

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2025
NOT ON TRACK TO COMPLETE CLEARANCE (INTERIM DEADLINE)

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: MASSIVE

NATIONAL DATABASE ESTIMATE AT END 2022

180km²

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2022

13.85km²

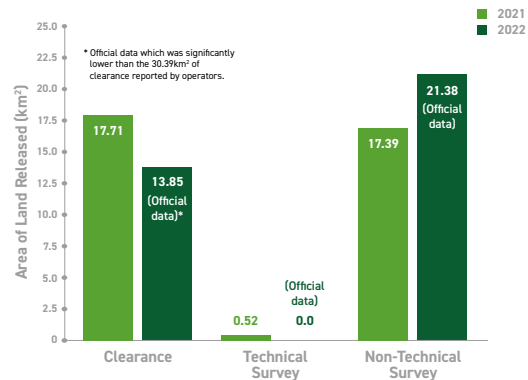
(OFFICIAL DATA WHICH WAS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN THE 30.39KM² OF CLEARANCE REPORTED BY OPERATORS)

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2022

4,803

(INCLUDING 1,954 MINES OF AN IMPROVISED NATURE) (OPERATOR DATA)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): NONE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Afghanistan was granted an interim two-year extension to its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline in 2022. The request was prepared and submitted by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations in Geneva representing the former government and consequently of questionable validity but it was endorsed by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)-appointed management of the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC).

In June 2022, three months after DMAC terminated a United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) emergency coordination centre, UNMAS established a Liaison Office to provide coordination and information management. The Liaison Office closed in November 2022 due to lack of funding, reopened in January 2023 with funding for the year but closed again in April after the IEA required it to co-locate with DMAC, an action seen as prohibited by international sanctions on the IEA. DMAC resumed control of information management and the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database in February 2023. The Liaison Office suspension was lifted by DMAC on 2 October 2023 and technical assistance provided to DMAC through what is now known as the Mine Action Technical Cell (MATC). UNMAS decided in November 2022 to halt funding for survey and clearance operations through the Voluntary Trust Fund for mine action (VTF) with effect from end-March 2023. In September 2023, UNMAS agreed to resume resource mobilisation for operational activities through the VTF.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Afghan government and DMAC should engage constructively with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) through the Mine Action Technical Cell (MATC).
- DMAC should similarly collaborate with the UN, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), and implementing partners (IPs) to strengthen information management, update Afghanistan's IMSMA database and resume annual submission of Article 7 reports.
- DMAC in collaboration with the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) IPs and the UN should conduct a nationwide survey, taking advantage of improved security and access to all provinces, in order to establish an up-to-date baseline estimate of mine contamination, including from anti-personnel (AP) mines of an improvised nature.
- The IEA and DMAC should support the participation of women in mine action.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2022)	Score (2021)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	7	7	Afghanistan has a good, but still incomplete, knowledge of pre-2001 or “legacy” AP mine contamination and continues to add significant amounts of previously unrecorded mined area to the database. Improved security and regional access since the change of government in August 2021 and the cooperation of former Taliban fighters has contributed to significant progress in understanding the threat posed by mines of an improvised nature.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	4	5	The MAPA is nationally managed but heavily dependent on international funding, which previously covered most DMAC salaries. Diplomatic isolation and international sanctions targeting the Taliban government cut off donor funding for DMAC leaving only a skeleton management team in place with minimal capacity to discharge its oversight and coordination functions. DMAC opposed UNMAS’ proposals for interim coordination mechanisms until June 2022 when, in agreement with DMAC, UNMAS set up a Liaison Office funded by the UN to coordinate mine action on a temporary basis. It closed in November 2022 after running out of funding, reopened in January 2023, but closed again in April 2023 after the IEA and DMAC required it to co-locate with DMAC, a move prohibited by international rules on cooperation with the IEA. The Liaison Office suspension was lifted by DMAC on 2 October 2023 and technical assistance provided to DMAC through what is now known as the MATC.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	4	5	Until August 2021, DMAC was committed to mainstreaming gender, which was one of four main goals in the 2016–20 strategic plan. Progress implementing it was slow but most IPs had gender focal points, hired some women in community liaison and risk education (and in rare cases, for clearance). Since August 2021, however, stringent IEA regulations have sharply reduced public space for women although some IPs were able to continue to employ women in office and field (risk education and community liaison) roles.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	4	4	Information management (IM) suffered major disruption after the change of government. DMAC has an IMSMA database but lost its IM personnel after the end to international funding. IPs continued to report operating results to DMAC but database operations largely halted after August 2021. The UN Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (UN-HMACCA) resumed data processing early in 2022 but this was terminated at the end of March. The Liaison Office established by UNMAS in June 2022 took on information management for the MAPA until it ran out of money in November. DMAC took back data entry from February 2023 but with limited capacity for uploading the substantial backlog of IP reports and without quality assuring the data. The land release data suffered from major inconsistencies with IP’s reported results. As of September 2023, Afghanistan had not submitted an Article 7 report covering 2022.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	4	6	DMAC planning and tasking of the MAPA suffered disruption after the August 2021 change of government but survey and clearance has continued on a project-by-project basis as international donors continued to fund IPs bilaterally or through UNMAS and the UN VTF.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	6	6	The MAPA has national mine action standards (AMAS) 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. International experts believe the AMAS need comprehensive updating. Land release is achieved largely by full clearance, underscoring weaknesses in IP application of non-technical survey. Upheavals in DMAC after August 2021 disrupted quality management, which has continued but only sporadically.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	6	6	Despite the political and financial turmoil impacting mine action, the MAPA continues to release substantial amounts of mined area but data weaknesses prevent a clear determination of how much. Clearance of nearly 14km ² in 2022, based on latest DMAC data provided by the UN, is about half the average rate of clearance over the last five years but may understate the MAPA’s output. IPs recorded clearance of 30km ² in 2022, assisted by improved security and better provincial access. The IEA, meanwhile, affirmed its commitment to fulfilling Afghanistan’s APMBBC treaty obligations. Although Afghanistan’s request for a two-year extension to its deadline was submitted by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UN in Geneva in July 2022 (representing the former regime), DMAC advised Mine Action Review that it endorsed the request. The extension was granted at the Twentieth Meeting of States Parties to the APMBBC.
Average Score	5.4	5.8	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- 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 and Dog Centre (MDC)

- Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR)
- 18 commercial companies accredited in 2021, but only one reported active in AP mine clearance

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding Sector (DRC)
- FSD
- The HALO Trust (HALO)

OTHER ACTORS

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

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

DMAC estimated Afghanistan's contamination from AP mines, including mines of an improvised nature, as covering 180km² at the end of 2022 (see Table 1). This represents a drop of a little under 6% on the estimate a year earlier (191km²). The decline occurred in estimates of conventional or "legacy" AP mines but Afghanistan is still discovering areas affected by improvised mines widely used in the two decades of conflict that preceded the August 2021 change of regime and its estimate of improvised mine contamination rose by a quarter in 2022.¹

Table 1: Mined area by contamination type (at end 2022)²

Contamination type	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Anti-personnel mines	1,568	104,106,701	68	22,997,703	127,104,404
Improvised mines	1,178	40,557,784	12	12,715,540	53,273,324
AP mine total	2,746	144,664,485	80	35,713,243	180,377,728
Anti-vehicle mines	996	150,561,192	158	56,727,559	207,288,751
Total mined area	3,742	295,225,677	238	92,440,802	387,666,479

CHA = Confirmed hazardous area SHA = Suspected hazardous area

Most of Afghanistan's conventional AP 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. Big concentrations of "legacy" mines in the north-east, centre, and west (see Table 2) account for close to three-quarters of the total. Afghanistan estimated the area affected by these so-called "legacy" mines dating from before 2001 amounted to 127km² at the end of 2022, down from 147km² a year earlier.

Operators say some of the survey carried out in the past lacked rigour resulting in inflated suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) that will require significant amounts of cancellation in the future.³ After decades of demining, the remaining confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) are increasingly located in remote and difficult mountainous terrain that has slowed the pace of clearance.

¹ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, Chief of Operations, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

² Ibid.

³ Interview with Farid Homayoun, Country Director, HALO, 4 June 2022.

Table 2: AP mined area by region, excluding improvised mines (at end 2022)⁴

Region	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Central	395	23,220,687	12	1,285,624	24,506,311
East	168	12,238,854	2	136,900	12,375,754
North	178	3,826,370	0	0	3,826,370
North East	543	34,346,170	12	8,682,246	43,028,416
South	71	5,839,533	30	4,773,932	10,613,465
South East	100	7,018,155	10	1,611,001	8,629,156
West	113	17,616,932	2	6,508,000	24,124,932
Totals	1,568	104,106,701	68	22,997,703	127,104,404

Survey continues to identify previously unrecorded hazardous areas. In 2022, with improved security permitting access to areas previously closed off by conflict, DMAC reported this amounted to nearly 20km² (see Table 3).⁵ This included significant areas affected by anti-vehicle (AV) mines but more than half the total consisted of improvised mines as operators stepped up survey and clearance in what were previously some of the most fiercely contested areas. However, DMAC's estimate may understate the total. The HALO Trust (HALO) reported finding more than 12km² of legacy AP mined areas in 2022 and mined areas with AP mines of an improvised nature amounting to 40km² across 19 provinces.⁶

Table 3: Newly recorded contamination in 2022⁷

Contamination type	Mined areas	Area (m ²)	Provinces affected
AP mines	67	2,717,355	5
AP/AV mines mixed	6	571,749	6
Anti-vehicle mines	54	5,836,526	3
Totals	127	9,125,630	
Improvised mines	434	10,740,855	20
Sum totals	561	19,866,485	

Seventy per cent of mined areas with improvised mines recorded by DMAC are in the southern region, particularly Helmand and Kandahar (see Table 4) with the extent of CHAs rising from 16km² in 2021 to 25km² at the end of 2022.⁸

Table 4: Improvised mine contamination by region (at end 2022)⁹

Region	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Central	45	901,301	0	0	901,301
East	281	8,655,892	4	111,973	8,767,865
North	42	1,586,044	3	50,188	1,636,232
North East	63	1,094,458	6	86,199	1,180,657
South	562	24,906,041	10	12,467,180	37,373,221
South East	46	305,127	0	0	305,127
West	138	3,108,921	0	0	3,108,921
Totals	1,177	40,557,784	23	12,715,540	53,273,324

⁴ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

⁷ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

⁸ Emails from Olivier Demars, Information Management Advisor, UNMAS, 24 April 2022; and Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

⁹ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

HALO, however, after extensive survey, reported that improvised mines were contaminating 27 provinces and estimated their extent at close to 118km². According to HALO's estimate, Kandahar province alone accounted for 60.2km² of the remaining contamination, followed by Uruzgan (15.4km²) Helmand (12.5km²) and Nangahar (6.95km²).¹⁰

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Afghanistan also contends with a significant threat from AV mines and from unexploded ordnance (UXO), which caused close to 90% of accidents in 2022.¹¹ DMAC reports over 200km² of confirmed and suspected AV mined areas, much of it a low-priority threat scattered over wide areas of sparse population. Since the change of government, however, IPs have worked in areas previously shut off by insecurity such as Ghazni, Wardak, and Zabul, identifying AV mined areas inside villages that are high priority for clearance.¹²

