

ARMENIA

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

	2017	2016
Problem understood	5	5
Target date for completion of mine clearance	5	5
Targeted clearance	6	6
Efficient clearance	5	5
National funding of programme	4	5
Timely clearance	3	4
Land-release system in place	6	6
National mine action standards	7	7
Reporting on progress	6	6
Improving performance	5	6
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	5.2	5.5

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Armenia is now solely dependent on national survey and clearance capacity to address mine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination, after The HALO Trust ceased demining operations in 2015 (though it continues to provide capacity development support). No clearance was conducted in 2017 and the mine detection dogs (MDDs), which had been in training since 2016, failed their accreditation and were sent back for further training. This meant that planned technical survey and clearance operations using the dogs did not take place in 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Armenia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Armenia should clarify the extent of remaining mine contamination, including in military restricted zones.
- Armenia should develop a national mine action strategy, mobilise the necessary resources to finish mine clearance, and set a deadline for the completion of operations.

CONTAMINATION

As at the end of 2017, Armenia had more than 5.7km² of confirmed mined area and a further 3.8km² of suspected mined area, as set out in Table 1. The mined areas contained anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines, or a combination of both, as well as unexploded ordnance

(UXO).¹ Of 97 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), 56 contain anti-personnel mines, totalling just over 2.9km². Three of the six suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), totalling just over 0.1km², may also be contaminated by anti-personnel mines.²

Table 1: Mine contamination (at end-2017)³

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
AP mines	42	2,201,286	3	105,500
AV mines	41	2,810,916	3	3,728,442
AP and AV mines	11	706,046	0	0
AP mines and UXO	2	12,769	0	0
AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Totals	97	5,735,859	6	3,833,942

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle

Four of Armenia's eleven provinces still contain mined areas. Three are contaminated with both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, while the fourth – Vayots Dzor – is contaminated solely with anti-vehicle mines, as set out in Table 2.⁴

Table 2: Mine contamination by province (at end-2017)⁵

Province	Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
Gegharqunik	AP mines	3	584,022	2	105,123
	AV mines	5	2,428,128	3	3,728,442
Syunik	AP mines	33	1,449,713	1	377
	AV mines	23	299,733	0	0
	AP and AV mines	8	676,617	0	0
	AP mines and UXO	2	12,769	0	0
	AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Tavush	AP mines	6	167,551	0	0
	AV mines	10	15,603	0	0
	AP and AV mines	3	29,429	0	0
Vayots Dzor	AV mines	3	67,452	0	0
Totals		97	5,735,859	6	3,833,942

Mine contamination in Armenia impacts a range of development activities, including agriculture and tourism.⁶ Mine contamination blocks access to pasture or arable land and hinders the implementation of community development projects and the development of infrastructure. Mine-affected communities are more socially and economically isolated and less likely to benefit from the flow of tourism to the area.⁷

Priority for clearance is based on CHDE criteria. The first priority is given to contaminated areas that are up to 1km away from a populated area; the second to those near agricultural land; and the third priority is given to contaminated areas that have a negative impact on the environment. These are mostly located in high mountainous zones.⁸

Mine and ERW contamination in Armenia is primarily the consequence of armed conflict with Azerbaijan in 1988–94, in which both sides used mines. The heaviest contamination is along the borders and confrontation lines with Azerbaijan, including the area in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and other territories controlled by the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Forces. Armenia's border with Georgia has been cleared of mines, whereas the border with Turkey, also mined during the Soviet era, is still contaminated.⁹ While non-technical survey in 2012–13 by the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) did not find evidence of mines outside the buffer zones in Ararat province, which borders Turkey, certain areas on that border remain unsurveyed because they are controlled by Russian border troops.¹⁰

The 2005 Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) identified 102 SHAs in five districts bordering Azerbaijan. The LIS estimated that contamination covered more than 321km², affecting 60 communities.¹¹ In August 2012, The HALO Trust conducted partial survey of 17 sites, cancelling 80% of the area identified by the LIS in those sites. However, HALO Trust activities were suspended following a grant awarded by the US Department of State to FSD to re-survey Armenia.¹²

