

## KEY DATA

### ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:

MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE

**2.8 km<sup>2</sup>**

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2022

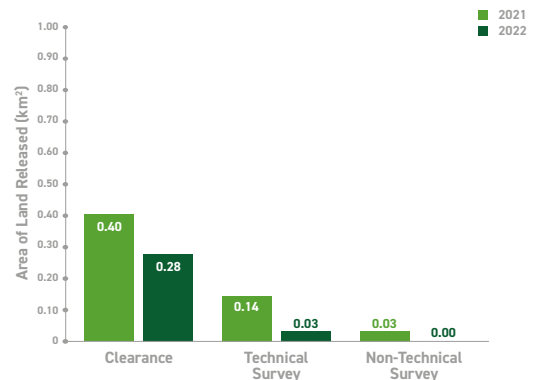
**0.28 km<sup>2</sup>**

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2022

**108**

(INCLUDING 26 DESTROYED IN SPOT TASKS)

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2022, The HALO Trust (HALO) was able to resume previously suspended operations in Georgia's Tbilisi Administered territory (TAT) and undertake non-technical survey (NTS) at two minefields at Khojali and Kadoeti, having secured permission to clear them in 2019 and then securing funding for the work in 2022. There has been no progress, however, on the granting of access to the minefields at Barisakho or Osiauri, nor to the Red Bridge area. This is the largest minefield in the Caucasus region, which consists of mined area on the territory of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Georgia should clear anti-personnel (AP) mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Georgia should continue to engage in bilateral political dialogue with Azerbaijan as well as multilateral dialogue with all stakeholders via the Landmine Free South Caucasus (LMFSC) Campaign, to enable full clearance of the Red Bridge border minefield.
- Georgia should develop a resource mobilisation strategy and engage with donors to secure the resources needed to complete clearance.

## DEMINING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- State Military Scientific Technical Centre (DELTA)
- Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Engineering Battalion of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- Georgian State Security Service (SSS) Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust (HALO)

### OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The full extent of mine contamination in Georgia is not known due to access restrictions and lack of survey. According to official estimates provided in 2022, as set out in Table 1, Georgia has at least 2.8km<sup>2</sup> of contamination across five mined areas in the TAT.<sup>1</sup> HALO believes that, with the exception of the addition of previously unquantified mined areas at Kadoeti and Khojali, the information on known contamination at end of 2021 remained correct a year later.<sup>2</sup> Contamination comprises both AP mines, and, in two areas, also anti-vehicle (AV) mines.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Mined area in TAT (at end 2022)<sup>4</sup>**

| Region                 | District/Municipality | Village        | Type of contamination | Mined areas | Area (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Kvemo Kartli           | Marneuli              | Kirach-Muganlo | Mixed AP/AV           | 1           | 2,738,730              |
| Mtskheta-Mtianeti      | Dusheti               | Kadoeti        | Mixed AP/AV           | 1           | *29,828                |
| Mtskheta-Mtianeti      | Dusheti               | Barisakho      | AP only               | 2           | 28,058                 |
| Shida Kartli           | Khashuri              | Osiauri        | AP only               | 1           | N/K                    |
| Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti | Mestia                | Khojali        | AP only               | 2           | **26,000               |
| <b>Totals</b>          |                       |                |                       | <b>7</b>    | <b>2,822,616</b>       |

N/K = not known \* This includes 16,825m<sup>2</sup> of confirmed hazardous area (CHA), and 13,003m<sup>2</sup> of suspected hazardous area (SHA) identified by HALO during NTS in 2022.  
 \*\* Identified as SHA by HALO in 2022.

The Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD) of Georgia and HALO consider this baseline to be evidence-based and accurate.<sup>5</sup> However, HALO cautioned in 2022 that the Georgian Government, through the HDCD, was in the process of conducting Georgia's first General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA), since 2011. This assessment may result in the current baseline being updated.<sup>6</sup> No update on the progress of the GMAA had been received from the national authority as at June 2023.

In the mined areas of Barisakho, Osiauri, and at the Red Bridge in TAT, the full extent of contamination is unknown. HALO has faced challenges in securing the necessary permission and funding to be able to complete NTS at these areas. HALO has continued to advocate for permission for access, both through bilateral channels and through participation in the LMFSC, which brings governments and civil society organisations together to encourage dialogue and cooperation. HALO asserts that both technical survey (TS) and NTS are required at all the sites to accurately determine the size of the contaminated areas.<sup>7</sup>

The Red Bridge minefield is an unfenced 7km-long and 2.2km<sup>2</sup> minefield consisting of densely packed lines of AP and AV mines at the "Red Bridge" border crossings between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Laid in 1991 by Azerbaijan during the 1988 Nagorno-Karabakh war, it is the largest minefield in the Caucasus and the last major minefield not in the vicinity of a functioning military establishment. The Red Bridge minefield affects more than 4,000 people. As at May 2022, there had been 88 incidents: 22 involving people and the other 66 involving livestock. No new incidents were reported during 2021.<sup>8</sup> It is not known if there were any incidents in 2022.