Afghanistan has massive contamination by a wide range of explosive remnants of war, including around 10km² of cluster munition-contaminated area¹³ (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Cluster Munition Remnants 2023* report on Afghanistan for further information). The UN reported in 2022 that Afghanistan had 39 former NATO firing ranges covering 681km² to be cleared of UXO, of which one, covering 51km², was being addressed.¹⁴ It is unclear what funding or IP capacity was available in 2022 to address these tasks.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The MAPA's management structure remained unchanged by the Taliban takeover of government in August 2021 but the impact of international sanctions and financial pressures disrupted the sector in 2022. The IEA retained Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority in the role of a national mine action authority, setting overall policy, while DMAC continued to be responsible for managing and coordinating operations, information management, and quality management (QM). The IEA-appointed director of DMAC said that the only change resulting from the change of government was in the personnel running it.¹⁵

The lack of international recognition of the IEA and financial sanctions imposed by the United States and Western governments has severely limited DMAC's ability to function. DMAC completed the transition from being a project of UNMAS to national management in June 2018. From its headquarters in Kabul and seven regional offices, DMAC coordinated the work of national and international IPs, prepared strategic plans and annual work plans, set priorities and standards, accredited operators, conducted quality assurance (QA), managed the mine action database, and liaised with international donors.¹⁶

However, DMAC remained almost entirely dependent on international financing. By 2021, the Government of Afghanistan paid salaries of only 15 of DMAC's 155 staff, the rest being paid by UNMAS and the US Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) through ITF

Enhancing Human Security.¹⁷ After August 2021, international sanctions imposed on the IEA halted cooperation between UNMAS and DMAC, and the staff working for DMAC on internationally funded salaries transferred to UNMAS. As of June 2022, DMAC's active staff consisted of the director and 15 other staff, including the heads of planning and operations and an information management officer.¹⁸

DMAC's director maintained close contact with IPs and sought actively to facilitate MAPA operations, intervening to resolve occasional difficulties between IPs and local authorities or to facilitate equipment imports, but DMAC acknowledged it lacked capacity to conduct previous levels of coordination and management. DMAC's regional offices closed and quality management staff were able to conduct only sporadic visits to IP operating sites to accredit teams and mechanical assets. IPs continued to submit progress reports to DMAC but the Directorate lacked capacity to upload them into the database.¹⁹

To maintain some continuity in MAPA operations, DMAC and UNMAS reached agreement on setting up an emergency coordination mechanism independent of the government and identified from November 2021 as the UN Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (UN-HMACCA). The mechanism was agreed as a "temporary project" pending international recognition of the IEA. DMAC would remain responsible for mine action sector governance, strategy, and accreditation, and international treaty compliance.

10 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

11 Email from Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, Deputy Programme Manager and Chief of Operations, UNMAS, 12 July 2023.

12 Interview with Farid Homayoun, HALO, 4 June 2022 and email 22 June 2023.

13 Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

14 UNMAS, "Humanitarian Mine Action in Afghanistan", 10 February 2022.

15 Interview with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, Director, DMAC, in Kabul, 4 June 2022.

16 Email from Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, Chief of Staff, UNMAS/DMAC, 16 May 2017.

17 Email from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 17 March 2021.

18 Interview with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, DMAC, Kabul, 4 June 2022; and email, 15 June 2022.

19 Interviews with international and national implementing partners, Kabul, 4-10 June 2022.

UN-HMACCA would take on planning, prioritisation, and land release; data collection and information management; accreditation and training; and public relations, as well as resource mobilisation.²⁰ The formula proved unacceptable to DMAC, and UN-HMACCA was terminated at the end of March 2022, ending the employment of 118 national staff.²¹

In June 2022, DMAC and UNMAS agreed on the creation of a Liaison Office providing coordination for the MAPA, tasking of IPs, and management of the IMSMA database. The Liaison Office suspended operations in November 2022 because of a shortage of funding. UNMAS obtained international funding for the Liaison Office for 2023 and resumed operations in January 2023. In February 2023, DMAC took back responsibility for data entry and running the IMSMA database and suspended the Liaison Office with effect from the start of April.²² A directive subsequently issued by the Office of the Prime Minister required DMAC and the Liaison Office to work from the same building. Donor restrictions did not allow UNMAS to comply, causing the Liaison Office to close.²³ Negotiations continued between the IEA and the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and as at June

2023, the UNMAS office in Kabul had 25 staff supporting operations of MAPA IPs, including 16 QM inspectors.²⁴

DMAC lifted its suspension of the Liaison Office on 2 October 2023 enabling what is now known as the Mine Action Technical Cell (MATC) to resume operations and provide technical assistance to DMAC, including with respect to planning, tasking, prioritisation, and QM.²⁵ At the time of writing, the MATC did not include support for information management.

UNMAS decided in November 2022 that it would cease providing funding through the VTF for survey and clearance operations from 1 April 2023 and that VTF funding would only support coordination, reportedly returning approximately US\$10 million to donors. IPs criticised the decision, which they said would severely impact national demining organisations that lacked direct contact with international donors. It added to the financial pressures resulting from the downturn in donor support and which has already led to significant deminer lay-offs.²⁶ In September 2023, UNMAS agreed to resume resource mobilisation for operational activities through the VTF.²⁷

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Afghanistan has a national standard on environmental management in mine action. In addition, individual operators, such as the Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding sector (DRC), the FSD, and HALO have policies applied globally and standing operating procedures (SOPs) aligned with the local context. Use of intrusive technologies such as flails by some operators has caused friction with local communities in past years and no longer appear to be in use.

