



GEORGIA

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

	2017	2016
Problem understood	5	5
Target date for completion of mine clearance	4	5
Targeted clearance	4	4
Efficient clearance	4	4
National funding of programme	4	4
Timely clearance	3	4
Land-release system in place	5	5
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	6	6
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	4.5	4.7

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

In 2017, The HALO Trust completed clearance of the Chognari minefield – part of a former Soviet military base in the Imereti region. Unfortunately, HALO Trust has not been granted access to continue survey or begin clearance of the Red Bridge minefield. HALO Trust plans to begin survey in Kadoeti and Khojali during 2018 but will consider winding down its operations in 2019 if it cannot get access to clear any of the remaining minefields.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Georgia should continue to engage in political dialogue with Azerbaijan, to enable full clearance of the Red Bridge border minefield.
- Georgia should grant access to The HALO Trust to complete survey and clearance of the remaining mined areas.

CONTAMINATION

Georgia has more than 2.3km² of mined areas across nine minefields, as set out in Table 1. Contamination comprises both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. The problem includes Osiauri village, in Kashuri municipality, and Vaziani village, in Gardabani municipality, both of which are in military zones. Khojali

mountain, in Mestia municipality, is on the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with Abkhazia, where the size of mined areas is not known. Georgia is also contaminated by cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).¹

Table 1: Mine contamination (at end-2017)²

Region	District/ Municipality	Village	Contamination	Mined areas	Area (m ²)
Kvemo Kartli	Marneuli	Kachagani (Red Bridge)	AP and AV mines	1	2,282,852
Kvemo Kartli	Gardabani	Vaziani (Military zone)	AP mines	1	N/K
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Barisakho 1, Barisakho 2	AP mines	2	4,275
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Kadoeti	AP mines	1	23,783
Shida Kartli	Kashuri	Osiauri (Military zone)	AP mines	1	N/K
Shida Kartli	Gori	Zemo Nikozi	AP mines and UXO	1	3,233
Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti	Mestia	Khojali	AP mines	1	N/K
Totals				8	2,314,143

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle UXO = Unexploded ordnance N/K = Not known

Georgia has mined areas around former Soviet military bases, along its international borders, and as a result of conflict with the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Historically, the bulk of the mine problem in Georgia resulted from mines placed around former Russian military bases. The precise extent of the threat has not been reported publicly. According to the Georgian Ministry of Defence, in 2009 mined areas were suspected at Akhalqalaqi, Gonio Firing Range, Kopitnari, Mtskheta, Osiauri, Sagarejo, Telavi, and Vaziani.³

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) conducted a General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA) for Georgia from October 2009 to January 2010, which identified eight suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) and seven confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) in 13 districts, the latter of which totalled more than 4.5km² in estimated area.⁴ Of the 15 SHAs and CHAs in total, ten contained mines and five were contaminated with UXO.⁵ Between 2009 and the end of 2012, HALO Trust cleared five of the minefields that had a humanitarian impact.⁶ There are two minefields in Georgia which are located within active military bases. The HALO Trust does not have access to these bases and does not know the size of the minefields.⁷

The Red Bridge minefield is an unfenced 7km-long minefield at the "Red Bridge" border crossing between Azerbaijan and Georgia, laid in 1991 by Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh war. It is Georgia's largest minefield and the last major minefield not in the vicinity of a functioning military establishment. In 1993–2013, there were 17 reported incidents at the Red Bridge border, resulting in 13 fatalities.⁸

There may also be mined areas in South Ossetia as a result of the 1990–92 Georgian–Ossetian war, and the more recent 2008 conflict with Russia. The HALO Trust has planned to conduct non-technical survey in South Ossetia, but, to date, has not been granted access. South Ossetia is effectively subject to Russian control and is inaccessible to both the Georgian authorities and international non-governmental organisation (NGO) demining operators.

