

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 NOVEMBER 2023
 FIVE-YEAR EXTENSION REQUESTED TO 1 NOVEMBER 2028

KEY DATA

CLUSTER MUNITION CONTAMINATION: HEAVY

NATIONAL AUTHORITY ESTIMATE

260KM²

(INCLUDING CURRENTLY UNRECORDED CMR CONTAMINATION IRAQ EXPECTS TO FIND)

SUBMUNITION CLEARANCE IN 2022

16.62KM²

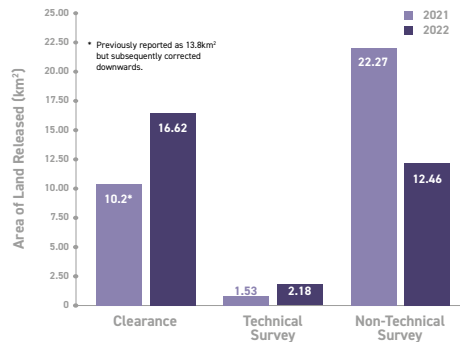
(FEDERAL IRAQ ONLY)
 MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE

SUBMUNITIONS DESTROYED IN 2022

4,697

(OFFICIAL DATA FOR FEDERAL IRAQ, IN ADDITION TO 27 SUBMUNITIONS CLEARED IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (KRI))

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Iraq has requested a five-year extension to its Article 4 deadline until November 2028, which will be considered by States Parties at the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) in September 2023. Iraq makes clear in its extension request that it would need to expand clearance capacity from 15 to 34 fully equipped and trained clearance teams to complete in five years but with the resources available at the time of the request it would need 16 years. In Iraq's extension request work plan based on current clearance capacity (15 teams), Federal Iraq will complete clearance of six governorates within the five year extension period, leaving the remaining three most heavily contaminated provinces still to clear under subsequent extension requests. For the second successive year, in 2022 Iraq identified more previously unrecorded cluster munition-contaminated area than it cleared.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Iraqi government should provide the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) with the legal authority, funding, human resources, and training to strengthen its effectiveness as the national mine action authority.
- The Iraqi government should help to implement its national strategy by increasing national financial support for mine action, including creating funding mechanisms to support national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to offset the diversion of international donor funds to other humanitarian emergencies.
- Federal Iraq should clarify the funding it plans for mine action in general and fulfilment of its CCM obligations in particular and when it will provide it.
- Federal Iraq should streamline its mine action information management procedures and accelerate the transition to electronic uploading of data to its Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2022)	Score (2021)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	6	6	Large, previously unrecorded cluster munition-contaminated areas were identified in 2022, underscoring the limitations of previous survey and Iraq's understanding of how much it has to clear. Its 2023 Article 4 request acknowledged the level of contamination will continue to rise before clearance achieves a net reduction. The DMA's Regional Mine Action Centre-South (RMAC-S) agreed with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) that it should focus on survey to develop an evidence-based baseline estimate of contamination.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	7	7	Iraq prepared a new mine action strategy for 2022–28, the first produced in consultation between the mine action authorities for the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and Federal Iraq. It recognised the need to increase national ownership and to increase national funding for the sector. The plan was amended to cover the period 2023–28 and officially approved in June 2023. CMR contamination and operations are heavily concentrated in southern governorates overseen by RMAC-S, which has continued its constructive engagement with operators on land release methodologies and priorities.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	7	7	Iraq's mine action strategy for 2023–28 acknowledges the importance of gender and diversity to the sector. The DMA and the Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) promoted gender and inclusion mainstreaming participating in workshops and training conducted by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Despite conservative social attitudes to women's employment in what has been a male-dominated sector the number of women work for demining organisations continued to rise, including in supervisory positions and in survey, community liaison, and clearance teams as well as in office roles.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	6	6	Iraq's mine action database is in the process of upgrading from IMSMA NG to IMSMA Core while IKMAA is replacing its IMSMA database with one based on open-source technology. DMA information management still struggled with obsolete reporting procedures causing chronic delays uploading operating results to the database and big discrepancies between official and operator data. Iraq, meanwhile, submits comprehensive annual updates in improved and promptly submitted Article 7 reports.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	7	7	Planning and tasking for survey and clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas have benefitted from good coordination between RMAC-S, operators, and local authorities. Operators say RMAC-S' task-order system works efficiently prioritising tasks according to local recommendations, DMA priorities, and operator requests.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	7	7	Federal Iraq adopted the Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS) methodology for CMR survey and clearance as a national standard in 2019 and has reported benefits for accurate mapping, planning, and land release.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	6	6	Official figures suggest a big increase in CMR hazardous areas released in 2022 but persistent, big discrepancies between official data and results available from international NGOs prevent a clear determination of progress. Iraq requested a five-year extension of its Article 4 deadline but indicated that with resources currently available it would take close to 16 years to achieve completion.
Average Score	6.5	6.5	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

- National Higher Council of Mine Action
- Directorate of Mine Action (DMA)
- Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Ministry of Defence
- Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)
- Ministry of Interior (Civil Defence)
- Al Khebra Company for Demining
- Ta'az Demining Company

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding (DRC) (formerly Danish Demining Group (DDG))
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Iraq ranks as one of the countries most heavily contaminated by cluster munitions. Federal Iraq reported cluster munition remnant (CMR) contamination of nearly 190km² at the end of 2022 (see Table 1),¹ 11.5km² or 6.4% more than at the end of the previous year.² This reflected the results of continuing survey which in 2022 added more CMR contamination to the database than was released through clearance.