In Barisakho, there are two mined areas close to a police station on the Russian border, which were laid to prevent entry from Ingushetia during the Second Chechen War. In Osiauri, a military base in the interior of the country, next to the main east-west road through Georgia, mines were laid around the perimeter of an ammunition storage area to defend the position in an event of an invasion.<sup>9</sup>

In May 2019, HALO finally received permission to survey

1 TAT does not include the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are outside Georgia's effective control.

2 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, Partnerships and Programme Support Manager, HALO, 12 April 2023.

3 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

4 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; Michael Montafi, Partnerships and Programme Support Manager, HALO, 26 July 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023. Data on mined areas at the villages of Kadoeti and Khojali were provided by HALO in April 2023. All other information in this Table was provided by Georgia's national authority in May 2022 and stated as correct as at the end of 2021.

5 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

6 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

7 Ibid.

8 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

9 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

and clear at Kadoeti and Khojali, and in June 2022, HALO secured funding from Norway to conduct NTS of these minefields.<sup>10</sup> Historical estimates of the size of Kadoeti and Khojali minefields originate from HALO's initial NTS of both tasks in 2009.<sup>11</sup> The Kadoeti minefield, which was laid in 2008, stretches along 950 metres of road near the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with South Ossetia. A livestock accident in 2009 and a non-fatal vehicle accident in 2010 indicated that the area was still mined. The mined areas at Khojali include two adjacent minefields about 12km from the ABL with Abkhazia. One of the two minefields was believed to lie along an approximately 300-metre-long path.<sup>12</sup>

HALO was able to conduct NTS at Kadoeti and Khojali as planned in 2022. Evidence of AV mines was found at Kadoeti, where 16,825m<sup>2</sup> of confirmed hazardous area (CHA), was identified and 13,003m<sup>2</sup> of suspected hazardous area (SHA) was identified. At Khojali, two sections of SHA covering an area of 26,000m<sup>2</sup> of were identified.<sup>13</sup>

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. HALO had planned to conduct NTS in South Ossetia, but following a preliminary fact-finding mission to South Ossetia by the HALO Abkhazia programme in 2008, no permissions for access or clearance have been given by the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities. South Ossetia is effectively subject to Russian control and is inaccessible to both Georgian authorities and international

non-governmental organisation (NGO) demining operators. As at May 2022, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remained the only international organisation with regular access to South Ossetia.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the minefields in TAT summarised in Table 1, six minefields located in the Gulripsh, Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli, and Sukhumi regions of Abkhazia, an autonomous republic outside the effective control of the Georgian government, came to HALO's attention between 2019 and 2021.<sup>15</sup> In 2021, HALO undertook clearance at Gulripsh, Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli and began clearance at Lindava,<sup>16</sup> with clearance at Lindava completed in December 2022.<sup>17</sup> HALO is not aware of any remaining areas of contamination in Abkhazia.<sup>18</sup>

HALO also believes that, besides the areas already identified, any additional AP mine contamination in Georgia is so sparse and spread over such large areas that further survey of areas where access is permitted would not be productive.<sup>19</sup> However, it is not certain that the contamination data in Table 1 is comprehensive. The national authority has informed Mine Action Review of clearance that took place in 2022 at two locations in TAT that were not previously listed in the information last supplied on contaminated areas as at the end of 2021; one being "near" the major seaport of Poti in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region and the other being the military firing range near the village of Gonio, in the Adjara region (see Table 6).<sup>20</sup>

## OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Georgia is believed to be free of cluster munition remnants (CMR), with the possible exception of South Ossetia, which is occupied by Russia and inaccessible to both the Georgian authorities and international mine action NGOs (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Georgia for further information).<sup>21</sup> Georgia remains contaminated by other unexploded ordnance (UXO), likely in South Ossetia and also within Georgia in former firing ranges.

## NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Georgia's national mine action authority is the Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD). Renamed after a reorganisation in January 2019, HDCD sits under the State Military Scientific Technical Centre, known as DELTA, within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).<sup>22</sup> The primary task of the HDCD is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including overseeing the national mine action strategy and quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC), and facilitating the development and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).<sup>23</sup> HDCD also undertakes some NTS and TS.<sup>24</sup>

10 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

11 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

12 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

13 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

14 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

15 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021 and 17 May and 26 July 2022.

