

**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 2022

**17.43** KM<sup>2</sup>

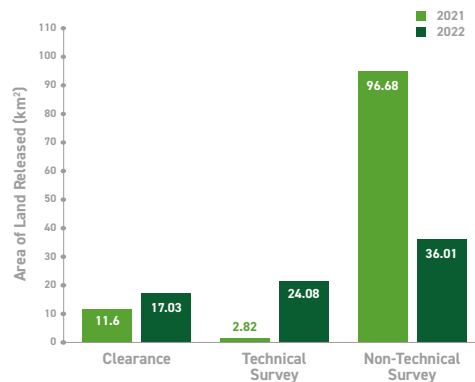
(MINE ACTION REVIEW ANALYSIS  
 OF NATIONAL AUTHORITY AND  
 NGO DATA)

AP MINES  
 DESTROYED IN 2022

**20,921**

(INCLUDING 276 DESTROYED  
 IN SPOT TASKS) (MINE ACTION  
 REVIEW ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL  
 AUTHORITY AND NGO DATA)

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



**CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET** (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **NONE**

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Iraq reported increased clearance of mined area again in 2022 but overall land release declined as a result of a sharp drop in cancellation of areas affected by improvised mines compared with the previous year. The Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) prepared a five-year national mine strategy, the first drawn up jointly by the two authorities, which was formally launched in 2023. IKMAA received funding from Slovenia through the ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) enabling a significant increase in clearance in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The DMA appointed a new director general in February 2023, the 17th in the last 20 years.

## 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 and mine action authorities should provide clarity on national funding available for mine action and how the funds are allocated.
- The DMA should seek urgently to strengthen information management in the national programme by enhancing human capacity, modernising data entry processes, updating the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database, and ensuring operators have access to information required for planning.
- The DMA should provide comprehensive data on the active capacity conducting survey and clearance and data on land release disaggregated by all operators, including state organisations, commercial companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- The DMA should streamline issuance of task orders to eliminate cumbersome procedures and lengthy delays obstructing efficient survey and clearance.
- The Ministry of Environment should engage with the Department of Non-Government Organisations to avoid the restrictions on access that have resulted in lengthy delays to survey and clearance.

- Iraq should explicitly recognise anti-personnel (AP) 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 enable disaggregation of improvised mines from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) which are not victim activated.

## ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2022)	Score (2021)	Performance Commentary
<b>UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION</b> (20% of overall score)	7	7	Iraq has a broad understanding of the location of legacy mined areas. Federal Iraq is confident initial estimates of minefields in the south were inflated and that non-technical survey (NTS) will substantially reduce the area requiring clearance. The KRI also has detailed knowledge of mined areas although insecurity prevented survey along the northern border. Improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from Islamic State and concentrated in Federal Iraq have been extensively surveyed, but in 2022 operators continued to identify previously unrecorded hazardous areas almost on a daily basis.
<b>NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT</b> (10% of overall score)	6	5	The DMA and IKMAA cooperated for the first time in preparation of a new national mine action strategy for 2023–28 which aims to increase national ownership by strengthening both authorities. Facing a downturn in international donor funding, Federal Iraq allocated funding for the mine action sector from its national budget which was endorsed by parliament in 2023. 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.
<b>GENDER AND DIVERSITY</b> (10% of overall score)	6	6	Iraq's mine action strategy for 2023–28 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. Opportunities to hire women for field work vary according to region and are particularly limited in the affected governorates in the south.
<b>INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING</b> (10% of overall score)	5	5	The DMA is upgrading its IMSMA database from New Generation to Core, a process the DMA said it hoped to complete by the end of 2023. Cumbersome information management procedures and manual data entry continued to slow entry of operator survey and clearance results. Iraq has submitted regular Article 7 transparency reports but still falls short in reporting land release results disaggregated by operator.
<b>PLANNING AND TASKING</b> (10% of overall score)	5	6	Long delays in issuance of task orders by the DMA reversed improvements over the last two years and, together with frequent restrictions on access imposed by the NGO department, again proved an obstacle to operational planning and implementation. Iraq prepared a national strategy originally intended for 2022–28 but which after review was launched a year later and covered 2023–28.
<b>LAND RELEASE SYSTEM</b> (20% of overall score)	6	6	The DMA has been conducting a comprehensive review of standards with support from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), which continued in 2022. It 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 standard operating procedures (SOPs).
<b>LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE</b> (20% of overall score)	7	7	Federal Iraq and the KRI increased the amount of land cleared in 2022 but the total area completed dropped as a result of a sharp fall in the amount of cancellation through NTS in Federal Iraq. The KRI received international donor funding that enabled it to hire vehicles to transport demining teams to their task sites, resulting in increased clearance.
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE</b>

## DEMINEING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

#### Federal Iraq:

- Ministry of Environment
- Directorate for Mine Action (DMA)

#### Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI):

- Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

#### State:

- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Interior: Civil Defence, EOD Directorate
- IKMAA

#### NGO:

- Health and Social Care Organisation in Iraq (IHSCO)
- Shareteah Humanitarian Organisation (SHO)

#### Commercial:

- 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
- Insanyon Organisation for Demining
- Iraq Tadhamon Company for Mine Clearance
- Kanary Mine Action Company
- Nabaa Al-Hurya Company
- Ta'az Demining
- Wtorplast Demining

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- DanChurchAid (DCA)
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- FSD
- Global Clearance Solutions
- HAMAP Humanitaire
- The HALO Trust (HALO)
- Humanity & Inclusion (HI)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- Tetra Tech

### OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- iMMAP
- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Iraq reported contamination by mines and improvised mines totalling 1,716km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2022,<sup>1</sup> making it among the most heavily affected countries in the world. The total recorded contamination comprised almost 1,503km<sup>2</sup> in Federal Iraq and 213km<sup>2</sup> in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) (see Tables 1 and 4, respectively), marking a 10% drop from estimated contamination at the end of 2021.

