

AFGHANISTAN

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

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2016

For 2015

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	For 2016	For 2015
Problem understood	8	8
Target date for completion of mine clearance	7	6
Targeted clearance	7	7
Efficient clearance	7	7
National funding of programme	4	5
Timely clearance	7	7
Land release system in place	8	8
National mine action standards	6	6
Reporting on progress	7	7
Improving performance	6	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	6.7	6.6

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Despite a further drop in donor funding in 2016, the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) reported a rise in mine clearance, by national operators in particular, as a result of increased efficiency and competitiveness. Results, though, still fell short of targets set to ensure completion within its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline and rising insecurity further narrowed the humanitarian space for mine action.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- MAPA should revise its Article 5 extension milestones to reflect slower-than-anticipated rates of clearance since it produced the request.
- MAPA should set out a policy and plans for tackling locally produced landmines.
- After a decade of discussion, Afghanistan should act quickly to finalise and adopt a national mine action law.

CONTAMINATION

Afghanistan is one of the countries most affected by mines and ERW, mainly the result of the decade-long war of resistance that followed the Soviet invasion of 1979, the 1992–96 internal armed conflict, and the United States (US)-led coalition intervention in late 2001, which added considerable quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

Between 2013 and the end of 2015, continuing survey led to new finds of legacy mined areas and raised the estimate of anti-personnel mine contamination to 251km². That changed in 2016 when the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) reported a drop in anti-personnel mine contamination to 225km² at the end of the year, representing about 38% of the total threat

from munitions.¹ North-east and central provinces account for more than half Afghanistan's anti-personnel mine contamination, with Kabul, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Paktia, and Panjshir provinces among the most affected.²

Afghanistan also had 277km² of anti-vehicle mine contamination at the end of 2016, particularly affecting southern and central provinces, and 89km² affected by ERW. The estimates, however, do not include areas affected by locally produced landmines or former NATO/International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) firing ranges. DMAC reported in April 2017 that 58 ranges covering 125km² remained to be surveyed and cleared.³

Table 1: Remaining contamination in 2013–16⁴

Type of contamination	Hazardous areas				Area (km ²)			
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016
Anti-personnel mines	2,981	2,825	2,765	2,387	240	230.80	251.37	225.16
Anti-vehicle mines	1,140	1,156	1,243	1,145	236	255.90	274.54	277.16
Locally produced mines*	28	19	23	N/R	5	3.54	5.18	N/R
ERW**	179	254	279	310	35	37.80	63.13	89.36
Totals	4,328	4,254	4,310	3,842	516	528.04	594.22	591.68

* Abandoned devices only N/R = Not recorded

** Includes 17 areas contaminated by cluster munition remnants (affecting 5.57km² as at May 2017).

Table 2: Anti-personnel mine contamination by region (2016)⁵

Region	Mined areas	Area (km ²)	Communities impacted
North-east	759	67.95	260
Central	717	47.72	290
South	170	33.80	96
West	64	27.51	41
South-east	209	19.09	105
North	332	18.74	107
East	136	10.35	36
Totals	2,387	225.16	935

Locally produced mines

The “IED” contamination of almost 5.2km² reported by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)/DMAC in 2015 (see Table 1) represented only “abandoned” devices and did not reflect the full extent of contamination by victim-activated devices that are prohibited as anti-personnel mines under the APMBC, adding to Afghanistan’s Article 5 clearance obligation. A “preliminary survey” conducted in 18 provinces in 2016 at the request of the National Security Council identified 270 newly contaminated areas, mostly contaminated by IEDs and ERW, covering an area of around 420km²,⁶ including about 220km² affected by pressure-plate IEDs (PPIEDs), which are landmines.⁷ The MAPA said it had not entered the data into the IMSMA database and the area required further non-technical survey.⁸

Locally produced mines continued to pose the greatest explosive threat to civilians. The United Nations (UN) reported that 1,100 casualties resulted from locally produced mines. These killed 473 civilians and injured a further 627 in 2016.⁹ They caused a further 547 civilian casualties (252 killed and 295 injured) in the first half of 2017, 22% more than in the same period of 2016. The UN expressed particular concern that the number of child casualties increased by 70% in the first half of the year and that the number of women casualties doubled in the same period.¹⁰

