

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 FEBRUARY 2028
NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: MASSIVE PRECISE EXTENT UNCLEAR

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2021

11.6km²

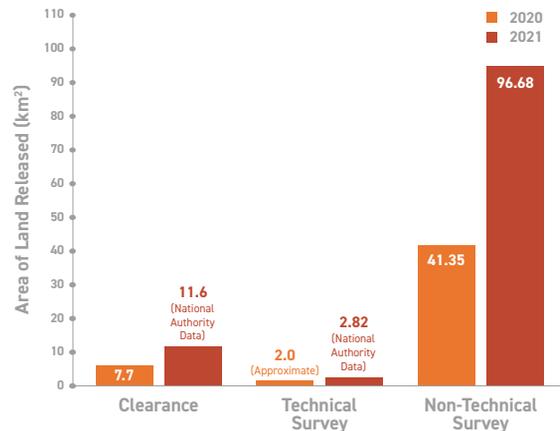
(NATIONAL AUTHORITY FIGURES: 10.97KM² IN FEDERAL IRAQ AND 0.63KM² IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ, KRI)

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2021

13,255

(NATIONAL AUTHORITY FIGURES: 11,819 IN FEDERAL IRAQ AND 1,436 IN THE KRI)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **LOW**

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Iraq's mine action sector saw significant improvements in productivity, particularly in cancellation of areas contaminated by improvised mines, and a sharp rise in the number of cleared mines. Despite the continuing focus on areas liberated from Islamic State, work started in August 2021 on clearing anti-personnel mines and other explosive ordnance from the valuable date palm forest in the Shatt al-Arab district funded by the European Union. The Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reviewed and updated Iraq's national mine action standards. The DMA and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) worked with the Geneva International Centre for Mine Action (GICHD) in drafting a new National Strategy for 2022–28 (released in April 2022), which commits them to closer cooperation in planning and resource mobilisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Iraqi government should provide the DMA with the legal authority, funding, equipment, and training for staff to strengthen its effectiveness as the national mine action authority.
- The Iraqi government should increase its financial support for humanitarian mine action, including creating funding mechanisms to support national and international NGOs, to offset the diversion of international donor funds to other humanitarian emergencies.
- International donors and organisations supporting humanitarian mine action should address the severely limited capacity and resources in national mine action structures.
- Iraq should establish a National Mine Action Platform (NMAP) for regular dialogue among all stakeholders, including donors, to collectively discuss progress, challenges, and support for Article 5 implementation.

- Iraq should explicitly recognise mines of an improvised nature as part of its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) treaty obligation and national mine action authorities in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) should amend reporting forms to include improvised mines as a separate category distinct from improvised explosive devices.
- The DMA should provide comprehensive, disaggregated data on the results of survey and clearance, detailing the results achieved by every active organisation.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2021)	Score (2020)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	7	6	Iraq has a broad understanding of the location of legacy mined areas although accelerating survey continued to add substantial previously unrecorded hazardous areas in Federal Iraq. KRI estimates of contamination have remained largely stable in recent years. Federal Iraq says that initial survey estimates greatly exaggerate the extent of contamination. It is confident that further non-technical survey will substantially lower the amount of legacy mined area requiring clearance. Nonetheless, priority continues to be given to surveying and clearing improvised mines in areas liberated from Islamic State where large areas are being cancelled and cleared but previously unrecorded hazardous areas continue to be added to the database.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	5	5	The DMA and IKMAA cooperated for the first time in preparation of a new national mine action strategy for 2022–28 which aims to increase national ownership by strengthening both authorities. Federal Iraq has not provided the DMA, a department of the Ministry of Environment, with the legal mandate and institutional authority to effectively manage or coordinate mine action activities by more politically powerful ministries such as defence, interior, and oil.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	6	6	Iraq's mine action strategy for 2022–2028 acknowledges the importance of gender and diversity to the sector. Conservative social attitudes to women's employment hamper recruitment in what has been a male-dominated sector but demining organisations are slowly increasing the number of women they employ, including in supervisory positions and in survey, community liaison and clearance teams as well as in office roles. Opportunities to hire women for field work vary according to region and are particularly limited in the affected governorates in the south.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	5	5	The DMA is in the process of upgrading its Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database from New Generation to Core which, together with a planned data clean-up, should help to address challenges posed by cumbersome information management procedures and slow entry of operator survey and clearance results. Iraq has submitted regular annual and, in recent years much improved, Article 7 transparency reports but still falls short in reporting land release results disaggregated by operator.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	6	5	Iraq released a National Strategy 2022–2028 in April 2022 setting out strategic objectives for the DMA and KRI. Operators report significant improvement in the issuance of task orders by the DMA in recent years although the process can still be slow and data accompanying the task orders was largely out of date.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	6	5	The DMA has reviewed standards with support from UNMAS and said in April 2022 that it had updated 20 standards although they had not yet been translated into English. International partners in the meantime continue to work from their own standing operating procedures (SOPs).
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	7	6	Federal Iraq and the KRI significantly increased land release in 2021, helped by progressive easing of Covid-19 related restrictions. Federal Iraq reported a sharp rise in the amount of improvised mine contamination cancelled by non-technical survey, most of it in one governorate, Ninewa. The KRI looked forward to receiving international donor funding that would enable it to acquire a large number of vehicles, facilitating field deployment of demining teams and accelerating clearance.
Average Score	6.2	5.5	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Federal Iraq:
 - Ministry of Health and Environment
 - Directorate for Mine Action (DMA)
- Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI):
 - Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Interior: Civil Defence, EOD Directorate
- IKMAA
- Ain Al Saker Demining Company
- Akad International Co. for Mines
- Baghdad for Clearance Organisation
- Al Basrah Demining Organisation
- Al Bayrac Demining Company
- Al Danube
- Al Fahad Co. for Demining
- Al Fayha
- Al Khebra Al Fania Demining Co.
- Al Safsafa
- Alsiraj Almudhia for Mine Removal
- Arabian Gulf Mine Action Co.
- Al Waha
- Al Watania Company for Demining

- AZSC
- Eagle Eye
- Health and Social Care Organisation in Iraq (IHSCO)
- Iraq Tadamon Company for Mine Clearance
- Kanary Mine Action Company
- Nabaa Al-Hurya Company
- Ta'az Demining
- Wtorplast Demining

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Church Aid (DCA)
- Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian and Disarmament and Peacebuilding Sector (DRC) (formerly Danish Demining Group, DDG)
- Global Clearance Solutions
- The HALO Trust
- Humanity & Inclusion (HI, formerly Handicap International)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD)
- Tetra Tech
- G4S
- Optima

OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Iraq recorded total anti-personnel mine and improvised mine contamination of 1,733km² at the end of 2021, making it the world's most heavily mined country. This comprised 1,523km² in Federal Iraq and 210km² in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) (see Tables 1 and 4, respectively). This is some 3% less than the total figure at the end of 2020.¹ Most of the contamination is in confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) rather than suspected hazardous areas (SHAs).