### FEDERAL IRAQ

Legacy minefields, heavily concentrated in southern governorates, make up almost two thirds of Federal Iraq's mine problem. This amounted to 976km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2022, only 2% smaller than a year earlier. The minefields were laid during 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 (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Mined area in Federal Iraq (at end 2022)<sup>2</sup>**

Contamination type	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
AP mines	353	958,986,173	36	17,287,352	976,273,525
Improvised mines	1,348	390,390,130	373	136,246,715	526,636,846
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,701</b>	<b>1,349,376,303</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>153,534,068</b>	<b>1,502,910,371</b>

CHAs = Confirmed hazardous areas  
SHAs = Suspected hazardous areas

1 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 18–19; and email from Ahmed Aljasem, Director of Information Management, DMA, 6 June 2023.

2 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 18–19.

**Table 2: Legacy AP mined area by governorate in Federal Iraq (at end 2022)<sup>3</sup>**

Governorate	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Anbar	1	6,329	0	0	6,329
Basrah	69	825,452,236	1	962,731	826,414,967
Diyala	1	0	28	15,791,646	15,791,646
Kirkuk	1	5,584	0	0	5,584
Missan	231	54,618,594	3	400,183	55,018,777
Muthanna	4	38,978,577	0	0	38,978,577
Najaf	1	1,754,329	0	0	1,754,329
Ninewa	1	390,540	4	132,792	523,332
Salah al-Din	5	126,544	0	0	126,544
Wassit	39	37,653,440	0	0	37,653,440
<b>Totals</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>958,986,173</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17,287,352</b>	<b>976,273,525</b>

Federal Iraq also contends with extensive contamination by improvised mines laid during Islamic State's 2014–17 occupation of large swathes of northern and central Iraq and estimated at 526km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2022 (see Table 3). The total is marginally higher than the 524km<sup>2</sup> recorded a year earlier.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2018, Federal Iraq's mine action resources have been heavily concentrated on clearing improvised mines to free critical infrastructure and facilitate resettlement of people displaced by the conflict. However, despite the concentration of clearance assets in Anbar and Ninewa in the past two years, operators recorded almost daily discoveries of previously unrecorded hazardous areas, resulting in a net increase in the estimated level of contamination in these governorates in 2022.

**Table 3: IED/Improvised mine contamination in Federal Iraq (end 2022)<sup>5</sup>**

Province	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Anbar	804	113,527,379	209	61,209,112	174,736,491
Diyala	29	206,544,876	12	47,617,198	254,162,074
Kirkuk	53	26,925,890	19	1,650,964	26,576,854
Ninewa	361	33,324,123	121	25,216,457	58,540,580
Salah al-Din	101	10,067,862	12	552,984	10,620,846
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,348</b>	<b>390,390,130</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>136,246,715</b>	<b>526,636,845</b>

### KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (KRI)

Mine contamination in the KRI is much smaller than in Federal Iraq but it still ranks among the world's most heavily mined areas. IKMAA estimated its contamination at 217km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2022 (see Table 4),<sup>6</sup> slightly higher than a year earlier.<sup>7</sup> In the five years to November 2022, the KRI has identified previously unrecorded hazardous areas totalling nearly 55km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>8</sup>

The KRI's contamination consists predominantly of legacy mines, some dating back to the 1960s and conflicts between Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the army of the previous Iraqi government. In addition, IKMAA says an area of around

20km<sup>2</sup> still remains to be surveyed where access has been prevented by insecurity, including persistent Turkish air strikes targeting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).<sup>9</sup> This included about 10km<sup>2</sup> in Slemani province, mainly close to the border with Iran, and about 5km<sup>2</sup> in each of Erbil and Dohuk provinces.<sup>10</sup> The KRI, however, increased its estimate of improvised mine contamination by 42% to 4.2km<sup>2</sup> in the past year, almost all of it located in Dohuk governorate. The new estimate included hazardous areas identified in survey conducted by the DMA on areas liberated from Islamic State, details of which were later provided to IKMAA.<sup>11</sup>

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 22.

5 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

6 Ibid., pp. 20–21.

7 Interview with Jabbar Mustafa, Head of IKMAA, Erbil, 18 May 2023.

8 Presentation of Iraq, APMBC Twentieth Meeting of States Parties (20MSP), Geneva, November 2022.

9 See, e.g., "Turkey confirms deadly airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, targeting Kurdish groups", *The Guardian*, 20 November 2022; "Turkish drone strikes hit PKK targets in northern Iraq, kill two", *Reuters*, 6 August 2023.

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

11 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), p. 23; and email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, Planning Manager, Directorate General of Technical Affairs, IKMAA, 23 May 2023.

**Table 4: Legacy AP mined area by governorate in the KRI (at end 2022)<sup>12</sup>**

Province	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Legacy mines</b>					
Dohuk	433	20,636,155	0	0	20,636,155
Erbil	371	48,750,410	0	0	48,750,410
Halabja	261	12,409,099	5	1,265,000	13,674,099
Slemani	2,131	101,023,696	121	28,729,766	129,753,462
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>3,196</b>	<b>182,819,360</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>29,994,766</b>	<b>212,814,126</b>
<b>Improvised mines</b>					
Duhok	30	1,058,157	48	3,069,929	4,128,086
Erbil	1	26,747	0	0	26,747
Slemani	6	8,105	0	0	8,105
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1,093,009</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3,069,929</b>	<b>4,162,938</b>
<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>3,233</b>	<b>183,912,369</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>33,064,695</b>	<b>216,977,064</b>

## 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.<sup>13</sup> 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."<sup>14</sup>

### FEDERAL IRAQ

The inter-ministerial Higher Committee of Mine Action,<sup>15</sup> which reports to the Prime Minister, oversees and approves

mine action strategy, policies, and plans. The committee is 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. 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.<sup>16</sup>

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.

