

ARMENIA

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

	For 2016	For 2015
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	5	5
Timely clearance	4	4
Land release system in place	6	6
National mine action standards	7	7
Reporting on progress	6	6
Improving performance	6	6
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	5.5	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 continue to provide capacity development support). While clearance output decreased in 2016, a significant amount of land was cancelled by non-technical survey. Furthermore, if mine detection dogs (MDDs), in training since 2016, acquire accreditation in 2017, this could improve progress in technical survey operations.

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 April 2017, Armenia had more than 5.7km² of confirmed mined area and a further 3.8km² or suspected mined area, as set out in Table 1. The mined areas contain 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 (SHAs), totalling just over 0.1km², may also be contaminated by anti-personnel mines. The breakdown of contamination by type is detailed in Table 1.²

Table 1: Contamination (as at April 2017)³

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
AP mines	42	2,222,857	2	105,123
AV mines	41	2,812,916	3	3,728,442
AP and AV mines	11	706,046	0	0
AP mines and UXO	2	12,828	1	377
AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Totals	97	5,759,489	6	3,833,942

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle

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

Table 2: Contamination by province (as at April 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	1,471,284	0	0
	AV mines	23	299,733	0	0
	AP and AV mines	8	676,617	0	0
	AP mines and UXO	2	12,828	1	377
	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	5,757,489	6	3,833,942

In addition, 14 CHAs and six SHAs contain only UXO. These areas, which total 1.4km² and 6.4km², respectively, are located in the provinces of Gegharqunik, Syunik, and Tavush.⁶

This compares to 6.7km² of confirmed mined area and a further 17.3km² of suspected mined area, as at end of 2015.⁷ The significant decrease in SHA is because more than 14km² was cancelled by non-technical survey in 2016.⁸

According to the Armenian Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (ACHDE), mine contamination in Armenia is typically not dense and does not follow set patterns.⁹ The ACHDE reports that 34,523 people, all in rural communities, are impacted by remaining mine and ERW contamination.¹⁰ Mine contamination in Armenia impacts a range of development activities, including agriculture and tourism.¹¹ Priority for clearance is given to agricultural land.¹²

Mine and ERW contamination in Armenia is primarily the consequence of armed conflict with Azerbaijan in 1988–94, which saw both sides use 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

FSD conducted non-technical survey from November 2012 to May 2013.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ Of the 131 "dangerous areas", 17 were SHAs estimated to cover 26km² and the other 114 were CHAs that covered 21km².¹⁹

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.²⁰

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.²¹ In addition, the ACHDE is the coordination body to which all casualty data is submitted for inclusion into the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.²²

Territory seized from Azerbaijan during the conflict is believed to be significantly contaminated by mines and ERW, including unexploded submunitions.²³ However, the precise extent of contamination in those districts is unknown.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In 2002, the ACHDE was established under the Ministry of Defence as a state agency for mine action activities.²⁴ On 17 February 2011, the Government of Armenia adopted Decree 143, which changed the legal status of the ACHDE to a civilian, non-commercial state organisation responsible for conducting survey and clearance, and identifying contaminated areas. Under its new status, the ACHDE can negotiate with international demining organisations, accept international funding, sign contracts, and receive international assistance.²⁵ The ACHDE has an advisory board, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Defence, Emergency Situations, Territorial Administration, and Justice.²⁶ In 2013, a government decree made the ACHDE Armenia's National Mine Action Centre (see below section, legislation and standards).²⁷

Strategic Planning

Armenia does not yet have a formally constituted national mine action programme or strategy.²⁸ In March 2013, a discussion was held at the Ministry of Defence on the 2012–13 survey.²⁹ The chair of ACHDE'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."³⁰

Based on the survey findings, the ACHDE was to develop a national mine action plan that it would implement following government approval.³¹ 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) in Yerevan, the ACHDE has been setting up a national mine action programme, which will benefit from national funding, guided by a national strategy for mine action and mine action plan.³² As at April 2017, the draft national strategic plan on mine action was in the final stages of editing, and reportedly includes strategic direction and coordination for mine action, guidance on principles and objectives, an outline of operations and planning, and allocation of financial means.³³

In 2014, the ACHDE launched an initiative to help improve efficiency in coordinating and directing mine action operations, and ensure a “realistic” land release policy.³⁴ 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.³⁵

Legislation and Standards

In 2013, in conformity with a government decree, the ACHDE began developing national mine action legislation. According to the decree, the ACHDE 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.³⁶ The ACHDE reported that it began drafting the law in 2015,³⁷ and that the OSCE office in Yerevan supported the early stage of the draft law’s elaboration.³⁸ As at April 2017, ACHDE reported that the draft law was in “being edited” prior to submission for government approval.³⁹

In 2013, with the assistance of FSD, the ACHDE developed the Armenian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and submitted them for government approval. The NMAS were approved by the government in April 2014.⁴⁰ As at April 2017, amendments to the NMAS on the use of MDDs were being elaborated, which the ACHDE expected the amendments to be submitted for government approval in the second half of 2017.⁴¹

The ACHDE will further develop its standing operating procedures (SOPs) once the draft law on mine action has been adopted.⁴²

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. QA is conducted by dedicated officers who make regular field visits to inspect cleared land.⁴³

Information Management

With FSD’s support, the ACHDE set up and manages the national IMSMA database.⁴⁴

Operators

Since The HALO Trust’s departure from Armenia in October 2015, only a national capacity for technical survey and clearance remains. In 2016, the Armenian Peacekeeping Engineering Brigade (PKEB), under the Ministry of Defense, deployed two six-strong manual clearance teams from mid-July to October 2016. In addition, the ACHDE had one three-strong non-technical survey team.⁴⁵ This represented a considerable decrease in capacity compared to 2015, as no international clearance organisation undertook demining operations in Armenia in 2016.⁴⁶