FEDERAL IRAQ

Federal Iraq reported nearly 1,000km² of "legacy" minefields at the end of 2021, almost 10% more than a year earlier. These minefields are heavily concentrated in southern governorates, which date back to the 1980–88 war with Iran, the 1991 Gulf War, and the 2003 invasion by the United States (US)-led coalition (see Tables 1 and 2). Basrah governorate, comprising the Shatt al-Arab and Fao districts, which were fiercely contested during the war with Iran, makes up 85% of the total.²

Table 1: Mined area in Federal Iraq (at end 2021)³

Contamination type	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Anti-personnel mines	317	981,388,638	43	17,290,546	998,679,184
Improvised devices*	1,187	381,662,714	335	142,601,786	524,264,500
Totals	1,504	1,363,051,352	378	159,892,332	1,522,943,684

* The area attributed to mines of an improvised nature.

1 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), pp. 15–19.

2 Ibid., pp. 15–16.

3 Ibid., pp. 14–15.

Table 2: Legacy anti-personnel mined area by governorate in Federal Iraq (at end 2021)⁴

Governorate	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Anbar	0	0	1	1,580	1,580
Basrah	58	841,786,243	1	962,731	842,748,974
Diyala	1	0	28	15,791,646	15,791,646
Kirkuk	1	5,584	0	0	5,584
Missan	216	55,420,682	3	400,183	55,820,865
Muthanna	4	38,978,577	0	0	38,978,577
Najaf	1	1,754,329	0	0	1,759,329
Ninewa	1	390,540	9	132,792	523,332
Salah al-Din	2	51,712	1	1,614	53,326
Wassit	33	43,000,971	0	0	43,000,971
Totals	317	981,388,638	43	17,290,546	998,684,184

In addition to legacy mines, Federal Iraq also contends with 524km² of improvised mine contamination which was left by Islamic State occupation of large swathes of central and northern governorates in 2014–17. This included long belts of improvised devices initiated by pressure plates sometimes stretching for tens of kilometres, and dense contamination of buildings such as hospitals and utilities, as well as private houses.

The end-2021 estimate of contamination was 69km² less than a year earlier reflecting the priority Iraq and its donors have given to tackling improvised mines in recent years so as to support resettlement of displaced populations and rehabilitate the economy.⁵ Most of the reduction occurred in Ninewa governorate, estimated to have improvised mine contamination amounting to 55km² at the end of 2021 compared with 126km² at the end of the previous year. In Diyala, the governorate with the biggest area affected by improvised mines, contamination estimates remained largely unchanged.⁶

Table 3: Improvised Explosive Device (IED)/Improvised mine contamination in Federal Iraq (at end 2021)⁷

Province	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Anbar	737	103,557,368	177	72,982,519	176,539,887
Diyala	7	206,540,876	12	47,617,199	254,158,075
Kirkuk	45	26,395,084	19	1,650,965	28,046,049
Ninewa	305	35,584,843	116	19,750,272	55,335,115
Salah al-Din	93	9,584,543	11	600,831	10,185,374
Totals	1,187	381,662,714	335	142,601,786	524,264,500

However, the accelerating pace of survey saw Federal Iraq continuing to add substantial areas of previously unrecorded hazardous areas to the database in 2021, notably in the western governorate of Anbar.⁸ The DMA has discussed, but not yet implemented, a major re-survey of Ninewa governorate and operators believe this would be likely to find more hazardous areas.⁹ Newly recorded contamination included 24.4km² of legacy mined areas, mainly in Wassit (17.2km²) and Missan governorates. Operators found a much larger area containing improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from Islamic State totalling 68.2km². This was almost entirely (98%) concentrated in two governorates, Anbar (56.4km²) and Ninewa (10.5km²), with smaller areas of Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah al-Din.¹⁰

⁴ Ibid., pp. 15–16.

⁵ Article 7 Report (covering 2021), pp. 18–19.

⁶ Ibid., and Article 7 Report (covering 2020) p. 10.

⁷ Article 7 Report (covering 2021), pp. 18–19.

⁸ The DMA recorded improvised mine contamination affecting 176.5km² in Anbar governorate at the end of 2021 compared with 162.4km² at the end of 2020, an increase of 9%.

⁹ Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 29 August 2022.

¹⁰ Article 7 Report (covering 2020), pp. 10 and 12–13.

KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (KRI)

The KRI has a much smaller mined area than Federal Iraq but its contamination of 210km² (see Table 4) still ranks it among the world's most heavily mined areas.

In addition, IKMAA says an area of around 20km² still remains to be surveyed where access has been prevented by insecurity. This included about 10km² in Slemani province, mainly close to the border with Iran, and about 5km² in each of Erbil and Dohuk provinces.¹¹

Table 4: Legacy anti-personnel mined area by governorate in the KRI (at end 2021)¹²

Province	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Dohuk	399	20,200,801	0	0	20,200,801
Erbil	334	47,679,331	0	0	47,679,331
Halabja	258	12,331,899	5	1,265,000	13,596,899
Slemani	2,112	100,172,132	117	28,519,766	128,691,898
Totals	3,103	180,384,163	122	29,784,766	210,168,929

The KRI had only a small amount of improvised mine contamination which it reported totalled 2,534,842m², of which only 34,852m² was in CHAs.

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 reports to the Council of Ministers and is led by a director general who has ministerial rank. The two organisations have functioned largely autonomously though contacts appear to have improved in 2021 after years in which relations were overshadowed by tensions over funding and territorial demarcation issues.