HALO's global policy sets three goals, calls for mitigating any adverse environmental impacts, designing projects to take account of environmental issues, and communicating its findings to stakeholders, including the local community affected by its work. It has hired an environmental expert to assess the impact of its operations and recommend measures to mitigate any negative effects.²⁸ FSD has also introduced an Environmental and Social Management Plan along with a "Socio-Economic Baseline Assessment" tool applied during survey to take full account of local community issues and interests.²⁹

HALO employs manual teams to remove dense vegetation while mechanical assets used for AP mine (including improvised mine) clearance by HALO, DRC, and other IPs, including ploughs and cultivators, which excavate to a depth of 30 centimetres, are broadly welcomed by local communities which take advantage of area clearance to irrigate land and plant crops.³⁰ IPs commented that farmers welcomed use of assets such as rippers which softened land that had hardened as a result of long non-use due to mine or UXO contamination.³¹

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Taliban bans on women's employment have reversed DMAC's pre-2021 plans to increase the level of female employment in the MAPA and prevented many women in the mine action sector from working. However, implementation of the bans has varied according to locality and some openings for women remained both in field operations and administrative support positions.

20 UNMAS, "Humanitarian Mine Action in Afghanistan", 10 February 2022.

21 Interview with Paul Heslop, Chief of Mine Action Programme, UNMAS, 7 June 2022; and UNMAS, "Humanitarian Mine Action in Afghanistan", 9 April 2022.

22 Email from Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, UNMAS, 20 March 2023.

23 Email from Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, UNMAS, 7 May 2023.

24 Interview with Nick Pond, Chief of Mine Action Section, UNAMA, in Geneva, 22 June 2023.

25 Email from Nick Pond, UNAMA, 2 October 2023.

26 Joint statement of the MAPA implementing partners, 23 January 2023.

27 Email from UNMAS Headquarters, 4 October 2023.

28 Email from Farid Homayoun, Country Director, HALO, 21 June 2023.

29 Email from Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023.

30 Interviews with Farid Homayoun, HALO, 4 June 2022; and Soeren Adser Soerensen, Head of Humanitarian Disarmament in Afghanistan, DRC, 6 June 2022.

31 Email from Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023.

Before the Taliban takeover of August 2021, DMAC's 2016–20 strategic plan included gender mainstreaming as one of four main goals. It stated that "achievable targets, reflecting prevailing circumstances and conditions, will be adopted to support and encourage progress wherever possible."³² Levels of female employment in the sector remained low but by the start of 2021, the MAPA's workforce included over 200 women.³³ After August 2021, Taliban imposed progressively stricter regulation on women and girls, banning women from working for foreign NGOs in December 2022³⁴ and from working for the United Nations in April 2023.³⁵

National IPs, forced to lay off hundreds of deminers as a result of funding cuts, have sharply reduced the number of their female staff. DAFA employed 12 women in 2022, including a gender mainstreaming officer and four explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) staff but in 2023 it had only one female employee working from home.³⁶ OMAR said it employed 53 women in 2022 but in 2023 had reduced the number to three.³⁷

Some exceptions have remained for humanitarian work, including mine action. In 2022, DMAC said it remained possible for women to work in the MAPA³⁸ and some IPs reported employing more women in 2022 than before the Taliban takeover. UNMAS convened the first

post-regime-change meeting of a Gender and Diversity Technical Working Group in February 2022³⁹ and IPs continued to employ female staff in office and field jobs.⁴⁰ UNMAS also provided grants to four Afghan IPs (AREA, DAFA, MDC, and OMAR) early in 2022 to support equality and inclusion mainstreaming.⁴¹

In 2023, IPs say female office staff have worked from home and in a number of areas some women have been able to conduct risk education field visits but access depends on relations between individual IPs and local authorities.⁴² Among international operators, DRC and HALO sought and gained permission from local authorities in some localities to deploy mixed-gender *mahram* teams⁴³ for EORE. DRC said negotiations continued to deploy all its mixed non-technical survey (NTS) and EORE teams.⁴⁴ HALO reported that in May 2023 it was able to deploy 15 mixed-gender teams in Ghor, Kabul, Kunduz, and Nangarhar provinces. It received permission to deploy two more teams in Takhar province in June 2023 and expected to deploy all mixed-gender EORE teams from July 2023. HALO said mine action data continue to be disaggregated by gender and age, including in pre- and post-clearance collection of socio-economic data. HALO also said it employs members of all ethnic groups and its database tracks the organisation's ethnic diversity.⁴⁵

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Prior to the August 2021 change of government, DMAC had embarked on upgrading the MAPA's IMSMA database from New Generation to IMSMA Core. UNMAS, with support from the GICHD, proposed to migrate data from IMSMA NG to IMSMA Core in 2022 but DMAC did not agree.⁴⁶ Since the Taliban takeover, information management for the MAPA has suffered severe disruption as a result of the financial crisis and diplomatic isolation facing the IEA, DMAC's loss of staff, and upheavals in the working arrangements between DMAC and UNMAS.⁴⁷

IPs have continued reporting their operating results to DMAC but disagreements over information management and the role of the UN resulted in extended interruptions when IP reports were not uploaded and the database was not up to date. DMAC resumed management of the IMSMA database in February 2023 after receiving government funding that enabled it to hire four data entry staff but without capacity for data quality management. Stakeholders reported DMAC's IM team were effectively processing current IP reports but still dealing with a backlog of hazard reports. HALO reported it sends a member of its staff to DMAC to assist uploading its operating results.⁴⁸

32 DMAC, "National Mine Action Strategic Plan 1395–1399 (2016–2020)", State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, undated but 2016, p. 17.

33 Email from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 17 March 2021.

34 UNMAS estimated the ban would result in 150 women working in mine action losing their jobs, 456,300 women and girls being deprived of EORE, and 8,700 women would not benefit from VA, including physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and social/economic inclusion. Participant notes from UNMAS meeting with MAPA directors, 3 January 2023.

35 Reuters, "Taliban bans female NGO workers, jeopardising aid efforts", 24 December 2022; and Reuters, "Taliban ban on women working for the UN an 'internal issue'", 12 April 2023.