<sup>12</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 20–21.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ahmed Aljasim, Director of Information Management, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Draft National Mine Action Strategy 2002–2028, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> "Document of roles and responsibilities", undated but 2019, received by email from the DMA, 13 May 2019.

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.<sup>17</sup>

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 the middle of 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 appeared likely to return full time to that position. The DMA awaited the appointment of a new long-term director general in 2023.<sup>18</sup>

Iraq elaborated 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 Council for Mine Action but does not indicate any timeline for this review.<sup>19</sup> The strategic plan received official approval in June 2023 and was due to be launched in August.<sup>20</sup>

The 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] Directorate and a significant workforce in many governorates but lacked details.<sup>22</sup> PMF capacity includes mine detection dogs (MDDs) and machines and an EOD training school near Baghdad.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> The government's 2023 budget approved by parliament in June 2023 provides for increased national spending on mine action, including payment of ID20 billion (US\$17 million) over three years towards implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and allocation to demining of part of a \$20 million loan that may be guaranteed by UK Export Finance.<sup>25</sup> However, mine action stakeholders say there is a lack of transparency on how funds are allocated and who are eligible recipients.<sup>26</sup>

### 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 and is led by a head who has ministerial rank and a deputy head with deputy ministerial rank. 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.<sup>27</sup>

IKMAA received no international donor funding in 2021<sup>28</sup> but in 2022 was supported by Slovenian Aid, which provided a grant of €168,000 through the ITF. The funds paid for vehicle rental, enabling IKMAA to deploy 15 demining teams and contributing to a rise in release of mined areas in 2022.<sup>29</sup>

### OTHER ACTORS

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) established a presence in Iraq in 2015 to assess the explosive ordnance hazard threat in liberated areas and set three priorities: explosive hazard management to support stabilisation and recovery, including the return of people displaced by conflict; delivery of risk education; and technical support to build capacity 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 2023 numbered 51 of whom 7 were internationals.<sup>30</sup>

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

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

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

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

21 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 17 and 22.

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

23 Interview with Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS, Geneva, 23 June 2023.

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

25 Interviews with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, Director, RMAC-S, in Basra City, 8 May 2023; and Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

26 Interviews with operators in Iraq, May 6–20, 2023.

27 Emails from Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023; and Niyazi Khalid Qusaimi, Deputy Head, IKMAA, 19 September 2023.

28 Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaimi, IKMAA, 22 April 2022.

29 Interview with Jabbar Mustafa, Head of IKMAA, Erbil, 18 May 2023; and email from Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

30 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 4 May 2019, 6 April 2020, and 11 May 2023; and Hayder Ghanimi, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 28 April and 31 August 2022.

UNMAS, in keeping with changing donor priorities and the focus on nationalisation, is shrinking its role in Iraq and by 2023 was preparing to exit from explosive hazard management. Donor funding for demining operations channelled through UNMAS has declined from its high point of US\$77 million in 2019 (some of it for activities in 2019–20) to approximately US\$12 million in 2022, when UNMAS funded operations for eight organisations in three governorates:

## 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 but they have not reported its release. In the meantime, humanitarian demining organisations said they applied their global SOPs for managing the environment.

Iraq's 2023 CCM Article 4 deadline extension request noted 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.<sup>35</sup> The extension request also mentioned that previous and ongoing wars have affected the environmental situation, and resulted in air, water, and soil pollution,<sup>36</sup> 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."<sup>37</sup> However, it contained no information on how environmental considerations will be addressed during planning and tasking in order to minimise potential harm from land release activities or how climate change may impact planned operations or Iraq's prioritisation for clearance. The CCM extension request did, however, ask for international funding to investigate the use of non-explosive methods of disposal that are as cost effective as explosive/thermite destruction techniques but lessen the impact on the environment.<sup>38</sup>

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

Anbar, Basrah, and Ninewa.<sup>31</sup> It expected funding to remain at this level in 2023 but faced the possibility of a further significant drop in 2024.<sup>32</sup> The number of donors funding operations in Iraq through UNMAS has dropped from a peak of 21 to six in 2023.<sup>33</sup> UNMAS planned to shift to providing capacity building support for the DMA, IKMAA, the Ministry of Interior, and national operators.<sup>34</sup>

up clearance with assistance to rehabilitate soil and irrigation systems to address acute problems of water quality and supply.<sup>39</sup>

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 in a state suitable for its intended use after completion of a task.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup>

FSD conducts an environmental impact assessment (EIA) prior to demining to identify potential environmental risks and operational impacts, including the risk of soil erosion, deforestation, and the disturbance of wildlife habitats. FSD then develops a plan to mitigate the risks through measures such as erosion controls, reforestation, and establishing buffer zones around sensitive habitats. It prioritises use of environmentally friendly demining techniques, where possible using manual clearance instead of heavy machinery and non-toxic or biodegradable alternatives to chemical agents. It also engages with local communities to address their concerns and ensure activities do not negatively affect their livelihoods.<sup>42</sup>

National NGO Shareteah Humanitarian Organisation (SHO), partnered by FSD and HAMAP, similarly conducted pre-clearance environmental assessments, adhered to strict protocols on waste disposal and safe disposal of ordnance to avoid soil and water contamination, and trained staff in environmental best practice.<sup>43</sup>

31 Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 11 May 2023. The eight organisations were AKAF, DCA, FSD, Global Clearance Solutions, HALO, HI, IHSCO, and NPA.

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

33 Interview with Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS, Geneva, 23 June 2023.

34 Ibid.

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

36 Ibid., p. 38.

37 Ibid., p. 28.

38 Ibid., p. 16.

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

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

41 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023; and interview with Chris Tierney, Programme Manager, NPA, in Baghdad, 13 May 2023.