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, the first produced in consultation with the two authorities and developed with support from implementing partners, led by the GICHD, in March 2021 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." The strategy also commits Iraq to preparing a national mine action law consistent with international best practice and to a review of the DMA's institutional status and mandate.¹³

The two authorities will also seek to increase both international and national funding. Iraq is to ensure its national survey and clearance capacities are strengthened,

including through increased national funding to develop and sustain national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and through formalised capacity development partnerships between national and international partners. It sets as a strategic objective of the plan that "all relevant ministries, directorates, and governorates will dedicate specific funding for technical survey, clearance, and QM."¹⁴

To promote cooperation between the DMA and IKMAA and achieve a unified programme the new national strategy states that:¹⁵

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formalising the partnership between DMA and IKMAA should be developed and signed before the end of 2022.
- "Regular and structured coordination meetings between the two will be formalised."
- The DMA and IKMAA will jointly promote Iraqi mine action internationally.
- The DMA, working closely with IKMAA, will take the lead in organising bi-annual coordination meetings involving Iraqi ministries, international donors, and national and international operators to strengthen coordination and information sharing.
- The DMA and IKMAA will collaborate with the Ministry of Planning and advocate for inclusion of mine action in broader national programmes, including the National Development Plan and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

11 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, Deputy Head, IKMAA, 6 April 2022.

12 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), p. 16.

13 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 36–38.

14 Ibid., pp. 18, 22, and 37.

15 Ibid., pp. 36–38.

FEDERAL IRAQ

The inter-ministerial Higher Council of Mine Action,¹⁶ which reports to the Prime Minister, oversees and approves mine action strategy, policies, and plans. 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.¹⁷

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

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

RMAC South, located in Basra City, is the focal point for Federal Iraq’s response to cluster munition contamination and coordinates mine action in the four governorates most heavily contaminated by legacy mines. It maintains its own

database and is responsible for tasking operators in its area of operations. RMAC North and MEU were located in Baghdad but RMAC North also opened a satellite office in Mosul in August 2019.¹⁸

DMA coordination of mine action remains a challenge in a sector in which its formal status as a department of the Ministry of Environment has less authority than the powerful ministries of Defence, Interior, and Oil, which are also major actors in the sector. Rapid turnover of directors has also affected management and policy continuity. The present Director General, Dhafir Mahmood Khalaf, appointed on an acting basis in September 2020, confirmed in 2021 and well-regarded by operators, was at least the 12th director since 2003.

Iraq’s new national strategic plan for 2022–28 acknowledges the institutional issues, citing the “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 Council for Mine Action but does not indicate any timeline for this review.¹⁹

KRI

IKMAA functions as both the regulator and an operator in the KRI. It reports directly to the Kurdish Regional Government’s Council of Ministers and coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garmian, and Sulaymaniyah (Stemani). IKMAA had a total staff of 822, including 445 personnel in operations, but a budgetary crisis in the KRI in 2020 and 2021 imposed severe constraints on the mine action sector. IKMAA received no international donor support in 2021 but reported that ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) had expressed willingness to provide funding in 2022 and 2023.²⁰

OTHER ACTORS

UNMAS established a presence in Iraq in mid 2015 to assess the explosive ordnance hazard threat in liberated areas and set three priorities: explosive threat management to support stabilisation and recovery, including the return of people displaced by conflict; delivery of risk education, nationally and locally; and capacity development of government entities to manage, regulate, and coordinate Iraq’s response to explosive ordnance contamination. In 2021, UNMAS shifted its focus from explosive hazard management to providing technical support to national mine action authorities and implementing partners. The UNMAS mission in Iraq employed 100 people with 43 international staff in 2019 but the number dropped to 86 staff in 2021 and by 2022 numbered 62, of whom 12 were internationals.²¹

Donor funding channelled through UNMAS has declined from its high of US\$76.9 million in 2019 (some of it for activities in 2019–20) but was slightly higher in 2021 than the previous year. Funding for mine clearance in 2020 amounted to \$12.75 million but in 2021 picked up to \$16.24 million.²² This included a grant for anti-personnel mine and explosive ordnance clearance of once important date palm forests in the Shatt al-Arab which were heavily contested and contaminated during the Iran-Iraq war. UNMAS also extended grants to three national NGOs as part of continuing efforts to build sustainable national capacity for explosive hazard management and risk education given added emphasis in Iraq’s National Strategy 2022–2028 by the pressure on donor funding. Iraq remains a priority for some mine action donors and funding pledged for 2022 amounted to \$13.9 million as at April 2022 but some donors have indicated they will cease support to Iraq and competing international priorities exacerbated by the war in Ukraine looked likely to shrink donor support.²³

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

18 Interview with Gus Guthrie, NPA, in Geneva, 12 February 2020.

19 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 37–38.

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

21 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 4 May 2019 and 6 April 2020; and Hayder Ghanimi, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 28 April and 31 August 2022.

22 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 4 May 2019 and 6 April 2020; and Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022. Donors included Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom.

23 Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Iraq does not have a policy on environmental management in mine action. Individual operators, such as Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and HALO Trust, have institutional policies in place at headquarters level.

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.²⁴ The 2022–28 strategic plan says Iraq's mine action 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.²⁵

The DMA, which first created a gender unit in 2017, adopted its first Gender Unit Action Plan in early 2021 and the DMA's director, who has advocated for employment of more women in mine action,²⁶ approved the concept of a Gender Task Force in early 2021.²⁷ The DMA reported members of its gender unit participated in non-technical surveys conducted by international implementing partners, including the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) and MAG.²⁸ Female staff members also joined quality assurance team monitoring to clearance conducted by Civil Defence Muthanna governorate, as well as conducting explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and collecting victim data. It also requested support from international partners in organising seminars on gender issues in rural areas and suggested they help prepare a register of all women working in mine action.²⁹

IKMAA reported that it offered equal employment opportunities to women who accounted for about 30% of its more than 800 employees and it encouraged them to seek advancement in their careers. IKMAA had appointed a woman for the first time as director of one of its four provincial mine action centres in Duhok in 2021 and in 2022 had appointed a female as IKMAA's legal affairs director. IKMAA has had a female public affairs director for some years and women also held managerial positions in planning, information management and EORE departments. In 2022, IKMAA was seeking to create female explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams in all four provinces and appealed for international support to help achieve it.³⁰