Contamination at the end of 2022 affected nine of Iraq's 15 governorates, but 91% of it was concentrated in just three southern governorates of Basrah, Muthanna, and Thi Qar. The northern Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is believed also to have a small amount of CMR contamination but has no estimate of the area affected. The Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) said the KRI had no registered hazardous areas contaminated by cluster munitions but reported clearing a total of 27 submunitions in 2022, all but one of them located in Choman district of the KRI.³

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area in Federal Iraq by province⁴

Province	Area (m ²) end 2021	Area (m ²) end 2022
Anbar	6,192,126	10,974,800
Babylon	633,031	633,031
Basrah	42,838,415	46,497,041
Karbala	1,331,881	141,910
Missan	990,312	955,962
Muthanna	68,954,722	81,790,909
Najaf	5,010,038	3,700,442
Ninewa	4,157,090	21,224
Thi Qar	44,893,607	44,887,183
Qadisiya	3,137,824	0
Totals	178,139,046	189,602,502

Iraq is working to update its baseline estimate of the extent of its cluster munition contamination. The DMA's Regional Mine Action Centre-South (RMAC-S) agreed with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) that it should focus on survey to develop an evidence-based baseline estimate of contamination and

in 2022, Iraq added nearly 48km² in previously unrecorded hazardous areas to the database (see Table 2).⁵ The DMA calculates that in the next five years it will identify another 79km² of CMR contamination, based on a percentage of the areas in each governorate that require survey or resurvey. The percentage increase ranged from 10% in governorates with low levels of CMR contamination to 30% in Anbar, 40% in Muthanna, and 80% (equivalent to another 36km²) in Basrah.⁶

Table 2: Cluster munition-contaminated area added to the database in 2022⁷

Region	Area (m ²)
RMAC S	44,954,766
RMAC M EU	1,820,282
RMAC N	923,121
Total	47,698,169

Low-quality non-technical survey (NTS) conducted between 2014 and 2016 generated large, often inflated polygons and left out large areas that were largely unpopulated at the time and lacking evidence of contamination. In Basrah governorate, which is the most contaminated, most submunition casualties in recent years occurred in areas that were not surveyed.⁸ Survey conducted after 2016 cancelled large areas of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) but significant movement of population onto land being reclaimed for agriculture and expansion of residential areas, particularly in Basrah governorate, has led to discoveries of substantial CMR and other unexploded ordnance (UXO) hazards, including subsurface items in areas previously subjected to surface clearance.⁹

Federal Iraq's contamination dates back to the Gulf War of 1991 and the United States (US)-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and follows the path of allied forces' advance from the south to Baghdad. Coalition aircraft also struck Iraqi army positions in the northern governorate of Kirkuk but DMA data no longer identifies any CMR contamination in the governorate.¹⁰ The most commonly found items are BLU-63 and BLU-97 submunitions. Other CMR found include BLU-61, M42, M77, and M118 submunitions.¹¹

1 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2022), p. 5 and Form F; email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, Head of Operations, RMAC South, DMA, 28 March 2023.

2 Article 7 report for 2021, Form F, recorded CMR contamination totalling 178km².

3 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, Planning Manager, Directorate General of Technical Affairs, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

4 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2021), p. 5 and Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 28 March 2023.

5 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form F.

6 CCM Article 4 Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 24.

7 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form F.

8 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, Regional Coordinator – Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding, DRC, 30 March 2022.

9 Email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, RMAC South, DMA, 28 March 2023; and interview with Chris Ramsden, Project Manager, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

10 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form F; and email from Haitham Lafta, DMA/RMAC South, 21 April 2021. Iraq's CCM Article 7 Report for 2021 does not appear to have included SHAs recorded for the amount of previously unrecorded contamination found in 2021.

11 Interview with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, Director, DMA RMAC-S; Haitham Fattah Lafta, RMAC-S, Basrah, 29 April 2019; and Mats Hektor, Project Manager, NPA South Iraq, Basrah, 28 April 2019; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form F.

OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

CMR represent less than 10% of Iraq's total explosive ordnance contamination by area.¹² It also has identified a total of 1,703km² contaminated by anti-personnel mines, including improvised mines¹³ and has extensive UXO contamination.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The mine action programme in Iraq is managed along regional lines. The DMA has represented Iraq internationally and oversees mine action for humanitarian purposes in Federal Iraq, covering 15 of the country's 19 governorates. Mine action in the KRI's four governorates is overseen by IKMAA, which acts as both regulator and operator. The two organisations have functioned largely autonomously though contacts appear to have improved since 2021 after years in which relations were overshadowed by tensions over funding and territorial demarcation issues.