36 Email from Bismillah Haqmal, Operations and Planning Manager, DAFA, 10 April 2023.

37 Email from Abid K. Fazel, Deputy Director Programme, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

38 Interviews with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, Director, DMAC, 4 June 2022; Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 6 June 2022; Farid Homayoun, HALO, 4 June 2022; and with Awal Khan, QA Manager, OMAR, and Zarina Omar, EORE Manager & Gender Focal Point, OMAR, 8 June 2022.

39 Email from Sohaila Hashemi, UNMAS, 23 February 2022.

40 Interviews with international and national IPs, Kabul, 4–10 June 2022.

41 Email from Sohaila Hashemi, UNMAS, 6 March 2022.

42 Email from MAPA IP, May 2023.

43 Mahram teams partner women with a male family member.

44 Email from Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023.

45 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

46 Email from Nick Pond, UNAMA, 25 August 2023.

47 Interviews with international and national implementing partners, Kabul, 4–10 June 2022; and emails from IPs, April–May 2023.

48 Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

DMAC submitted a Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Article 7 report covering 2022 at the end of May 2023,⁴⁹ but as of September 2023 had not submitted an APMBC Article 7 report since 2021.

PLANNING AND TASKING

Afghanistan's mine action sector has operated without a strategic plan since the Taliban took power in August 2021. International sanctions and Afghanistan's financial crisis have left DMAC with insufficient human resources to put into effect the Afghan year 1400–1404 (April 2021–March 2026) strategic plan under preparation with the GICHD before August 2021 or to pursue a detailed work plan.

IPs are implementing tasks determined by their donor(s) and their own priorities and submitted to DMAC for approval. DMAC's technical board reportedly reviews and prioritises hazards and encourages IPs to include tasks that meet its criteria of very high or high priority. DMAC, in consultation with operators, also reportedly sets IP teams clearance targets for different types of hazard taking account of results in the previous year. DMAC conducted periodic coordination meetings with IPs but also had ad hoc meetings with individual IPs on operational issues, approving hazard completion reports, accrediting teams and equipment and monitoring the progress of field operations.⁵⁰

DMAC lifted its suspension of the Liaison Office on 2 October 2023 enabling what is now known as the MATC to resume operations and provide technical assistance to DMAC, including for planning, tasking, prioritisation, and QM.⁵¹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

The MAPA has comprehensive national mine action standards that are compliant with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). Before the change of government in August 2021 and the disruption to MAPA management, DMAC had reviewed them annually and amended them in consultation with IPs. No further updates of the national mine action standards (AMAS) or SOPs has occurred since August 2021.⁵²

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 was reviewed in a series of technical working group meetings and a revised version issued in 2020. The standard requires operators to secure 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 abandoned improvised mines (AIMs) should be conducted remotely or semi-remotely, and, where possible, devices should be destroyed in situ.⁵³

A GICHD capacity assessment in 2019 noted that DMAC had been “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 said some chapters needed to be reviewed and updated to promote greater efficiency.⁵⁴ The persistently high percentage of land released through full clearance—averaging 78% between 2018 and 2020—called into question the efficiency of the MAPA's survey and land release practices. In 2021, the percentage of full clearance fell to below half (48%) but primarily as a result of HALO's cancellation of land affected by improvised mines and in 2022 full clearance again accounted for close to two-thirds of reported land release.

49 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2022), 31 May 2023.

50 Emails from Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023; and Farid Homyoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

51 Email from Nick Pond, UNAMA, 2 October 2023.

52 Email from Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 27 March 2022.

53 AMAS 06.10, March 2019, p. 5; Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form F, p. 15.

54 GICHD, Integrated Capacity Assessment Report, 5 July 2019 (draft), p. 7.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

The MAPA has experienced a sharp fall in its workforce since the Taliban takeover in August 2021 and UNMAS decision in November 2022 to stop funding survey and clearance operations through the VTF. MAPA operating results for 2022 show that six national IPs (AREA, ATC, DAFA, MCPA, MDC and OMAR) were active clearing mines together with three international NGOs (DRC, FSD, and HALO).⁵⁵ Total MAPA employment dropped from 5,910 in the last quarter of 2020⁵⁶ to between 4,000 and 5,000 at the end of 2021, and to around 3,000 by early 2023.⁵⁷

DAFA, with a total staff of 400 people in 2022, underscored the impact of the MAPA's funding crisis. In 2022, it was the only IP conducting clearance of cluster munitions but it also cleared mines with eight manual teams working in Baghlan and Paktika provinces. DAFA reported that UNMAS's suspension of operations funding through the VTF led to early closure of two projects, including clearance of improvised mines in Helmand and operations of a quick response team in Kandahar. It completed the last of four projects on which it was working in 2022 at the end of January 2023 and at that point had no further contracts, and said it was retaining only a small core of staff while it looked for additional work.⁵⁸

MCPA deployed 37 manual clearance teams in 2022 employing 370 deminers of a total workforce of 537, which included 19 two-person survey teams, 10 mechanical teams and 2 quick response teams. As a result of funding shortfalls, MCPA said in early 2023 that it was losing 240 staff.⁵⁹ OMAR conducted some clearance of improvised mines in the south in 2022 but focused mainly on legacy AP mines in 10 provinces. OMAR ended 2022 with 738 manual deminers among a total of more than 1,000 staff but released 660 once the projects were completed and said its priority in 2023 was to mobilise resources in order to retain trained staff.⁶⁰

End-year data was not immediately available from ATC but in mid-2022 it reported that it deployed nine manual teams, an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team, and a mechanical demining unit in Maydan Wardak on a US-funded project for clearing conventional mines and other capacity working on BAC tasks. The organisation's priority for 2022, though, was tackling improvised mines. ATC reported it had 16 deminers trained by Artios for clearing improvised mines and another 10 people undergoing training. It said it was developing proposals for clearing improvised mines in the Musa Qala and Nad Ali districts of Helmand province.⁶¹