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.³¹ It can be problematic to deploy women outside the areas they live and some candidates have dropped out of training that required overseas travel.³² Women make up well below 20% of the personnel in most international implementing partners (IPs). Some IPs report that non-technical survey and community liaison teams are gender mixed rather than gender balanced, but the number of female staff has risen across office and operational roles and most IPs said they intended to employ more women in the future.³³

Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian and Disarmament and Peacebuilding Sector (DRC) recruited six female deminers in Basrah in March 2022 who will work in mixed clearance teams. The same month it hired a female medic to address the needs of female staff and it has taken other steps to attract women staff, including 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.³⁴ It set improving gender representation as one of its priorities in 2022 drawing on the findings of two gender assessments conducted in 2021. The first focused on identifying barriers to employment and retention in the mine action sector in Ninewa, and provided recommendations for recruitment, training, and sustainable deployment of female or mixed clearance teams. The second assessment, conducted by the GICHD, reviewed DRC's staff perception, knowledge, and practices in relation to gender equality and inclusion, and led to an action plan which DRC is now implementing.³⁵

FSD employed 21 female staff out of a total of 164 personnel, including 17 women in risk education and demining, of whom two were team leaders.³⁶ Women made up just under 15%

24 National Strategic Mine Action Plan, pp. 12, 18, 20, and 30.

25 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, p. 15.

26 Email from Chris Tierney, Programme Manager, NPA, 17 April 2022.

27 Email from Hannane Boulmaoui, Head of Programme Section, UNMAS Iraq, 16 April 2021.

28 Email from Ahmad Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022.

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

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

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

32 Email from Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022.

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

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

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

36 Email from Peter Smethers, Country Director, FSD, 22 February 2022.

of HALO Trust's 204 staff and 10% of operations staff at the end of 2021, but women held three of eight managerial positions in the office (38%) and a quarter of the team leader positions in the field. Achieving gender balance remains challenging but HALO's survey and community liaison teams were all gender mixed and it said it offers equal opportunity for employment regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion. After consulting UNMAS it said it took a number of practical measures to improve recruitment and conditions for women from better design of women's uniforms and separate facilities for field ablutions to improve engagement with family members of female employees.³⁷

MAG employed 133 women out of a total staff of 811 at the end of 2021 with women working across the spectrum of jobs ranging from managerial and administrative office positions to field positions that included community liaison, manual clearance, a mechanical asset operator and improvised explosive device (IED) search dog handlers. MAG has traditionally found it easier to recruit women in Federal

Iraq, particularly in the Sinjar area where it has employed female deminers since 2016, but in 2021 it hired and trained women for manual clearance teams in Ninewa governorate (Mosul and Hamdaniya) and the KRI (Slemani). By mid 2021, four women had progressed to become deputy team leaders and three were team leaders. MAG Iraq's actions were part of the organisation's global focus on Gender Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) in mine action, and informed by a GDI Baseline Assessment in September 2021. MAG formed a GDI Working Group in 2022, which is tasked to review and enhance MAG Iraq's approach to gender equity in the sector.³⁸

NPA also plans to hire more women who made up a little over 17% of its total staff of 274 people, varying between more than a quarter of management personnel but close to 14% of its operations staff. NPA's survey and community liaison teams are mixed gender and it actively encourages women to apply but also encounters attitudes questioning the point of female employment when there are not enough jobs for men.³⁹

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028 underscores the importance of comprehensive information management processes to effective planning, tasking, implementation, and reporting. It says Iraq will seek to increase understanding of its remaining landmine and CMR contamination through continuous updating of its baseline data by means of a database clean-up, desktop analysis, and contact with communities. It also states the DMA will strengthen information sharing and coordination with relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Planning, to strengthen connections between mine action and broader development goals.⁴⁰ Operators say considerable work is still required to achieve these objectives.

The DMA and IKMAA have operated databases using Information Management System for Mine Action New Generation (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 (WRA).

Federal Iraq's mine action database is located at the DMA's Baghdad headquarters. RMAC-S, the focal point for cluster munition remnants (CMR) survey and clearance, maintains a database in Basrah, which receives reports from demining organisations in its area of operations.⁴¹ The DMA started

upgrading its database from IMSMA NG to IMSMA Core in 2021 and was working with the GICHD on cleaning up and migrating data to the new server. The DMA believes the process could take two years to complete in view of the large volume of data to be transferred and citing the experience of Lebanon's database upgrade.⁴² The DMA also operates an Online Task Management System (OTMS) developed by iMMAP and an online dashboard providing operators with access to data on operational developments.

Information management continues to be plagued by cumbersome procedures requiring hard-copy reports and slow uploading of data. Operators say information available from the OTMS and dashboard is incomplete, not up to date on survey and clearance results, and insufficient for the purposes of planning and informed decision-making. The DMA is moving towards streamlining procedures, requiring operators to submit reports in digital as well as hard copy, which is expected to accelerate data processing and facilitate access to information. In the meantime, operators said it still required a wide range of documents in hard copy, including task order requests, non-technical survey reports, and hazardous area reports. The DMA issued updated IMSMA reporting forms and also conducted a workshop on IMSMA reporting in 2021. It also required operators to submit weekly plans for all teams to RMACs enabling unannounced site visits.⁴³

37 Email from Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022.

38 Emails from Jack Morgan, MAG, 19 April 2021; and Katie Shaw, Programme Manager, MAG, 29 June 2021 and 29 August 2022.

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

40 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 14 and 20–21.

41 Interview with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, RMAC-S, Basrah, 29 April 2019.

42 Emails from Ahmad Aljasim, DMA, 15 April and 7 August 2022.

43 Emails from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022; Peter Smethers, FSD, 22 February 2022; Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022; Katie Shaw, MAG, 29 August 2022; and Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

NPA quality control (QC) teams set up in Anbar in 2021 to monitor site set-up, progress, and completion by open area-clearance teams working with Leica GG04 differential global positioning system (DGPS) for completion reports with a probability of error of less than 10cm. NPA also updated Survey123 software on tablets and other smart devices so that GPS data is automatically logged on NPA forms to avoid possible manual data entry errors. NPA's external QC teams use the same model of Leica DGPS units to mark sampling boxes.⁴⁴

IKMAA is planning to replace its IMSMA database with one based on open-source technology and licencing. IKMAA said in April 2022 that work had started on design of the new system and it expected to complete the work by the end of the year.⁴⁵

PLANNING AND TASKING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, released in April 2022, sets broad goals for both the DMA and IKMAA, the first time the two authorities have cooperated in drawing up a national plan.⁴⁶ 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.