42 Email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 12 April 2023.

43 Email from Ismat Selevany, Director, SHO, 17 May 2023.

## 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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 (QA) field visits to Civil Defence and NGO demining teams and also visiting women deployed in operational teams to assess their activities and address issues encountered by female 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.<sup>46</sup> 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).<sup>47</sup>

IKMAA reported offering equal employment opportunities to women and said that women held 10 of its 15 managerial posts, but, overall, women were 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 nine women. IKMAA said it would like to set up female clearance and EOD teams in the KRI's four governorates and has called for donors to support this initiative.<sup>48</sup>

Women's participation in mine action, a traditionally male-dominated sector, still faces 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.<sup>49</sup> It can be problematic to deploy women outside the areas they live and some candidates have dropped out of training that required overseas travel.<sup>50</sup> Three of the six NGOs working in Federal Iraq had more than 20% female staff with a lower percentage employed in operational positions (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Gender composition of mine action operators in 2022<sup>51</sup>**

Operator	Total staff	Total women	Total staff in managerial or supervisory positions	Total women in managerial or supervisory positions	Total operations staff	Total women in operations
FSD	105	12	25	1	80	10
HALO	96	18	6	3	53	9
HI	151	42	15	2	136	40
MAG	810	131	94	10	714	103
NPA	491	96	83	20	392	66
SHO	135	51	13	2	62	19

The participation of women in mine action and their level of qualification continued to rise. Graduates of an EOD Level 3 course at the Ministry of Interior's training centre in 2022 included the first female Civil Defence staff member. 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.<sup>52</sup>

Conservative social norms among tribes in the south make recruitment of females more challenging than in northern governorates but Danish Refugee Council (DRC) recruited six female deminers from Basra and surrounding villages without previous experience who underwent training in early 2022 and deployed on their first task in April 2022. It had announced

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

45 Ibid., p. 15.

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

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

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

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

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

51 Emails from Peter Smether, FSD, 22 May 2023; Hein Bekker, HALO, 4 May 2023, Chris Fuller, Chief of EOD Operations, Iraq, 13 April 2023; Katie Shaw, Programme Manager, MAG, 14 May 2023; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023; and Ismat Selevany, SHO, 17 May 2023.

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



vacancies for eight staff and received around 35 applicants.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup> NPA experienced some interference with recruitment notices put up in Basrah encouraging female applicants but it perceives that the slowly increasing participation of women in the sector is finding widening community acceptance of their role and its 61 operations staff included 7 women, working mainly in NTS.<sup>55</sup>

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 and by the end of 2022, female staff was at 21% and female operational staff increased by 43%.<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup>

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## 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.<sup>58</sup>

The DMA and IKMAA have operated databases using IMSMA NG with technical support from iMMAP, an international not-for-profit organisation based in Erbil and funded by 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.

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 (QC).<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> Data verification and correction can add additional significant delays.<sup>61</sup> The process has ensured the database and the data available to operators on an online dashboard are not

up to date, limiting its utility for planning or preparing task proposals. 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 small number, high turnover, and limited working hours of the DMA's data processing staff has further contributed to the DMA's information management challenges. The DMA appealed to implementing partners in 2022 and early 2023 to provide seconded staff to boost its data processing capacity. However, an additional challenge for the DMA's information management is that the staff available reportedly devote significant time to processing official correspondence and documents, reducing the time available for data processing. 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's data management operations and shifting to more training.<sup>62</sup>

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.<sup>63</sup> The DMA expects electronic uploading to start with EORE and victim assistance data before extending to include survey and clearance results.<sup>64</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

58 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 20–21.

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

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

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

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

63 Statement of Iraq, Intersessionals Meeting, Geneva, 19 June 2023.

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

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.<sup>65</sup>

IKMAA said in April 2022 that work had started working with iMMAP and expected to complete installation in two years.<sup>66</sup> IKMAA continues to operate IMSMA NG but is trialling the new system in Erbil and Slemani governorates.<sup>67</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, officially approved in June 2023, sets broad goals for both the DMA and IKMAA, the first time the two authorities have cooperated in drawing up a national plan.<sup>68</sup> 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, a major source of friction between the DMA and operators in 2018–2019, returned as a headache for implementing partners in Federal Iraq in 2022. 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.<sup>69</sup> In 2021, UNMAS reported improved liaison and coordination with the DMA<sup>70</sup> and the DMA cited its high level of cooperation with UNMAS among factors contributing to the sector's increased productivity in that year.<sup>71</sup>

Implementing partners (IPs) also said most task orders were issued in a timely manner in 2021. In 2022, however, IPs said getting approval for tasks became more difficult. The DMA required a separate request for each task and each task order needed the signature of the director general or, in his absence, the Minister of Environment, resulting in lengthy delays. Operators additionally encountered increased delays and obstacles to receiving access authorisation and travel permits from the Department of NGOs, causing further, sometimes long, interruptions in team deployments and reduced clearance results.<sup>72</sup>

## 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 and existed in Arabic only. Updated standards that have been officially released cover NTS and TS, BAC, 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.<sup>73</sup> The DMA released seven national standards that were translated into English with support from NPA in November 2022 and ten standards translated by UNMAS in 2023.<sup>74</sup>

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.<sup>75</sup>

UNMAS said another two standards and three International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) technical notes would be reviewed in 2023. These included Contracting in Mine Action (IMAS 07:20), Management of human remains (IMAS 07:50), and technical notes on Clearance of Depleted Uranium Hazards (TN 09.30/02), All Reasonable Effort (TN 07.11/03), and Estimation of Explosion Danger Areas (10.20/01).<sup>76</sup>

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

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

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

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

69 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.

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

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

72 Interviews with implementing partners, Iraq, 7 May to 19 May 2023.

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

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

75 Emails from Hayder Ghanimi, UNMAS, 28 April 2022; and Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS Iraq, 11 May 2023.

