

ERITREA



ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 FEBRUARY 2020
 (NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE)

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	For 2016	For 2015
Problem understood	4	4
Target date for completion of mine clearance	1	1
Targeted clearance	4	5
Efficient clearance	4	5
National funding of programme	6	7
Timely clearance	1	2
Land release system in place	5	5
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	0	0
Improving performance	0	0
PERFORMANCE SCORE: VERY POOR	3.0	3.4

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Eritrea's mine action programme has performed very poorly in most areas, with further stagnation and even deterioration during 2016. There is no indication that any progress in mine action has occurred since the end of 2013. It is failing to comply with its obligation under Article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) to complete clearance as soon as possible. Eritrea failed to submit an updated Article 5 workplan as required by states parties upon granting its second extension and did not respond to repeated requests for updated information from Mine Action Review in 2017. It last submitted an Article 7 transparency report in 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Far greater priority needs to be afforded to demining in Eritrea. The authorities should ensure that demining units are not reoriented to other tasks but focus on survey and clearance operations for humanitarian purposes.
- Eritrea should urgently submit an up-to-date list of all known or suspected areas with anti-personnel mines and a detailed timeline of activities planned under its Article 5 extension request, including annual projections of areas to be addressed and a corresponding budget.
- Eritrea should urgently submit its outstanding annual Article 7 transparency reports, the latest of which was due by 30 April 2017, as well as respond to requests from the international mine action community for updated information in a transparent and timely manner.
- Eritrea should reconsider its policy of excluding international technical assistance from the country, which would support more efficient land release and re-open international funding paths.
- Eritrea should develop and make public a resource mobilisation strategy on the basis of a clear understanding of remaining contamination.

CONTAMINATION

Eritrea is affected by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) dating back to World War II, but largely as the result of the struggle for independence in 1962–91 and its armed conflict with Ethiopia in 1998–2000.

In May 2015, in response to Mine Action Review's request for updated information on the state of contamination and mine action activities in Eritrea, the Deputy General Manager of the Eritrea Demining Agency (EDA) reported "no significant progress registered by the EDA currently". He claimed, though, that the EDA was being reorganised in an effort to make "better progress".¹ The EDA did not respond to repeated requests from Mine Action Review for further information in 2016 or in 2017.

The last estimate of mine contamination in Eritrea dates back to the end of 2013, when Eritrea reported that 434 mined areas remained over an estimated 33.4km².² This was a two-thirds reduction on the earlier estimate of 99km² of June 2011,³ and significantly lower than the 129km² identified by the 2004 landmine impact survey.⁴

Table 1: Suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) by region (as at end-2013)⁵

Zoba (region)	SHAs	Estimated area (m ²)
Semienawi Keih Bahri	166	9,462,537
Anseba	144	10,230,940
Gash Barka	63	6,252,951
Debub	29	3,894,036
Maakel	24	2,423,325
Debubawi Keih Bahri	8	1,169,029
Totals	434	33,432,818

Anti-personnel mines and ERW are reported to negatively affect socio-economic conditions in Eritrea, blocking access to agricultural and pastoral land vital to farmers and animal herders, and preventing the implementation of construction and development projects, including of roads, schools, and clinics.⁶

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Eritrea mine action programme is entirely nationally managed. The EDA, established in July 2002, is responsible for policy development, regulation of mine action, and the conduct of mine clearance operations. The EDA reports directly to the Office of the President.

Operators

Demining is primarily conducted by the engineering units of the Eritrean defence forces under the supervision of the EDA, which also carries out quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) in accordance with Eritrea's National Mine Action Standards.⁷ According to its second

Article 5 deadline extension request, submitted in 2014, Eritrea planned to deploy "at least" five demining teams during its second extension period, the same number as then deployed, but might increase the number if adequate financial and logistical support were found.⁸ However, the request stated that Eritrea's demining units may be re-tasked toward infrastructure building, such as construction of roads and dams, "at any point".⁹ Following expulsion of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 2005, Eritrea does not allow any international demining operators to conduct survey or clearance in Eritrea.

LAND RELEASE

Under its 2014 extension request, Eritrea projected that up to 15.4km² of mined area could be cleared within five years. It reported that 67.3km² of contaminated area had been cancelled through non-technical survey and that 5.7km² was cleared over 38 mined areas in 2011–13.¹⁰

Eritrea has not provided any updates to states parties to the APMBC, nor responded to Mine Action Review requests for information on any mine action activities (including survey) undertaken in since 2014. Previously, in 2013, Eritrea reported release of 157 SHAs totalling 33.5km², leaving 385 mined areas of close to 24.5km² to

be surveyed.¹¹ Forty-nine new mined areas with a total size of 9km² were discovered in five of the country's six regions during non-technical survey in 2013: Anseba, Debub, Gash Barka, Maakel, and Semienawi Keih Bahri.¹²

Likewise, Eritrea has not made public any information on any mine clearance undertaken in 2016 or recent years. In 2013, Eritrea seemingly cleared approx. 2.26km² of mined area, almost twice the amount cleared in 2012 (1.2km²).¹³ The number of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines destroyed in 2013 was not reported.

