. In the process, the number of manual demining teams fell from 75 teams to 54 with a total of 1,474 deminers. HALO also finished the year with 17 survey/EOD teams and 21 mechanical teams. It expected further staff cuts as other UK funding came to an end in 2020.<sup>45</sup>

HALO, however, was increasing capacity to address Afghanistan's AIM contamination. It increased the number of multi-task AIM teams conducting survey, EOD, and risk education from two in 2018 to twelve by the end of 2019. It also combined with two national IPs, Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA) and Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), in setting up 11 mixed gender and multi-task quick response teams to undertake non-technical survey, risk education, EOD call-outs, small task clearance, and the collection of victim data. The teams help planning and project design by confirming hazardous areas and reporting on local security conditions and other issues that may affect access.<sup>46</sup>

National IPs did not respond to requests for details of their operations and results.

## DEMINER SAFETY

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DMAC reported one deminer killed and six injured in demining accidents in 2019. It attributed the casualties to carelessness, weakness in command group supervision, and attempts to accelerate clearance. One civilian was injured by a mine detonation in a location that had been cleared in 2017 and another was killed by an unspecified ERW in an area cleared in 2018.<sup>47</sup>

The biggest threat to deminers remained insecurity which 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.<sup>48</sup> Most abduction incidents appear to involve extortion attempts by Taliban demanding payment of taxes. HALO Trust reported five such incidents but said they were resolved without payment for release of people or equipment.<sup>49</sup>

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## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

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Afghanistan released a total of 30.9km<sup>2</sup> of mined area through survey and clearance in 2019, 9% less than the previous year but close to the level maintained in the last four years. Clearance accounted for 90% of the total area released in 2019, underscoring the limited contribution of cancellation and reduction to land release in Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup>

## SURVEY IN 2019

DMAC reported release of a total of 2.9km<sup>2</sup> through cancellation and area reduction in 2019, but discrepancies between results reported by DMAC and some IPs left uncertainty about the exact extent of the land released.<sup>51</sup>

DMAC's data attributed release of 1.74km<sup>2</sup> to cancellation through non-technical survey (see Table 4), a sharp reduction from 2018 when 12.9km<sup>2</sup> was cancelled, mainly as a result of resurvey by HALO Trust quick response teams which accounted for 11km<sup>2</sup> of the total. A further 1.17km<sup>2</sup> was released in 2019 through area reduction (see Table 5).<sup>52</sup>

The MAPA changed the focus of non-technical survey in 2019. A workshop in March 2019 concluded that the Mine/ERW Impact Free Community Survey (MEIFCS) included in Afghanistan's Article 5 deadline extension request should be shelved because of mounting obstacles to implementation posed by lack of funding and shrinking access.<sup>53</sup> DMAC instead concentrated non-technical survey in 2019 on two projects. The biggest, targeting 30 districts in 14 provinces, aimed to capture explosive ordnance contamination resulting from combat and did not address landmines. The second, concentrated on central, eastern, north-eastern, and southern regions, aiming to record contamination by both improvised and "legacy" mines.<sup>54</sup>

HALO Trust said its quick response teams resurveyed large SHAs and CHAs converting them into smaller polygons and in the process achieving significant cancellation and area reduction. HALO said its teams cancelled 700,469m<sup>2</sup> in seven provinces in 2019, down from a little over 1km<sup>2</sup> the previous year, but it released 2.56km<sup>2</sup> through area reduction compared with 0.2 km<sup>2</sup> reduced in 2018, more than half of it in four districts of northern Samangan province.<sup>55</sup>

**Table 4: Cancellation through non-technical survey in 2019<sup>56</sup>**

Operator	Province	Area cancelled (m <sup>2</sup> )
ATC	Parwan	1,339
DAFA	Baghlan	5,000
DMAC	Baghlan	1,027
HALO	Baghlan, Farah, Ghazni, Kapisa, Nuristan, Partika, Paktia, Parwan	999,749
MCPA	Helmand, Maydan Wardak, Sari Pul, Zabul	726,487
OMAR	Parwan	2,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,735,602</b>