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The MAPA is managed by DMAC, a department of the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), reporting to the Office of the Second Vice-President. It received operational support in planning, priority-setting, and information management from the UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA), which changed its name to “UNMAS in support of DMAC” (UNMAS/DMAC) in November 2016.¹¹

The present structure is the outcome of a transition from international management of mine action to national ownership. From 2001, this was a project of UNMAS and under international management.¹² In October 2016, UNMAS formally handed leadership of the programme over to DMAC. The change has been accompanied by increased attention to mine action by the Office of the President and is expected to raise the profile of mine action in national policy-making.¹³

By the end of 2016, DMAC had 16 staff, but was preparing to expand to 35 in the course of 2017. The staff of UNMAS/DMAC increased in 2016 to 201, of whom six were international staff. By July 2017, all former UNMACA staff except department heads were due to transfer to contracts bringing them under DMAC management and reporting directly to DMAC. Department heads were due to continue as UNMAS advisers to DMAC until also coming under DMAC management by the end of 2018.¹⁴

Legislation

A technical committee comprising concerned ministries and the former UNMACA drafted a mine action law to be included as an annex to a 2005 law on firearms and explosive materials. The draft was approved by the Office of the President and passed to the Ministry of Justice more than two years ago but as at February 2017 it remained stuck in the Ministry of Justice.¹⁵

Strategic Planning

Afghanistan’s Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in March 2012 and revised in August of that year set out a plan to clear all known areas contaminated by mines and ERW by March 2023. It consolidated the 4,442 mine and ERW hazards then remaining into 308 projects, an approach intended to facilitate monitoring of progress and resource mobilisation. Projects would be tackled according to their priority as determined by their impact, measured against a set of impact indicators.¹⁶ But donor funding of mine action in Afghanistan has fallen sharply since the extension request was drafted, forcing DMAC to adjust its targets.

A five-year plan for 2016–20, adopted in January 2016, set four strategic goals:¹⁷

- Facilitate development
- Engage with other sectors
- Reduce the impact of mines and ERW, and mitigate the impact of mine incidents; and
- Mainstream gender and diversity to ensure participation in, and shared benefits of, mine action.

The plan also set out 33 objectives and 108 associated actions. These included incorporating mine action into Afghanistan’s National Priority Programmes and Sustainable Development Goals; integrating mine action into the activities of line ministries, improving fundraising; completing survey; and keeping implementation of Afghanistan’s Article 5 extension on track. On the basis of a mid-2015 review, it concluded that the MAPA needed \$391 million to implement the plan, including \$353 million for clearance, almost \$25 million for “coordination” (quality assurance, planning and prioritization, information management, advocacy and resource mobilization), \$3.6 million for survey, and \$5.6 million for risk education.¹⁸

DMAC identifies tackling contamination by locally produced mines as a priority concern in view of the high level of civilian casualties. At the request of Afghanistan's National Security Council it coordinated assessment of contamination conducted by Implementing Partners (IPs) in 18 provinces in 2016. A small number of IPs have hitherto conducted only limited clearance of devices that have been "abandoned". Discussion continues on developing a strategy and operating framework that would enable wider clearance without jeopardising the perception by armed groups of IP neutrality and thereby compromising their safety and security.¹⁹

The MAPA continued to set clearance targets based on what Afghanistan would need to fulfil its 2023 Article 5 clearance deadline rather than on available resources. The operational work plan for 1396 (2016–17) called for release of 133km², including 622 mined areas containing anti-personnel mines covering 51km², 198 areas with anti-vehicle mines covering 21km², and 92 battle area clearance (BAC) tasks covering 57km², not including firing-range clearance. Those operations would release 32 districts of mines/ERW if no additional hazards were located but required funding of \$110 million, including \$94.6 million for land release, \$6.3 million for coordination, \$5.7 million for risk education and \$3.4 million for victim assistance.²⁰

Total funding received in Afghan Year 1395 (2016–17) amounted to \$40.5 million, 15% less than the \$47.6 million received the year before. Donors provided \$30.93 million bilaterally in 1395 and \$9.48 through the VTF. Half the year's funding came from just three donors: the United States provided \$14.9 million, the United Kingdom \$3.2 million and Canada \$3.1 million.²¹

