

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2026
ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

KEY DATA

CLUSTER MUNITION CONTAMINATION: LIGHT

NATIONAL ESTIMATE

10 km²

SUBMUNITION CLEARANCE IN 2021

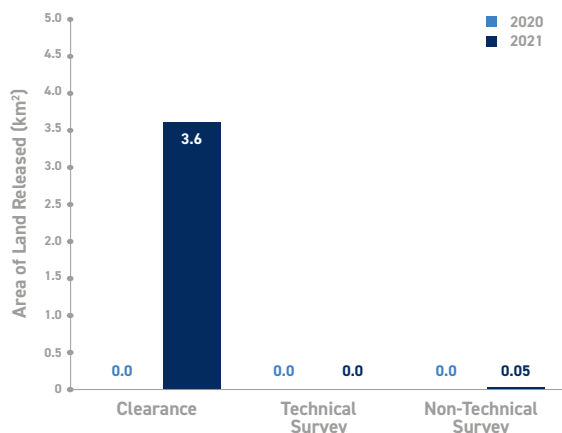
3.6 km²

SUBMUNITIONS DESTROYED IN 2021

1,059

(INCLUDING 759 IN SPOT TASKS)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) took power in August 2021 but did not receive international recognition and came under international sanctions that crippled the economy and cut off funding to national mine action authorities. International donors continued to provide funds to implementing partners bilaterally or through the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action (VTF). The IEA retained the existing mine action institutional structure with the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) overseeing the sector and the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) in charge of operational management and coordination, but lack of funding caused an exodus of staff from DMAC, limiting its capacity to discharge its responsibilities. UNMAS set up the UN Emergency Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (UN-EMACCA), later renamed the UN Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination for

Afghanistan (UNHMACCA), to provide coordination and support but encountered resistance from DMAC and the arrangement was terminated in March 2022. DMAC and UNMAS agreed to establish a temporary liaison office, the Afghan Emergency Mine Action Coordination Committee (AEMACC), to coordinate the sector, which was due to open by the end of June 2022.

Days before the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan requested a four-year extension to its Article 4 CMR clearance deadline. The IEA committed itself to fulfilling Afghanistan's obligations under both the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). Afghanistan resumed clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR) in 2021 after a pause in operations the previous year and continued to record progress in 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Afghanistan should accelerate survey of areas that were previously inaccessible due to insecurity to establish a definitive baseline estimate of the remaining CMR contamination.
- DMAC and UNMAS should collaborate to develop a revised programme of work for fulfilling its CCM Article 4 obligations and completing clearance of remaining CMR contamination.

- DMAC should resume submission of annual Article 7 reports comprehensively detailing the progress of survey and clearance.
- DMAC should formally instruct all mine action implementing partners (IPs) to cooperate fully with the liaison office established as a temporary coordination mechanism, including explicit instruction to submit all operating results to the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2021)	Score (2020)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	8	8	Afghanistan has a small amount of known CMR contamination but continues to identify previously unrecorded cluster munition-contaminated areas. The change of government in 2021 has opened up areas previously inaccessible due to insecurity but also raises the possibility operators will identify more previously unrecorded hazardous areas. Operators also encounter scattered "legacy" submunitions in the course of other tasks.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	4	8	The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) is nationally managed but heavily dependent on international funding. After the change of government in August 2021, the de facto authorities' lack of international recognition and financial resources severely constrained DMAC's capacity to discharge its management and coordination functions. Under the previous government most DMAC salaries and operations were funded by international donors and the removal of international funds left only a skeleton management team in place. CMR clearance funded by the United States and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) continued after August 2021 but with limited coordination.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	5	7	Until August 2021, DMAC was committed to mainstreaming gender which featured in the 2016–20 strategic plan. Progress implementing it was slow although most IPs had gender focal points, hired some women in community liaison and risk education and in rare cases for clearance. After August 2021, stringent IEA regulations sharply reduced public space for women but IPs were able to continue to employ women in office and field (risk education) roles.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	4	8	Information management suffered major disruption after the change of government. DMAC has an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database but DMAC lost most staff, including IM personnel, after the end to international funding and while IPs continued to report operating results database operations largely halted after August. 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 2022. DMAC subsequently agree that a liaison office set up with UNMAS would manage the IMSMA database but, initially, funding only supported a much reduced IM capacity.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	4	8	Mine action sector planning was disrupted by the change of regime, international sanctions, and post-regime-change discord between DMAC and UNMAS. Afghanistan never had a strategic plan for cluster munition clearance but a CCM Article 4 deadline extension request submitted in August 2021 laid out timelines for clearance of all remaining CMR hazardous areas by 2026. The additional time requested appeared more than sufficient for the tackling the contamination identified but implementation was dependent on international donor support.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	6	7	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. International experts believe the AMAS need comprehensive updating. Upheavals in DMAC after August 2021 disrupted its QM which has continued but only sporadically.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	7	5	Conflict and political turmoil in Afghanistan in 2021 did not halt MAPA clearance operations. DAFA, with funding from the United States worked on five tasks clearing 3.6km ² , the highest amount of clearance in three years. DAFA continued clearance in 2022, but as of June said it had funding only until November, leaving uncertain its future engagement in CMR clearance.
Average Score	5.9	7.1	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