**Table 5: Reduction through technical survey in 2019<sup>57</sup>**

Operator	Province	Area reduced (m <sup>2</sup> )
ATC	Baghlan	58,120
DAFA	Baghlan, Kapisa	20,467
DDG	Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyan, Kabul, Nangarhar, Panjshir	313,637
HALO	Baghlan, Kabul, Laghman, Panjshir, Parwan	546,173
MCPA	Zabul	75,782
OMAR	Baghlan, Kabul, Kapisa, Logar, Parwan	151,439
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,165,618</b>

## CLEARANCE IN 2019

DMAC reported that IPs released 27.9km<sup>2</sup> through clearance in 2019 (see Table 6), nearly 10% below the 2018 level. National IPs together cleared 43% of the total, releasing 12.1km<sup>2</sup>. HALO Trust accounted for almost half the area released. In the process, IPs also destroyed fewer anti-personnel mines: 7,452 through clearance and 334 in roving EOD tasks for a total of 7,786 mines destroyed in 2019 compared with a total of 8,859 in 2018. DMAC attributed the outcome in part to sparser levels of contamination as clearance progresses to remoter minefields.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, HALO and DAFA conducted small-scale clearance of AIMS in southern Afghanistan releasing 84,972m<sup>2</sup> and destroying 21 items. DAFA cleared 25,677m<sup>2</sup> in Helmand province reportedly destroying 1 AIM. HALO worked in Helmand and Ghazni provinces, clearing around 59,295m<sup>2</sup> and 20 devices.

**Table 6: Mine clearance in 2019<sup>59</sup>**

Operator	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Area	269,055	29	0	22
ATC	4,964,011	429	18	279
DAFA	2,708,707	265	3	290
DDG	1,748,687	450	0	696
FSD	326,751	1,090	0	68
HALO Trust <sup>60</sup>	13,710,302	4,771	0	439
MCPA	1,329,584	25	0	46
OMAR	2,885,086	393	0	289
SDC	22,195	0	0	0
TDC	8,642	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27,973,020</b>	<b>7,452</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2,129</b>

## ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the 10-year extension granted by States Parties in 2013), Afghanistan 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 2023. Afghanistan will not meet this deadline.

Afghanistan set out detailed timelines for completing clearance of all ERW in its first Article 5 extension but will need to request a second extension to its Article 5 deadline in 2022. As one of the world's most heavily mine contaminated countries it will not complete clearance by 2025 either. Continuing conflict also leaves Afghanistan unable realistically to set a target for completion.

The key obstacles remain unchanged:

- Since starting the extension period, Afghanistan has never received the levels of funding required to achieve its targets. In 1398 (April 2019-March 2020), the MAPA received \$45.3 million, less than half the amount targeted. For Year 1399, donors had committed to provide around \$24 million as of February 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic has added uncertainty to funding prospects.
- Conflict limits access for survey and clearance teams, preventing an accurate determination of the extent of contamination and adding additional explosive hazards.
- Insecurity means that even in areas where clearance continues, access often requires lengthy negotiation with local communities and armed opposition groups, particularly in relation to clearance of abandoned improvised mines.

**Table 7: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance**

Year	Area cleared (km <sup>2</sup> )
2019	27.97
2018	30.90
2017	28.12
2016	27.12
2015	13.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>127.55</b>

## PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

Afghanistan's national mine action strategy makes no provision for tackling residual contamination. The issue is not a priority given the high levels of remaining contamination but the GICHD is recommending DMAC plan to include it in the next MAPA strategy.<sup>61</sup> The GICHD observed that further support was needed to develop definitions and approaches to residual risk management.