16 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

17 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

18 Email from Fiona Kilpatrick, Head of Region, Europe (South Caucasus), HALO, 12 June 2023.

19 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

20 Email from Jemal Kopaleishvili, Interim Head of DELTA, 18 May 2023.

21 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020 and 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

22 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016, and 28 March and 10 June 2019; and Matthew Walker, Programme Officer, HALO, 8 April 2019; Decree 897 issued by the Minister of Defence, 30 December 2010; and Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 21 March 2017 to 31 March 2018), Form A.

23 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015 and Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

24 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 2 September 2022.

The Georgian government funds the running costs of the HDCD. In 2022, this was reported to include all salary and administrative expenses as well as the costs of survey, QA/QC activities of ongoing clearance, and monitoring of stockpile destruction tasks.<sup>25</sup> It also included funding for the Engineering Battalion, which carries out some survey and battle area clearance (BAC).<sup>26</sup> Mine Action Review was not able to obtain information on the amount of funding provided by the Georgian government to support mine action in 2022.

The national authority has received capacity development support from HALO and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). HALO did not provide any direct capacity development support to the national authorities in Georgia or the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities in 2021<sup>27</sup> or 2022.<sup>28</sup> Previously, however, HALO provided training on IMAS, geographic information systems (GIS), and clearance and survey techniques.<sup>29</sup>

In previous years, the GICHD provided training for HDCD staff on the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core database, ammunition storage, and TS.<sup>30</sup> It is not known if the national authority received any capacity development support from any organisations in 2022.

HALO reports that the Georgian authorities are enabling of mine action within the country where access is granted. HALO has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Georgian national mine action authority, which allows HALO to work in Georgia. HALO maintains relations with relevant government ministries on both sides of the ABL and is registered in Georgia as an international NGO. HALO is able to procure items in Georgia and transfer them across the ABL into Abkhazia by coordinating permissions from the Government of Georgia and the *de facto* authorities in Abkhazia.<sup>31</sup>

Gaining access to some areas in Georgia for humanitarian demining continues to prove challenging, however. HALO has submitted several requests to the MoD seeking access to the remaining minefields where access is denied. While permission to begin clearing two of the six remaining minefields, at Khojali and Kadoeti was granted in 2019, permissions for the remaining four minefields have not yet been granted. HALO does not expect permissions for Barisakho or Osiauri to be forthcoming in the near future. This is mainly due to the perceived tactical value of these minefields to the Georgian military.<sup>32</sup> Permission to access the Red Bridge area has also been denied since July 2015 when, following initial granting of access to HALO and their initiation of NTS, the Azerbaijani military demanded a month later that TS be halted.<sup>33</sup> Georgia has reported further discussions with Azerbaijan regarding the clearance of Red Bridge minefield.<sup>34</sup> As at March 2023, however, HALO had still not been granted permission to restart clearance.<sup>35</sup>

While the national authorities in Georgia have facilitated mine action where access is permitted, HALO reports that clearance operators are not involved in key decision-making processes by the national authorities. There is no in-country platform for dialogue among all stakeholders that meets on a regular basis to collectively discuss progress, challenges, and support for AP mine survey and clearance in Georgia.<sup>36</sup> Georgia has, however, engaged in regional co-operation for mine action through its participation in regional meetings of the LMFSC campaign, hosted in Tbilisi in cooperation with DELTA in both November 2021<sup>37</sup> and October 2022. HALO is also a member of the campaign, which it has found to be a useful platform for advocating for the release of the remaining minefields in Georgia as well as continued lobbying for the accession of all three States in the South Caucasus to the APMBC.<sup>38</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

In 2022, DELTA reported that Georgia's draft National Mine Action Standards contained a standard on environmental management and policy, although HALO was not aware of this.<sup>39</sup> DELTA has stated that all national and international demining operators are expected to abide by state laws relating to environmental protection when planning and conducting demining operations.<sup>40</sup>

HALO has an institutional environmental policy as well as strict environmental standard operating procedures (SOPs), which aim to leave the environment in a state similar to or, where possible, better than it was before demining operations, and in a state that permits intended land use once operations are complete.<sup>41</sup> Once inspected and found to be clear, soil that has been

25 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May and 2 September 2022.

26 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.

27 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

28 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

29 Emails from Matthew Walker, HALO, 8 April 2019; Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 10 June 2019.

30 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.

31 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

32 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 26 July 2022.

33 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

34 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.

35 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

36 Ibid.

37 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022 and; commonspace.eu, "Georgia supports efforts to clear the South Caucasus from all landmines and unexploded ordnance", 7 November 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3zDRWxn>.