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

NATIONAL OPERATORS

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

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding sector (formerly known as Danish Demining Group (DDG))
- HALO Trust
- Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD)

OTHER ACTORS

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

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Afghanistan has limited CMR contamination compared with its much greater challenge from landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) but it has experienced difficulty pinpointing the precise extent, partly due to limitations on access to affected areas as a result of insecurity. Discoveries of previously unrecorded hazardous areas have steadily increased the estimate of the extent of CMR in the past four years and this was particularly so in 2021.

At the end of 2021, the estimate rose to 10.03km² in 19 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) (see Table 1),¹ one-third more than the 7.54km² reported in 10 CHAs at the end of 2020², and more than double the end-2018 estimate of 4.12km².³ Afghanistan informed the CCM intersessional meetings in May 2022 that remaining contamination amounted to 16 hazardous areas affecting 9.9km².⁴

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area (at end 2021)⁵

Province	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Bamyan	2	258,887
Nangarhar	5	4,233,907
Paktya	10	5,522,391
Samangan	2	11,715
Totals	19	10,026,900

Escalating conflict in recent years prevented operators from conducting systematic survey in some parts of the most CMR-affected provinces. In 2020, operators identified three more CHAs located in Bamyan, Paktya, and northern Faryab province, which added a combined total of 1.7km² of CMR contamination to the database.⁶ In 2021, Quick Response Teams identified another 11 previously unrecorded CHAs totalling 5.66km² (see Table 2), mainly in a district of Paktya province that had not previously been surveyed because of insecurity.⁷

Table 2: Cluster munition-contaminated area identified in 2021⁸

Province	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Bamyan	2	392,756
Paktya	7	5,255,995
Samangan	2	11,715
Totals	11	5,660,466

In March 2021, Afghanistan had still expected to complete clearance of its CMR hazardous areas within its initial Article 4 deadline of 1 March 2022,⁹ but the new CHA finds, combined with delays in donor funding, prompted Afghanistan to request a four-year extension until 1 March 2026.¹⁰ The

1 Email from Olivier Demars, Information Management Advisor, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

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

3 Email from Abdul Qudos Ziaee, Head of Operations Department, DMAC, 3 April 2019.

4 Statement of Afghanistan, CCM Intersessional meetings, Geneva, 16 May 2022.

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

6 Email from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 11 April 2021.

7 CHAs identified in 2021 included seven in Paktya covering 5.26km², two in Bamyan affecting 0.39km², and two in Samangan affecting 0.01km². 2021 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, p. 10.