The DMA and IKMAA collaborated in drawing up Iraq's draft National Mine Action Strategy 2023–28, the first produced jointly by the two authorities.¹⁴ The strategy sets increasing national ownership as a key objective and says this will be achieved by strengthening both authorities and “ensuring these national entities are empowered, appropriately structured and sufficiently equipped and resourced to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities.”¹⁵

FEDERAL IRAQ

The inter-ministerial Higher Committee of Mine Action,¹⁶ which reports to the Prime Minister, oversees and approves mine action strategy, policies, and plans. The committee was chaired by the Prime Minister and includes representatives of the ministries of defence, interior, oil and environment as well as the National Security Council and IKMAA. A meeting of the committee in March 2023 decided it would in future be chaired by the Minister of Environment and other ministries would be represented at the level of deputy minister, not minister.¹⁷ The DMA “plans, coordinates, supervises, monitors and follows up all the activities of mine action”. It draws up the national strategy and is responsible for setting national standards, accrediting, and approving the standing operating procedures (SOPs) of demining organisations and certifying completion of clearance tasks.¹⁸

The DMA oversees three Regional Mine Action Centres (RMACs):

1. North: covering the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Salah ad-Din.
2. Middle Euphrates (MEU): Babylon, Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiya, and Wassit.
3. South: Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar.

RMAC South, located in Basra City, is the focal point for Federal Iraq's response to CMR contamination. Alone among the RMACs, it collects and uploads results of survey and clearance to Federal Iraq's IMSMA database and is responsible for tasking operators in its area of operations. RMAC North and MEU are located in Baghdad but RMAC

North also opened a satellite office in Mosul in August 2019.¹⁹

DMA coordination of mine action remains a challenge in a sector in which its formal status as a department of the relatively low-ranking Ministry of Environment gives it less authority than the powerful ministries of defence, interior, and oil, which are also major actors in the sector. Long-running discussions on a proposed demining law have raised the possibility of placing the DMA directly under the Office of the Prime Minister but as of mid 2023 there was no indication the government planned to take up the idea. A rapid turnover of the DMA's directors has also adversely affected management and policy continuity. The DMA has had 17 directors general in the 20 years since 2003, all but one of whom was appointed on an acting basis, which also limited their authority. Dr Sabah Hasan al-Hussaini, who took up the position in February 2023, was already the head of another directorate and was expected to return full time to that position. The DMA awaited the appointment of a new director general in 2023.²⁰

Iraq prepared a new national strategic plan for 2023–28, which acknowledges the institutional issues, citing “widespread belief” that the DMA should be strengthened to give it the authority commensurate with its mandate. The plan calls for an external assessment of the DMA's mandate and position that will result in recommendations to the Higher National Committee for Mine Action but does not indicate any timeline for this review.²¹ The strategic plan was approved in June 2023 and was due to be launched officially in August 2023.²²

¹² CCM Article 4 Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 10.

¹³ Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 18 – 23. Federal Iraq recorded 1,486km² of mined area, including 527km² affected by improvised mines, and the KRI recorded 217km² of mined area, including 4km² affected by improvised devices.

¹⁴ Interview with Ahmed Aljasem, Director of Information Management, DMA, in Baghdad 11 May 2023.

¹⁵ Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2002–2028, p. 36.

¹⁶ The Council, which is led by the Prime Minister, includes representatives of the ministries of defence, interior, oil, and environment, as well as the National Security Adviser and the head of IKMAA.

¹⁷ Email from UNMAS Headquarters, 24 July 2023.

¹⁸ “Document of roles and responsibilities”, undated but 2019, received by email from the DMA, 13 May 2019.

¹⁹ Interview with Jonathan Guthrie, NPA, in Geneva, 12 February 2020.

²⁰ Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, Deputy Director General, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

²¹ Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 37–38.

²² Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023; and email from UNMAS Headquarters, 24 June 2023.

Iraq's strategic plan for 2023–28 calls for strengthened national ownership and more national funding, recognising the dependence on external donor support as a key risk to sustainability of its mine action programme.²³ To boost the capacity available for mine action the DMA says Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) "have accepted to be involved" in mine action. The DMA reported the PMF had their own explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) Directorate and a significant workforce in many governorates.²⁴ Donor funding for demining operations channelled through the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has declined from its high of US\$77 million in 2019 (some of it for activities in 2019–20) to approximately US\$12 million in 2022. It was expected

to remain at this level in 2023 but faced the possibility of a further significant drop in 2024.²⁵

Iraq's government appears to be increasing its spending on mine action. Government funding for mine action has totalled about \$81 million in the decade to 2022 and averaged close to \$4 million a year in 2020–22.²⁶ The government has allocated ID 20 billion (US\$17 million) from the Federal state budget over three years towards implementation of the CCM and additional funding for the demining programme.²⁷ The government also allocated US\$20 million, part of a loan from the UK, for mine action other than relating to cluster munitions.²⁸

KRI

IKMAA functions as both the regulator and an operator in the KRI. It reports directly to the Kurdistan Regional Government's Council of Ministers, which is headed by a minister. It coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garmian, and Sulaymaniyah (Sleman). IKMAA had a total of staff of more than 900 personnel, including 432 in operations, at the end of 2022, largely unchanged from the previous year, but a budgetary crisis in the KRI in recent years imposed severe constraints on the mine action sector.²⁹

IKMAA received no international donor funding in 2021³⁰ but in 2022 was supported by Slovenian Aid, which provided a grant of €168,000 through ITF Enhancing Human Security. The funds financed the hiring of vehicles enabling IKMAA to deploy 15 demining teams and contributing to a rise in release of mined areas in 2022.³¹

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Iraq does not have a policy on environmental management in mine action. In 2022, the DMA and IKMAA were in the process of preparing a national standard and a number of humanitarian demining organisations which already applied their global SOPs for managing the environment.

