

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Armenia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Armenia should clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Armenia should clarify the extent of remaining mine contamination, including in zones where access is restricted to the military.
- Armenia should mobilise the necessary resources to finish mine clearance and set a deadline for the completion of operations.

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

At the end of 2020, Armenia had more than 5.69km<sup>2</sup> of confirmed mined area and a further 3.83km<sup>2</sup> of suspected mined area, as set out in Table 1.<sup>1</sup> The mined areas contained anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines, or a combination of both, as well as unexploded ordnance (UXO).<sup>2</sup> Of 94 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), 55 contain anti-personnel mines, totalling just under 2.9km<sup>2</sup>, and the remaining 2.8km<sup>2</sup> contains anti-vehicle mines. Three of the six suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), totalling just over 0.1km<sup>2</sup>, are thought to be contaminated by anti-personnel mines, with the remaining 3.7km<sup>2</sup> thought to contain only anti-vehicle mines.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Mined area (at end 2020)<sup>4</sup>**

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
AP mines	41	2,176,085	3	105,500
AV mines	39	2,791,608	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
<b>Totals</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>5,691,350</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3,833,942</b>

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.<sup>5</sup> The total area contaminated by mines and exploded ordnance (UXO) reported at the end of 2020 is the same as that reported at the end of 2019 as no land was released during the intervening twelve months.

A Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was conducted in Armenia in 2005, followed by partial survey of 17 sites by The HALO Trust in 2012, and then again, in 2012–13, by the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD). FSD found 17 SHAs estimated to cover 26km<sup>2</sup> and 114 CHAs that covered 21km<sup>2</sup> in four districts bordering Azerbaijan. Thirteen of these areas, totalling 1.8km<sup>2</sup>, contained only UXO and not mines.<sup>6</sup> In 2019, the Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE) conducted non-technical survey in Syunik province but military-restricted zones continued to be off limits for survey and clearance.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2: Mined area by province (at end 2020)<sup>8</sup>**

Province	Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Gegharkunik	AP mines	3	584,022	2	105,123
	AV mines	5	2,428,128		
Syunik	AP mines	32	1,424,512	1	377
	AV mines	21	280,425		
	AP and AV mines	8	676,617	0	0
	AP mines and UXO	2	12,769		
	AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
	AP mines	6	167,551		
Tavush	AV mines	10	15,603	0	0
	AP and AV mines	3	29,429		
Vayots Dzor	AV mines	3	67,452	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>5,691,350</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3,833,942</b>

Mine and explosive remnants of war (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 exists in areas previously occupied by Armenia but regained by Azerbaijan during a six-week conflict that took place between September and November 2020. The reclaimed territory, which is no longer under Armenia's control, contains heavily contaminated land, including around Nagorno-Karabakh, and a massive mined area along the 350km-long line of contact (LoC) that previously separated Armenian and Azerbaijani forces.<sup>9</sup>

Armenia's border with Georgia has been cleared of mines, whereas the border with Turkey, also mined during the Soviet era, is still contaminated.<sup>10</sup> While non-technical survey in 2012–13 by the 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.<sup>11</sup> The LIS conducted under UNDP auspices in 2005 had identified Ararat province as contaminated with anti-personnel mines but this is not confirmed by the data provided from CHDE.<sup>12</sup>

Armenia also reported new contamination with cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive ordnance (EO) in Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush provinces as a result of the conflict with Azerbaijan in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

## NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The CHDE was established by the Armenian government in 2011 as a civilian, non-commercial State body responsible for conducting survey and clearance and identifying contaminated areas. In 2014, the CHDE was made Armenia's national mine action authority (NMAA).<sup>14</sup> The CHDE can negotiate with international demining organisations, accept international funding, sign contracts, and receive international assistance.<sup>15</sup> The CHDE has an advisory board, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Defence, Emergency Situations, Territorial Administration, Education, and Justice.<sup>16</sup>

