

YEMEN

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

2015

Problem understood	4
Target date for completion of cluster munition clearance	3
Targeted clearance	3
Efficient clearance	3
National funding of programme	3
Timely clearance	2
Land-release system in place	2
National mine action standards	5
Reporting on progress	2
Improving performance	3
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	3.0

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Yemen should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).
- The Yemen Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) should allow and facilitate survey and clearance by international operators.
- YEMAC and its international supporters should prioritise training teams in survey and clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR).
- YEMAC should acknowledge its responsibility to report on its mine action activities and publish annual reports on, at a minimum: programme capacity, progress of survey and clearance operations, and funding.

CONTAMINATION

Yemen was contaminated with explosive remnants of war (ERW), including CMR, before 2015, but since the start of the latest conflict on 26 March 2015 the United Nations has confirmed that intensive air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition have significantly increased its extent and the threat to the civilian population.¹

YEMAC reported in 2014 it had identified some 18km² of suspected CMR hazards in the northern Saada governorate bordering Saudi Arabia but also knew of other areas of contamination in north-western Hajjah governorate it had not been able to survey.² Since the start of the latest round of hostilities in March 2015, international observers and researchers reported that Saudi coalition land and aerial bombardments using a variety of cluster munitions had struck many areas of north-western Yemen. YEMAC has identified heavy CMR contamination in Saada governorate as well as additional CMR contamination in Amran, Hodeida, Mawit, and Sanaa governorates.³

Human Rights Watch has documented Saudi air strikes using cluster munitions dating back to 2009.⁴ In 2015, after reviewing photographs and citing witness accounts, it reported finding air-dropped BLU-97 and CBU-105 sensor-fuzed submunitions as well as artillery-fired ZP-39 dual-purpose improved conventional munition (DPICM) submunitions in Saada governorate. It also reported finds of CBU-105 submunitions in Amran and Sana'a governorates. In 2016, it documented the presence of BLU-63 submunitions in Sanaa city after an air strike on the capital in January, and CBU-105 submunitions after an attack on the port town of Hodeida.⁵ Amnesty International also reported the presence of Brazilian Astros II munitions in Saada and British-made BL755 submunitions in Hayran in Hajjah governorate.⁶

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Yemen established a National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) in June 1998 by prime ministerial decree to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine action strategy.⁷ NMAC, chaired by the Minister of State (a member of the cabinet), brings together representatives of seven concerned ministries.

YEMAC was established in Sana'a in January 1999 as NMAC's implementing body with responsibility for coordinating mine action in the country.⁸ It is supported by a Regional Executive Mine Action Branch (REMAB) and a national training centre in Aden also set up in 1999 and another REMAB in al-Mukalla (Hadramout governorate) added in March 2004. REMABs are responsible for field implementation of the national mine action plan.

However, escalating political turmoil and conflict in Yemen since 2014, together with lack of funding, have severely impaired YEMAC's abilities to discharge its responsibilities.⁹ The presence in Aden of members of the internationally recognised but exiled government supported by coalition forces while Sanaa remained under the control of the Houthis further complicated the functioning of YEMAC, hampering communication and coordination between YEMAC headquarters and its Aden branch.¹⁰

Strategic Planning

Yemen has no strategic plan for tackling CMR. Towards the end of 2015, with normal operations around the country stalled by conflict, YEMAC set up three unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance teams to focus on cities.¹¹

YEMAC acknowledges, however, that its deminers and EOD personnel are not trained or equipped to deal with CMR, an issue highlighted by the death of three personnel in a submunition incident in Hajjah governorate in May.¹²

Operators

All survey and clearance of ERW is conducted by YEMAC. By the start of 2016, it had some 850 staff, between 350 and 400 of whom were said to be active, under the management of offices in Sana'a and Aden.¹³

LAND RELEASE

Systematic survey and clearance activities have been disrupted by the conflict in Yemen and lack of funds. YEMAC operations were frozen in mid-2014 and resumed on a limited emergency basis only after late September 2015. YEMAC set up three mobile UXO sweeping teams which visited schools and facilities set up for people displaced by conflict in Sanaa and Amran, collecting unexploded ordnance.¹⁴

YEMAC did not respond to requests for information about its activities in 2015. YEMAC planned to work in 2016 with eight teams clearing UXO and six mine clearance 'units' but it was unclear whether it was able to follow through.¹⁵

ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Yemen is neither a state party nor a signatory to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. Nonetheless, it has international human rights law obligations to protect life, which requires that CMR be cleared as soon as possible.

- 1 UNDP, "Grant Progress Report for the period 1 October 2015 – 31 December 2015", 25 January 2016.
- 2 Email from Ali al-Kadri, General Director, YEMAC, 20 March 2014.
- 3 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, 17 February 2016.
- 4 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015.
- 5 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Saudi-Led Airstrikes Used Cluster Munitions", 3 May 2015; "Yemen: Cluster munitions harm civilians", 31 May 2015; and "Yemen: Coalition Drops Cluster Bombs in the Capital", 7 January 2016.
- 6 Amnesty International, "Yemen: children among civilians killed and maimed in cluster bomb 'minefields'", 23 May 2016.
- 7 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 7 Report, Form I, 31 March 2009.
- 8 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.
- 9 Interviews with mine action stakeholders who declined to be identified, February–June 2015.
- 10 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February 2016.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Interviews with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, 17 February 2016, and with Stephen Bryant, UNDP, in Geneva, 19 May 2016.
- 13 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February 2016.
- 14 UNDP, "Grant Progress Reports for 1 July–30 September 2015 and 1 October–31 December 2015", 25 January 2016.
- 15 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, in Geneva, 17 February 2016.