Iraq's 2023 Article 4 deadline extension request notes that the DMA is part of the Ministry of Environment and provides technical support to land conservation efforts and planning as part of the wider Ministry.³² The extension request also mentions that previous and ongoing wars have affected the environmental situation, and resulted in air, water, and soil pollution,³³ and that "climate changes, natural, and geographical factors which lead to the spreading and expansion of the contaminated areas as a result of the migration of mines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordnance due to erosion factors such as rain and floods, which resulted in an increase in the size of contaminated areas".³⁴ However, it contains no information on how environmental considerations will be addressed during planning and tasking for CMR survey and clearance, in order

to minimise potential harm from land release activities or how climate change may impact planned operations or Iraq's prioritisation for clearance.

That said, in the extension request, Iraq has requested international funding to provide support and funds to investigate the use of non-explosive disposal methods that are as cost effective as explosive/thermite destruction techniques and lessen the impact on the environment.³⁵

Some international demining organisations are exploring how their capacity can help address severe pressure on water supply and irrigation systems to facilitate productive use of cleared land. The HALO Trust (HALO) is looking into possibilities of partnerships with local organisations to follow up clearance with assistance to rehabilitate soil and irrigation systems to address acute problems of water quality and supply.³⁶ NPA has an environmental SOP followed during the planning and implementation of tasks. Teams avoid disturbing soil unless specifically required for technical survey (TS) or clearance operations, and seek to ensure that the soil is

23 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 17 and 22.

24 Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

25 Email from Shinobu Mashima, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 11 May 2023; and interview with Shinobu Mashima and Johannes Smith, UNMAS, in Baghdad, 14 May 2023.

26 CCM Article 4 Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 40.

27 Interviews with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, RMAC-S, in Basra City, 8 May 2023; and Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023; and email from UNMAS Headquarters, 24 July 2023.

28 Email from UNMAS Headquarters, 24 July 2023.

29 Email from Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

30 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, Deputy Head, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

31 Interview with Jabar Mustafa, Director of IKMAA in Erbil, 18 May 2023; and email from Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

32 CCM Article 4 Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 34.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

36 Email from Hein Bekker, Programme Manager, HALO, 4 May 2023; and interview in Baghdad, 10 May 2023.

in a state suitable for its intended use after completion of a task.³⁷ In 2022, NPA appointed a global environmental adviser and piloted collection of environmental data in the course of

non-technical survey (NTS). NPA also is developing support for local communities in rehabilitating irrigation canals and use of irrigation pipelines that help conserve water.³⁸

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The Iraq National Strategic Mine Action Plan for 2017–2021 referred to gender equality and gender mainstreaming within mine action activities as objectives of an effective programmatic response.³⁹ Iraq's 2023–2028 strategic plan recognises the different impact of contamination shaped by gender, age, and ethnic or religious affiliations and requires specific activities targeting those needs, for which disaggregated data is a prerequisite.⁴⁰

The DMA's gender unit, which was created in 2017 and adopted its first Gender Unit Action Plan in early 2021, reported a range of activities in 2022, conducting quality assurance field visits to Civil Defence and NGOs' demining teams and also visiting women deployed in operational teams to assess their activities and address issues encountered by women operators. The DMA organised workshops on gender mainstreaming in mine action in 2022 in cooperation with NPA, and together with IKMAA participated in a four-day leadership training course conducted by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and a one-day course on gender balance and diversity.⁴¹ According to Iraq's 2023 Article 4 deadline extension request, the DMA, in partnership with NPA, established and trained two mixed-gender teams (for TS and clearance).⁴²

IKMAA reported that it offered equal employment opportunities to women and that women held 10 of its 15 managerial posts, but overall, female staff made up a little more than 12% of IKMAA's total staff at the end of 2022, most of them in administration, information management, and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE). The 623 operations staff employed by IKMAA as of May 2023 included only 9 women. IKMAA said it is proposing to set up female clearance and EOD teams in the KRI's four governorates and has called for donors to follow through with support.⁴³

Women's participation in mine action, a male-dominated sector, still faces some resistance from socially conservative attitudes, particularly in rural areas. Efforts to recruit women can encounter attitudes questioning the point of female employment when there are not enough jobs for men.⁴⁴ It can be problematic to deploy women outside the areas they

live and some candidates have dropped out of training that required overseas travel.⁴⁵ Women comprise well below 20% of the personnel in most international implementing partners (IPs).

The participation of women in mine action and their level of qualification continued to rise. Graduates of an EOD Level 3 course conducted by the Ministry of Interior's training centre in 2022 included the first female Civil Defence staffer. Fifteen women participated in EOD Levels 1 and 2 courses conducted by UNMAS. Additionally, nine female Civil Defence officers completed an explosive hazard first-responder training course and a DMA female staff member passed a course on drone-supported NTS conducted by UNMAS Iraq's technical support unit.⁴⁶