8 Email from Rezwandullah Hijran, Operations Senior Officer – AIM, UNMAS, 5 May 2022.

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

10 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, p. 2.

request identified 16 CHAs totalling 9.9km² but said available information pointed to the possibility of an additional 3km² of CMR contamination in Paktya province.¹¹ Since August 2021 IPs have gained access to previously insecure areas and operators consider it likely that further survey may find additional contamination.¹²

Most of the submunitions cleared in Afghanistan in recent years are Soviet-era AO-2.5RT bomblets from the decade-long war of the 1980s¹³ but the outstanding CMR contaminated areas consist mainly of US BLU-97 munitions

dropped in 2001 and previously assessed by DMAC to be located in just a few provinces of central and eastern Afghanistan.¹⁴ Afghanistan has stated that no cluster munitions were dropped after 2001.¹⁵ However, the CMR contamination found in Bamyán province in 2021 reportedly consisted of Soviet-era submunitions and scattered items continue to be found in many areas. Afghanistan's last Article 7 report, covering 2020, said Soviet-era cluster munitions made up most of the 276 submunitions destroyed in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operations.¹⁶

OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

CMR make up only a small part of Afghanistan's extensive explosive ordnance contamination. This includes almost 500km² of mine contamination¹⁷ and a wide range of ERW. Most explosive ordnance casualties in Afghanistan were caused by anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature affecting an area still to be determined. In addition, Afghanistan had 441km² of conventional mine contamination and 39 former NATO firing ranges covering 681km² to be cleared of unexploded ordnance (UXO), of which one covering 51km² was being worked on.¹⁸

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan's government in August 2021 brought little formal change to the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) management structure but disrupted its ability to function. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan retained Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority in the role of a mine action authority setting policy while DMAC was 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.¹⁹

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 the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to national management in June 2018. From its headquarters in Kabul and seven regional offices, DMAC coordinated the work of national and international implementing partners, prepared strategic plans and annual workplans, set priorities and standards, accredited operators, conducted quality assurance (QA), managed the mine action database, and liaised with international donors.²⁰

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 were paid by UNMAS and ITF Enhancing Human Security.²¹ After August 2021, international sanctions imposed on the IEA halted cooperation between UNMAS and DMAC, and DMAC staff 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.²²

DMAC's director has maintained close contact with IPs and engaged proactively to support 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 visits to IP operating sites to accredit teams and mechanical assets but only sporadically. IPs continued to submit progress reports to DMAC but the Directorate lacked capacity to upload them into the database.²³

11 Ibid., p. 10.

12 Interview with Bismillah Haqmal, Operations Manager, DAFA, in Kabul, 8 June 2022.

13 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, pp. 8–9.

14 Human Rights Watch and Landmine Action, *Banning Cluster Munitions: Government Policy and Practice*, Mines Action Canada, Ottawa, May 2009, p. 27.

15 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, p. 5.

16 CM Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form 3.

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

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

19 Interview with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, Director, DMAC, 4 June 2022.

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

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

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

23 Interviews with international and national implementing partners, Kabul, 4–10 June 2022.

In September 2021, UNMAS set up the UN Emergency Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (UN-EMACCA) to serve as a temporary coordination body on an emergency basis and acting independently of the government, tasking IPs that were bilaterally funded, as well as providing quality management and information management for these projects.²⁴ In early November, the operation was re-branded as the UN Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination Centre for Afghanistan (UN-HMACCA). By the end of the year, it was operating with 114 national staff.²⁵ Under its proposed division of responsibilities, DMAC would continue to set the national mine action strategy, act as custodian of national mine action standards, sign and issue the final certification of land release, oversee adherence to international treaties and regulate the mine action sector's commercial and development-focused actors. The UN would take the lead in humanitarian mine action, setting the strategy, planning, and priorities. It would also oversee the process of accreditation and land release, data collection and information management, research, training, and public relations, including resource mobilisation.²⁶ The formula proved unacceptable to DMAC, leading to the termination of UN-HMACCA at the end of March and ending the employment of 118 national staff.²⁷

Further negotiations between DMAC and UNMAS led in June 2022 to agreement on the creation of a liaison office located in a separate building from DMAC and UNMAS. DMAC expected the office to open by the end of June 2022.²⁸ DMAC described the office as a temporary facility to support coordination of the MAPA until the removal of international sanctions. DMAC emphasised that it remained the primary point of contact for IPs for data sharing, disseminating information, planning, operational activities, and quality management. It agreed that the Liaison Office would manage the MAPA's IMSMA database, processing survey and clearance results, completion reports, new hazard reports, risk education results, and accident reports. DMAC also looked to the Liaison Office for support for regional offices and QA/QM.²⁹ The liaison office was due to have a staff of 25, employing national staff on a salary linked to NGO pay scales, higher than government rates but below UN salaries.³⁰ In addition to information management, it would undertake tasking and prioritisation in consultation with DMAC.³¹ UNMAS, however, was only resourced to coordinate IPs funded through the VTF and it was not immediately clear how it would coordinate the work of operators funded bilaterally.³²

