

AFGHANISTAN

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2022 (CAPABLE OF MEETING DEADLINE)

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	2015	2014
Problem understood	7	7
Target date for completion of cluster munition clearance	6	6
Targeted clearance	7	7
Efficient clearance	7	7
National funding of programme	5	7
Timely clearance	5	6
Land-release system in place	7	7
National mine action standards	7	6
Reporting on progress	6	6
Improving performance	5	6
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	6.2	6.5

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Afghanistan should amend reporting forms to disaggregate clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR) from other unexploded ordnance (UXO) in line with the requirements of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).
- The Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) should set revised timelines for clearance of CMR.

CONTAMINATION

MACCA reported that by the end of 2015 it had 17 CMR-contaminated areas in four provinces covering a total area of 6.86km², a level unchanged since April 2015. Nearly half of the contamination is in one district of north-eastern Takhar province (see Table 1).¹

These areas are affected by remnants of the 1,228 cluster munitions containing some 248,056 submunitions dropped by the United States between October 2001 and early 2002.³ CMR are said to block access to grazing and agricultural land.⁴ Contamination by CMR, however, appears more widespread. Soviet forces used cluster munitions during the decade-long war of resistance to the Soviet-backed government and demining operators have, in the past, continued to find occasional submunitions on demining tasks.⁵ The extent of those finds is unclear as operators' standard reporting forms only provide for recording clearance of UXO.

Table 1: **CMR contamination at the end of 2015**²

Province	Area affected (m ²)
Wardak	658,124
Nangahar	1,717,200
Takhar	3,280,069
Paktia	1,200,000
Total	6,855,393

Other ERW and Landmines

Afghanistan is also heavily contaminated by other explosive remnants of war (ERW) and landmines.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) is coordinated by MACCA with the support of a United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) project office.

Clearance of explosive contamination is conducted by five long-established national and two international NGOs. The Afghan NGOs are: Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), Demining Agency for Afghanistan (DAFA), Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA), Mine Detection and Dog Centre (MDC), and the Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR). The most active international NGOs are Danish Demining Group (DDG) and HALO Trust. Sterling International has been contracted to undertake clearance of ranges used by militaries serving with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.⁶

Afghanistan said in 2014 that it planned to release 60% of its CMR hazards by the end of 2015. The remaining hazardous areas would be tackled "later" because they were located in areas of insecurity.⁷ In its CCM Article 7 transparency report for 2014, Afghanistan said it would clear CMR hazards in Nangahar and Takhar provinces totalling 5km² (nearly three-quarters of the remaining contamination) in the Afghan year 1395 (ending 20 March 2017). It planned to clear three hazards totalling 0.8km² in 1397 and the last hazard covering 0.16km² in Afghan year 1400 (ending March 2022).⁸

LAND RELEASE

No release of CMR hazardous areas occurred in 2015, partly due to insecurity in affected areas and reflecting competing priorities at a time when the mine action programme is dealing with a sharp downturn in funding.⁹ HALO Trust reported destroying 152 submunitions in the course of mine clearance and battle area clearance and roving operations but did not tackle any CMR hazards.¹⁰ National operators did not respond to requests for information about their activities.

ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 4 of the CCM, Afghanistan is required to destroy all CMR in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 March 2022. Afghanistan can meet this deadline.

Clearance of Afghanistan's remaining CMR hazards by its Article 4 deadline is well within the MAPA's capacity. Afghanistan's Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Article 5 deadline extension request provided for clearance of all ERW, including submunitions, by 2020.¹¹ However, clearance of CMR hazards stalled in 2015 because they are located in areas that were too insecure for operators to access.¹²

In 2015, Afghanistan said that it intended to complete CMR clearance in 2022.¹³ Whether it is achieved will depend mainly on factors outside the control of the mine action sector, notably the country's long-running conflict. The extent of scattered CMR suggests operators will continue to encounter residual contamination beyond the Article 4 clearance deadline, even if Afghanistan meets it.

- 1 Emails from MACCA, 1 May 2016 and 30 April 2015; Article 7 Report (for 2015), Form F.
- 2 Article 7 Report (for 2015), Form F.
- 3 Human Rights Watch and Landmine Action, *Banning Cluster Munitions: Government Policy and Practice*, Mines Action Canada, Ottawa, May 2009, p. 27.
- 4 Statement of Afghanistan, CCM intersessional meetings, Geneva, 15 April 2013.
- 5 Interviews with MACCA implementing partners, Kabul, May 2013.
- 6 Email from MACCA, 10 May 2011.
- 7 Statement of Afghanistan, CCM Fifth Meeting of States Parties, San Jose, 2-5 September 2014.
- 8 CCM Article 7 Report (for 2014), Form F.
- 9 Email from Mohammed Wakil, Chief of Staff, MACCA, 1 May 2016.
- 10 Email from Farid Homayoun, Country Director, HALO Trust, 14 May 2016.
- 11 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2012, p. 194.
- 12 Email from Mohammed Wakil, MACCA, 1 May 2016; CCM Article 7 Report (for 2015), Form F.
- 13 CCM Article 7 Report (for 2014), Form F.