Among implementing partners operating in the south, NPA's 61 operations staff included seven women working mainly in NTS. NPA experienced some interference with recruitment notices put up in Basrah encouraging female applicants but perceives that the slowly increasing participation of women in the sector is finding widening community acceptance of their role.⁴⁷ Danish Refugee Council (DRC) set improving gender representation as one of its priorities in 2022⁴⁸ and recruited six female deminers from Basra and surrounding villages without previous experience who underwent training in 2022 and started operations in May 2023. Conservative social norms among tribes in the south make recruitment of females more challenging than in northern governorates but DRC announced vacancies for eight staff and received around 35 applicants.⁴⁹ If tests conducted as part of its recruitment process do not produce a female in the top three candidates, the top scoring female is interviewed to ensure there is no bias. Its steps to attract women staff included offering 18 weeks of paid maternity leave and five days of paid leave to deal with child sickness in line with global DRC Minimum Standards for employment of national staff.⁵⁰

NPA has a dedicated Gender and Diversity Programme Coordinator responsible for gender mainstreaming and implemented specific projects to support the inclusion of women in mine action. NPA has increased its number of

37 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, Deputy Programme Manager, NPA, 12 April 2023.

38 Ibid.; and interview with Chris Tierney, Programme Manager, NPA, in Baghdad, 13 May 2023.

39 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 12, 18, 20, and 30.

40 Ibid., p. 15.

41 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 30–36.

42 CCM Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 26.

43 Email from Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

44 Email from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

45 Email from Tim Marsella, Programme Officer, HALO, 17 March 2022.

46 Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS Iraq, 11 May 2023.

47 Interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

48 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022.

49 Email from Katrien Denys, Head of Programme, DRC, 18 April 2023; and field visit with Mustafa Nadhim Hameed, DRC, 8 May 2023.

50 Emails from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022; and Lasse Marinus Joergensen, Operations Manager, DRC, 21 April 2022.

51 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023.

female employees and as of the end of 2022, the number of female staff was at 21% and female operational staff increased by 43%.⁵¹ In addition to women employed in administrative roles in NPA's Basra-based CMR programme,

three of NPA's 10 operational teams each employ two women. Despite some community resistance, employment of women in all aspects of mine action appears to be gaining acceptance.⁵²

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028 underscores the importance of comprehensive information management processes to effective planning, tasking, implementation, and reporting. It also says Iraq will seek to increase understanding of its remaining mine and CMR contamination through continuous updating of its baseline data by means of a database clean-up, desktop analysis, and contact with communities.⁵³

The DMA and IKMAA have operated databases using IMSMA NG with technical support from iMMAP, a commercial service provider based in Erbil and working under contract to the US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA). Federal Iraq's mine action database is located at the DMA's Baghdad headquarters, but RMAC South headquartered in Basrah is the focal point for cluster munitions and responsible for uploading CMR data into the database.

Federal Iraq's mine action information management continues to suffer from severe delays in uploading operating results which ensures the database is not up to date and annual results do not accurately reflect the activities conducted. The DMA attributes delays to the need to correct reporting errors and apply quality control.⁵⁴ Implementing partners point to cumbersome procedures which require them to submit operational data in hard copy and on CD-ROMs to be uploaded manually into the database.⁵⁵ Data verification and correction can add additional significant delays.⁵⁶ The process has ensured the database and an

online dashboard accessible to operators are not up to date. The DMA introduced an Online Task Management System in 2019 to facilitate tasking but took it offline in October 2021, reportedly over sensitivities about the data available.

The limited number and high turnover of the DMA's data processing staff has further contributed to the DMA's IM challenges. iMMAP previously had two staff embedded in the DMA but ended their deployment in December 2022 in line with moves to reduce the scope of its engagement with the DMA.⁵⁷

The DMA is in the process of upgrading its database to IMSMA Core with support from the GICHD and iMMAP. The DMA's IMSMA Core server was installed in December 2022 and field testing of reporting forms started in 2023. The DMA was due to launch the system by December 2023.⁵⁸ The DMA expects electronic uploading to start with EORE and victim assistance data before extending to include survey and clearance results.⁵⁹

IKMAA is planning to replace its IMSMA NG database with one based on open-source technology and licencing. iMMAP started designing a customised server in March 2021 and six months later launched a base version which is in the process of being developed and due for completion in August 2024.⁶⁰ IKMAA said in April 2022 that work had started working with iMMAP and expected to complete installation in two years.⁶¹ IKMAA continues to operate IMSMA NG but is trialling the new system in Erbil and Slemani governorates.⁶²

PLANNING AND TASKING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028 sets broad goals for both the DMA and IKMAA, the first time the two authorities have cooperated in drawing up a national plan.⁶³ These include as a strategic priority the development of "a prioritisation system based on clear and transparent criteria" to inform all planning and tasking decisions. Iraq has not had a specific strategic plan for CMR which, like clearance

of legacy mines in the south, has been overshadowed by the priority given to tackling dense improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from Islamic State.

Iraq's Article 4 deadline Extension Request, submitted in November 2022, was updated in April 2023 to include for the first time a 16-year work plan based on the capacity available

52 Interview with Chris Ramsden, South Iraq, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

53 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 20–21.