Among the three international operators, DRC was able to increase the number of clearance personnel from 160 to 220 in 2022 with support from European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and receipt of additional funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). It also increased DRC's survey/EOD capacity from 20 personnel to 52 and trained two teams for improvised mine clearance who received accreditation from DMAC in early 2023. DRC expected further expansion in 2023, increasing the number of clearance personnel to 280, and would convert two survey/EOD teams to quick response teams. In 2022, DRC added Minehound and Wirehound detectors and a new type of excavator to assist the clearance of improvised mines.⁶²

FSD continued to be based in northern Kunduz province, conducting clearance in both Kunduz and Badakhshan that focused on Soviet-era butterfly mines. The loss of a German donor following the change of government in August 2021 resulted in a drop in clearance capacity from 5 teams with 79 deminers in 2021 to 2 teams and 32 deminers.⁶³

HALO also experienced a drop in overall staff numbers from 3,010 to 2,794 and deployed 47 manual teams on "legacy" mines, compared with 64 teams and 1,716 deminers the previous year. But HALO received more funding to tackle improvised mines, increasing the number of clearance teams from 32 to 37, supported by 16 mechanical teams, up from the previous year, and 18 survey teams. HALO continued testing a range of detectors and new equipment for potential productivity benefits, including a STORM commercial excavator for use in complex terrain, a linear mine comb, and the vehicle-mounted AMULET explosive ordnance detection system. It is also testing a differential GPS system for more precise polygon mapping.⁶⁴

55 Email from Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

56 Email from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, Head of Planning and Programme, DMAC, 17 March 2021.

57 Interview with Nick Pond, UNAMA, in Geneva, 22 June 2023.

58 Emails from Bismillah Haqmal, DAFA, 10 April and 21 June 2023.

59 Emails from Mir Mohammad, MCPA, 5 and 12 April 2023.

60 Email from Abid K. Fazel, Deputy Director, Programmes, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

61 Interview with Abdul Qahir Rahmanzai, ATC, Kabul, 8 June 2022.

62 Email from Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023.

63 Email from Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023.

64 Emails from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 12 May 2022 and 21 June 2023.

Table 5: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2022⁶⁵

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Machines/personnel	Comments
ATC ⁶⁶	9	80	1/NR	
DAFA	8	136	3/9	
DRC	22	220	2/6	
FSD	2	32		
HALO	87	1,024	32/216	Mechanical assets included 16 for AP mines, 16 for AIMs. HALO also tackled AIMs with 37 manual and 9 survey teams which, with AIM mechanical teams, employed a total of 478 personnel.
MCPA	41	390	10/30	Manual capacity included 4 AIM teams with 20 deminers. Also operated 2 quick response teams with 10 personnel.
OMAR	45	762	4/48	Manual capacity includes 4 AIM teams with 24 deminers
Totals	214	2,644	52/309	

DEMINER SAFETY

MAPA IPs sustained a number of deminer deaths and injuries resulting from demining accidents and security incidents in 2022. A DRC deminer was killed as a result of the detonation of a PMN-2 AP mine during clearance operations in Paghman district of Kabul province. Investigation concluded he may have disturbed the mine during excavation or moving his base stick as he leaned forward but could not determine precisely the cause of the detonation. DRC's response included a review of QA/quality control (QC) methodology, SOPs, field risk assessment and task implementation plan procedures. Two other DRC deminers were injured by an AP mine detonation during clearance in Kabul province. Investigations found shortcomings relating to lane marking and safety distances and concluded the deminers were wearing visors and PPE incorrectly, prompting immediate retraining of the team.⁶⁷

An OMAR deminer was killed in Laghman province after slipping into a mined area. After investigation of the accident, which occurred during a break in work, OMAR dismissed the team leader, section leader, and medic for poor management and control of the team.⁶⁸ MCPA reported one deminer was seriously injured by the detonation of an Iranian-made M4 AP mine.⁶⁹ A HALO deminer was wounded by gunfire during a security incident in Nangahar province when armed men attacked a local gathering.⁷⁰ The attack was later attributed to Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP).

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

The MAPA continued to release substantial amounts of land in 2022 despite the organisational and financial disruption it experienced, but big discrepancies between DMAC and IP data prevent a precise determination of the extent. DMAC initially reported that Afghanistan released a total of 27.68km² in 2022: 15.54km² cancelled through NTS and 12.14km² through clearance.⁷¹ This would represent a drop of nearly one quarter from the 35.6km² released the previous year and similar to results reported in 2020 the last full year of operations before the change of government. Mine Action Review later received

⁶⁵ Emails from Bismillah Haqmal, DAFA, 10 April 2023; Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023; Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023; Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023; Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023; and Abid K. Fazel, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

⁶⁶ Data applicable as at June 2022.

⁶⁷ Email from Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023.

⁶⁸ Email from Abid K. Fazel, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

⁶⁹ Email from Mir Mohammad, MCPA, 12 April 2023.

⁷⁰ Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

⁷¹ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

updated DMAC survey and clearance data from the UN (see Tables 6, 8, and 9), which showed release of a total of more than 35.22km² in 2022: nearly 21.38km² cancelled through NTS and almost 13.85km² of clearance.⁷² Mine Action Review has used this more recent data for Afghanistan's land release totals in the "Key Data" section of this report, pending an update of the IMSMA database.

However, operations of the MAPA's IMSMA database suffered from long interruptions after Afghanistan's change of government delaying the entry of IP results and official data appears to understate the amount of land released in 2022. The results reported by six national and international IPs indicate they released AP and improvised AP mined areas totalling 52.07km² in 2022, including 21.68km² through survey and 30.39km² as a result of clearance, which would represent the highest rate of clearance in the last four years.⁷³

SURVEY IN 2022

IPs cancelled a total of 21.38km², according to the latest DMAC data provided by the UN (see Table 6).⁷⁴ This included cancelling suspected AP mined areas amounting to 9km², nearly double the result in 2021, and more than 12km² of suspected improvised mine contamination, almost the same as in the previous year. DMAC also did not report any area reduction through technical survey of AP or improvised AP mined areas.