FSD conducted non-technical survey from November 2012 to May 2013.¹³ The survey found 131 “dangerous areas” totalling 47km² in four districts bordering Azerbaijan. Thirteen of these areas, totalling 1.8km², were found to contain only UXO and not mines.¹⁴ Of the 131 “dangerous areas”, 17 were SHAs estimated to cover 26km² and the other 114 were CHAs that covered 21km².¹⁵ FSD was mandated by the Government of Armenia to survey impacted communities outside the military restricted zone. Therefore, 50 SHAs that fall inside the military perimeter were not included in the survey, which was conducted only within the internationally recognised boundaries of Armenia.¹⁶

During the 2012–13 survey, FSD teams collected data on 271 non-recent mine victims. These records were submitted to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which maintains a mine victim database in Armenia.¹⁷

Territory seized from Azerbaijan during the conflict is believed to be significantly contaminated by mines and ERW, including unexploded submunitions.¹⁸ However, the precise extent of contamination in those districts is unknown.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In 2002, the Armenian Humanitarian Demining Centre was established and the mine action programme was developed under the Armenian Armed Forces. However, this process stalled in 2006 and the Armenian Humanitarian Demining Centre suspended its activities mainly due to a lack of funding. At the beginning of 2011, the Government of Armenia established the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE) as a civilian, non-commercial state body responsible for conducting survey and clearance, and identifying contaminated areas. The CHDE can negotiate with international demining organisations, accept international funding, sign contracts, and receive international assistance.¹⁹ The CHDE has an advisory board, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Defence, Emergency Situations, Territorial Administration, Education, and Science and Justice.²⁰ In 2013, a government decree made the CHDE Armenia's National Mine Action Centre (see below section, legislation and standards).²¹ The CHDE is said to offer equal employment opportunities for both men and women. The roles are nearly equally divided between men and women, and most women occupy senior or leadership positions.²²

Strategic Planning

Armenia does not yet have a formally constituted national mine action programme or strategy.²³ In March 2013, a discussion was held at the Ministry of Defence on the 2012–13 survey.²⁴ The chair of the CHDE's council, Ara Nazaryan, stated that “the drafting of a national mine action programme, its approval and subsequent implementation are priority tasks for comprehensive demining activities in the territory of the Republic of Armenia.”²⁵

Based on the survey findings, the CHDE was to develop a national mine action plan that it would implement following government approval.²⁶ Alongside development of the draft mine action law (see below), and with the support of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s office in Yerevan, the CHDE has been seeking to establish a national mine action programme. The programme should receive national funding, and be guided by a national mine action strategy and plan.²⁷ As at August 2018, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a final draft of the National Strategic Plan on Mine Action had been developed, which was due to be presented to the

Government of Armenia for approval before the end of the year. The main elements of the draft Plan are to address, as a priority, anti-personnel mine contamination with a humanitarian impact as well as to work on demining in support of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.²⁸

In 2014, the CHDE launched an initiative to improve operational efficiencies.²⁹ Criteria used to prioritise clearance tasks include the distance of hazardous areas from local communities, the intended use of land post-clearance, and the potential for development projects on cleared land. To optimise efficient deployment of resources, clearance plans are typically drawn up on a community-by-community basis.³⁰

Legislation and Standards

In 2013, in conformity with a government decree, the CHDE began developing national mine action legislation. According to the decree, the CHDE would draft the law and a mine action strategy for discussion among the government in the first half of 2016, in addition to proposing possible amendments to national mine action standards covering explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and the use of MDDs.³¹ The CHDE began drafting the law in 2015³² with the support of the OSCE office in Yerevan.³³ As at August 2018, the draft mine action law had been submitted to the National Assembly for review.³⁴

In 2013, with the assistance of FSD, the CHDE developed the Armenian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and submitted them for government approval. The NMAS were approved by the government in April 2014.³⁵