54 Interview with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, RMAC South, DMA, in Basrah, 8 May 2023.

55 Interviews with mine action operators in Iraq, 7–20 May 2023.

56 NPA reported receiving a request in 2022 to verify data relating to a task completed in 2019.

57 Interview with Clare Pritchard, Country Representative, iMMAP, in Erbil, 15 May 2023.

58 Ibid.

59 Interview with Ahmad Aljasim, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

60 Interview with Clare Pritchard, iMMAP, in Erbil, 15 May 2023.

61 Emails from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022; and Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

62 Interview with Clare Pritchard, iMMAP, in Erbil, 15 May 2023.

63 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022.

in 2022. The plan set out targets for land release of 17.25km² per annum, including plans to complete clearance of six governorates with total contamination estimated at almost 16.5km² in the first five years. These included clearing in 2024, the first year of the extension, all contamination in four governorates with small amounts of CMR hazards: Babylon (0.7km²), Kerbala (1.5km²), Missan (1.1km²) and Ninewa (0.02km²). The plan provided for completing clearance of Najaf (4.1km²) in the third year of the extension and Anbar (9.1 km²) in the fifth year. This would leave the three most heavily CMR-contaminated provinces of Basra, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar, planned to be addressed over 10/11 more years, in subsequent Article 4 extension requests.⁶⁴ The extension request also included a five-year work plan to complete CMR clearance, but that assumes deployment of an additional 19 equipped and trained clearance teams to supplement the existing 15 clearance teams. It also assumes extremely ambitious gains in operational efficiencies (1.5 times productivity in the first year and subsequent doubling of productivity in the remaining four years) from application of innovative technologies.⁶⁵ No funding has been secured for this additional capacity.

Iraq's Article 4 deadline Extension Request also includes a work plan for survey (for both the 16-year and 5-year completion targets). While the respective work plans show where survey capacity will be deployed, there is no explanation of how Iraq plans to undertake survey to identify and confirm the 79km² of additional previously unrecorded CMR contamination it expects to find. Furthermore, the total amount of CMR contamination at the start of the work plans already include the 79km² of additional contamination, despite the fact this contamination has yet to be identified and confirmed.

The DMA issues tasks requested by operators after consultation with DMA operations and RMAC staff and taking account of requests from government, local authorities, development plans and prioritisation criteria that include a NTS survey scoring system.⁶⁶ In much of Federal Iraq tasking suffers from cumbersome procedures. In the south, planning and tasking for survey and clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas have benefitted from good coordination between the RMAC-S, operators, and local authorities. RMAC-S's task order system prioritises tasks according to local recommendations, DMA priorities, and operator requests, and is said to be working well.⁶⁷

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Federal Iraq started working with UNMAS in 2021 on updating national mine action standards for mine and battle area clearance (BAC), NTS, and TS. The standards were written in 2004–05 existed in Arabic only and did not specifically address cluster munitions. The DMA said in April 2022 it had updated many of the standards although they had still to be translated into English. They included standards for NTS and TS and mine clearance, BAC, EOD, marking, and personal protective equipment.⁶⁸ The DMA released seven national standards that were translated into English with support from NPA in November 2022, and 10 standards translated by UNMAS in 2023. UNMAS reported another eight standards and three IMAS technical notes will be reviewed in 2023.⁶⁹

The DMA adopted the Cluster Munition Remnants Survey (CMRS) methodology as a national standard in 2019, citing the benefits it has delivered for survey, planning, and clearance.⁷⁰ In August 2021, after a review of NMAS 09.11 for battle area clearance, Iraq increased the national standard for depth of CMR clearance from 20cm to 30cm because in areas with moving sand or soft ground some CMR, most commonly larger BLU-97 submunitions, had been found to penetrate deeper than 20cm. NPA said the new standard did not affect operations because 30cm was within the range of its existing detectors.⁷¹ NPA data also showed that the great majority of CMR were found within 5cm of the surface.⁷²

64 Article 4 Extension Request, Annex B, 11 April 2023.

65 Article 4 Extension Request, 11 April 2023, pp. 10, 17, and 26; and Annex A.

66 Emails from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022; Peter Smethers, FSD, 22 February 2022; Tim Marsella, HALO, 17 March 2022; and Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

67 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022.

68 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022.

69 Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS Iraq, 11 May 2023.

70 Email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, RMAC-S, 12 August 2020.

71 Emails from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April and 2 May 2022.

72 Interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, 7 May 2023 and email 12 May 2023. NPA data showed that 85% of M77 submunitions, which accounted for over half of cleared CMR, were found at a depth of 0cm–5cm and 70% of BLU-97 CMR were also found within this depth.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

The Iraqi government covers the costs of a total of 11 teams working on cluster munitions tasks. They include five teams from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence organisation conducting survey and clearance. Two of these teams focus on technical survey and three on clearance). Another six MoD teams (EOD) conduct submunition demolitions, a task restricted to the military.⁷³

DRC's southern programme based in Basra employed a total of 30 people in operations at the end of 2022, including two 10-person BAC teams working on clearance of UXO as well as CMR and one manual demining team. DRC also had one risk education team based in Basra. Dwindling donor support for mine action in Iraq, however, created some uncertainty about the long-term prospects of DRC's operations. Donor funding of DRC's operations in southern Iraq was due to end in December 2023.⁷⁴

NPA's operations in southern Iraq expanded in 2022. By the start of 2023, NPA had a total of 10 multi-task teams

(MTTs) in the south, including four teams working in Basrah governorate, four more MTTs working from a base camp in Muthanna, and two teams operating from a Muthanna field camp close to the border with Kuwait. One MTT in Basrah is focused on mine clearance. It also employed two NTS teams, one each in Basrah and Muthanna base, and a CMRS (technical survey) team in Muthanna base.⁷⁵ NPA's MTTs work with large-loop detectors expanded from the normal 2m to 2.5m and in the habitually flat terrain enable teams to average 6,400m² a day, higher than the 5,000m² daily average adopted for calculating productivity in Iraq's Article 4 deadline extension request.⁷⁶