Table 6: Release of AP mined area through NTS in 2022 (DMAC data as at October 2023)⁷⁵

Operator	Province	Area cancelled (m ²)
Legacy AP mines		
DAFA	Baghlan	285,000
DRC	Nangahar	95,542
HALO	Ghazni, Maydan Wardak	696,741
MCPA	Baghdis, Farah, Ghazni, Paktika, Kunduz, Takar, Logar, Maydan Wardak	7,349,514
OMAR	Helmand, Kandahar	590,570
Subtotal		9,017,367
Improvised mines		
DRC	Logar	51,829
HALO	Helmand, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Logar, Samangan, Uruzgan	4,050,325
MCPA	Helmand, Kunduz	1,527,856
OMAR	Helmand, Kandahar	6,728,319
Subtotal		12,358,329
Total		21,375,696

DMAC's survey results, however, differ sharply from those of the IPs. The latest DMAC data recorded cancellation of 0.7km² of AP mined areas by HALO, which reported cancelling 7.83km² in 2022. It also attributed cancellation of more than 7km² to MCPA which reported that it cancelled only 0.6km² (see Table 7).⁷⁶ IPs also reported area reduction through technical survey totalling 0.7km².

⁷² Email from UNMAS Headquarters, 4 October 2023.

⁷³ Emails from Bismillah Haqmat, DAFA, 10 April 2023; Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023; Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023; Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023; Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023; and Abid K. Fazet, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

⁷⁴ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023; and Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023.

⁷⁵ Email from UNMAS Headquarters, 4 October 2023.

⁷⁶ Emails from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023; and Mir Mohammad, MCPA, 12 April 2023.

Table 7: Release of AP mined area through survey in 2022 (IP data)⁷⁷

	AP mined area (m ²)		AIM-affected area (m ²)	
	NTS	TS	NTS	TS
DAFA	261,980	37,000	22,845	0
DRC	429,594	242,161	0	0
HALO	7,831,222	125,662	1,731,813	0
MCPA	571,695	17,600	0	13,203
OMAR	4,706,663	301,952	5,383,326	0
Totals	13,801,154	724,375	7,137,984	13,203

CLEARANCE IN 2022

Clearance data for 2022 suffers from similar inconsistencies. The latest DMAC data provided by the UN recorded clearance of 13.85km² of AP mined area in 2022 (see Tables 8 and 9), which would represent a fall of nearly one third from the previous year. The big drop in DMAC's results was in clearance of legacy mined areas, down from 16.7km² in 2021 to 11.5km². By contrast the greater access to formerly high-conflict areas saw a doubling of improvised mine clearance from 1km² to 2.4km², predominantly in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, and destruction of 1,402 improvised mines, nearly four times the number destroyed in the previous year. Overall, according to DMAC data, the number of conventional and improvised AP mines destroyed during clearance in 2022 was less than half the level of the previous year in official data and down by more than one third compared to IP results.

Table 8: AP mine clearance in 2022 (DMAC data as at October 2023)⁷⁸

Operator	Province/district	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
AREA	Nuristan	245,263	27	0	4
ATC	Kunar, Maydan Wardak	447,898	13	0	25
DAFA	Baghlan, Paktika	1,083,976	248	0	383
DRC	Kabul, Maydan Wardak	1,049,417	155	0	626
FSD	Badakshan	166,632	1,068	0	50
HALO	Badakshan, Balkh, Kabul, Kunduz Maydan Wardak, Nangahar, Samangan, Takar, Zabul	2,010,857	438	26	51
MCPA	Ghazni, Kunduz	1,468,310	203	6	7
MDC	Baghlan	1,471,979	155	0	6
OMAR	Balkh, Faryab, Ghaznia, Kabul, Laghman, Nangahar, Nimroz, Paktya, Panjshir, Sari Pul,	3,445,537	313	2	779
SDL	Balkh	84,251	18	0	14
Totals		11,474,120	2,638	34	1,945

Table 9: Clearance of improvised mines in 2022 (DMAC data as at October 2023)⁷⁹

Operator	Province/district	Area cleared (m ²)	Improvised mines destroyed
DAFA	Kandahar	241,524	21
HALO	Balkh, Farah, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Samangan, Uruzgan, Zabul	2,074,817	1,312
MCPA	Kunduz	54,993	69
Totals		2,371,334	1,402

⁷⁷ Emails from Bismillah Haqmal, DAFA, 10 April 2023; Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023; Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023; Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023; Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023; and Abid K. Fazel, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

⁷⁸ Email from UNMAS Headquarters, 4 October 2023.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

IPs reported clearing more than double the area recorded by DMAC, including nearly 26km² of AP mined area and 4.5km² of improvised AP mined area as well as 4,803 AP and improvised AP mines (see Tables 10 and 11). The number of AP mines cleared in 2022 was well below the 7,304 mines recorded as destroyed during clearance operations in the previous year.