In 2013, in conformity with a government decree, the CHDE began developing national mine action legislation. The CHDE began drafting the law in 2015<sup>17</sup> with the support of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) office in Yerevan.<sup>18</sup> In 2019, the CHDE expected to submit the draft mine action law to the new Parliament of Armenia for discussion before the end of the year.<sup>19</sup> As at April 2021, however, no progress towards the adoption of the mine action law had been reported.<sup>20</sup>

In 2020, the government allocated AMD208 million (approx. US\$400,000) to cover the costs of the CHDE and AMD130 million (approx. \$250,000) for survey and clearance operations.<sup>21</sup>

In 2021 the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) programme, financed by Japan, initiated a project for Medical Support and First Aid Training. The project will provide training in the provision of explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and first aid in mine-impacted communities in Armenia. The GGP included the supply of an ambulance to be used in support of clearance operations.<sup>22</sup>

The CHDE receives capacity development support from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). CHDE staff have been trained in land release and information management.<sup>23</sup>

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The CHDE does not have a gender policy and associated implementation plan but has reported that gender has been mainstreamed in Armenia's draft national mine action strategy. During community liaison activities, all groups affected by mine contamination are consulted, including women and children. The CHDE is said to offer equal employment opportunities for both men and women. Two of the department heads within the CHDE are female and out of a total of 47 employees, 17 are women (36%), most of whom occupy senior or specialist roles. In addition, two women work in the non-technical survey teams, but there are no women deminers.<sup>24</sup>

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## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

With FSD's support, the CHDE set up and manages the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.<sup>25</sup> The CHDE had been planning to install IMSMA Core in 2019 but as at April 2021, this had been delayed for an unspecified amount of time due to the outbreak of COVID-19. In 2020, the CHDE elaborated quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) forms using KoboCollect Software to improve data collection in the field. Once IMSMA Core is installed, it will be possible to import the data into the database using KoboCollect forms.<sup>26</sup>

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## PLANNING AND TASKING

The draft National Strategic Plan on Mine Action was presented for the approval to the Armenian Government in 2018, however, as at April 2021, it was being reconsidered due to the emergence of new challenges (primarily the contamination relating to the 2020 conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh).<sup>27</sup> The main objectives of the draft Plan are to address, as a priority, anti-personnel mines in CHAs that have a humanitarian impact, increasing community safety in support of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>28</sup>

Priority for clearance is based on CHDE criteria. Priority is given first to contaminated areas that are up to 1km away from a population centre, then to those near agricultural land, and finally to contaminated areas that negatively affect the environment. These are mostly located in the mountains. To optimise efficient deployment of resources, clearance plans are typically drawn up on a community-by-community basis.<sup>29</sup>

Armenia's annual work plan of 2021 envisaged the following activities: battle area clearance (BAC) of 45,000m<sup>2</sup> of CMR and EO contamination in Kornidzor area of Tegh community (Syunik province); technical survey and clearance of 15,000m<sup>2</sup> of EO contaminated land in Davit Bek of Kapan community (Syunik province); and non-technical survey in Syunik, Gegharkunik and Tavush provinces. CHDE noted that survey and clearance foreseen in Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush provinces will target new contamination that resulted from the 2020 conflict with Azerbaijan.<sup>30</sup>

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## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

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.<sup>31</sup> In 2018, amendments were made to the NMAS for mine risk education, accreditation of demining organisations, and mine detection dogs (MDDs). No amendments were made to the NMAS in 2020. According to CHDE, reviews of the NMAS are conducted following the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and international best practice.<sup>32</sup>

The CHDE has been developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for several years.<sup>33</sup> SOPs on manual mine clearance, BAC, marking of hazardous areas, and medical support were elaborated by 2018.<sup>34</sup> In 2020, the CHDE elaborated SOPs on Information Management (IM), non-technical survey, technical survey, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and quality management (QM).<sup>35</sup>

## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Armenia only conducted BAC and EO clearance in 2020, all of which was all performed by the Foundation for Demining and Demolition. The CHDE deployed one non-technical survey team of three personnel while the Foundation for Demining and Demolition deployed three clearance teams totalling 18 deminers.<sup>36</sup>