38 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

39 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

40 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

41 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

displaced during mechanical excavation is returned to the place of origin. Prior to handing over a task to the local community, HALO teams remove items used to mark the ground during clearance and make every effort not to leave any negative impact behind.

HALO's operations in Georgia reflect its efforts globally to develop projects that combine mine clearance with environmental protection. For example, subsurface clearance at Primorsky was conducted to a depth that would help to remove from the soil heavy metal contamination caused by UXO to allow local residents to use the land for agriculture. Clearance at Khojali is intended to help facilitate development of ecotourism in the area. It is also hoped that, as this is an SHA, reduction through TS will allow HALO to minimise further the environmental impact of clearance.

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Georgia has a Gender and Diversity policy in place.<sup>42</sup> In 2022, the national authority reported that there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance teams in Georgia, including for managerial level/supervisory positions even though, proportionately, the number of women has remained low. Among the HDCD's staff in 2020 and 2021, one of seven members—the GIS/IMSMA specialist—was a woman. While no women were employed by HDCD in operational roles or in managerial/supervisory positions in 2020 or 2021, 1% of military personnel within the EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] Company of Combat Engineer Battalion were women in 2021.<sup>43</sup> No information was provided on the gender balance of HDCD's staff or of personnel within the EOD Company of Combat Engineer Battalion in 2022.

In 2022, women made up 31% of HALO staff, including those based in Abkhazia and HALO's two Tbilisi-based members of staff. 36% of managerial and supervisory positions were occupied by women and 29% of operational positions were occupied by women (see Table 2).<sup>44</sup> Overall, the proportion of female staff is similar to that reported for 2021, when women made up 28% of HALO staff in Abkhazia, with an additional female member of staff based in Tbilisi, dedicated to the administration of the Georgia programme (at the time, HALO's only member of staff outside Abkhazia). The proportion of managerial and supervisory positions occupied by women has increased however, from the 15% reported for 2021. The proportion of operational positions occupied by women remains the same as that reported for 2021.<sup>45</sup>

In 2022, funding from an anonymous donor allowed HALO to continue to provide childcare support stipends to female staff

with school-aged children. A new grant from this donor was due to begin in June 2023, intended to fund these stipends, along with professional development training for women working in HALO's Abkhazia programme.<sup>46</sup>

HALO has a gender and diversity policy in place and beneficiary data is disaggregated by gender and age. HALO also supports use of mixed-gender teams to conduct survey, which allows for greater engagement with women and children.<sup>47</sup> Manual mine clearance teams deployed to Lindava in 2022 were gender-equal and included two women who had previously worked in BAC at Primorsky and had been retrained to conduct manual clearance. EOD teams continued to be mixed-gender and mixed-ethnicity in 2022, as they were in 2021. Due to restrictions on movement between Abkhazia and TAT and the difficult access conditions at Khojali and Kadoeti, HALO did not succeed in recruiting women for NTS operations in TAT in 2022. HALO states that ensuring mixed-gender and mixed-ethnic teams for clearance of these areas will be a major priority once funding for clearance is secured.<sup>48</sup>

HALO notes that, when responding to EOD callouts, the presence of female personnel is extremely important to ensure gender sensitivity of project delivery and ensure that the teams are able to reach all members of the community. In accordance with local gender norms in villages, female EOD team members take the lead when interacting with female-led households. In the Gali-based EOD team, the presence of an acting female team leader at various times has had a significant impact in positively shifting perceptions among community members about the kinds of roles that women in Abkhazia are capable of undertaking.<sup>49</sup>

42 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021.

43 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021 and 31 May 2022.

44 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

45 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 May 2021, 17 May 2022, and 7 and 10 June 2022.

46 Emails from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April and 12 July 2023.

47 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO, 8 April 2019.

48 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

49 Ibid.

HALO's survey and EOD teams make every effort to reach all members of affected communities, including women and children, and to visit schools and other locations frequented by these populations. HALO also considers the potential impact of clearance in the task prioritisation process on women, children, and marginalised or vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and elderly. In the case of Kadoeti, for example, mine contamination has led to all women and children leaving the village, with only seven residents remaining, all of whom are men. It is hoped that clearance at Kadoeti will facilitate the return of former residents, including women and children. Similarly, clearance of Lindava, completed in 2022, was significant for its potential to facilitate the return of ethnic Georgian displaced persons to the village, a key reason for HALO's high prioritisation of the task. When selecting tasks in Abkhazia, HALO makes an effort to select an equitable proportion of tasks in both

predominantly ethnic Abkhaz and predominantly ethnic Georgian communities.