The CHDE will further develop its standing operating procedures (SOPs) once the draft law on mine action has been adopted.³⁶ SOPs on manual mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) have already been elaborated.³⁷

Quality Management

In 2014, with technical support from FSD, a quality management (QM) system was developed to be implemented in accordance with IMAS and the NMAS. Quality assurance (QA) is conducted by dedicated officers who make regular field visits to inspect cleared land.³⁸

In 2017, internal QA activities were implemented through systematic field inspections, sampling and continuing monitoring of all operations. Only internal quality assurance was carried out as BAC operations were conducted by CHDE deminers. The internal quality assurance was led by the CHDE's Chief Inspector. Quality control (QC) is conducted once clearance of the land has been completed, but prior to handover.³⁹

The quality of demining activities is assured through:

- Accreditation of deminers and demining operators by the CHDE
- Internal QA procedures
- External QA by the CHDE QA/QC team
- External QC sampling inspections by the CHDE QA/QC team.⁴⁰

Information Management

With FSD's support, the CHDE set up and manages the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.⁴¹

Operators

Since The HALO Trust's departure from Armenia in October 2015, only a national capacity for technical survey and clearance has remained, the Armenian Peacekeeping Engineering Brigade (PKEB). In 2017, the PKEB was unable to deploy any teams for clearance or technical survey as it had other missions to accomplish, whereas it deployed two six-strong manual clearance teams the previous year.⁴² While the CHDE deployed one team of five for non-technical survey, technical survey, and battle area clearance.⁴³ This represented a considerable decrease in capacity compared to 2015, as no international clearance organisation undertook demining operations in Armenia in 2016 or 2017.⁴⁴

Six MDDs were also introduced in Armenia for the first time in 2016, for use in PKEB's technical survey. The MDD project is funded by the United States (US) Department of State and private donations from US citizens with support from ITF Enhancing Human Security and the Marshall Legacy Institute.⁴⁵ As part of the project, Bosnian Mine Detection Dog Center (MDDC) trainers were leading a dog-handler integration course with PKEB dog handlers.⁴⁶ In 2017, however, all six MDDs failed their accreditation and were returned so could not be involved in demining operations as planned. As at September 2018, there were no plans to bring back MDDs to Armenia although the CHDE is open to discuss the possibility of involving adequately trained MDDs in its operations in the future.⁴⁷

FSD had been present in Armenia since 2012,⁴⁸ but withdrew at the end of January 2015 due to lack of funding.⁴⁹ From August 2013 to January 2015, FSD implemented a capacity development programme, covering: basic EOD training; mentoring the CHDE in tasking, planning, QA/QC, IMSMA, reporting systems and mechanisms; data collection, and support for the elaboration of SOPs and policy.⁵⁰

The HALO Trust was operational in Armenia from mid-2012 to late 2015, initially undertaking mainly non-technical survey, and later technical survey and clearance, deploying both its own clearance teams and HALO Trust-led teams from the PKEB.⁵¹ Although The HALO Trust no longer conducts mine clearance operations in Armenia, it continues to provide advice and training to the CHDE, as and when required.⁵² An agreement in 2017 concerns HALO support for safe QA clearance of tasks that straddle the border. These operations were ongoing in 2018 and were expected to continue beyond the end of the year. In addition, HALO Trust conducted first aid training for the CHDE in April 2017 and provided training on BAC in October 2017. The HALO Trust will continue to seek to help the CHDE to complete minefield clearance in future years.⁵³

In December 2013, the Foundation for Demining and Demolition (FDD) was established as a national, civilian, and non-commercial demining organisation in Armenia with support from the CHDE, Geowulf LLC, FSD, and the Government of Armenia.⁵⁴ Its main tasks are to conduct

demining and destroy expired or obsolete arms and ammunition in Armenia; it also undertakes research, dog breeding and supplies machinery.⁵⁵ As at August 2018, FDD had not conducted any demining operations since its creation nor are there any current plans for it to do so.⁵⁶

LAND RELEASE

No survey or clearance of mined area was conducted in 2017. This compares to 0.02km² which was released by clearance and cancellation by non-technical survey of 14.4km² in 2016.⁵⁷