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

## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

The survey and clearance capacity active in Federal Iraq in 2022–23 is unclear. The DMA reported 55 Iraqi and international organisations accredited for mine action apart from government organisations but it did not identify which were active in 2022 and included organisations focused on other activities such as information management and victim assistance.<sup>77</sup>

The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence and Directorate for Explosives Control constitute the biggest organisations in Federal Iraq's mine action sector but few details are available 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.<sup>78</sup> The Army also remains the only organisation authorised to conduct demolitions.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> The DMA said the PMF have extensive mine clearance and EOD capacity and would become active partners in the national demining programme but lacked details of the PMF resources or how they would participate.<sup>81</sup>

In the KRI, IKMAA reported employing a total of 432 people in operations in 2022 out of a total staff of over 800, including 36 manual demining teams, 5 non-technical survey teams (down by 3 on 2021), 4 EOD/BAC teams, 6 mechanical units, 7 EORE teams, and 36 QA/QC teams.<sup>82</sup> IKMAA has faced financial constraints in recent years severely limiting its teams' field deployments but in 2022 it received €168,000 in financial support from Slovenia boosting clearance operations.<sup>83</sup> The only international operator active in survey and clearance in the KRI in 2022 was Mines Advisory Group (MAG) (see below). IKMAA accredited FSD in 2022<sup>84</sup> but it did not conduct any operations that year.

The downturn in donor funding has prompted more attention in Federal Iraq to the need for "localisation" and developing local survey and clearance capacity. FSD provided capacity building support for SHO, which received its accreditation for clearance in 2021. In 2022, with French government

funding, it added two teams to operate operating in Ninewa governorate with five BAC/IEDD (IED disposal) teams as well as a mechanical team with two front-end loaders, two NTS and a community liaison team.<sup>85</sup> SHO received technical support from HAMAP Humanitaire, a French NGO focused on developing sustainable national capacity, which worked with SHO developing tasks in Ninewa's Sinjar district.<sup>86</sup>

DCA, based in Erbil, has focused since 2019 on developing the Health and Social Care Organisation in Iraq (IHSCO) and has UNMAS support for a three-year partnership agreement. IHSCO received accreditation for manual clearance and TS in 2021 and in 2022 had four multi-task teams qualified for TS, EOD, BAC, and clearing improvised mines and two EORE teams.<sup>87</sup> DCA operations in 2022 faced a series of bureaucratic procedural issues over accreditation and movement restrictions issued by the Department of Non-Government Organisations that stalled its activities in 2022. After a delay of seven months, DCA received accreditation for one team in early May 2023.<sup>88</sup> DRC retained a BAC team based in Mosul as a multi-task team capable of manual clearance of conventional and improvised mines as well as EOD and BAC but it did not report any land release for 2022. DRC also set up a team of women deminers in Basrah which became operational in 2022 and completed its first task at the beginning of 2023.<sup>89</sup>

FSD operated in 2022 with a total staff of 102 including 9 manual clearance teams with 63 deminers working in Erbil and Ninewa governorates. External QA was undertaken by IMMAP on behalf of PM/WRA.<sup>90</sup> HI, operating from a main office in Erbil, had three clearance teams working in Kirkuk governorate in 2022 supported by funding from the German Federal Foreign Office. It ended operations in Kirkuk in mid 2023 and moved teams to more heavily contaminated areas in Salah al-Din. It hoped to add a mechanical asset for clearance operations and drones to support task assessment in 2023.<sup>91</sup>

For much of 2022, HALO operated with 10 multi-task teams (6 persons each), 5 mechanical teams (8 persons each) and 1 manual clearance team (6 persons) as well as 5 EORE teams and a community liaison team. Operations focused on Anbar, dealing predominantly with improvised devices, and Salah al-Din governorate, where teams have encountered both conventional and improvised mines. A two-year grant from UNMAS for NTS and clearance in Anbar combined with capacity building of a national NGO, the Al-Ghad League,

77 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 6 June 2023.

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

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

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

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

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

83 Interview with Jabbar Mustafa, IKMAA, Erbil, 18 May 2023.

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

85 Email from Ismat Selevany, SHO, 17 May 2023.

86 Interview with Zakaria Abbioui, Coordinator for Iraq, HAMAP, and Kenneth Dean Jones, Operations Management Advisor, HAMAP, in Erbil, 18 May 2023.

87 Emails from Khalid Ahmed, Project Manager, IHSCO, 10 and 15 August 2023.

88 Interview with Albert Schevey, Operations Manager, DCA, Erbil, 16 May 2023; interview with Khalid Ahmed, IHSCO, Erbil, 18 May 2023; and email, 10 August 2023.

89 Emails from Katrien Denys, Head of Programme, DRC HDP, 18 April and 5 September 2023.

90 Email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 12 April 2023; and interview with Steven Munro, International Operations Manager, FSD, and Markus Schindler, Project Manager, FSD, Erbil, 16 May 2023.

91 Email from Chris Fuller, HI, 13 April 2023; and interview in Erbil, 18 May 2023.

expired in November 2022 leading to a downsizing and the return of two mechanical assets made available for the task. Operations in Anbar continued with a mechanical team, a manual clearance team, and an NTS team until the funding from Luxembourg ended in March 2023 when HALO ended operations in Anbar. In 2023, HALO also started a one-year research project with IHSCO. HALO, meantime, continued to trial Wirehound VR1 ground penetrating radar detectors and started use of drones for task evaluation before deploying assets.<sup>92</sup>