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Afghanistan has a national standard on environmental management in mine action. In addition, individual operators, such as The HALO Trust and DRC, have institutional policies in place at headquarters level. Use of intrusive technologies such as flails by some operators has caused friction with local communities in past years. The HALO Trust employs manual teams to remove dense vegetation while mechanical assets used for anti-personnel mine (including improvised mine) clearance, 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.³³

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Prior to August 2021, Afghanistan had taken initial steps to develop more inclusive mine action within limits imposed by a deeply conservative society. 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."³⁴ After August 2021, Taliban rules imposed stricter regulation on women and girls condemned by the UN as the "institutionalised systematic oppression of women"³⁵ but DMAC has said it remained possible for women to work in the MAPA.³⁶ UNMAS convened the first post-regime-change meeting of a Gender and Diversity Technical Working Group in February 2022³⁷ and IPs have continued to employ female staff in office and field jobs.³⁸

24 Email from Sohaila Hashemi, Communications and Advocacy Officer, UNMAS, 23 February 2022; UNMAS, Humanitarian Mine Action in Afghanistan, MASG, 9 April 2022.

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

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

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

28 Email from Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, Director, DMAC, 15 June 2022.

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

30 Interview with Paul Heslop, UNMAS, Kabul, 7 June 2022.

31 Ibid.

32 Interview with Paul Heslop, UNMAS, in Geneva 21 June 2022.

33 Interviews with Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 4 June 2022; and Soeren Adser Soerensen, DRC, 6 June 2022.

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

35 Statement of Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to the UN Human Rights Council, 15 June 2022.

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

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

38 Interviews with international and national implementing partners, Kabul, 4–10 June 2022.

Despite the commitment to promoting gender and inclusion in mine action, employment of women remained low. The MAPA, with a total workforce of close to 6,000, had increased the number of women employees from 170 near the end of 2019 to 212 in the last quarter of 2020.³⁹ DMAC acknowledged in 2021 that women made up only 4% of MAPA personnel and people with disabilities 1%.⁴⁰ In early 2021, DMAC's 155 staff still included only four female employees, consisting of a female human resources assistant and three interns for the gender and diversity, information management, and risk education departments.⁴¹ DMAC had taken a number of measures to raise awareness of gender issues and promote compliance by implementing partners. In October 2020, after a gap of six months, it appointed a new gender focal point and provided training for the gender focal points of implementing partners as well as some training on non-technical survey for male and female staff of DMAC and IPs.⁴² DMAC reported that all vacancy announcements were gender sensitive and that a woman is present in all recruitment panels, and that women candidates' scores are automatically accorded extra points.⁴³

After August 2021, conditions for female employees varied in different locations, but women NGO staff still worked across the country.⁴⁴ Afghanistan's first female clearance team, set up by DRC in Bamyan province in 2018 and taken on by OMAR for BAC tasks in the same province in 2020, no longer exists and some of its members have

reportedly left the country. However, some IPs reported employing more women in 2022 than before the Taliban takeover. Females employed in operations largely worked in mixed teams with a male family member and almost exclusively in risk education and community liaison. IPs noted this added to operating costs requiring separate vehicles, office space, and accommodation.⁴⁵

DRC, the first IP to deploy an all-female manual clearance team in 2018, had 21 women employees including one international in its staff in 2021, four of them working in managerial positions, and the remainder working in risk education teams. In 2022, DRC hired more women and as of April 2022 had 23 female staff working in the field on risk education and expected to deploy more mixed gender risk education/non-technical survey teams in each of the five main regions by the end of the year.⁴⁶ FSD's total staff of 99 in 2021 included five women, two of whom worked in financial management positions in the head office in Tajikistan and three worked in Afghanistan in FSD's programme of support to mine victims. Since the change of government these staff have been working from home.⁴⁷ The HALO Trust reported it employed 15 women before August 2021 and by June 2022 had increased the number to 46 working in mixed gender teams with family members. In most teams, HALO Trust said it gave women the position of team leader.⁴⁸