Anti-personnel mines have a social, economic, and humanitarian impact in Georgia. At the Red Bridge minefield, for example, the land is used for grazing cattle.⁹ The main income of the local population is animal husbandry and therefore safe use of the grazing land is very important. Other remaining minefields are located in remote locations and as they are not guarded, fenced or marked locals who use the land for hunting and foraging are vulnerable to accidents.¹⁰

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Georgian Ministry of Defence and international NGO Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMAP) to establish the Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Center (ERWCC).¹¹ On 30 December 2010, the Ministry of Defence issued a decree instructing that mine action be included as part of the State Military Scientific Technical Center – known as “DELTA” – an entity within the ministry. The agreement with iMAP ended on 31 March 2012 and the ERWCC took ownership of the mine action programme.¹² In 2013, the ERWCC became the Humanitarian Demining Division (HDD) under DELTA.¹³ As at April 2018, there were seven personnel working in the HDD, including a GIS and IMSMA specialist.¹⁴

The primary task of the ERWCC/HDD is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including QA/QC, and to facilitate the creation and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards, in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).¹⁵

Strategic Planning

Georgia has identified clearance of the Red Bridge minefield as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.¹⁶ Georgia previously reported plans to start clearance of the Red Bridge minefield in 2015.¹⁷ Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives met in 2015 to discuss demining the minefield,¹⁸ but only survey was permitted. The HALO Trust conducted non-technical survey between 1 and 3 July, and then began technical survey on 4 July 2015. The following month, however, the Azerbaijani military demanded that technical survey operations be halted.¹⁹ As at May 2018, all of HALO Trust’s requests to restart clearance in Red Bridge have been refused.²⁰ According to DELTA, there have been no changes in the accessibility of the Red Bridge minefield and it had no additional information about the current situation.²¹

Legislation and Standards

Georgian National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards and Guidelines (NTSGs) have been drafted in accordance with IMAS. Georgia does not currently have a timeframe for the establishment of these standards.²² Once finalised, the NTSGs will be translated and sent to Parliament for approval.²³

Quality Management

Under the control of DELTA, the HDD now conducts quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC). iMAP has also conducted training on QA/QC for the Quality Management section of the ERWCC, the Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, and DELTA. In addition, The HALO Trust conducts its own internal quality control.²⁴

Information Management

Georgia using the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.

Operators

The HALO Trust conducts clearance in Georgia, but NGOs are not permitted to clear land belonging to the military and, as at May 2018, HALO Trust has not been granted access to any of Georgia’s remaining mined areas.²⁵ In 2017, HALO Trust had 12 operational staff working at the Chognari minefield.²⁶

At the request of the Government of Georgia, the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Trust Fund has supported Georgia in addressing its ERW problem from the August 2008 conflict. In 2010, a NATO Trust Fund project planned to provide support to establish long-term local capacity for the ERWCC in clearance and victim assistance.²⁷ As part of the project, 66 members of the Georgian Army Engineers Brigade were trained in demining, battle area clearance, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).²⁸ Since March 2015, these engineers have been conducting EOD of abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) and UXO at the former ammunition storage facility at Skra.²⁹

LAND RELEASE

In 2017, The HALO Trust cleared 9,256m² of mined area, destroying five anti-personnel mines in the process, and reduced a further 39,568m² by technical survey. In 2016, The HALO Trust cleared 7,288m² of mined area, and reduced 70,052m² by technical survey.³⁰

Survey in 2017

In 2017, The HALO Trust confirmed 48,824m² as contaminated with mines at the Chognari minefield and reduced 39,568m² of this through technical survey.³¹

The Chognari minefield is part of a former Soviet military base in the Imereti region. It was previously under military restriction but has since been handed over by the government for clearance.³² Chognari was also the site of an uncontrolled explosion in the 1990s; in addition to the minefield around the perimeter of the base, the site is also contaminated by UXO.³³

The base threatens the lives and livelihoods of more than 4,500 villagers who live nearby and use the area for grazing their livestock. Once cleared, the Georgian government also plans to build a waste processing facility on the site, which is expected to employ more than 130 people.³⁴ In addition, certain areas at Chognari will be used to build a water reservoir to supply drinking water to the city of Kutaisi, which has a population of 300,000.³⁵

