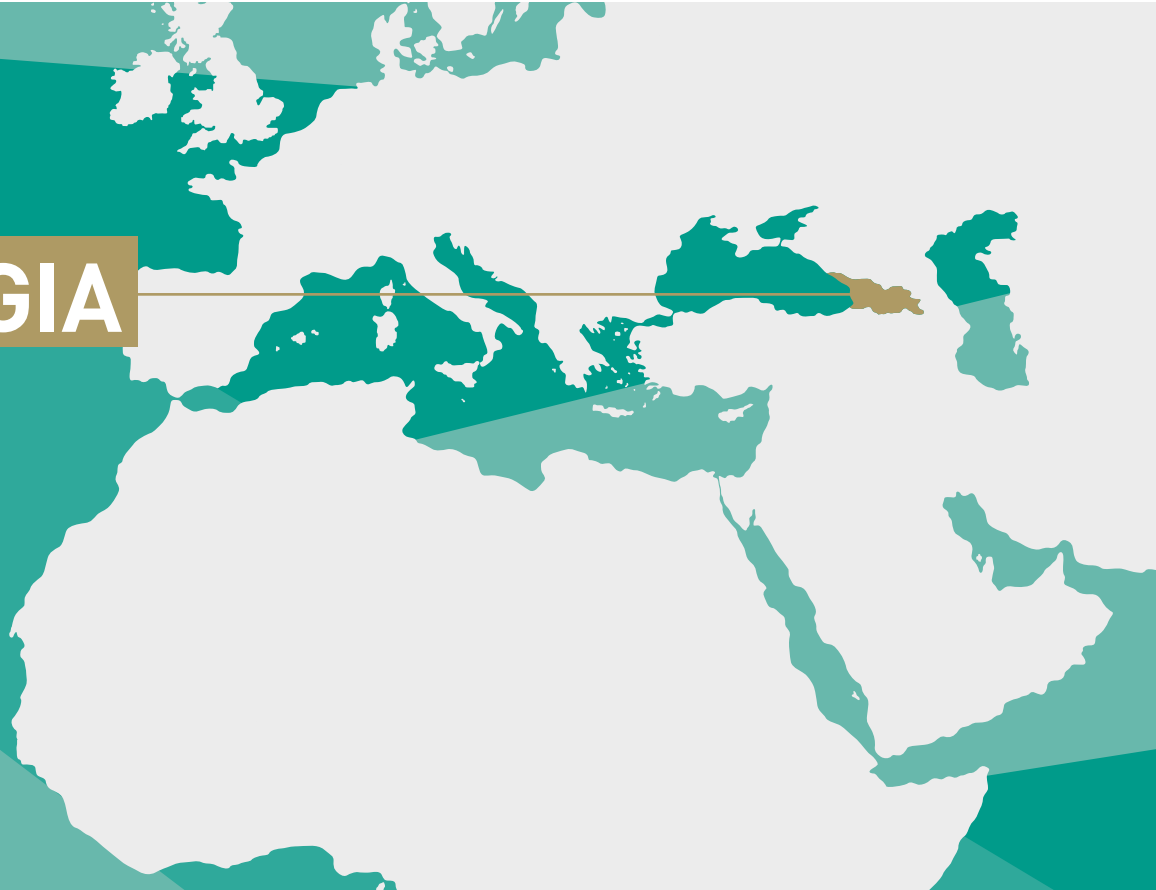


GEORGIA



MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2016

For 2015

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

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

In 2016, Georgia commenced survey and clearance of the Chognari minefield – part of a former Soviet military base in the Imereti region. Unfortunately, however, re-commencement of technical survey of the Red Bridge minefield was not permitted in 2016. Survey began in July 2015, but was halted only one month later, due to a request by Azerbaijani military located on the other side of the border.

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.

CONTAMINATION

Georgia has almost 2km² of mined area across seven minefields, as set out in Table 1.¹ This includes Osiauri village, in Kashuri district, which is in a military zone and Khojali mountain, in Mestia district, on the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with the Abkhazia Region, where

the size of mined and battle areas is not known. Contamination comprises both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. Georgia is also contaminated by cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).