In a move toward increasing efficiency, NPA planned to start training teams with Scorpion detection systems in 2023.⁷⁷ It is also in discussion with Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, investigating the possible use of autonomous ground vehicles in survey which have the potential to deliver a sharp increase in productivity.⁷⁸

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

Federal Iraq reported release of a total of 48.26km² through survey and clearance in 2022,⁷⁹ nearly triple the 16.6km² recorded in official results in the previous year. However, persistent issues with Iraq's mine action data, including notably long delays uploading operator results into the database, prevent a clear determination of progress.

International operators, who have represented the main capacity tackling CMR contamination, recorded total land release of 37.6km² in 2021, more than double the official result, but in 2022, NPA and DRC, the international NGOs active in the south reported releasing a total of 8.4km².⁸⁰ For the purposes of monitoring global clearance numbers, Mine Action Review has estimated Iraq's CMR clearance in 2022 to be 16.62km², based on official clearance data, but deducting 17km² cleared by civil defence in Qadisiya, which appears to be BAC rather than CMR clearance given the small number of unexploded submunitions destroyed.

The Ministry of Defence, Civil Defence, and commercial companies also conducted survey and clearance but RMAC South and the DMA did not provide details of their activities leaving unexplained the gap between official and operator data.

SURVEY IN 2022

DMA data shows that the amount of land released through survey in 2022 more than doubled from 6.5km² in 2021 to reach 14.6km² (see Table 3), with RMAC South accounting for nearly three-quarters of the total. The result underscores the disparity between official and implementing partner data and may reflect the time lapse between operations and the results being uploaded to the database. In 2021, NPA and DRC recorded releasing 23.8km² through survey, most of it cancelled through NTS.⁸¹ In 2022, NPA and DRC reported they did not release any land through survey.⁸²

73 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, updated 11 April 2023, p. 13.

74 Email from Katrien Denys, DRC, 18 April 2023.

75 Interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

76 Email from Chris Tierney, NPA, 2 February 2023.

77 Interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

78 Interview with Chris Tierney, NPA, in Baghdad, 13 May 2023.

79 Email from Haithem Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 28 March 2023.

80 Emails from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023 and Stuart Rickard, HDP Operations Manager, DRC Iraq, 2 May 2023.

81 See *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2022*, p. 67.

82 Emails from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023 and Stuart Rickard, DRC Iraq, 2 May 2023.

Table 3: Cluster munition-contaminated area cancelled through NTS in Federal Iraq in 2022 (official data)⁸³

Province	Operator	Area cancelled by NTS (m ²)
Muthanna	NPA – Civil Defence – MOD	8,384,062
Najaf	Civil Defence	1,309,596
Qadisiya	Civil Defence	2,767,374
Total		12,461,032

Table 4: Cluster munition-contaminated area reduced by TS in 2022 (official data)⁸⁴

Province	Operator	Area cancelled by TS (m ²)
Basrah	Civil Defence Alsiraj Al mudhia	2,176,048
Thi-Qar	Civil Defence	6,424
Total		2,182,472

DRC did not conduct survey in 2022, focusing the small capacity funded by donors on BAC and demining.⁸⁵ NPA, in agreement with RMAC South and priorities set out in Iraq's CCM Article 4 extension request, focused on survey to develop a comprehensive baseline estimate of Iraq's CMR contamination. Many areas where survey and surface clearance have already been conducted are revealing subsurface contamination as population reclaims land for agricultural or other uses. NPA has also found that contact between its NTS/EORE team with migrant Bedouin tribes as they move across Muthanna governorate has yielded extensive information on contamination.⁸⁶ NPA survey recorded nearly 30km² of previously unrecorded CMR contamination in Basrah and Muthanna governorates through survey in 2022 and another 14.5km² in the first quarter of 2023.⁸⁷

CLEARANCE IN 2022

Iraq more than tripled the amount of CMR hazardous areas cleared in 2022, according to official data, which recorded release of 33.6km² compared with 10.2km² the previous year (previously reported by Mine Action Review as 13.8km², but subsequently corrected downwards), but raised many questions.⁸⁸ International NGOs, which have previously accounted for most CMR clearance, said they cleared 8.4km² in 2022, a quarter of the official clearance total, while NPA alone reported that it found 5,946 submunitions, 27% more than the number officially recorded for all operators (see Tables 5 and 6). Official data attributes clearance of 17km², more than half the total, to one task in Qadisiya governorate tackled by Civil Defence which reportedly has one team active in the region.⁸⁹ The DMA also reported participation by Iraq's Shia militia, the Popular Mobilisation Forces, thought to be their first official involvement in mine action.⁹⁰

83 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form F; and email from Haithem Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 25 May 2023.