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the three-year extension granted by states parties in 2011 and a further five-year extension granted in 2014), Eritrea is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 February 2020. It is not on track to meet this deadline and is failing to comply with its Article 5 obligations.

In January 2014, Eritrea submitted a second Article 5 deadline extension request seeking a further five years to continue clearance and complete re-survey of SHAs, but not to fulfil its clearance obligations under the treaty. It is not clear how this is consistent with the terms of Article 5 of the APMBC. In June 2014, however, states parties granted Eritrea its extension request until 2020, but noted that five additional years beyond Eritrea's previous February 2015 deadline "appeared to be a long period of time to meet this objective".¹⁴

Re-survey during the second extension period is planned to involve both technical and non-technical survey of all remaining mined areas across six regions. Re-survey is planned to run concurrently with clearance in priority areas in the Anseba, Maakel, and Semienawi Keih Bahri regions.¹⁵

Based on a predicted clearance rate of 0.384km² per team per year and 1.92km² per five teams per year, Eritrea estimated that five teams operating at this optimum pace could clear almost 15.4km² in the five-year period.¹⁶ However, this clearance rate was acknowledged by Eritrea as "ambitious" due to the "inevitable collaboration ... of the demining teams with the survey teams". In addition, while Eritrea seems to have set reasonable estimates for its clearance rates, which roughly match its progress in previous years with similar capacity, this accounts for less than half of the total area Eritrea has estimated as requiring either clearance or re-survey (33.5km²), leaving some 18km² unaccounted for in the workplan.¹⁷

Eritrea projected that costs for the extension period would amount to more than US\$7 million, all to be raised nationally.¹⁸ In 2011–13, Eritrea managed to raise only \$257,000 annually. As at December 2013, Eritrea had not received international funding for mine clearance, and in its statement at the Thirteenth Meeting of States Parties, it said that progress in clearing mines would be slow because it "had limited resources and capacity of one small poor nation".¹⁹ It is therefore unclear how Eritrea intends to raise the finances necessary for its survey and clearance activities, particularly in light of its regrettable policy not to accept international technical assistance.

In April 2014, at the APMBC intersessional meetings, Eritrea stated that the extension period was designed to gain greater clarity about its mine problem, at which point Eritrea “could plan and think about the financial resources to be allocated for mine action”.²⁰ It was further stated that Eritrea “won’t complete clearance in the next five years”, and will likely require a third extension.²¹ Eritrea has not provided states parties with any information since, nor did it submit an updated Article 5 extension request workplan as requested. It did not attend any meetings of the APMBC in 2016 or the first half of 2017.

Table 2: Mine clearance in 2012–16²²

Year	Area cleared (km ²)	AP mines destroyed
2016	N/R	N/R
2015	N/R	N/R
2014	N/R	N/R
2013	2.3	N/R
2012	1.2	11
Totals	3.5	11

AP = Anti-personnel

N/R = Not reported

- 1 Email from Habtom Seghid, Deputy General Manager, EDA, 6 May 2015.
- 2 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 7. This was despite finding 49 previously unrecorded suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) in five regions across an estimated area of 9km² during non-technical survey in 2013. Analysis of Eritrea’s Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, submitted by the President of the 13th Meeting of the States Parties on behalf of the States Parties mandated to analyse requests for extensions, 20 June 2014, p. 2.
- 3 Eritrea’s reply to questions from the Article 5 Analysing Group about its Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 7 June 2011, p. 2.
- 4 Survey Action Center (SAC), “Landmine Impact Survey, Eritrea, Final Report”, May 2005, p. 7.
- 5 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 8.
- 6 Analysis of Eritrea’s Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 20 June 2014, p. 3.
- 7 Article 7 Report (for 2012), Form F, p. 5.
- 8 Ibid., p. 10.
- 9 ICBL interview with Habtom Seghid, EDA, 10 April 2014.
- 10 Analysis of Eritrea’s Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 20 June 2014, p. 2.
- 11 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 7.
- 12 Analysis of Eritrea’s Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 20 June 2014, p. 2.
- 13 Article 7 Report (for 2012), Form F, p. 10.
- 14 Decision on Eritrea’s Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, Third Review Conference, Maputo, 26 June 2014.
- 15 Statement of Eritrea, Intersessional meetings (Standing Committee on Mine Clearance), Geneva, 9 April 2014.
- 16 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 10.
- 17 ICBL Comments on Eritrea’s Article 5 Extension Request, March 2014.
- 18 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 11.
- 19 Statement of Eritrea, 13th Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 6 December 2013.
- 20 Statement of Eritrea, Intersessional meetings (Standing Committee on Mine Action), Geneva, 9 April 2014. Notes by ICBL.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Emails from Habtom Seghid, EDA, 2 March 2010, 21 and 22 July 2011; Article 7 Reports (for 2011 and 2012), Form J; and Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 8.