HALO's EOD project has been designed to serve diverse communities from across Abkhazia's districts and to deploy teams based on the ethnic composition of the settlements where HALO operates, i.e. an ethnic Georgian team based in Gali, serving ethnic Georgian communities in the eastern part of Abkhazia, and an ethnic Abkhaz team serving the ethnic Abkhaz communities.<sup>50</sup>

HALO has also collaborated with local women's organisations to increase the visibility of its work to women. In 2021–22, for example, the HALO Abkhazia programme was able to partner with United Nations (UN) Women in Abkhazia to distribute information about ending violence against women, including how to access UN Women-supported local shelter hotlines.<sup>51</sup>

**Table 2: Gender composition of mine action operators in 2022<sup>52</sup>**

| Organisation | Total staff | Total women employed | Total staff in managerial/supervisory positions | Total women in managerial/supervisory positions | Total staff | Total staff in operational positions |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------|---|---|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| HALO         | 35          | 11                   | 11  | 4   | 24          | 7                                    |
| DELTA HDCD   | N/K         | N/K                  | N/K   | N/K   | N/K         | N/K                                  |

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The HDCD uses the IMSMA database and, according to HALO, the data are accurate. Data archives go back to 2009 and are regularly updated, based on HALO's operations reports and on work by the Engineering Battalion.<sup>53</sup>

In 2022, Georgia outlined how various government agencies, in particular the Defence Forces and the EOD team of the Georgian State Security Service, work effectively to report contamination discovered through their established networks and in response to information from local residents. The HDCD regularly collects, analyses, documents, and stores information on areas contaminated by mines or ERW. The HDCD also compiles and regularly updates digital and printed maps of contaminated and cleared areas within and through the national IMSMA database.<sup>54</sup>

Previously, in 2019, HALO said that it had access to the data in Georgia's national information management system.<sup>55</sup> In 2023, however, the organisation reported it no longer has access to the system.<sup>56</sup> HALO uses its own IMSMA-compatible data collection forms that DELTA has approved while the HDCD QA/QC team also has its own forms.<sup>57</sup> As at March 2023, HALO was considering a shift to new data collection and IM systems used by other HALO programmes, commenting that, while the current data collection forms do enable collection of the necessary data, this change would allow the programme to analyse the data more easily and with greater sophistication.<sup>58</sup>

50 Ibid.

51 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

52 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

53 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

54 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2021), Form B.

55 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO, 8 April 2019.

56 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

57 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

58 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

## PLANNING AND TASKING

Georgia has previously reported having a national mine action strategy in place. Its main aims and targets are focused on clearing the remaining mined areas (unless they are deemed to have military utility) and to clear other areas contaminated with ERW.<sup>59</sup> In 2021, implementation of Georgia's annual mine action plan was compromised by COVID-19 restrictions, poor funding of humanitarian demining operators, and national staffing challenges. Georgia had a mine action plan in place for 2022.<sup>60</sup> No update was available on the implementation of this 2022 plan or as to whether a mine action plan was in place for 2023.

DELTA prioritises clearance in areas of high risk to the population, as well as land used for livestock and other agriculture, along with roads, border security, and other key infrastructure. In addition, Georgia has long-term plans for survey and clearance of mines and UXO at commercial sites to support the country's socio-economic development.<sup>61</sup> DELTA explains how, in the aftermath of the August 2008

Russian-Georgian conflict, the safety of local populations clearly determined prioritisation of mine and UXO clearance. However, since the immediate post-conflict period, Georgia has had no national level prioritisation system for clearance, with clearance operations conducted by HALO as and when possible and when resources allow. Clearance is also sometimes conducted at the request of ministries, organisations, or commercial companies to facilitate safe infrastructure development.<sup>62</sup>

HALO has confirmed that the prioritisation of tasks continues to be predominantly determined by the level of risk to the population, release of land used for agriculture and facilitation of access to key infrastructure.<sup>63</sup> In TAT, HALO collaborates with the national mine action authorities to determine annual operational planning and task priority.<sup>64</sup> In Abkhazia, however, HALO prioritises tasks based on its own data.<sup>65</sup>

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

As at June 2022, Georgia's National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards Guidelines were drafted and awaiting approval by the GICHD IMAS department. Once approved by GICHD IMAS, they were due to be translated into Georgian and then sent to Parliament for approval.<sup>66</sup> The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs) have been translated into Georgian but the translation of the IMAS remains ongoing.<sup>67</sup> HALO states that it has not been given access to the draft NMAS or received a request to provide input. HALO was also not aware of whether translation of the NMAS had been completed or if their approval from parliament had been granted.<sup>68</sup>

In 2022, HALO created a new SOP on NTS for the Kadoeti and Khojali tasks, in line with IMAS, as it had been several years since NTS was conducted in TAT.<sup>69</sup>

Mine Action Review requested data from the national authority on Georgia's current national clearance capacity and range of demining assets, but none was provided. In TAT, quality management (QM) is conducted by DELTA. In Abkhazia, HALO is responsible for its own QM.<sup>70</sup>

All areas cleared by HALO in Georgia in 2022 proved to contain AP mines.<sup>71</sup> The Engineering Battalion of the MoD cleared an area of 32,451m<sup>2</sup> near Poti Port in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region of TAT, which proved to contain no AP mines.<sup>72</sup>

59 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.