LAND RELEASE

The MAPA appears to have achieved more with less in 2016. The programme received funding of \$40 million in Year 1395 (2016–17), down from \$47 million the previous year, yet mine clearance accelerated, releasing more than 49km² in 2016. This was only about two-thirds of the UNMAS/DMAC target but compared with 35km² in 2015 and resulted in destruction of three times as many anti-personnel mines in 2016 than in the previous year. Operators also released 7.3km² of battle area in 2016, 40% more than the previous year.²⁶

UNMAS/DMAC attributed the upturn to increased operational efficiency, better application of land release methodologies by IPs, and greater competitiveness among operators bidding for projects.²⁷ DMAC received \$1.27 million and UNMAS/MACCA \$4.3 million in 2016, compared with \$7 million provided for the MACCA in 2015.²⁸

UNMAS/DMAC expected funding in 2017 to remain at about the same level as the previous year but planned to release a total of 133km² of contaminated land, including 55km² of mined area containing anti-personnel mines, 21km² of mined area containing anti-vehicle mines, and almost 57km² of battle area.²⁹

Operators

Landmine clearance is conducted largely by five long-established national and two international NGOs. The Afghan NGOs are: Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA), Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), Mine Detection and Dog Centre (MDC), and the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR). AREA, a national non-governmental organisation (NGO) accredited in 2014, became operational at the end of 2016.²² The MAPA received no funding from the Afghan government.

By the end of 2016, three national IPs were operating a total of 38 community-based demining teams in areas where insecurity inhibited demining by their own teams, down from 49 a year earlier. AREA supported nine teams in Kabul and north-eastern Nangahar provinces, while DAFA (13 teams) and MDC (16 teams) deployed them in Helmand and Kandahar provinces.²³

The most active international NGOs are Danish Demining Group (DDG) and The HALO Trust. Since 2012, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) has had a small operation near the border with Tajikistan. Janus Demining Afghanistan (previously Sterling International) has been contracted to undertake clearance of firing ranges used by militaries serving with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.²⁴

UNMAS/DMAC had a total of 61 quality assurance (QA)/ (quality control) QC staff: 7 in headquarters in Kabul, 16 staff working from seven regional offices and 38 conducting quality management for the firing ranges clearance project. In 2016, staff carried out 2,303 QA/QC checks on demining operations and 4,480 on firing ranges clearance.²⁵

Survey in 2016

Afghanistan started a nationwide "Mine and ERW Impact Free Community Survey" (MEIFCS) in May 2012, envisaging it would take two years to complete. Almost six years later, the MAPA reported the survey had completed 285 of 400 districts. Survey was under way in 10 more districts and the MAPA said it planned to survey 24 more districts in 1356 (2017–18) if it could find funding.³⁰

In 2016, The HALO Trust operated seven teams conducting survey in Herat and Kandahar provinces and MCPA deployed 12 teams in 14 provinces. FSD, meanwhile, operated two teams in Badakhshan province.

Non-technical survey resulted in cancellation and reduction of 4km² in 2016 but the MAPA reported that the continuing MEIFCS survey also added 87km² of previously unidentified contamination, of which anti-personnel mined areas accounted for 19.4km², mined areas with anti-vehicle mines for 19.8km² and battle area for the rest.³¹

Table 3: Cancellation of SHAs and reduction of CHA by non-technical survey in 2016³²

SHAs cancelled	Size of cancelled SHAs (m ²)	CHA area reduced (m ²)
14	2,641,821	1,410,213

Table 4: New suspected or confirmed mined and battle areas identified in 2016³³

SHAs identified	Estimated total area (m ²)	CHAs identified	Estimated total area (m ²)
44	16,129,422	434	70,968,848

Among the key factors prolonging the survey was the need to cover far more communities than planned. By March 2017, MEIFICS teams had surveyed 1,297 communities that were known to be affected and 21,454 where the presence of ERW was unknown, but it had also surveyed 26,650 villages that were not listed in the official gazetteer on which the survey was based but that were identified as the survey progressed. Two other key factors were insecurity and lower donor funding.³⁴