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The MAPA's information management suffered severe disruption in 2021 after the change of government and the loss of staff experienced by DMAC as a result of international sanctions against the IEA.⁴⁹ DMAC had started planning to upgrade its database from IMSMA New Generation to IMSMA Core in 2020, but lost some key information management staff and focused instead on cleaning up data in the existing database.⁵⁰ After August 2021, many IP reports submitted to DMAC's regional offices were never sent on to the national database when the offices shut down following the change of government.⁵¹

Between August 2021 and the end of the year, IPs continued to submit operating results to DMAC and UNMAS but not all

reports went to both organisations and reports were not uploaded systematically into the database.⁵² UNMAS set up a small IMSMA cell early in 2022 which first uploaded the operating data for UNMAS-funded projects and then moved onto the other IPs results.⁵³ The termination of UN-HMACCA at the end of March 2022 led to another interruption in data processing. DMAC and UNMAS subsequently agreed that UNMAS would run the IMSMA database in the joint liaison office providing a duplicate data set to DMAC.⁵⁴ As of June 2022, the liaison office had a five-person information management team consisting of two international supervisors and three national staff, but was planning to recruit three more national staff.⁵⁵

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

40 Afghanistan Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, p. 4.

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

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

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

45 Interviews with Farid Hodayoun, HALO Trust, 4 June 2022; and with Awal Khan, QA Manager, OMAR, and Zarina Omar, EORE Manager & Gender Focal Point, OMAR, 8 June 2022.

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

47 Email from Din Mohammad Nickwah, Country Director, FSD, 23 March 2022.

48 Interview with Farid Hodayoun, HALO Trust, 4 June 2022, and email, 20 June 2022.

49 Interviews with international and national implementing partners, Kabul, 4–10 June 2022.

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

51 Email from Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 20 June 2022.

52 Ibid.; and interview with Farid Hodayoun, HALO Trust, 4 June 2022.

53 Email from Mohammad Wakil Jamshidi, Acting Head of Project/CoOPS Unit, UNMAS, 16 February 2022.

54 Interview with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, DMAC, 4 June 2022.

55 Interview with Paul Heslop, UNMAS, in Geneva, 21 June 2022.

UNMAS pursued a number of other initiatives to enhance access to data and strengthen IP reporting. These include working towards launching the Global Information Management System, digitally capturing data imported from IPs and humanitarian agencies and presenting it on a dashboard. This will provide operators, donors, and other stakeholders with easy access to an updated snapshot that includes explosive ordnance contamination estimates, the

status of current operations, and donor funding.⁵⁶ UNMAS is also promoting use of electronic tablets by IP survey and clearance teams to facilitate and improve the quality of reporting from the field. UNMAS started distributing the tablets in May 2022 and by early June had delivered 120. It planned to roll out the programme to all IPs it funded in the course of the year.⁵⁷

PLANNING AND TASKING

Before August 2021 Afghanistan did not have a CMR-specific strategic plan. Afghanistan set out a programme for the clearance of all remaining known CMR hazards in the Article 4 deadline extension request submitted in August 2021 days before the collapse of the government. The request sought an extension of four years until March 2026.⁵⁸ The IEA has repeatedly committed to fulfilling Afghanistan's obligations under the CCM and the APMBC.⁵⁹

The extension request included annual and monthly targets for non-technical and technical survey and clearance of 9.89km² of CMR contamination between November 2022 and October 2025. This included 0.65km² in 2022, 5.35km² in 2023, 2.14km² in 2024, and 1.75km² in 2025.⁶⁰ Those targets will be revised to take account of new hazardous area discoveries and the availability of international funding.