60 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

61 Ibid.

62 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May and 26 July 2022.

63 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

64 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 July 2023.

65 Emails from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April and 12 July 2023.

66 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

67 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021 and 31 May 2022.

68 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

69 Ibid.

70 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

71 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

72 Emails from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.



## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

At the time of writing, no up-to-date information from the national authority was available on national operational capacity deployed in 2022 or on plans to increase, decrease or maintain this capacity in 2023. In 2022, DELTA had reported that the Ministry of Defence retained a small demining and EOD capacity in TAT. In 2021 the EOD Company of Combat Engineer Battalion had one survey team (for both NTS and TS), and one manual clearance team of ten personnel.<sup>73</sup> The HDCC was continuing to coordinate and monitor operations and carry out NTS and TS but was not conducting clearance.<sup>74</sup> As in 2021, the Georgian State Security Service (SSS) EOD team conducted EOD tasks in response to call-outs.<sup>75</sup> In Abkhazia, the emergency services (EMERCOM) had a small EOD capacity, although HALO continued to be generally relied upon to deal with all items of UXO.<sup>76</sup> In July to September 2022, personnel from DELTA-HDCD joined HALO Abkhazia programme personnel to conduct NTS at Khojali and Kadoeti in TAT.<sup>77</sup>

HALO, which is the only international operator working in the country, conducts survey and both BAC and mine clearance in Abkhazia<sup>78</sup> and resumed NTS in TAT in 2022.<sup>79</sup> HALO's ethnic Georgian and ethnic Abkhaz EOD teams, funded by the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), also continued to respond to call-outs in the conflict-affected areas across the whole of Abkhazia in 2022.<sup>80</sup> HALO secured three-year funding for its EOD work in Abkhazia in 2020.<sup>81</sup>

This funding has not been extended and EOD operations in Abkhazia therefore were suspended on 31 March 2023. HALO is currently awaiting a funding decision for another project, which would allow the EOD programme to resume.<sup>82</sup> HALO's operations in TAT resumed in 2022 having remained suspended in 2021 due to lack of donor funding.<sup>83</sup> However, as of April 2023, HALO had no mine clearance, survey, or EOD teams active in Abkhazia or TAT. If HALO is successful in securing funding for clearance of the minefields at Khojali and Kadoeti, it expects that three teams of deminers will be deployed to conduct this work.<sup>84</sup>

Beginning in June 2020, HALO responded to the COVID-19 crisis in Abkhazia through the deployment of six HALO ambulances. The programme completed its last COVID-19 response project in mid-October 2022 and has handed over the vehicles and equipment to two local hospitals.<sup>85</sup>

In 2021, the international demining company, SafeLane Global, requested accreditation from DELTA/HDCD to conduct offshore survey and clearance of Poti Harbour, in order to allow some construction work to proceed safely. As at May 2022, the accreditation process was ongoing.<sup>86</sup> At the time of writing, no further update was available from the national authority and there was no information on SafeLane Global's website indicating demining activity in Georgia.<sup>87</sup>

**Table 3: Operational NTS and TS capacities deployed in 2022<sup>88</sup>**

| Operator   | NTS/TS teams | Total NTS/TS personnel | Comments   |
|--|--------------|------------------------|--|
| HALO   | 1            | 4                      | Conducted NTS in cooperation with HDCC DELTA. An increase in survey capacity as none deployed by HALO in 2021. |
| EOD Company of Engineer Battalion of MoD of Georgia* | 1            | 10                     | Deployed in 2021. Conduct both NTS and TS. Updated information not available for 2022.                         |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>2</b>     | <b>14</b>              |  |

\* This information was supplied by DELTA in May 2022 and stated as correct as at the end of 2021. Relevant information was requested for 2022 but was not provided.

73 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May, 26 July, and 2 September 2022.

74 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 2 September 2022.

75 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

76 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019 and 12 May 2020; and Matthew Walker, HALO, 8 April 2019.

77 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

78 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO, 2 May 2017.

79 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

80 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

81 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021.

82 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

83 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022; Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

84 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

85 Ibid.

86 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

87 SafeLane Global, accessed 11 June 2023 at: <https://bit.ly/3qye61v>.

88 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022; Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.