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 US Department of State and private donations from US citizens with support from ITF Enhancing Human Security and the Marshall Legacy Institute.⁴⁷ As part of the project, Bosnian Mine Detection Dog Center (MDDC) trainers were leading a dog-handler integration course with PKEB dog handlers.⁴⁸ The MDDs were scheduled to undergo final tests and accreditation by ACHDE in the summer of 2017, and if successful, will join the PKEB manual teams in technical survey.⁴⁹

FSD had been present in Armenia since 2012,⁵⁰ but withdrew at the end of January 2015 due to lack of funding.⁵¹ From August 2013 to January 2015, FSD implemented a capacity development programme, covering: basic EOD training; mentoring ACHDE in tasking, planning, quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC); IMSMA; reporting systems and mechanisms; data collection; and support for the elaboration of SOPs and policy.⁵²

Although The HALO Trust no longer conducts mine clearance operations in Armenia, it continues to provide advice and training to ACHDE, as and when required.⁵³ The HALO Trust had previously been 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.⁵⁴

In September 2013, The HALO Trust opened an office in the Kapan region in order to initiate its new demining activities under a US\$600,000 grant awarded by the US Department of State for a two-year period (August 2013–July 2015).⁵⁵ It began clearance in April 2014 and continued in 2015, with funding secured until July.⁵⁶ The HALO Trust’s US funding was subsequently extended to October 2015, but it took the decision to make its own manual and mechanical teams redundant at the end of July, in order to provide adequate resources for the continuation of PKEB’s operations until October. This decision was taken with a view to supporting the project’s end goal of a sustainable national mine clearance capacity.⁵⁷ At the completion of HALO Trust’s US grant the PKEB teams successfully operated from August to October 2015 as an independent national clearance capacity.

The HALO Trust has also undertaken work to build national capacity in Armenia through a training programme, and supervised deminers from the PKEB to international standards.⁵⁸ In 2016, as part of the capacity-building project, The HALO Trust provided refresher training for nine PKEB leaders on minefield marking, mapping, reporting, GPS coordinates, and minefield management, prior to deployment. In addition, The HALO Trust also provided geographic information system (GIS) training to ACHDE staff on polygon mapping and database management.⁵⁹ The HALO Trust will continue to provide advice and refresher training in 2017, as required by the ACHDE, to ensure the national capacity's long-term success.⁶⁰

In January 2014, the Foundation for Demining and Demolition (FDD) was established as a national, civilian, and non-commercial demining organisation in Armenia with support from the ACHDE, Geowulf LLC, FSD, and the Government of Armenia.⁶¹ Its main tasks are to conduct demining and destroy expired or obsolete arms and ammunition in Armenia.⁶² As at April 2017, however, FDD had not conducted any operations since its creation.⁶³

LAND RELEASE

Less than 0.02km² of mined area was released by clearance in 2016, compared with 0.07 km² cleared in 2015. In addition, just under 14.4km² was cancelled by non-technical survey.⁶⁴

Survey in 2016

Through survey in 2016, the ACHDE cancelled two huge SHAs totalling almost 13.5km², and partly cancelled a further two CHAs, totalling almost 0.9km².⁶⁵

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

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

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although Armenia has not acceded to the APMBC, it voluntarily provides information on anti-personnel mines to the United Nations and to the OSCE for transparency and confidence-building.⁶⁷ Whatever information is provided, however, is not publicly available.

One of the objectives of the Armenian Mine Action Strategy 2007–11 was released through technical survey and clearance of 2.2% (7km²) of the SHAs identified by the LIS and 6.8% of the SHAs outside the restricted military zone.⁶⁸ Scant progress was, though, made towards these targets.⁶⁹ Armenia claims that challenges in its mine and ERW clearance include the low level of contamination and the random distribution of mines it is confronting.⁷⁰

Historically, Armenia has not reported systematically on its mine clearance operations, though detailed information was provided for 2014, 2015, and 2016. In the past, demining in Armenia has been slow and productivity rates correspondingly low, with the Ministry of Defence reporting only some 2km² of mined area cleared from 2002 to the end of 2008.⁷¹ During 2013, only non-technical survey was conducted (by FSD, with the support of ACHDE).⁷² In April 2014, clearance operations began again in Armenia, and continued in 2015 and 2016. Humanitarian demining was not carried out prior to this, due to lack of donor funding.⁷³

Clearance in 2016

In 2016, PKEB teams cleared one mined area totalling 17,310m², destroying two anti-personnel mines and three items of UXO.⁶⁶

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2012–16⁷⁴

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2016	0.02
2015	0.07
2014	0.04
2013	0
2012	0
Total	0.13

In October 2015, The HALO Trust ceased mine clearance operations in Armenia, leaving only national capacity for survey and clearance provided by the Armed Force's PKEB; and an overall reduction in operational capacity in 2016.

The ACHDE planned to increase the number of PKEB manual clearance teams from two to three in 2017. In addition, if MDDs gain accreditation, this will also facilitate progress in technical survey in Armenia.⁷⁵

National funding supports the budget expenses and capacity building of the ACHDE, but Armenia does not fund clearance operations.⁷⁶ ACHDE's budget for 2017 remained the same as 2016, and as at April 2017, no donor support had been secured.⁷⁷

No target data has been set for the completion of mine clearance in Armenia, due to the uncertainty of future funding.⁷⁸

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- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, Operations Officer, ACHDE, 8 August 2016.
- 8 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, ACHDE, 28 April 2017.
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- 34 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, ACHDE, 30 March 2015.
- 35 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, ACHDE, 28 April 2017.
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