Since August 2021, IPs have continued to report to, and coordinate operations with, DMAC as the national authority but also with the UNMAS coordination mechanisms operational between September 2021 and the end of March 2022. Tasking and coordination was due to be shared between the two bodies through the Liaison Office that was expected to come into operation in June 2022 although the scope of its responsibilities remained to be clearly defined.⁶¹

As the MAPA navigated political change and international sanctions, UNMAS sought to mobilise international funding to support six priorities:⁶²

- **Coordination:** compared with more than 100 staff coordinating mine action in DMAC before August 2021 and in interim UN bodies up to March 2022, the liaison office has 25 staff and funding through UNMAS only until the end of August 2022.
- **National survey:** in April 2022 IPs started conducting survey in four provinces that experienced the most casualties in the last five years: Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Kunduz. UNMAS advocated for a full national survey taking advantage of improved security and access to previously inaccessible districts in order to establish a baseline estimate of contamination that could inform an Afghanistan's APMBC Article 5 deadline extension request.
- **Large-scale clearance:** at the start of the year UNMAS had hoped to raise some \$75 million for the MAPA in 2022, aiming among other priorities to train and deploy up to 10,000 Afghans providing livelihoods in mine action.
- **Increasing the number of Quick Response Teams** matching post-conflict needs for emergency EOD call-outs, survey and clearance.
- **Increased risk education:** this would include training for humanitarian organisations and NGOs to address risks from widespread improvised mine contamination. Aid organisations had shown strong interest and a first course was due to take place July 2022. UNMAS also aimed to broaden nationwide messaging, learning from the success of a BBC Media Action series,⁶³ as well as expanding regional communications and community-level engagement.

56 Interview with Paul Heslop and Malcom MacDonald, Senior Technical Advisor, UNMAS, Kabul, 7 June 2022.

57 Ibid.

58 Afghanistan submitted an initial draft of its extension request to the CCM Implementation Support Unit on 29 July 2021 and its official request for an extension on 3 August 2021. After consultations with the CCM Analysis Group, Afghanistan submitted a text containing further revisions on 10 August 2021.

59 Statement of Afghanistan, CCM Intersessional meetings, 16–17 May 2022; and interview with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, DMAC, 4 June 2022.

60 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, Annex D.

61 Interviews with Qari Nooruddin Rustamkhail, DMAC, 4 June 2022, and Paul Heslop, UNMAS, 7 June 2022.

62 Interview with Paul Heslop and Malcom MacDonald, Senior Technical Advisor, UNMAS, 6 June 2022.

63 BBC Media Action prepared a 16-episode radio drama incorporating explosive hazard messaging broadcast three times daily in Dari and Pushto. The first broadcast reportedly attracted an audience of 600,000 people; the second, an audience of 6 million.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Afghanistan has comprehensive national mine action standards that are International Mine Action Standard (IMAS)-compatible and subject to regular review. CMR survey and clearance are addressed in AMAS 06.02 (Battle Area Clearance).⁶⁴

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Afghanistan's Article 4 deadline extension request indicated that 10 demining NGOs and 23 commercial companies are capable of conducting CMR clearance.⁶⁵ In practice, only one IP, DAFA, has conducted significant recent CMR clearance, while two others, HALO Trust and MCPA, have conducted survey of CMR-affected areas.

DAFA had close to 200 personnel in operations out of total staff of around 400 working in 2021, depending on the number of contracts active at any given time. This included 12 manual demining teams with 120 personnel active until their contract concluded at the end of September 2021, as well as seven community-based demining teams working on CMR tasks in Paktya province. In 2022, in addition to the teams working on CMR clearance, DAFA had 16 teams assigned to clearance of improvised mines in Kandahar, three risk education teams, and one mechanical demining unit operating an excavator. However, DAFA said it had funding for CMR tasks only until November 2022. It also deployed four demining teams, two risk education teams, and one survey team assigned to tackle legacy AP mine contamination in Baghlan province.⁶⁶

The US Department of State funded CMR clearance by DAFA in 2021 and before August 2021 had committed to funding clearance of the remaining CMR contamination.⁶⁷ International sanctions complicated financial transfers to Afghanistan and caused uncertainty about US financing for national IPs that lacked overseas bank accounts,⁶⁸ but DAFA reported that it continued to receive PMWRA funding directly in 2022.⁶⁹

The HALO Trust is much the biggest operator in the MAPA with a total staff of just over 3,000 people in 2021 representing about 65% of the MAPA manpower. It expected to maintain staffing at this level in 2022. This included 64 demining teams employing 1,716 deminers, 37 teams assigned to improvised mine survey and clearance with 241 deminers and 19 mechanical demining units employing more than 100 staff and 75 mechanical assets.⁷⁰ HALO Trust has not been involved in releasing cluster munition hazards but HALO Trust/DAFA joint Quick Response Teams in 2021 identified 11 previously unrecorded CHAs.⁷¹