Survey in 2017

No mined area was surveyed in 2017, but a small amount of ERW survey did take place. Upon receiving information of an incident involving cluster munition remnants (CMR) in the Kornidzor area of the Tegh community in the Syunik province, the CHDE conducted a “double” non-technical survey (meaning survey of an area that has already been surveyed) and confirmed a hazardous area covering 500,004m² as contaminated with CMR and other ERW.⁵⁸ The CHDE also implemented “double” non-technical survey in the Khnatsakh community of Syunik province in an area contaminated with anti-vehicle mines. As a result, a CHA of 438m² was cancelled.⁵⁹

Clearance in 2017

No mined areas were cleared in 2017. BAC was conducted following non-technical survey in the Kornidzor area of the Tegh community in Syunik province confirming an area of 500,004m². Partial clearance of 64,191m² was conducted and two cluster munition remnants and two items of other ERW were found.⁶⁰

Progress in 2018

In 2018, the CHDE planned to implement the following activities:

- Manual clearance of 25,200m² of area containing anti-personnel mines by two teams from the PKEB in Davit Bek in Syunik province
- Continuation of BAC activities in Kornidzor in Syunik province
- “Double” non-technical survey in Gegharqunik province.⁶¹

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Armenia is not a state party to the APMBC, but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires the clearance of mines in any area under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.

No target date has been set for the completion of mine clearance in Armenia, due to the uncertainty of future capacity and funding.⁶² Moreover, over the past five years, demining in Armenia has been slow and productivity rates paltry, as Table 3 illustrates. In 2017, no demining took place.

One of the objectives of the Armenian Mine Action Strategy 2007–11 was to release, through technical survey and clearance, 2.2% (7km²) of the SHAs identified by the LIS and 6.8% of the SHAs outside the restricted military zone.⁶⁴ However, scant progress was made towards these targets.⁶⁵ Armenia claims that challenges in its mine and ERW clearance include the low level of contamination and the random distribution of mines.⁶⁶

Operational capacity was significantly reduced in 2017 from previous years with no international operators or the PKEB conducting clearance. BAC was conducted using teams from the CHDE. The MDDs did not gain accreditation and planned technical survey and clearance activities did not take place in 2017.

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2013–17⁶³

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2017	0
2016	0.02
2015	0.07
2014	0.04
2013	0
Total	0.13

National funding supports the budget expenses and capacity building of the CHDE, but Armenia does not fund clearance operations.⁶⁷ The CHDE’s budget for 2017 remained the same as 2016, and as at August 2018, no donor support had been secured.⁶⁸ The CHDE has submitted an application to the government of Armenia for AMD 130 million (approx. US\$270,000) to cover planned clearance activities in 2019.⁶⁹

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- 2 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 1 October 2018.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 9 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014 and 28 April 2017, and interview in Geneva, 1 April 2014.
- 10 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", CHDE, Yerevan, 2013, p. 9; and emails from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016; and Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 11 UNDP Armenia Humanitarian Demining Project, "Landmine Impact Survey in Armenia 2005", Yerevan, August 2005.
- 12 Emails from Andrew Moore, Caucasus and Balkans Desk Officer, HALO Trust, 17 February 2014; and Valeria Fabbroni, Head of Operations, FSD, 26 February 2014.
- 13 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", Yerevan, 2013, p. 12.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 21 February 2014.
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- 18 Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), "ANAMA 2017".
- 19 Armenian Ministry of Defence, "The New Legal Status of the Humanitarian De-Mining Center", 13 February 2014; and email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 September 2018.
- 20 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.
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- 22 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 23 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 30 March 2015.
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- 30 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 31 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 30 March 2015; and Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 3 September 2015.
- 32 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.
- 33 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 34 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 35 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014 and 30 March 2015.
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- 37 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 38 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015.
- 39 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014.
- 42 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017; and Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.
- 43 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.
- 44 Ibid; and email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
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- 50 Ibid.
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