HALO, much the biggest operator, reported destroying only 515 AP mines in 2022 compared with 2,252 the previous year, explaining that after August 2021 it had taken advantage of improved security and provincial access to focus on areas such as Ghazni, Wardak, and Zabul where insecurity previously hindered access but where AV mine tasks had a higher priority. Remaining AP mined areas are mostly in mountainous locations whereas AV mines, although often spread sparsely across large area, were used on flat land now in demand for cultivation, resulting in recent casualties.⁸⁰

Table 10: AP mine clearance in 2022 (IP data)⁸¹

Operator	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
DAFA	1,996,124	262	387	413
DRC	4,255,796	146	9	4,427
FSD	202,007	1,444	0	636
HALO	2,529,544	515	14	58
MCPA	10,848,906	150	238	518
OMAR	6,051,278	332	13	4,219
Totals	25,883,655	2,849	661	10,271

Table 11: Improvised AP mine clearance in 2022 (IP data)⁸²

Operator	Area cleared (m ²)	Mines destroyed
DAFA	241,524	21
DRC	0	0
HALO	4,100,036	1,394
MCPA	92,650	11
OMAR	72,424	528
Totals	4,506,634	1,954

IP results indicate a sharp acceleration in clearance of improvised mines made possible by improved security and access to provinces and facilitated by information forthcoming from former fighters. Five IPs reported clearing four times as much mined area with improvised AP mines in 2022 as the previous year, led by HALO, which accounted for around 90% of the total in 2022 and said tackling improvised mines was its main priority for 2023.⁸³ Clearance in 2022 was heavily concentrated on the previously fiercely contested areas of Helmand and Kandahar but also occurred in Balkh, Farah, Ghazni, Khost, Uruzgan, and Zabul.⁸⁴

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



⁸⁰ Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

⁸¹ Emails from Bismillah Haqmat, DAFA, 10 April 2023; Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023; Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023; Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023; Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023; and Abid K. Fazet, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

⁸² Emails from Bismillah Haqmat, DAFA, 10 April 2023; Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 21 May 2023; Din Mohammad Nickwah, FSD, 30 June 2023; Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023; Mir Mohammad, Executive Operation Manager, MCPA, 12 April 2023; and Abid K. Fazet, OMAR, 6 April 2023.

⁸³ Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.

⁸⁴ Email from Abdul Habib Rahimi, DMAC, 3 May 2023.

Under Article 5 of the APMB (and in accordance with the two-year extension granted in 2022), Afghanistan is required to destroy all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 March 2025. This is, however, only an interim extension which Afghanistan will use "to understand how the demining situation in Afghanistan will develop in Afghanistan in terms of institutional arrangements and continued support from donors."⁸⁵ DMAC informed the Mine Action Review it intended to submit a request for a further extension to its Article 5 deadline by March 2024.⁸⁶

The IEA committed to fulfilling its obligations under the APMB and other international conventions to which Afghanistan is already a State Party⁸⁷ and it has retained the MAPA's institutional framework but by the end of 2022 there was little clarity on other issues. DMAC's ability to discharge its designated functions of regulator and coordinator remained severely constrained by lack of UN funding that paid the salaries of most DMAC personnel before the change of government. Despite these constraints, DMAC has sought to retain control of critical functions such as information management and disagreements with UNMAS over a mechanism for cooperation have caused interruptions in delivery of available support.

In March 2022, DMAC terminated the UN Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination for Afghanistan (UN-HMACCA), set up by UNMAS to provide mine action coordination and support. It agreed to the creation of a smaller Liaison Office in June 2022 but in February 2023 DMAC applied to the Office of the Prime Minister for a decision on working arrangements between DMAC and the Liaison Office. The Office of the Prime Minister issued a directive requiring DMAC and UNMAS to revert to arrangements that existed in 2018 after the transition of management from the UN to DMAC and to work from the same building as DMAC.⁸⁸ The Liaison Office was unable to comply with an arrangement precluded by donor restrictions and DMAC suspended its operations. UNMAS continues to work in Afghanistan but as the Mine Action Section of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). The UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA informed the Security Council in June 2023 that "discussions continue with the de facto authorities to lift the suspension as soon as possible and enable us to provide full support within our mandate to this vital sector."⁸⁹ On 2 October 2023, the Liaison Office suspension was lifted by DMAC and the UN resumed the provision of technical assistance to DMAC through what is now known as the MATC.⁹⁰

After decades of conflict, improved security in Afghanistan allowing IPs to work in areas previously inaccessible due to insecurity presents an opportunity for major advances in tackling landmine contamination in one of the world's most affected countries but unstable institutional arrangements are among a number of obstacles to progress.

An arguably greater challenge is lack of funding. The breakdown in interim arrangements for UNMAS technical support to the MAPA had sent a negative signal to donors at a time when Taliban policies towards women have deepened the isolation and stigmatisation of de facto authorities and donors face demands for massive and sustained support to Ukraine. DMAC subsequently lifted the suspension of the Liaison Office in October 2023 and UN technical support through the MATC had resumed. Against this background, the November 2022 decision of UNMAS headquarters to halt funding for survey and clearance operations through the VTF and to return millions of dollars of assistance available to Afghanistan had looked particularly unfortunate, notably for national IPs that do not have the same degree of bilateral relations with donors and alternative channels of financial support and in 2023 laid off hundreds of deminers as a result of reduced funding. In September 2023, the decision was reversed and UNMAS resumed resource mobilisation for operational activities through the VTF.

Clearance of AP mines in line with the APMB may also face more competition for resources from demands for tackling other types of explosive ordnance, underscoring the need for greater clarity on MAPA task prioritisation. Clearance of improvised mines, which previously accounted for a high percentage of casualties, remains a high priority but UXO now account for the vast majority of casualties. Meanwhile, HALO reports higher community demand for clearance of AV mines placed across flat land suitable for cultivation and given a higher priority than legacy AP mines found mainly in mountainous and more remote locations.⁹¹

Table 12: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance (2018–22)*

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2022	13.85
2021	17.71
2020	24.24
2019	28.01
2018	30.90
Total	114.71

* Including improvised mines

85 2022 Article 5 deadline Extension Request.

86 Email from Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, DMAC, 3 October 2023.

87 Statement of Afghanistan, CCM Intersessional Meetings, 16 May 2022.

88 Email from the United Nations, 7 May 2023.

89 Special Representative of the Secretary-General Roza Otunbayeva, Briefing to the UN Security Council, 21 June 2023.

90 Email from Nick Pond, UNAMA, 2 October 2023.

91 Email from Farid Homyoun, HALO, 22 June 2023.