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), with a team of 18 people (including an international country director, five international, and six national technical advisers), provides third-party monitoring of all US PMWRA grants to IPs in Afghanistan. In 2021, these included 18 grants with an estimated value of \$12.5 million that spanned mine and CMR clearance as well as weapons and ammunition disposal, conventional weapons destruction, stockpile security and management, and community survey, as well as post-clearance impact assessments. Apart from a short hiatus in MAPA operations in August 2021, NPA's activities continued throughout the year involving more than 400 visits to projects. Most sites visited had achieved the necessary standards and none of the sites declared to have been cleared had subsequently recorded items founds or accidents.⁷²

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2021

In a year overshadowed by escalating conflict leading to dramatic regime change, Afghanistan still managed to release more cluster munition-contaminated area in 2021 than in several years. In 2021, the MAPA reported release of 3.6km², almost entirely through clearance.⁷³ IPs destroyed 1,059 submunitions in 2021, mostly through spot EOD tasks, a result that improved significantly on the 276 destroyed the previous year.⁷⁴ In 2020, as a result of delays in donor funding, Afghanistan did not conduct any systematic CMR clearance.⁷⁵

⁶⁴ Statement by Mohammed Shafiq, Director, DMAC, GICHD workshop, Geneva, 26 March 2019.

⁶⁵ Article 4 deadline extension request, 3 August 2021, Executive Summary.

⁶⁶ Interview with Bismillah Haqmal, DAFA, Kabul, 8 June 2022, and email, 23 June 2022.

⁶⁷ Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Interview with Paul Heslop and Malcom MacDonald, UNMAS, 6 June 2022.

⁶⁹ Emails from Bismillah Haqmal, DAFA, 23 and 26 June 2022.

⁷⁰ Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 12 May 2022 and interview 4 June 2022.

⁷¹ Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, p. 10.

⁷² Interview with Russell Bedford, Country Director; Mats Hektor, Senior Technical Advisor; and Nermin Mujcinovic, Senior Technical Advisor, NPA, 5 June 2022; and emails from Sayed Wali, Information Manager, NPA, 9 June 2022; and Mats Hektor, NPA, 1 July 2022.

⁷³ Email from Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

⁷⁴ Emails from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 8 August 2021; and Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

⁷⁵ Emails from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 17 March and 11 April 2021.

SURVEY IN 2021

Insecurity or conflict have largely restricted survey operations in Nangahar and Paktya, the provinces most heavily affected by cluster munition remnants. Quick response teams located the 11 previously unrecorded CMR-contaminated areas added to the database in 2021. Survey results for 2021 also underscore the poor record of Afghan IPs in cancelling or reducing hazardous areas through survey, opting instead for full clearance. DAFA, the only operator releasing CMR-affected areas, only cancelled 0.05km² in 2021 (see Table 3).⁷⁶

In April 2022, two IPs, HALO Trust and OMAR, started conducting survey of explosive ordnance hazards in four provinces (Helmand, Kandahar, Kunduz, and Uruzgan), selected as those that had experienced intense conflict and registered the highest number of casualties. By late June 2022, the survey had surveyed 1,281 villages, cancelled 96 hazard areas covering approximately 2.5km² and identified 94 previously unrecorded hazards as well as conducting 335 EOD tasks.⁷⁷

Table 3: Non-technical survey of cluster munition-contaminated area in 2021

Province	Operator	Area cancelled through NTS (m ²)
Faryab	DAFA	46,467
Total		46,467

CLEARANCE IN 2021

CMR clearance in Afghanistan has fluctuated sharply in recent years as a result of changing security conditions and uneven donor funding. International sanctions applied after August 2021 to isolate the IEA did not halt bilateral funding for mine action.