Clearance in 2016

Clearance covered 49.25km² of mined area in 2016. Five Afghan IPs accounted for most of the increase in mined land released through clearance in 2016 despite a continued decline in funding. The five IPs³⁵ cleared 31.4km² according to DMAC,³⁶ up from less than 20km² in 2015 and amounting to nearly two-thirds of the 2016 total.³⁷ DMAC attributed the improved productivity to better use of land release methodologies, better clearance techniques, and greater competition for donor contracts. Operators were also heavily dependent on short-term contracts and on US funding, leaving open the question of whether this performance would be sustained and raising concerns that if the funding stopped some IPs would have to close.³⁸

DAFA, working mainly in the south west, nearly tripled the area cleared while OMAR more than quadrupled the amount of land it released and the number of mines destroyed, working with 14 demining teams totalling 378 deminers out of a total staff of nearly 600.³⁹ MCPA, which had total staff of 448, reported deploying a similar number of deminers and 12 survey teams with 28 staff. It planned to bid for contracts in 2017 that would enable it to maintain capacity at this level.⁴⁰

The HALO Trust remained much the biggest humanitarian operator with total staff of 2,854, including close to 1,600 deminers, 96 staff in mechanical units, and another 50 in multipurpose teams undertaking survey and spot explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), responding to community call-outs. Capacity expanded with the help of multi-year funding from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Area clearance was fractionally down, as teams focused less on clearing anti-vehicle mines than they had in 2015 and more on the slower task of clearing anti-personnel mines. They were also working in several areas affected by heavy metal contamination.⁴¹

The HALO Trust also participated with other IPs in the survey of contamination in 18 provinces from locally produced mines/IEDs at the request of the National Security Council. It also worked with DMAC on developing a strategy and operational framework that would enable humanitarian operators to engage in clearing locally produced mines in Afghanistan without compromising their neutrality, safety, and security.⁴²

Of the two other international humanitarian operators active in 2016, FSD, working in northern Badakhshan province bordering Tajikistan, sharply increased both the area cleared and the number of mines destroyed in 2016. Lower levels of funding for DDG, however, resulted in it laying off 15 clearance teams and 150 personnel in the course of the year. Although it developed an EOD surge capacity that responded to 525 emergency call-outs, the mined area it cleared was sharply down on 2015.⁴³

Table 5: Mine clearance in 2016⁴⁴

Operator	Areas released	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	“Abandoned” locally produced mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
AREA	8	64,535	6	0	0	1
ATC	158	7,516,879	1,585	39	0	18,454
DAFA	94	9,926,794	5,714	119	0	44,854
DDG	10	332,776	71	1	0	840
FSD	3	328,025	6,518	0	0	25
HALO	313	17,157,895	4,086	139	0	2,036
MCPA	46	2,616,129	142	58	0	45
MDC	65	7,884,273	527	68	10	29,180
OMAR	75	3,421,620	465	4	0	4,886
Totals	772	49,248,926	19,114	428	10	100,321

AP = Anti-personnel

AV = Anti-vehicle

UXO = Unexploded ordnance

Deminer Safety

A total of 16 demining casualties were recorded by DMAC/UNMAS for 2016.⁴⁵ This is a much higher toll than in 2015 when one deminer was killed and nine injured. It is not known whether increased competitiveness among IPs is indirectly contributing to demining accidents.

Insecurity inflicted a much higher number of casualties in 2016, with nine deminers killed and ten injured in attacks by armed groups.⁴⁶ In the first six months of 2017, UNAMA said it recorded no conflict-related attacks against humanitarian deminers that resulted in death or injury but anti-government elements abducted four employees of an unspecified demining organisation for ransom. They were released two days later after the intervention of community elders.⁴⁷

ARTICLE 5 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 submitted an extension request in 2012 providing for clearance not just of anti-personnel mines but all ERW by 2023. Four years into implementation of its request, Afghanistan’s prospects for meeting its deadline are fast disappearing because of a downturn in donor funding, resulting in reduced capacity of the MAPA and slower clearance; new discoveries of contamination; and the impact of continuing conflict.