MAG, the biggest of the international demining organisations with a head office in Erbil and a total staff of 810 also continued to be the only one operating in the KRI as well as in Federal Iraq. MAG deployed a total of 45 manual clearance teams employing 423 staff, including 274 deminers, and supported by mine detection dogs and a range of mechanical assets. MAG operated 15 manual teams in the KRI conducting

clearance of legacy mines, mainly in Sulaymaniya (Slemani). MAG operated 30 manual teams in Federal Iraq working mainly in Ninewa governorate's Telafar, Telkeif and Sinjar districts but also conducting clearance in Baaj, Bartalah, and Hamdaniya districts. In March 2022, MAG opened a new operating base in Telkeif, north-east of Mosul, which it said substantially cut the travel time for teams operating in the north-east area of Ninewa.<sup>93</sup>

NPA continued to expand operational capacity in 2022, adding two more technical survey/clearance teams that raised the number of teams to 27 with 162 deminers, supported by nine mechanical teams and a small number of mine detection dogs, used mainly in technical survey. NPA has five dogs active in 2023 and expected to increase the number to 12. Since mid-2022, NPA has routinely used drones to assess NTS tasks coordinating closely with local authorities on the location and time when they are operated.<sup>94</sup>

**Table 6: Operational clearance capacities deployed in Iraq in 2022**

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Dogs and handlers	Machines*	Comments
Army	12	est. 3,000			
IKMAA	35	360		6 teams/34 personnel	Clearance teams conduct TS; also deploys 4 EOD/BAC teams with 12 personnel.
DRC	2	15			1 manual mine clearance team in Basrah (from May 2022) 1 multi-task team Mosul (also available for TS, BAC, and EOD).
FSD	9	63		1 teams/9 personnel	
HALO	**1	4		4 teams/32 personnel	**End-2022. Also 6 multi-task teams conducting NTS, EORE, and BAC/EOD in Salah al-Din and 1 NTS team in Anbar.
HI	3	21			
IHSCO	4	40			Conduct TS/BAC/EOD and clearing improvised mines.
MAG (Federal Iraq)	30	192	2 teams/6 dogs	4 teams/24 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.

<sup>92</sup> Email from Hein Bekker, Programme Manager, HALO, 4 May 2023 and interview, Baghdad, 10 May 2023.

<sup>93</sup> Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 14 May 2023.

<sup>94</sup> Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, Deputy Programme Manager, NPA, 12 April 2023; and interview with Chris Tierney, Programme Manager, NPA, in Baghdad, 13 May 2023.

**Table 6 Continued**

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Dogs and handlers	Machines*	Comments
MAG (KRI)	15	88	3 teams/6 dogs	2 teams/6 personnel	Manual Teams include 7 mine action teams (91 personnel) and 3 multi-task and mech support teams (15 personnel).
NPA	27	162		9 teams/13 personnel	Added 2 clearance teams, which all conduct TS.
Shareteah	5	25		1 team/5 personnel	
Tetra Tech***	10	88		8 teams/10 personnel	*** 2021 data. Manual teams included 2 multi-task teams with 24 personnel and 8 search and clearance teams with 64 personnel.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>4,058</b>	<b>5 teams/12 dogs</b>	<b>35 teams/133 personnel</b>	

\* Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters

## DEMINER SAFETY

A MAG team leader died and three deminers were injured as a result of the detonation of a white phosphorous shell as they conducted a range sweep following a demolition in the KRI's Slemani governorate. The three deminers were treated and released the same day. The team leader sustained third degree burns and died after medical evacuation to hospital in Jordan. IKMAA conducted a board of inquiry into the incident.<sup>95</sup>

Two AKAF deminers were killed and an UNMAS operations and QA officer was injured in an accident at a clearance task site in Basrah governorate's Shatt al-Arab district in October 2022. Operations at the site were suspended until late November while UNMAS and the DMA investigated the incident and the DMA's RMAC South conducted remedial training for AKAF deminers.<sup>96</sup>

An improvised mine activated by a crush wire switch detonated under a minibus carrying a GCS demining team of seven female and three male staff. The detonation occurred as the minibus approached the administrative area of an active GCS clearance task in Ninewa governorate's Telkeif district. The passengers were taken to hospital but released the same day, the minibus sustained severe damage.<sup>97</sup>

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

After a big rise in land release in 2021 helped by recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, official data shows that Federal Iraq and the KRI released a total of 72km<sup>2</sup> in 2022, 35% less than the previous year. This included 71km<sup>2</sup> released by Federal Iraq and a little over 1km<sup>2</sup> in the KRI.<sup>98</sup> However, discrepancies between Federal Iraq's official data and results reported by NGO operators make it likely that more area was released than official data reflects.

### FEDERAL IRAQ

The priority for mine action in Federal Iraq since 2018 has been clearance of massive amounts of improvised mines in areas liberated from Islamic State as part of a broader stabilisation drive involving clearance of critical infrastructure and areas for resettlement of people displaced by conflict. As a result, little funding or capacity was allocated for tackling the even greater amounts of legacy minefields concentrated in southern governorates. Iraq, however, is pursuing a range of big road, port, and power projects in the south, and in 2022, while donor funding continued to focus on liberated areas, DMA data indicate it released nearly 40km<sup>2</sup> in southern governorates contaminated with legacy mines, more than five times the legacy mined area released in the previous year and more than the amount of improvised mine contamination released in liberated areas (see Table 7). The 31km<sup>2</sup> of improvised mine-affected areas released in 2022 was less than one third of the previous year's result.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 10 July 2023.

<sup>96</sup> Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 11 May 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp 24–28.

<sup>99</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2021), p. 22; and Article 7 Report (covering 2022), p. 28.