Table 4: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2022<sup>89</sup>

| Operator   | Manual clearance teams | Total deminers* | Mechanical assets/machines** | Comments  |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| HALO   | 2                      | 10              | 0                            | Increase on 1 team of 4 deminers in 2021. As in 2021, also deployed two EOD call-out teams (8 personnel), and, at Primorsky, two BAC teams (15 personnel in total). A decrease in mechanical assets compared to the two deployed in 2021. |
| EOD Company of Engineer Battalion of MoD of Georgia*** | 1                      | 10              | 0                            | Deployed in 2021. Georgian State Security Service (SSS) EOD team conducts EOD tasks. Abkhazia emergency services (EMERCOM) have a small EOD capacity. Updated information not available for 2022  |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>3</b>               | <b>20</b>       | <b>0</b>                     |   |

\* Excluding team leaders, medics, and drivers. \*\* Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters. \*\*\* Information correct as at the end of 2021; information was not provided for 2022.

## DEMINER SAFETY

There were no demining accidents involving HALO staff in 2022.<sup>90</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

A total of 0.28km<sup>2</sup> of land was released through clearance in Georgia in 2021, destroying in the process 82 AP mines and 131 items of UXO (see Table 6). All clearance by HALO took place in Abkhazia, while that undertaken by the Engineering Battalion of the MoD took place in TAT. In addition, 26 AP mines, 2 AV mines, and 1,068 items of UXO were destroyed in spot tasks by HALO (operating EOD teams in Abkhazia only) (see Table 6).

No land was released through NTS in 2022. However, NTS by HALO in TAT resulted in identification of 39,003m<sup>2</sup> of SHA and 16,825m<sup>2</sup> of CHA. A total of 32,456m<sup>2</sup> was reduced through TS by the Engineering Battalion of the MoD in TAT.<sup>91</sup>

### SURVEY IN 2022

No land was released through NTS in 2022.<sup>92</sup> This is a decrease compared to 2021 when, in Abkhazia, 25,453m<sup>2</sup> of mined area was cancelled through NTS by HDCD.<sup>93</sup> A total of 32,456m<sup>2</sup> was reduced through TS by HDCD in TAT in 2022 (see Table 5). This is a decrease compared to 2021, when 0.14km<sup>2</sup> was reduced through TS by HDCD and the Engineering Battalion of the MoD.<sup>94</sup>

Having gained permission in 2019 and after securing funding in 2022,<sup>95</sup> HALO, supported by HDCD personnel, was able to conduct NTS at the Kadoeti and Khojali minefields during July to September 2022. This resulted in 26,000m<sup>2</sup> of SHA being identified at Khojali as well as 13,003m<sup>2</sup> of SHA and 16,825m<sup>2</sup> of CHA at Kadoeti (see Table 1).<sup>96</sup> These areas were not added to the national database as HALO did not have access to the database in 2022.<sup>97</sup>

89 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

90 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

91 Email from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.

92 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

93 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

94 Ibid.

95 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

96 Emails from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May 2023; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

97 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 and 19 April 2023.

**Table 5: Release of mined area through TS in 2022<sup>98</sup>**

| Region/Village                                       | Operator | Area reduced (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|--|----------|--------------------------------|
| Dedoplistskaro utilization base, Kakheti region, TAT | HDCD     | 32,456                         |
| <b>Total</b>   |          | <b>32,456</b>                  |

## CLEARANCE IN 2022

A total of 0.28km<sup>2</sup> of mined area was released through clearance in Georgia in 2022, during which 82 AP mines were destroyed along with 131 items of UXO (see Table 6). The area cleared represents a decrease compared to the 0.4km<sup>2</sup> cleared in 2021.<sup>99</sup> All clearance by HALO took place in Abkhazia, while that undertaken by the Engineering Battalion of the MoD took place in TAT. In addition, 26 AP mines, 2 AV mines, and 1,068 items of UXO were destroyed in spot tasks by HALO (operating EOD teams in Abkhazia only).<sup>100</sup>

HALO saw a decrease in the amount of clearance it undertook in 2022, at 246,949m<sup>2</sup> compared to 397,766m<sup>2</sup> in 2021.<sup>101</sup> This was due to HALO's efforts across multiple tasks and projects, leading to a decrease in work undertaken in mined areas. Following completion of battle area clearance at Primorsky in July 2022, HALO was able to reallocate resources and undertake clearance at one minefield at Lindava, which was completed in December 2022.<sup>102</sup>

HALO's operations at Primorsky, which were initiated in 2017, were completed in July 2022.<sup>103</sup> AP mines there were the result of an ammunition storage area explosion in August 2017. The mines were scattered across the landscape as a result of the explosion and had not been emplaced.<sup>104</sup> HALO did not deploy any mechanical assets in 2022.<sup>105</sup>