At the end of 2016, estimated anti-personnel mine contamination was 225km², just 15km² less than at the start of the extension period (see Table 1). Moreover, this estimate did not take account of widespread use of victim-activated explosive devices by armed anti-government groups, which

qualify as anti-personnel mines and add to Afghanistan’s clearance obligations under the Article 5. UNMAS/DMAC believes the number of devices is far fewer than the number of mass-produced mines but acknowledges that amid Afghanistan’s continuing conflict and narrowing humanitarian space, comprehensive survey of locally produced mines is impossible, let alone clearance.⁴⁸

Table 6: Mine clearance in 2012–16

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2016	49.25
2015	35.38
2014	62.87
2013	60.11
2012	77.15
Total	284.76

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- 1 Data provided by DMAC, 10 May 2017. Afghanistan's Article 7 transparency report for 2016 (Form F) still reported anti-personnel mine contamination as 251km².
- 2 A7 Report (for 2016), Form F; email from MACCA, 27 April 2016.
- 3 "MAPA Fast Facts", Quarterly Update January to March 2017, 19 April 2017.
- 4 Data provided by DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 MAPA, "Operational Work Plan 1396", undated but 2017, p. 2.
- 7 Interview with Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, Director, DMAC, in Geneva 9 February 2017.
- 8 MAPA, "Operational Work Plan 1396", undated but 2017, p. 2.
- 9 "Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Annual Report 2016", UNAMA, February 2017, p. 7.
- 10 "Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Mid-Year Report 2017", UNAMA, July 2017, pp. 36–37.
- 11 Email from Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, Chief of Staff, UNMAS/DMAC, 16 May 2017.
- 12 For details of the history and structure of mine action in Afghanistan, see Afghanistan's Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2012, pp. 50–68.
- 13 Interviews with Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, DMAC, in Geneva, 9 February 2017, and with Yngvil Foss, Country Programme Manager, UNMAS, in Geneva, 6 February 2017.
- 14 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 15 Interview with Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, DMAC, in Geneva, 9 February 2017.
- 16 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2012, pp. 167–75.
- 17 National Mine Action Strategic Plan, 1395–1399 (2016–2020), State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, undated but 2016, pp. 2–7.
- 18 MAPA, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399", Kabul, undated but 2016, pp. 2–6, 26.
- 19 Interview with Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, DMAC, in Geneva 9 February 2017; email from Farid Homayoun, Country Director, HALO Trust, 23 May 2017.
- 20 MAPA, "Operational Work Plan 1396", undated but 2017, pp. 26 and 43.
- 21 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Email from MACCA, 10 May 2011.
- 25 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 UNMAS said clearance costs per square metre dropped from US\$0.68 to US\$0.58. It also reported spending less on programme management and coordination. Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 MAPA, "Operational Work Plan 1396", undated but 2017, p. 24.
- 31 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 35 ATC, DAFA, MCPA, MDC, OMAR.
- 36 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, UNMAS/DMAC, 10 May 2017.
- 37 DMAC reporting of results for the Afghan years 1394 (2015–16) and 1395 (2016–17) showed a more modest increase in area cleared by five national IPs, rising from 25.23km² in 1394 to 25.89km² in 1395, while funding for these operators dropped from \$15.2 million in 1394 to \$11.8 million in 1395. Email from Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, DMAC, 26 September 2017.
- 38 Interview with Mohammad Shafiq Yosufi, DMAC, in Geneva 9 February 2017.
- 39 Email from Zekria Payab, Deputy Director, OMAR, 29 March 2017.
- 40 Email from Haji Atiqullah, Director, MCPA, 14 April 2017.
- 41 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 23 May 2017.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Email from Megan Latimer, Programme and Operations Coordinator, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Colombia, DDG, 29 May 2017.
- 44 Email from Feda Mohammad Oriakhil, Project Officer, DMAC, 30 September 2017.
- 45 Email from Habib Khan Zazai, UNMAS, in support of DMAC, 7 May 2017.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 "Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Mid-year Report 2017", UNAMA, July 2017, p. 21.
- 48 "MAPA Operational Work Plan 1396", undated but 2017, p. 22.