**Table 7: Federal Iraq land release results for 2022 (official data)<sup>100</sup>**

Device type	Area cancelled (m <sup>2</sup> )	Area reduced (m <sup>2</sup> )	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area released (m <sup>2</sup> )
Legacy AP mines	12,731,465	23,839,843	3,010,780	39,582,088
Improvised mines	23,283,557	47,863	8,062,191	31,393,611
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36,015,022</b>	<b>23,887,706</b>	<b>11,072,971</b>	<b>70,975,699</b>

## SURVEY IN 2022

The rise in land release in Federal Iraq in 2021 was largely due to a jump in the area of improvised mined area cancelled through NTS, which the DMA reported as amounting to 94km<sup>2</sup> and accounted for 90% of the improvised mine area released. The sharp drop in the area cancelled to 23km<sup>2</sup> in 2022 (see Table 8) largely accounts for the overall downturn in Iraq's land release results as well as the shifting balance between release of conventional and improvised mined areas.

International and local NGOs conduct demining almost exclusively in areas of improvised mine contamination and recorded cancellation and reduction of a total of 34km<sup>2</sup> in 2022 (see Table 8). Their reported result was 50% more than the DMA reported, underscoring persistent problems with timely uploading of operator results into the database.

**Table 8: Release of mined area through survey in 2022 (NGO data)<sup>101</sup>**

Operator	Governorate	Area cancelled (m <sup>2</sup> )	Area reduced (m <sup>2</sup> )
HALO	Anbar, Salah al-Din	10,700,649	588,817
HI	Kirkuk	2,207,020	272,239
MAG	Ninewa	2,178,740	2,019,051
NPA	Anbar	1,847,783	9,855,626
Shareteah	Ninewa	4,377,178	35,091
<b>Totals</b>		<b>21,311,370</b>	<b>12,770,824</b>

## CLEARANCE IN 2022

Mine Action Review has calculated that a total of 17.03km<sup>2</sup> were cleared in Iraq in 2022, with the destruction of 20,083 AP mines (see Table 12). Federal Iraq reported releasing a total of 11.07km<sup>2</sup> through clearance in 2022 (see Table 9), marginally more than the clearance reported by the DMA in 2021 but involving clearance of 13,731 conventional and improvised mines, up from 11,819 reported the previous year.<sup>102</sup>

Clearance included 3km<sup>2</sup> in two southern governorates, Basrah and Missan, affected by conventional mines, triple the clearance in southern areas recorded for 2021.<sup>103</sup> Approximately one third of this clearance was by Iraqi contractor AKAF in Basrah governorate, funded by the European Union through UNMAS, but it was unclear if the funding would continue beyond the end of 2023.<sup>104</sup> Most of the clearance is believed to have been conducted by commercial companies under contract to the Ministry of Oil or by Iraqi army engineers.

Iraq plans increased mine and cluster munitions clearance in the south to support major road, rail, port and power generation projects in the south as well as agricultural development but international donors have largely shunned funding for clearance of legacy mined areas to focus support on clearing areas liberated from Islamic State. Iraq is engaging with regional neighbours to mobilise additional resources<sup>105</sup> but future clearance in the south looks likely to be largely dependent on Iraqi government funding.

<sup>100</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2022), p. 24.

<sup>101</sup> Emails from Hein Bekker, HALO, 4 May 2023; Chris Fuller, HI, 13 April 2023; Katie Shaw, MAG, 14 May 2023; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023; and Ismat Selevany, SHO, 17 May 2023.

<sup>102</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 24, 28; see also Mine Action Review, Clearing the Mines 2022, p. 186.

<sup>103</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2022), p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 11 May 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

**Table 9: Mine clearance in Federal Iraq in 2022 (official data)<sup>106</sup>**

Improvised mine clearance	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Improvised mines destroyed
Anbar	1,878,144	3,468
Kirkuk	244,603	90
Ninewa	5,443,280	6,957
Salah al-Din	496,164	62
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>8,062,191</b>	<b>10,577</b>
Legacy mine clearance	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed
Basrah	1,785,369	1,706
Missan	1,199,820	1,448
Ninewa	11,442	0
Salah al-Din	14,149	0
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>3,010,780</b>	<b>3,154</b>
<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>11,072,971</b>	<b>13,731</b>

Clearance results for Federal Iraq also showed major discrepancies between DMA and data from operators who recorded clearing 13.3km<sup>2</sup> of areas affected by improvised mines in 2022 (see Table 10), 63% more than the improvised mine clearance reported by the DMA in 2022. The result, however, was 25% lower than the area clearance reported by operators in 2021, although the number of mines cleared at 14,287 was relatively closer to the 15,166 cleared in 2021.

NPA, which increased the number of clearance teams working in 2022 reported more than doubling the area it cleared<sup>107</sup> but cuts in donor funding meant several operators worked with less capacity in 2022. MAG, which recorded a significant drop in area cleared noted that in 2021 it had completed clearance of larger areas in Sinjar and Telkeif where it was able to use scarifiers, contributing to high rates of clearance. In 2022, MAG said it worked on a lot of smaller tasks in 2022, including taking on more building clearance in Sinjar, resulting in clearance of fewer square metres.<sup>108</sup>

**Table 10: Mine clearance in Federal Iraq in 2022 (NGO data)<sup>109</sup>**

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed (including improvised mines)	UXO destroyed
FSD	Ninewa	3,941,558	1,248	625
HALO	Anbar, Salah al-Din	1,661,168	512	1,378
HI	Kirkuk	60,650	92	0
IHSCO	Ninewa	83,198	182	19
MAG	Ninewa	3,758,172	4,606	14,150
NPA	Anbar	3,005,201	6,772	425
Shareteah	Ninewa	779,134	875	83
<b>Totals</b>		<b>13,289,081</b>	<b>14,287</b>	<b>16,680</b>

## KRI

The KRI reported a significant rise in AP mine clearance for a second successive year in 2022, when IKMAA recorded clearance of 1.13km<sup>2</sup>, a 79% increase on the 2021 result, and an even bigger percentage rise in the number of AP mines destroyed to 3,204 compared with 1,436 the previous year (see Table 11).<sup>110</sup> A further 276 AP mines were destroyed in the course of spot task EOD.<sup>111</sup> The increase was made possible by a grant of €168,000 provided by Slovenia through ITF Enhancing Human Security.