84 Email from Haithem Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 25 May 2023.

85 Email from Katrien Denys, DRC, 18 April 2023.

86 Interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

87 Email from Chimwewe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023; and interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

88 Email from Haithem Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 25 May 2023.

89 CCM Article 4 Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 25.

90 Email from Haithem Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 25 May 2023.

Table 5: CMR clearance in 2022 (official data)⁹¹

Province	Operator	Areas released	Total area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed
Basrah	MoD	49	11,259,807	4,513
	DRC			
	NPA			
	Ta'az			
Muthanna	PMF	21	5,021,356	
	NPA			
Qadisiya	Civil Defence	1	*17,232,309	157
Babylon	Civil Defence	1	107,131	
Totals		72	33,620,603	4,670
Adjusted Totals			16,620,603	

* The reported figure of over 17km² appears to be BAC rather than CMR clearance given the small number of unexploded submunitions destroyed. Mine Action Review has therefore deleted 17km² from the total.

In addition, IKMAA reported clearing a total of 27 submunitions, all but one of which was in the Choman district of the KRI.⁹²

The 8.4km² of clearance recorded by international NGOs (see Table 6) marked a drop of nearly one third from the more than 12km² they cleared in 2021. DRC, with only three manual clearance teams, of which one conducted demining, reported clearing more area in 2022 but it was mainly tasked for BAC and the 2.7km² included 139,208m² affected by CMR and the 839 items found included eight submunitions.⁹³ NPA clearance dropped from nearly 10km² in 2021 to 5.7km² in 2022, when the main focus of operations switched to survey. In addition, NPA said it conducted clearance on a substantial task in the area of Basrah governorate's Rumaila oilfields but the data would only be released on completion of the task.⁹⁴

Table 6: CMR clearance in Federal Iraq in 2022 (NGO operator data)⁹⁵

Province	Governorate	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions cleared	Other UXO cleared
DRC	Basrah	2,692,399	8	831
NPA	PMF	1,548,310	2,296	145
	Basrah NPA			
	Muthanna	4,189,792	3,650	7
Totals		8,430,501	5,954	993

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



⁹¹ Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form F; and email from Haithem Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 25 May 2023.

⁹² Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

⁹³ Email from Stuart Rickard, DRC, 2 May 2023.

⁹⁴ Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023; and interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, in Basrah, 7 May 2023.

⁹⁵ Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023.

Under Article 4 of the CCM, Iraq is required to destroy all CMR in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 November 2023. Iraq acknowledged in 2022 that the extent of CMR contamination and the limited capacity available for tackling it ensured it would not achieve its Article 4 deadline.⁹⁶ In November 2022, Iraq requested a five-year extension of its deadline until November 2028 and after consultations with the CCM Article 4 Analysis Group and support from NPA, it delivered an amended request in April 2023. The request will be considered by States Parties at Eleventh Meeting of States Parties in September 2023.

Iraq makes clear that this is only an interim request in view of the scale of the problem and the limited capacity available to deal with it. The DMA submitted a five-year work plan for completion with the request which estimated it needed 34 teams, more than double the 15 teams available in 2023.⁹⁷ A second work plan based on current capacity foresees completion in up to 16 years.⁹⁸

Setting a timeline for completion remains complicated by the fact Iraq lacks an up-to-date baseline estimate of CMR contamination and the survey being conducted by NPA to achieve it is finding significantly more previously unrecorded hazardous areas than are being cleared.⁹⁹ The extension request bases its proposed work plans on a November estimate, putting CMR contamination at 181km². By the end of the year, that figure had risen to 189km². The extension request calculates that survey will identify another 79km²

of contamination by the end of 2028, based on a projected percentage rise in individual governorates. These ranged from a projected increase of 10% in governorates with small amounts of CMR contamination, including Babylon, Kerala, and Najaf, to an increase of 20% in Thi Qar, 40% in Muthanna, and 80% in Basrah.¹⁰⁰ Results of survey in the past year suggest the estimated additional contamination may be conservative.

Other obstacles to completing include the priority given by Iraq and its international donors to clearing mainly improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from Islamic State, overshadowing both CMR and extensive "legacy" mined areas in the south. Iraq also cites the lack of a response to its request for US cluster bomb target data and climate factors which have resulted in migration of explosive ordnance, including cluster munitions.¹⁰¹

The biggest challenge alongside the size of contamination is the scarcity of resources available to tackle it. Iraq's 2023 extension request reports that the government allocated \$80.5 million to mine action in the period 2013–22, but annual spending in the past two years was less than \$4 million and only an unspecified share of that sum went to tackling CMR.¹⁰² Iraq's new national mine action strategy for 2023–28 says it will seek to attract more funding to address CMR and mine contamination in the south, particularly in Basrah governorate.¹⁰³ The government has allocated 20 billion Iraqi dinars (\$17 million) over three years to support implementation of the CCM.¹⁰⁴

Table 7: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Federal Iraq (km ²)	KRI (km ²)	Totals
2022	16.6	0	16.6
2021	10.2	0	*10.2
2020	5.7	N/R	5.7
2019	4.3	0.4	**4.7
2018	7.2	0	7.2
Totals	44.0	0.4	44.4

N/R = Not reported * Previously reported as 13.8km², but subsequently corrected downwards

** Based on Mine Action Review calculation

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

There is no active planning for the management of residual contamination.

⁹⁶ CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form F.

⁹⁷ CCM Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, Annex A.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10, cites 15.2 years. Annex B of the request puts the figure at 16 years.

⁹⁹ CCM Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 28.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰³ Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 21–22 and 24.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023; and email from UNMAS Headquarters, 24 July 2023.