Tasking, previously a major source of friction between the DMA, operators, and UNMAS, is reported to have improved significantly since 2019. UNMAS reported improved liaison and coordination with the DMA in 2021⁴⁷ and the DMA cited its high level of cooperation with UNMAS among factors contributing to the sector's increased productivity.⁴⁸ 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 non-technical survey scoring system.⁴⁹ Operators say most task orders are issued in a timely manner but the process can be slow, particularly in the case of large hazardous areas which can be more effectively addressed by splitting into several smaller tasks.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Iraq has national mine action standards for mine and battle area clearance (BAC), non-technical survey, and technical survey, but they were written in 2004–05 and they exist in Arabic only. Operators have reported that even those versions have been hard to locate.

The DMA and UNMAS started conducting a review and update of Iraq's national mine action standards (NMAS) in 2019 to bring them into line with international standards.⁵⁰ In 2021, the DMA's NMAS review committee and UNMAS had three workshops to review and update 27 standards.⁵¹ The DMA said in April 2022 that it had updated 20 standards although they had yet to be translated into English.⁵²

The updated standards which have been officially released covered non-technical and technical survey, battle area clearance, manual mine clearance, mechanical demining,

post-clearance documentation, accreditation, EOD, IED disposal, land release, safety in the workplace, house clearance, monitoring, sampling procedures, personal protective equipment (PPE), quality management, and marking. A standard on environmental management in mine action was still under review in the Ministry of Environment as were draft standards for the following: Investigation and reporting of accidents and incidents, Risk management in mine action; Medical support; Testing and evaluation of mine action equipment; Guide for the application of NMAS; and Guide for establishment of a Mine Action programme. These are all pending review internally by DMA prior to official release.⁵³ The new mine action strategy for 2022–2028 called for standards on land release to be finalised and approved by mid 2022.⁵⁴

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

45 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

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

47 Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022.

48 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 7 August 2022.

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

50 Emails from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2021; and Hannane Boulmaoui, UNMAS Iraq, 16 April 2021.

51 Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022.

52 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022. The DMA said it had updated standards numbered 10-6, 07-11, 07-12, 07-30, 07-40, 08-10, 08-20, 08-30, 08-40, 09-10, 09-10-1, 09-11, 09-13, 09-20, 09-30, 09-31, 09-50, 10-12, 10-20, 10-30.

53 Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022.

54 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, p. 24.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

The DMA reported 40 organisations accredited for survey and clearance in 2021. They included eight international and four national NGOs which were active mainly in clearance of improvised mines in Ninewa and Anbar governorates. The DMA also listed 28 accredited commercial companies, of which it said 12 were active in 2021.⁵⁵

Iraq's Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence and Directorate for Combatting Explosives constitute the biggest organisations in Federal Iraq's mine action sector but provide few details about the extent of their capacity or activities. The Ministry of Defence reported in 2019 that it had twelve 600-strong engineer battalions conducting EOD and clearance of mines of an improvised nature in which approximately half the personnel (equating to several thousand men) were operators. Army engineers worked on tasks identified as priorities by local government authorities.⁵⁶ The Army remains the only organisation authorised to conduct demolitions.⁵⁷ The Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence units employed 494 personnel divided into teams deployed in every governorate tackling unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) but did not conduct area clearance of improvised mines.⁵⁸

In the KRI, IKMAA employed a total of more than 820 people in 2021 with 445 people in operations, including 36 manual demining teams, 8 non-technical survey teams, 4 EOD/BAC teams, 10 mechanical units, 9 EORE teams, and 18 QA/QC teams. In addition to the impact of COVID-19 on operations, IKMAA has faced severe financial constraints in recent years but it looked forward to receiving international donor support in 2022.⁵⁹

DCA's mine action engagement until 2022 focused on developing the capacity of a national partner, Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq (IHSCO). It worked in 2021 with three international staff (an operations manager and two technical advisers), supported by two national staff: a QA officer and an operations officer. Although based in Erbil, DCA provided training for IHSCO at its base in Hamdaniya district of Ninewa governorate. IHSCO received its accreditation for mine survey and clearance in April 2021. DCA planned to start its own operations in 2022 with one multi-task team comprising a team leader and deputy and five searchers. To support its clearance operations it also planned to open an office in Sherqat in Salah al-Din governorate.⁶⁰

FSD capacity rose from a total staff of 131 in 2020 to 160 in 2021, adding one manual team of female deminers deployed in Mosul district and a number of other deminers taking on the additional role of searchers. In 2020, FSD had acquired a

remote-controlled Bobcat machine to give it more flexibility for building clearance⁶¹ and in 2021 it reconfigured its mechanical assets to increase from one to two mechanical demining units.⁶² FSD also trained two EORE teams and four demining teams for a local NGO, Shareteah, which in 2021 became the first national NGO to be accredited for clearing improvised mines.⁶³

Global Clearance Solutions (GCS), headquartered in Freienbach, Switzerland, worked under a grant from UNMAS in Ninewa's Telkeif district focused mainly on clearance of farmland.⁶⁴

The HALO Trust continued a build-up of capacity, which saw its staff numbers more than double to 150 in 2020 and rise further to 205 at the end of 2021. It continued to operate mainly in Anbar governorate, with an office in Ramadi serving teams working in Ramadi and Fallujah, and also in Salah al-Din, with an office in Tikrit supporting teams in Tikrit and Baiji districts. It reconfigured its team structure, deploying one manual demining team instead of six the previous year, while boosting the number of survey teams from two to twelve. It also boosted its mechanical capacity adding two wheeled front-end loaders and increasing the number of people in its mechanical units from 38 in 2020 to 50.⁶⁵