<sup>106</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 24, 28.

<sup>107</sup> Emails from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022 and Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023.

<sup>108</sup> Email from Katie Shaw, MAG, 10 July 2023.

<sup>109</sup> Emails from Peter Smether, FSD, 22 May 2023; Hein Bekker, HALO, 4 May 2023; Chris Fuller, HI, 13 April 2023; Khalid Ahmed, IHSCO, 10 August 2023; Katie Shaw, MAG, 14 May 2023; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 12 April 2023; and Ismat Selevany, SHO, 17 May 2023.

<sup>110</sup> Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 19 September 2023.

<sup>111</sup> Email from Khatib Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

IKMAA had been able to deploy only 40% of its manual and mechanical capacity because of financial constraints and a lack of transport. Receipt of the grant in the second half of 2022 had made it possible to hire vehicles, enabling teams to work in the field and achieve a sharp rise in productivity.<sup>112</sup>

**Table 11: Mine clearance in KRI in 2022\*<sup>113</sup>**

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed
Dohuk MAC	Dohuk	221,947	84
Erbil MAC	Erbil	211,611	973
Garmyan MAC	Garmyan	104,005	91
MAG	Dohuk, Slemani	399,957	1,279
Slemani MAC	Slemani	194,700	777
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1,132,220</b>	<b>3,204</b>

\* Includes area reduced through technical survey

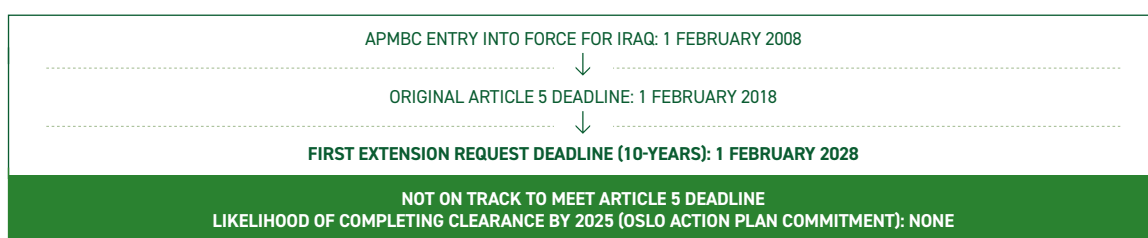
### CONSOLIDATED MINE CLEARANCE DATA

Based on its data verification and analysis, Mine Action Review believes that a total of 17.03km<sup>2</sup> of AP mined area were cleared across Iraq in 2022 with the destruction of 20,083 AP mines: almost 16.22km<sup>2</sup> in Federal Iraq, with the destruction of 17,259 AP mines and almost 0.82km<sup>2</sup> in the KRI with the destruction of 2,824 AP mines. The results of the analysis are summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12: Consolidated mine clearance in Iraq in 2022 (Mine Action Review analysis)**

Region	Contamination type	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed	Comments on data sources
Federal Iraq	Legacy mined area	3,010,780	3,154	National authority data
Federal Iraq	Improvised mined area	13,289,081	14,287	NGO data used due to data entry problems in the national database
KRI	All mined area	1,132,220	3,204	National authority data
KRI	Spot tasks	N/A	276	National authority data
<b>Totals</b>		<b>17,432,081</b>	<b>20,921</b>	

### ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



<sup>112</sup> Interview with Jabbar Mustafa, IKMAA, Erbil, 18 May 2023.

<sup>113</sup> Email from Niyazi Khalid Qusaim, IKMAA, 19 September 2023.



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 AP mines in 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 and the resources available to mine action.

Prospects for accelerating or maintaining clearance rates are overshadowed by reduced funding from international donors responding to competing demands, including from Ukraine, and observing Iraq's record \$115 billion oil revenues in 2022. The Iraqi government responded in 2023 by allocating substantial funds to the mine action sector. It is also proposing to mobilise additional resources by engaging the Popular Mobilisation Forces for mine clearance and EOD. While international funding remains largely focused on clearance of liberated areas, government funding may provide impetus to tackling legacy AP minefields concentrated in the south.

Greater national ownership of mine action, however, also underscores the need for adherence to the 2023–28 mine action strategy's key principles of accountability, continual improvement, transparency, and humanitarian principles.<sup>114</sup> Stakeholders reported little clarity on how national funding will be allocated to mine action or plans for expanding local capacity. Iraq's financial system reportedly does not make any provision for government funding of NGOs, only state organisations or commercial entities. Few details are available on resources deployed by key actors such as the

Ministries of Defence, Interior, and Oil, and the capacity to be added by the PMF.

The 2023–28 strategy affirms solid information management and coordination will ensure adherence to key principles. However, weaknesses in Federal Iraq's mine action data, including lengthy delays in data entry and major discrepancies between official and operator results, prevent a clear determination of progress in any given year. Available data does not provide comprehensive results disaggregated by operator. Meanwhile, operators observe data available on contamination and the results of survey and clearance is often out of date and incomplete, particularly in relation to areas where military engineers have been active, raising questions about the degree to which state security actors adhere to national mine action standards.

**Table 13: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance**

Year	Area cleared (km <sup>2</sup> )
2022	*17.4
2021	11.6
2020	7.7
2019	*15.7
2018	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>60.8</b>

\* Mine Action Review estimate

## PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

Iraq's 2023–28 national strategy commits to "develop a strategy on the management of residual contamination, specifying appropriate processes, roles and responsibilities, in line with Oslo Action Plan's Action 26" but says it will be developed by 2025, for tackling residual risk by 2025.<sup>115</sup> Iraqi Security Forces and the Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence are well placed to provide a long-term demining and EOD capacity but no further action on developing the strategy was reported in 2022.

114 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 17–18.

115 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 23, 26.