CHDE had been planning to add one manual clearance team, one mechanical demining team, and one non-technical survey team to its demining capacity for 2020. The envisaged increase did not happen, however, and survey and clearance capacity remained constant. CHDE's plans to acquire mechanical clearance equipment also did not materialise due to changes in domestic law, which have impeded procurement.<sup>37</sup> Currently all clearance is conducted manually following the failure of six MDDs to obtain accreditation in 2017 following which they were "demobilised".<sup>38</sup> The CHDE has foreseen an increase of capacity of one non-technical survey team and one to two demining teams in 2021.<sup>39</sup>

QM is conducted in accordance with IMAS and the NMAS. QA is conducted by dedicated officers who make regular field visits to inspect cleared land.<sup>40</sup> QC is conducted once clearance of the land has been completed, but prior to handover.<sup>41</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

### LAND RELEASE

No anti-personnel mined area was surveyed or cleared in 2020.

A total of 16,180m<sup>2</sup> of anti-personnel mined area was cleared in 2019, with two anti-personnel mines found and destroyed.<sup>42</sup> Clearance of the 'Davit Bek' CHA that started in 2018, was completed in 2019 and the land was handed over to the community. Davit Bek was however re-contaminated with CMR and other EO following the recent conflict with Azerbaijan in September–December 2020.<sup>43</sup>

The inability to procure mechanical clearance services, as noted above, has precluded progress in clearing anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mined areas in the Yeghvard area of Kapan community (Syunik Province), as had been set out in the 2020 work plan.<sup>44</sup>

No target date has been set for the completion of mine clearance in Armenia, due to the uncertainty over future capacity and funding.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, due to the new CMR and EO contamination that resulted from the 2020 conflict with Azerbaijan, the CHDE will prioritise non-technical survey in the newly contaminated provinces of Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Tavush. The 2021 annual work plan does not foresee clearance of anti-personnel mined areas.

Over the past five years, demining in Armenia has been slow and productivity rates low, as Table 3 illustrates. Very little demining has taken place in the last five years. Armenia claims that challenges in its mine and ERW clearance include the low level of contamination and the random distribution of mines, which creates obstacles for the effective and efficient implementation of technical survey and clearance activities, and the absence of donor funding.<sup>46</sup> Going forward, Armenia will not complete clearance without a significant increase in funding and capacity.

**Table 3: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance**

Year	Area cleared (km <sup>2</sup> )
2020	0
2019	*0.02
2018	*0.01
2017	0
2016	0.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.05</b>

\* Area rounded up

### PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

According to the CHDE, Armenia has included provisions for addressing previously unknown mined areas following completion in national strategies. Currently the only national survey and clearance capacity in place to address previously unknown mined areas discovered following completion is the team at the CHDE.<sup>47</sup>

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- 1 Email from Margaret Lazyan, Head of Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance, Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE), 26 April 2021.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", Yerevan, 2013, p. 12.
- 7 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 25 June 2020.
- 8 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 9 See Mine Action Review's Clearing the Mines 2021 report on Azerbaijan for further information.
- 10 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014 and 28 April 2017, and interview in Geneva, 1 April 2014.
- 11 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.
- 12 "Landmine Impact Survey", UNDP, 2005, at: <http://bit.ly/3tfQtr0>, p. 29.
- 13 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 14 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015; and Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020.
- 15 Armenian Ministry of Defence, "The New Legal Status of the Humanitarian De-Mining Centre", 13 February 2014; and email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 September 2018.
- 16 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.
- 17 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.
- 18 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 19 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 20 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020 and 26 April 2021.
- 25 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014.
- 26 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020 and 26 April 2021.
- 27 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020 and 26 April 2021.
- 28 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 29 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 30 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 31 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 32 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 26 April 2021.
- 33 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.
- 34 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 35 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019, 25 June 2020, and 26 April 2021.
- 39 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 40 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015.
- 41 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 42 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 43 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 April 2021.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 26 April 2021.
- 46 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020; and Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 47 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020 and 26 April 2021.