MAG, the biggest of the international demining organisations in Iraq with a head office in Erbil employed a total of 811 staff at the end of 2021 and continued to be the only one operating in the KRI as well as in Federal Iraq. In the KRI, MAG operated through offices in Dohuk and Chamchamal which supported seven mine action teams with a total of seventy deminers and three multitask teams totalling fifteen deminers plus a mechanical team, a mechanical support team, two mine detection dog (MDD) teams, and an MDD support team. In Federal Iraq, MAG operated 34 mine action teams with 220 deminers, five mechanical teams and three IED search dog teams. These worked in Ninewa governorate's districts of Sinjar, Telafar, Telkeif, and Hamdaniya. In Diyala governorate, MAG partnered Work for Peace which operated six EORE teams. MAG opened a new operating base in Telkeif, north-east of Mosul, in March 2022, which substantially cut the travel time for teams operating in the north-east area of Ninewa and enabled it to deploy mechanical assets on rural and urban tasks in and around Mosul city. MAG also collaborated with a number of humanitarian organisations, including Nadia's Initiative, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Solidarities, and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHABITAT), to facilitate restoration of shops, services, and housing projects in cleared areas.⁶⁶

55 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022. The commercial operators identified as active in 2021 were Arabian Gulf Mine Action Company, Al Bayrac, Al Fahad, Al Fayhaa, Al Khebra al-Fania, Alsiraj Almudhia, Al Waha, AZSC, Eagle Eye, GCS, Ta'az Demining and Tetra Tech.

56 Interview with Brigadier-General Hassan, Ministry of Defence, Baghdad, 3 May 2019.

57 "Document of roles and responsibilities", undated but 2019, received by email from the DMA, 13 May 2019.

58 Interview with General Salah, Ministry of Interior, at the DMA, Baghdad, 3 May 2019.

59 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

60 Email from Albert Schevey, Operations Manager, DCA, 21 April 2022.

61 Email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 11 April 2021.

62 Email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 22 February 2022.

63 FSD Annual Report 2021, p. 21.

64 Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022; "Unearthing hope in Tel Kaif", GCS website, 22 March 2022, accessed at: <https://bit.ly/3zI0uQj>.

65 Email from Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022.

66 Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 3 May 2022.

NPA reported adding nine clearance teams and three armoured vehicles in 2021, providing a significant boost to productivity of operations focused on Anbar governorate. It established two dedicated internal QC teams with DGPS to work in Anbar focused on site setup, progress and completion QC on all open area clearance teams using Leica GG04 DGPS for completion reports, to increase accuracy and avoid manual entry errors in survey and completion reports.⁶⁷

Tetra Tech, working under contract to the US Department of State, deployed 10 multi-function teams in 2021, a drop from 14 the previous year as a result of budget cuts which saw total staffing reduced to 107 from 220 the previous year. The number of international staff also halved to nine. The number of mechanical assets, however, remained unchanged. Tetra Tech also closed its forward operating base in Mosul and worked from a project office in Erbil. Tetra Tech worked with two multi-task teams with 24 personnel and eight search-and-clearance teams with 64 personnel supported by eight mechanical teams working in Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninewa governorates. Tetra Tech's operational focus remained on clearing critical infrastructure but widened from major towns to villages to facilitate the return of internally displaced people.⁶⁸

Table 5: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2021

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Dogs and handlers	Machines*	Comments
Army	12	est. 3,000			
IKMAA	36	360		10 teams/33 personnel	Clearance teams conduct technical survey (TS)
FSD	12	93		2 teams/17 personnel	
HALO	1	9		5 teams/50 personnel	
MAG (Federal Iraq)	34	220	3 teams/ 8 personnel/ 6 dogs	5 teams/25 personnel	Manual Teams include 13 mine action teams (169 personnel) and 21 multi-task and mech support teams (110 personnel). Mech teams vary but minimum of 4 armoured machines per team.
MAG (KRI)	11	89	2 teams/8 personnel 1 MDD support team/7 personnel	1 teams/5 personnel	Manual Teams include 7 mine action teams (91 personnel) and 3 multi-task and mech support teams (15 personnel).
NPA	25	100		9 teams/13 personnel	Added 9 clearance teams, which all conduct TS, and 3 armoured machines.
Tetra Tech	10	88		8 teams/10 personnel	Manual teams include 2 multi-task teams with 24 personnel and 8 search and clearance teams with 64 personnel.
Totals	141	est. 3,959	6 teams/ 23 personnel	40 teams/ 153 personnel	

* Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters

NPA introduced drones for reconnaissance of mine sites planned for clearance in 2021 and trained its non-technical survey teams in drone use. In 2022, it planned to go further and develop use of drones for high-resolution mapping of hazardous areas.⁶⁹ The HALO Trust had plans to introduce drones in 2021 that were held up by security issues but it drew on analysis of NPA's use of drones and received permission to proceed with adding this capacity to its programme in 2022.⁷⁰

DEMINER SAFETY

NPA suffered its first demining fatality in Iraq in September 2021 when a VS500 improvised mine detonated, killing a manual deminer in Ana district of Anbar governorate. NPA investigated the incident in conjunction with the DMA. Investigators concluded the actions of the deminer who was killed may have caused the device to function.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Email from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

⁶⁸ Email from Jeff Caldwell, Iraq Senior Destruction Operations Manager, Tetra Tech, 13 July 2022.

⁶⁹ Email from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

⁷⁰ Email from Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022.