In 2021, however, the MAPA released 3.6km², concentrated in Paktya province's Zurmat district. MAPA data attributed one task to HALO Trust in Bamyan province but may have misrecorded the operation. DAFA worked on five CMR tasks in 2021 and by June had reportedly completed around 40%.⁷⁸ HALO Trust said it had not conducted any CMR clearance in 2021 but destroyed 65 submunitions in the course of EOD spot tasks, 70% of them in Logar and Parwan provinces.⁷⁹

Table 4: Reported CMR clearance in 2021⁸⁰

Province	Operator	Areas released	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
Bamyan	HALO Trust ⁸¹	1	133,869	20	0
Paktya	DAFA	4	3,461,804	280	27
Totals		5	3,595,673	300	27

In total in 2021, 759 submunitions were reported to have been destroyed through EOD spot tasks, in addition to the 300 destroyed through area clearance.⁸²

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



⁷⁶ Email from Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

⁷⁷ Interviews with Paul Hestop, UNMAS, Kabul, 6 and 21 June 2022; and UNMAS Fact Sheet, distributed 22 June 2022.

⁷⁸ Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 3 August 2021, p. 14.

⁷⁹ Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 12 May 2022.

⁸⁰ Email from Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

⁸¹ HALO Trust did not record any area CMR clearance in 2021. Email from Farid Homayoun, HALO Trust, 12 May 2022.

⁸² Emails from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 8 August 2021; and Olivier Demars, UNMAS, 24 April 2022.

At the start of 2021, Afghanistan still expected to complete clearance of outstanding CMR contamination within its original Article 4 deadline of March 2022.⁸³ The discovery of seven CHAs, adding 5.2km² of CMR contamination to the database, put that objective out of reach. In August 2021, Afghanistan submitted a request to extend its Article 4 deadline by four years to 1 March 2026. Twelve days later the government collapsed and Taliban forces took control. Afghanistan's Extension Request was granted by States Parties at Part Two of the Second CCM Review Conference in September 2021.

In a statement to the CCM intersessional meetings in May 2022, the IEA said it "commits itself to fulfilling its obligations in relation to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and other international conventions to which Afghanistan is already a state party."⁸⁴

Afghanistan's Article 4 deadline extension request set a work plan that aimed to complete clearance of Nangahar province by the end of 2023. Clearance in Paktya province was not possible in winter and is limited to the May–October period in each year of the extension period while clearance of the small hazardous area in Bamyan province was scheduled for May–August 2024. It provided for clearance of 0.6km² in 2022; 5.1km² in 2023; 2.28km² in 2024; and 1.92km² in 2025.⁸⁵

Those targets will need to be adjusted to take account of any new discoveries if previously unrecorded hazardous areas are found, but are well within the MAPA's capacity.

Moreover, Afghanistan no longer faces, as at June 2022, the threat of insecurity which it previously identified as the main risk to completion within the requested extension period. That said, Afghanistan's future progress in fulfilling its CCM obligations will depend largely on the outcome of diplomatic engagement between the IEA and the international community and continued support from the United States, which had previously pledged to finance clearance of remaining CMR hazardous areas, or from other international donors. The UN Security Council approved a humanitarian exemption to international sanctions allowing the provision of humanitarian assistance⁸⁶ and international donors have continued to provide funding through the VTF and bilaterally to some IPs, but not to DMAC.

Table 5: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2021	3.60
2020	0
2019	2.72 ⁸⁷
2018	4.24
2017	2.89
Total	13.45

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

84 Statement of Afghanistan, CCM Intersessional meetings, Geneva, 16–17 May 2022.

85 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, August 2021, Annex.

86 UN Security Council Resolution 2615, 22 December 2021. Exemptions allow payment of salaries of civil servants engaged in delivery of essential services, sharing of office space for humanitarian activities and payment for rent, utilities and security services.

87 Afghanistan's Article 7 report for 2019 recorded CMR clearance in 2018 of 3.62km². DMAC explained that this might include tasks started in 2018 and that 2.72km² represents clearance conducted in 2019. This total included clearance of 1.07km² which resulted in clearance of 2 submunitions and 1,205 items of UXO. Mine Action Review consequently assessed this task as BAC and excluded it from its summary of CMR clearance, which it reported as amounting to 1.65km². DMAC has confirmed (by email, 23 June 2021) that due to the suspected presence of CMR the task was cleared applying cluster munition clearance protocols, not BAC. The Review accordingly has reinstated 2019 CMR clearance of 2.72km². (Email from Mohammad Akbar Oriakhil, DMAC, 23 June 2021).