Table 1: Mine contamination (as at end-2016)²

Region	District	Village	Contamination	Mined areas	Area (m ²)
Kvemo Kartli	Marneuli	Kachagani (Red Bridge)	AP and AV mines	1	1,863,813
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Barisakho 1, Barisakho 2	AP mines	2	4,275
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Kadoeti*	AP and AV mines	1	23,783
Imereti	Terjola	Chognari (former military base)	AP and AV mines, and UXO	1	62,034
Shida Kartli	Kashuri	Osiauri (Military zone)	AP mines	1	N/K
Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti	Mestia	Khojali**	AP mines	1	N/K
Totals				7	1,953,905

AP = Anti-personnel

AV = Anti-vehicle

UXO = unexploded ordnance

N/K = Not known

* Located at the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with South Ossetia. As at May 2017, HALO Trust did not have access to the minefield.

** Khojali minefield is located on a mountain at the ABL with Abkhazia. As at May 2017, HALO Trust did not have access to the minefield.

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 unexploded ordnance (UXO).⁵ Between 2009 and the end of 2012, HALO Trust cleared five of the minefields that had a humanitarian impact and identified one additional small minefield in a military restricted area.⁶

As at the end of 2016, Georgia had some 1.95km² of mined area across seven minefields (see Table 1).⁷ This includes an unfenced 7km-long minefield at the 'Red Bridge' border crossing between Azerbaijan and Georgia.⁸ The Red Bridge minefield 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.⁹

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 mine contamination in Georgia has a social, economic, and humanitarian impact. Mined areas are accessible by local populations, and at the Red Bridge minefield, for example, territory is used for herding cattle.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 (iMMAP) 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 iMMAP ended on 31 March 2012 and the ERWCC took ownership of the mine action programme.¹²

Through the iMMAP project, ERWCC became the Georgian Mine Action Authority, under DELTA, tasked to coordinate and execute action to address the ERW threat.¹³ The primary task of the ERWCC is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC), and to facilitate the creation and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards, in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).¹⁴

Strategic Planning

Georgia has identified clearance of the Red Bridge minefield as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.¹⁵

Standards

Georgian National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards and Guidelines (NTSGs) have been drafted in accordance with IMAS and as at September 2017 were awaiting completion in coordination with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).¹⁶ Once finalised, the NTSGs will be translated and sent to Parliament for approval.¹⁷

Quality Management

Under the control of DELTA, the ERWCC now conducts QA/QC.¹⁸ iMMAP has also conducted training on quality management for the QA/QC section of ERWCC, the Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, and DELTA.

Operators

The HALO Trust conducts clearance in Georgia, but NGOs are not permitted to clear land belonging to the military.¹⁹ HALO Trust employed three teams of seven deminers in 2016,²⁰ trained in both mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC), and deployed as required.²¹ While the number of demining teams increased due to the mine clearance task at Chognari, where HALO Trust also deployed three demining machines, BAC capacity decreased as the Udabno BAC task is due to be completed in 2017.²²

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.²³ As part of the project, 66 members of the Georgian Army Engineers Brigade were trained in demining, BAC, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).²⁴ Since March 2015, these engineers have been conducting EOD of abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) and UXO at the former ammunition storage facility at Skra.²⁵

LAND RELEASE

In 2016, The HALO Trust cleared 7,288m² of mined area, and a further 70,052m² was reduced by technical survey.²⁶ In 2015, no mine clearance took place.

Survey in 2016

The HALO Trust started operations at the Chognari minefield in March 2016, initially conducting non-technical survey, and then beginning technical survey in April.²⁷ In total in 2016, 70,052m² was reduced through technical survey and 18,877m² was confirmed as mined.²⁸

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.²⁹ 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.³⁰

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.³¹ 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 300,000.³²

Georgia previously reported plans to start clearance of the Red Bridge minefield in 2015.³³ However, while Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives met in 2015 to discuss demining the minefield,³⁴ only survey was permitted. HALO Trust conducted non-technical survey between 1 and 3 July, and then began technical survey on 4 July 2015. However, the Azerbaijani military located on the other side of the border subsequently demanded that technical survey operations be halted one month later, on 4 August 2015.³⁵ As at September 2017 survey had not been permitted to resume, and despite many requests to the Government of Georgia the HALO Trust had not been granted permission to the task.³⁶