⁷¹ Email from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

In February 2021, MAG reported an explosion in an explosive storage house which resulted in the death of a deminer and caused non-life-threatening injuries to a supervisor. MAG concluded the explosion was caused by the functioning of a cocked striker of a VS500 improvised mine. Another MAG deminer was injured in the course of legacy mine clearance in Slemani governorate. Investigation reports for both incidents were submitted to the DMA, IKMAA, and relevant stakeholders.⁷²

Turkish airstrikes targeting Kurdish YPS positions in Sinjar city in August 2021 resulted in fragmentation injuries sustained by three GCS personnel operating in the district who were caught in the crossfire and caused logistical damages. GCS clearance operations in the area were suspended for a week before resuming normally.⁷³ A vehicle transporting GCS men and women deminers to a work site in Telkeif district of Ninewa governorate was hit by an improvised device blast in July 2022, slightly injuring seven people. The UN called on Iraqi authorities to investigate the incident and provide security for deminers.⁷⁴

Several members of Iraqi security forces are understood to have died in a detonation of ordnance in August 2021 but Mine Action Review did not receive details of the incident.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2021

Iraq's official data showed that Federal Iraq and the KRI released a total of more than 111km² in 2021 (96.68km² through non-technical survey, 2.82km² through technical survey, and 11.6km² through clearance), up by almost 25% on the results of the previous year, helped by the progressive lifting of COVID-19 measures that significantly affected productivity in 2020. Other factors cited by the DMA as contributing to increased output included the use of donor grants held up in the pandemic and the increased capacity of implementing partners.⁷⁵

Restrictions still in force at the start of the year posed a number of challenges: limits on the number of people who could travel in one vehicle necessitated hiring or acquiring additional vehicles; visa restrictions impeded international staff movements; and operators also reported meetings delayed and some staff absenteeism. A more permissive environment emerged as those restrictions eased and Iraq adopted other measures such as issuing visas on arrival. Operators continued to report delays and difficulties at security checkpoints and delays conducting demolitions of cleared items which can only be carried out by the military.⁷⁶

FEDERAL IRAQ

Federal Iraq saw a significant increase in land release across survey and clearance to 110.5km² in 2021 but it attributed 85% of that total to cancelling areas suspected to be affected by improvised mines (see Table 6). Iraq's huge areas of conventional anti-personnel mine contamination remained a low priority for international donors although attention may be beginning to widen. Persistent discrepancies between official data and results reported by demining organisations raise the possibility that Iraq released more land through technical survey and clearance than appears in official figures.

Table 6: Official Federal Iraq land release results for 2021⁷⁷

Device type	Area cancelled (m ²)	Area reduced (m ²)	Area cleared (m ²)	Total area released (m ²)
Legacy AP mines	2,945,191	2,819,962	1,212,718	6,977,871
Improvised mines	93,739,179	0	9,752,845	103,492,023
Totals	96,684,370	2,819,962	10,965,563	110,469,894

SURVEY IN 2021

Federal Iraq more than doubled the area of improvised mine contamination cancelled in 2021 to almost 94km² compared with 41km² the previous year. In both years, almost all the area cancelled was in one governorate, Ninewa. In 2020, the area cancelled was in Ninewa's Daquq and Kirkuk districts, in 2021 93% was in six districts but mostly Mosul, Sinjar and Telafar (see Table 7).⁷⁸ The DMA reported Army engineers alone cancelled 59.5km² of improvised mine contamination in Mosul.⁷⁹

72 Emails from Katie Shaw, MAG, 3 May 2022 and 29 August 2022.

73 Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022.

74 "Improvised explosive device struck demining team; UN calls for an investigation", *ReliefWeb*, 6 July 2022.

75 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 7 August 2022.

76 Emails received from international operators, March to May 2022.

77 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), pp. 20, 22.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 20; and email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 7 August 2022.

79 Emails from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April and 7 August 2022.

Table 7: Area containing improvised mines cancelled by non-technical survey in 2021 (official data)⁸⁰

Operator	Governorate	District	Area cancelled (m ²)
DMA	Ninewa	Telafar	6,875,716
MoD	Ninewa	Al-Hamdaniya, Makhmur, Mosul, Telafar, Telkeif	65,401,256
Mol	Baghdad	Al-Mahmodiya	3,577,320
HI	Kirkuk	Daquq	2,013,379
MAG	Ninewa	Telafar, Sinjar	15,470,088
NPA	Anbar	Haditha, Ramadi	401,421
Total			93,739,180

Iraq reported cancelling 39km² of legacy mined areas in 2020 but had reclassified the area as battle area rather than an anti-personnel mine hazard. As a result, the nearly 3km² of legacy mined area cancelled in 2021, although a sharp drop on paper, actually represented an increase in real terms. However, results reported by international operators suggest the area reduced by technical survey may be substantially greater.

Federal Iraq's official data shows it reduced 2.8km² in 2021 in the Shatt al-Arab district of Basrah governorate (1.9km²) and the Amara district of Missan. The data omits 8.3km² which MAG reported it reduced in Ninewa⁸¹ and 4.9km² reduced by NPA in Anbar governorate⁸² and 0.1km² reduced by HALO Trust⁸³ (see Table 8). The 13.4km² reduced by these three operators compared with just under 2km² they reduced in 2020.⁸⁴

Table 8: Cancellation and reduction through survey reported by International NGOs (INGOS) in 2021⁸⁵

Operator	Governorate	Area cancelled (m ²)	Area reduced (m ²)
HALO Trust	Anbar, Salah al-Din	259,095	120,914
MAG	Ninewa	84,707	8,302,139
NPA	Anbar	971,591	4,892,688
Totals		1,315,393	13,315,741

CLEARANCE IN 2021

Mine clearance in Federal Iraq, freed of COVID-19 restrictions, accelerated sharply in 2021. Official data shows land released through clearance increased by 55% to almost 11km² (see Table 9), much of it in Ninewa governorate, up from 7km² the previous year. The number of mines cleared rose by close to 90%.⁸⁶

For the first time in several years, Iraq also conducted some clearance of legacy mines in 2021. An Iraqi commercial operator, Al Khebra Al Fania (AKAF), started training in June 2021 on a project to survey and clear almost 15km² of heavily contaminated date palm forest in Basrah governorate's Shatt al-Arab district. The \$2.1 million project, funded by the EU and managed by UNMAS in coordination with the DMA and RMAC-South, which began operations in July 2021, was due to run for a year.⁸⁷ By the end of the year AKAF had cleared 428,700m² and 449 anti-personnel mines, including 238 improvised mines, as well as 27 anti-vehicle mines and 3,380 other ERW items.⁸⁸ UNMAS planned to continue its operation in the south in 2022.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 7 August 2022.

⁸¹ Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 3 May 2022.

⁸² Email from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

⁸³ Email from Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022.

⁸⁴ Emails from Nicholas Torbet, HALO Trust, 12 April 2021; Jack Morgan, MAG, 19 April 2021; and Gus Guthrie, NPA, 23 March 2021.

⁸⁵ Emails from Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022; Katie Shaw, MAG, 3 May 2022 and 29 August 2022; and Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

⁸⁶ Article 7 Report (covering 2021), p. 22.