The EOD Company of the Engineering Battalion undertook clearance at a military firing range, near Gonio, in the Adjara region of TAT. A total of 0.75km<sup>2</sup> has been cleared since work began in 2016, but the national authority was unable to specify how much of this clearance took place there during 2022.<sup>106</sup>

**Table 6: Mine clearance in 2022<sup>107</sup>**

| Region & District/Village                               | Operator                                     | Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> ) | AP mines destroyed | UXO destroyed |
|---|--|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Lindava, Abkhazia                                       | HALO   | 11,684                         | 5                  | 0             |
| Primorsky, Abkhazia (BAC)                               | HALO   | 235,265                        | *77                | 131           |
| Abkhazia EOD call-outs                                  | HALO   | 0                              | **26               | 1,068         |
| Near Poti Port, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region, TAT      | EOD Company of the MoD Engineering Battalion | 32,451                         | 0                  | 0             |
| Military firing range near Gonio, Adjara region, TAT*** | EOD Company of the MoD Engineering Battalion | N/K                            | N/K                | N/K           |
| <b>Totals</b>   |  | <b>279,400</b>                 | <b>108</b>         | <b>1,199</b>  |

\* AP mines destroyed at Primorsky were the result of BAC and mechanical clearance of the site of an unplanned ammunition storage area explosion that occurred in August 2017. As such, the mines were not emplaced but rather scattered around the storage area. \*\* Two AV mines were also destroyed during Abkhazia EOD call-outs.

\*\*\* The EOD company of the MoD Engineering Battalion has been working at the former military facility of Gonio since 2016. A total of 750,000m<sup>2</sup> has been cleared to date. No information was available on the number of AP mines destroyed during 2022.

98 Emails from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.

99 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021.

100 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

101 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

102 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

103 Ibid.

104 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

105 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

106 Emails from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.

107 Emails from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023; and Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

No target date has been set for completion of AP mine clearance in Georgia. DELTA reiterated in 2021 that, "given all the impediments, it is difficult to name specific timelines".<sup>108</sup> The Red Bridge minefield is Georgia's largest, clearance of which has previously been identified as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.<sup>109</sup> Georgia previously reported plans to start clearing the Red Bridge minefield in 2015, but after discussions between Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives only survey was permitted.<sup>110</sup> In 2022, HALO reported that, while there had been indications from the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that progress had been made on general demarcation disputes between Georgia and Azerbaijan, there was still no clear evidence of progress towards Red Bridge clearance.

As at March 2023, HALO had not been granted permission to clear any part of the minefield.<sup>111</sup> The Georgian MFA stated in October 2021 that HALO remains the Georgian Government's preferred implementer for clearance of the Red Bridge minefield, should clearance become possible.<sup>112</sup> But while HALO has previously stated it would maintain its residual presence in TAT as long as it was undertaking operations in Abkhazia, it expressed concern in 2022 at the outlook for tackling the Red Bridge minefield, should HALO be forced to exit Georgia before necessary permission and funding to operate at Red Bridge are secured.

In addition to a lack of access to the Red Bridge minefield, permission has still not yet been granted for HALO to survey and clear mined areas in Barisakho or Osiauri.<sup>113</sup> Notable progress has been made, however, with NTS of the minefields at Khojali and Kadoeti in 2022 by HALO.<sup>114</sup>

HALO cautions that, while the Engineering Battalion of the MoD would be a suitable entity to deal with any residual contamination once all minefields have been cleared, it would struggle to conduct the large-scale, systematic clearance that a minefield like Red Bridge would require. HALO would be prepared to return to Georgia to undertake the clearance, even if it had left Georgia.<sup>115</sup> This issue has now become pressing as, as at April 2023, HALO had no mine clearance, survey, or EOD teams active in Abkhazia or TAT. HALO is continuing to lobby for permission to access the Red Bridge area and pursuing funding to enable clearance of at Khojali and Kadoeti.<sup>116</sup>

## PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

Georgia's national strategy provides for action to address previously unknown mined areas that are found after completion.<sup>117</sup> The Engineering Battalion of the MoD has been trained to carry out EOD, demining, and BAC by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Partnership for Peace and has the capacity to deal with any residual contamination once all the known minefields have been cleared.<sup>118</sup> However, Georgia has expressed concern that this capacity to tackle residual contamination is limited.<sup>119</sup>

108 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

109 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

110 Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.

111 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

112 Ibid.

113 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

114 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May and 26 July 2022.

115 Ibid.

116 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

117 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

118 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021.

119 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.