Clearance in 2016

In 2016, HALO Trust cleared 7,288m² of mined area and destroyed 19 anti-personnel mines at the Chognari minefield – part of a former Soviet base.³⁷ Clearance of the Chognari minefield was planned to be completed in 2017.³⁸

Although HALO Trust is not operating at Red Bridge, its operational staff periodically visit the site in order to help keep the local community and Border Police aware of the mine threat there. In October 2016, HALO Trust identified one cattle incident, which occurred in August the same year. At the same time, based on information from a member of the local community, The HALO Trust identified a TM-62 anti-vehicle mine in the area adjacent to the minefield, located almost 700 metres from the border with Azerbaijan. The organisation expressed its readiness to destroy the mine, but the Border Police informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and on the following day, the Ministry's EOD team destroyed the mine. The HALO Trust immediately asked permission to deploy its team, but permission was not granted.³⁹

Progress in 2017

The HALO Trust started new mine clearance operations in April 2017, near the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) in the Tskhinvali region, which will help ensure safe access to agricultural land.⁴⁰

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Georgia is not a state party or signatory to the APMBIC but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires clearance of mines as soon as possible.

ERWCC operates under DELTA within the Ministry of Defence, and is financed from the state budget.⁴¹ The HALO Trust does not receive national funding from Georgia for its survey and clearance operations.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 expected to finish clearing in 2017. It is not known if any of the restricted military areas has been cleared of mines.

- 1 Email from Irakli Chitanava, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017. There were differences between the data reported by HALO Trust and by DELTA for two areas; DELTA reported 2,579,593m² of mined area at Kirach Mughanlo (Red Bridge) and 8,169m² at Chognari. Email from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, State Military Scientific Technical Centre – DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 2 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017. There were differences between the mine-contamination data reported by HALO Trust and the data provided by DELTA for two areas. DELTA reported 2,579,593m² of mined area at Kirach Mughanlo (Red Bridge) and 8,169m² at Chognari. Email from Oleg Gochashvili, 3 April 2017.
- 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.halostrust.org/where-we-work/georgia>.
- 7 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
- 8 Interview with George Dolidze, Director, Department of Security Policy and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009.
- 9 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
- 10 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
- 11 IIMAP, "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 NATO, "NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia", January 2012, at: http://www.mzv.cz/file/786123/Georgia_ERW_Fact_Sheet_3___230112.pdf; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.
- 14 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.
- 15 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 16 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017; and Nick Smart, Regional Director, Europe, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
- 17 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016; and email, 3 April 2017.
- 18 Response to Cluster Munition Monitor questionnaire by Tom Meredith, Desk Officer, HALO Trust, 21 August 2012.
- 19 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
- 20 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
- 21 Email from Nick Smart, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
- 22 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Nick Smart, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
- 23 NATO, "NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia", January 2012; and emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015 and 20 June 2016.
- 24 Estonia Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (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.
- 25 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016; and email, 3 April 2017.
- 26 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Nick Smart, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
- 27 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 15 June 2016; and Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016.
- 28 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017. There is a discrepancy with survey data reported by DELTA, in which 387,756m² was reported as reduced, and 8,169m² as confirmed. Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017. It is thought that the reason for the discrepancy is that DELTA's data also includes BAC.
- 29 Interview with Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, Thornhill, 28 April 2016.
- 30 HALO Trust, "New funding for clearance in Georgia", 10 March 2016, at: <https://www.halostrust.org/media-centre/news/new-funding-for-clearance-in-georgia>; and email from Andrew Moore, HALO, 18 October 2016.
- 31 Ibid; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 32 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 33 Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and response to Mine Action Monitor questionnaire by Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.
- 34 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
- 35 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 36 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Nick Smart, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Emails from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 39 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
- 40 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017; and Nick Smart, HALO Trust, 11 October 2017.
- 41 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 15 June 2016.
- 42 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 1 October 2016.
- 43 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 30 August 2012.