⁸⁷ Email from Joel Yves Aboh, Associate Programme Officer, UNMAS, 15 July 2021.

⁸⁸ Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022.

⁸⁹ Email from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 31 August 2022.

Table 9: Mine clearance in Federal Iraq in 2021 (official data)⁹⁰

Governorate	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed
Improvised mines		
Anbar	1,654,693	4,272
Kirkuk	133	1
Ninewa	8,007,304	4,480
Salah al-Din	90,715	904
Subtotals	9,752,845	9,657
Legacy minefields		
Basrah	940,300	805
Missan	272,418	1,357
Subtotals	1,212,718	2,162
Totals	10,965,563	11,819

As in previous years, it appears official data understates the actual amount of land released, possibly as a result of delays in uploading operating results to the database. Four international demining NGOs reported they cleared 17.82km² (see Table 10), almost triple the results of the previous year and similarly almost tripled the number of mines or improvised mines cleared during the year. FSD and MAG alone recorded clearance of nearly 14km² in Ninewa governorate while HALO Trust and NPA together reported clearance of almost 3km² in Anbar, significantly more than shown in official data.⁹¹

Table 10: Mine clearance in Federal Iraq in 2021 (INGO data)⁹²

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines, including improvised mines, destroyed
FSD	Ninewa	*8,281,499	3,088
HALO	Anbar, Salah al-Din	1,993,063	2,279
HI	N/R	N/R	N/R
MAG	Ninewa	5,651,239	1,427
NPA	Anbar	1,891,147	8,372
Totals		17,816,948	15,166

N/R = Not reported * This figure may contain significant release through technical survey.

KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

The KRI also recorded a significant gain in the amount of land released in 2021, almost entirely through clearance. In 2020, when financial crisis and COVID-19 restrictions severely hampered mine action, the KRI reported clearance just under 100,000m².⁹³ In 2021, the KRI's clearance rose to 634,464m² (see Table 11). IKMAA and the Slemani Mine Action Centre reportedly⁹⁴ cancelled 65,378m² but the rest of the area released was accounted for by clearance, with Slemani governorate accounting for two thirds of the area and 85% of the 1,431 mines cleared. Operators also destroyed 135 anti-vehicle mines and 1,840 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO).⁹⁵

IKMAA has identified lack of vehicles as a major obstacle to deploying mine action teams in 2021.⁹⁶ With projected international donor support in 2022 it planned to buy 38 vehicles and hire another 30 vehicles, raising the prospect of a significant rise in productivity.⁹⁷ MAG expected to maintain operations in Dohuk focused on clearing high priority minefields in order to support socio-economic development. It also continued working with IKMAA on capacity building including EOD level 2 and EOD level 3 training for IKMAA staff.⁹⁸

90 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), p. 22.

91 Emails from Peter Smethers, FSD, 22 February 2022; Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022; Katie Shaw, MAG, 3 May and 29 August 2022; and Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.

92 Ibid.

93 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Table 8, p. 22.

94 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

95 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), p. 21; and email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

96 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, p. 11.

97 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

98 Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 3 May 2022.

Table 11: Mine clearance in KRI in 2021*⁹⁹

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed
Dohuk MAC	Dohuk	51,325	44
Erbil MAC	Erbil	93,658	141
Garmyan MAC	Garmyan	1,504	0
MAG	Dohuk, Garmyan, Halabja, Slemani	434,751	758
Slemani MAC	Slemani	53,226	493
Totals		634,464	1,436

* Includes area reduced through technical survey

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the ten-year extension granted by states parties in 2017), Iraq is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 February 2028. Iraq will not meet the deadline given the scale of remaining contamination.

The reported release of more than 110km² through cancellation and clearance in 2021 attests to post-pandemic recovery in the productivity in the mine action sector (see Table 12). Mine action continues to concentrate on tackling improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from the Islamic State 2014–17 occupation rather than the larger legacy mine contamination in southern and border governorates. That focus reflects the government's security and socio-economic imperative of facilitating the return of more than a million internally displaced people before tackling the more sparsely populated areas affected by legacy mines.¹⁰⁰

However, an accurate determination of the extent of Iraq's progress continues to be obscured by the lack of comprehensive, up-to-date data on results achieved by different actors in Federal Iraq, particularly key national actors and commercial companies, which should underpin

effective planning and prioritisation. The National Strategy for 2022–28 provides for a DMA database upgrade to IMSMA Core and data clean-up that is expected to ease information management challenges. The problems also underscore limitations on the authority and mandate of the DMA as a department within the Ministry of Environment in relation to more powerful actors such as the ministries of Defence, Interior and Oil.

Future progress is vulnerable to a number of risks, most notably a downturn in international donor support but Iraq's 2022–28 national strategy also identifies insecurity and political instability among the principal risks for the mine action sector.¹⁰¹ Islamic State cells continue to be active in Iraq conducting small-scale local attacks mainly targeting security forces and mainly in Diyala and Kirkuk governorates,¹⁰² but insecurity has not escalated significantly or interfered with mine action operations. Political instability following the October 2021 elections posed a more immediate challenge, holding up the formation of a new government for ten months as of August 2022, which in turn has undermined Iraq's ability to move forward implementing national strategy goals of strengthening the sector's institutional framework, national capacity, and national financing of the mine action sector.

⁹⁹ Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

¹⁰⁰ Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰² See, e.g., C. Bunzel, "Explainer: The Islamic State in 2021", Wilson Center, 10 December 2021; The Soufan Centre, "Intelbrief: The Islamic State is not finished in Iraq and Syria", 1 November 2021; Clingendael Institute, "A Stubborn threat: Islamic State in Iraq in early 2022", May 2022.

Table 12: Five-year summary of anti-personnel mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2021	11.6
2020	7.7
2019*	15.7
2018	8.4
2017	23.3
Total	66.7

* Mine Action Review estimate

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

Iraq has not formulated any plan for coping with residual mine and explosive ordnance risks. Iraqi Security Forces and the Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence are well placed to provide a long-term demining and EOD capacity. Iraq's 2022–28 national strategy commits to developing a strategy for tackling residual risk by 2025.¹⁰³

103 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, p. 26.