Clearance in 2017

In 2017, The HALO Trust only had access to one mine contaminated area, Chognari village in the Imereti region. The HALO Trust cleared 9,256m² of mined area and destroyed five anti-personnel mines at the Chognari minefield. Clearance was completed in September 2017.³⁶

In addition, one anti-personnel mine was destroyed during EOD spot tasks in 2017. The mine was found by HALO Trust deminers during technical survey in Shida Kartli region, the mine was not armed and was considered to be abandoned.³⁷

Progress in 2018

In 2018, HALO Trust planned to conduct non-technical survey in Kadoeti and Khojali, as these areas may be accessible for non-technical survey only.³⁸ As at April 2018, DELTA was working with the Georgian Ministries, State Security Service and The HALO Trust to plan the surveys of these areas.³⁹

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

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

HDD/ERWCC operates under DELTA within the Ministry of Defence and is financed from the state budget.⁴⁰ The HALO Trust does not receive national funding from Georgia for its survey and clearance operations.⁴¹ The HALO Trust is operating on approximately the same amount funding in 2018 as it received in 2017. If access is granted HALO Trust expects to mobilise up to US\$1 million for clearance of the remaining minefields in Georgia.⁴²

Between 2009 and the end of 2012, using international funding HALO Trust cleared five minefields with humanitarian impact and identified a sixth.⁴³ In 2013 and 2014, HALO Trust focused on clearing former firing ranges. In 2015, The HALO Trust briefly focused on technical survey of the Red Bridge minefield before the survey was forced to halt, and did not undertake any mine clearance. In 2016, in a positive development, The HALO Trust began survey and clearance of the Chognari minefield, which it finished clearing in September 2017. There are a total of six mined areas still remaining in Georgia. Four of these minefields have a humanitarian impact and two are active military bases which are believed to be mined. Currently, HALO Trust does not have access to any of these mined areas due to political and security reasons. If access is not granted to HALO Trust to clear remaining minefields it will consider winding down all operations in Georgia in mid-2019. It is not known if any of the restricted military areas has been cleared of mines.⁴⁴

1 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 25 April 2018.
2 Ibid.
3 Email from Irakli Kochashvili, Deputy Head, International Relations and Euro-Atlantic Integration Department, Ministry of Defence, 6 September 2009.
4 Ibid.
5 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 4 June 2015.
6 HALO, "Georgia, The Problem", at: <http://www.halotruster.org/where-we-work/georgia>.
7 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
8 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
9 Email from Irakli Chitanava, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
10 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
11 iMMAP, "Establishing the New Georgian Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Centre (ERWCC)", Press release, 25 February 2009; and E. M. Hasanov and P. Nevalainen, "Mine-action Challenges and Responses in Georgia", *Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, Issue 15.3, Fall 2011.
12 Ibid.; Decree #897 issued by the Minister of Defense, 30 December 2010; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016.
13 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 21 March 2017 to 31 March 2018), Form A.
14 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 25 April 2018.
15 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.
16 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
17 Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and response to Mine Action Review questionnaire by Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.
18 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
19 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
20 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
21 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 25 April 2018.

22 Ibid.
23 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016; and email, 3 April 2017.
24 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 25 April 2018.
25 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
26 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
27 NATO, "NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia", January 2012; and emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015 and 20 June 2016.
28 Estonia CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report, 2 April 2012; NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia Fact Sheet, January 2012; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.
29 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016; and email, 3 April 2017.
30 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Nick Smart, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
31 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
32 Interview with Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, Thornhill, 28 April 2016.
33 HALO Trust, "New funding for clearance in Georgia", 10 March 2016, at: <https://www.halotruster.org/media-centre/news/new-funding-for-clearance-in-georgia>; and email from Andrew Moore, HALO, 18 October 2016.
34 Ibid; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
35 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
36 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
37 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 25 April 2018.
38 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
39 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 25 April 2018.
40 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 15 June 2016 and 25 April 2018.
41 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 1 October 2016.
42 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.
43 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 30 August 2012.
44 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 25 May 2018.