- 1 Email from Fazel Rahman, Project Manager Operations, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 2 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 28 April 2020.
- 3 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 The United Nations identified 650 civilian casualties (including 275 killed and 365 injured) caused by pressure-plate devices in 2019. UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, Report, 22 February 2020.
- 6 Statement of Afghanistan, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 23 May 2019.
- 7 See, e.g., reports that armed opposition groups mined the highway linking Kabul and Ghazni during fighting in August 2018: "Intense fighting as Taliban presses to take Afghan city", Reuters, 12 August 2018.
- 8 MAPA Fast Facts, Quarterly Update for 4th quarter of Afghan year 1397 (April 2018 – March 2019).
- 9 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 28 April and 3 June 2020.
- 10 This included 18.4km<sup>2</sup> of anti-personnel mines and 3.2km<sup>2</sup> of mixed mine contamination.
- 11 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, DMAC, 3 April 2019.
- 12 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 12 July 2020.
- 13 Ibid. The funding was allocated for clearance of a total of 403,423m<sup>2</sup> in two districts of south-eastern Khost province.
- 14 Email from Mohammed Shafiq Yousufi, DMAC, 20 July 2020.
- 15 Email from Sohaila Hashemi, Communications and Advocacy Officer, UNMAS, 13 May 2020.
- 16 Email from Mats Hektor, Senior Technical Adviser – EOD, NPA, 22 April 2020.
- 17 DMAC, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399 (2016–2020)", State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, undated but 2016, p. 17.
- 18 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.
- 19 DMAC, "Gender mainstreaming strategy of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan", undated but 2013, pp. 3–9.
- 20 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 17.
- 21 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 3 June 2020.
- 24 Email from Mohammed Shafiq Yousufi, DMAC, 20 July 2020.
- 25 Email from Daniel Bertoli, Head of Programme – Afghanistan, DDG, 6 April 2020.
- 26 Email from Peter Smethers, Country Director, FSD, 9 April 2020.
- 27 Email from Farid Homayoun, Country Director, HALO Trust, 27 May 2020.
- 28 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 28 April 2020.
- 29 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 28 April 2020.
- 30 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 16.
- 31 MAPA, Annual Operational Work Plan 1398 (April 2019–March 2020), Version 4, Graph 2, p. 6. The extension request projected funding totalling US\$479 million in the first seven years of the plan, receipts totalled US\$338 million.
- 32 DMAC, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399 (2016–2020)", State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, undated but 2016, pp. 2–5.
- 33 DMAC, "Annual Operational Work Plan 1398", undated but 2019, pp. 1–2.
- 34 Interview with Mohamad Shafiq Yosufo, Director, DMAC, in Geneva, 12 February 2020.
- 35 Email from Calvin Ruysen, Head of Region – Afghanistan, Middle East, North Africa, HALO Trust, 24 June 2019.
- 36 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 37 Ibid., p. 7.
- 38 Afghanistan Mine Action Standards, AMAS 06.10, March 2019, p. 5.
- 39 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 28 April 2020.
- 40 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 27 May 2020.
- 41 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), pp. 7–9, 28.
- 42 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February and 19 July 2020.
- 43 Email from Daniel Bertoli, DDG, 6 April 2020.
- 44 Emails from Peter Smethers, FSD Iraq, 9 April 2019 and 24 April 2020.
- 45 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 27 May 2020.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 27 May 2020.
- 50 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 51 DDG reported cancelling a little over 121,000m<sup>2</sup> through non-technical survey in seven provinces that was not recorded in DMAC data. HALO Trust reported cancelling 700,469m<sup>2</sup> through non-technical survey and reducing 2,563,192m<sup>2</sup> through technical survey.
- 52 Emails from Fazel Rahman, DMAC 25 February and 3 June 2020.
- 53 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 27 May 2020.
- 56 Email from Fazel Rahman, DMAC, 25 February 2020.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 HALO Trust reported clearance of 15,616,340m<sup>2</sup> of anti-personnel mined area in 2019.
- 61 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 17.