

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

## KEY DATA

**ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:**  
 MASSIVE BUT NO REALISTIC ESTIMATE

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2023

**14.35** km<sup>2</sup>

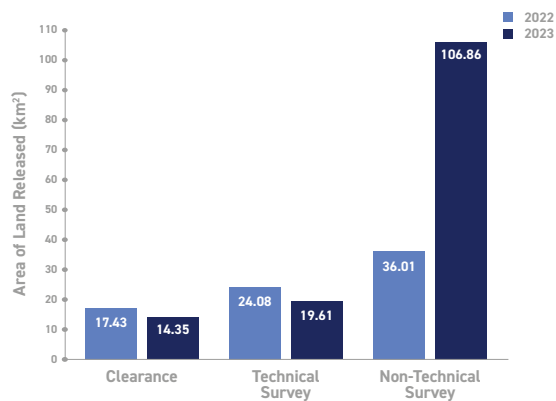
(MINE ACTION REVIEW CALCULATION)

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2023

**16,590**

(INCLUDING 73 DESTROYED IN SPOT TASKS)

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



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

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The Ministry of Environment appointed a new director to the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) who implemented wide-ranging changes in its management and structure and investigations into the conduct of some senior staff. The new director halted DMA preparations in cooperation with Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to upgrade the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database from New Generation to Core. Federal Iraq lowered its estimate of mine contamination but continued to locate significant areas of previously unrecorded hazardous areas. Increased political sensitivities around gender issues stalled activities linked to promoting the position of women in mine action.

## FIVE-YEAR OVERVIEW

Iraq has wiped some 230km<sup>2</sup> off its estimated mine contamination through survey and clearance in the last five years despite continuing to identify extensive areas of previously unrecorded contamination. Internationally funded clearance made significant inroads clearing improvised mines from areas liberated from Islamic State but Iraq made little headway dealing with large conventional anti-personnel (AP) minefields. As international donor attention shifts increasingly to other areas, prospects for future progress were overshadowed by frequent changes of mine action management and policy, cumbersome bureaucracy, and lack of transparency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Iraqi government should provide the DMA with the legal authority, funding, and equipment to discharge its responsibilities as the national mine action authority and stabilise management.
- 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 IMSMA database, and ensuring operators have access to up-to-date information required for planning.
- The DMA should strengthen coordination of mine action through establishing a national mine action platform for regular dialogue among all stakeholders, including donors.
- The DMA should release comprehensive annual data on the progress of survey and clearance disaggregated by operator, including State organisations, commercial companies, and NGOs.
- The DMA should streamline issuance of task orders to eliminate cumbersome procedures and lengthy delays obstructing efficient use of survey and clearance resources.
- The Ministry of Environment should engage with the Department of Non-Government Organisations to avoid restrictions on access that continue to result in lengthy operational delays.
- Iraq should explicitly recognise AP mines of an improvised nature as part of its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) treaty obligation.
- 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.

## ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2023)	Score (2022)	Performance Commentary
<b>UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION</b> (20% of overall score)	7	7	Iraq has a broad understanding of legacy mined areas and improvised 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 but despite the focus in recent years on tackling improvised mines in areas liberated from Islamic State, Federal Iraq added 127km <sup>2</sup> of previously unrecorded contamination in 2023. The KRI also has detailed knowledge of mined areas although insecurity prevented survey along the northern border and in 2023 it doubled its estimate of improvised mine contamination.
<b>NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT</b> (10% of overall score)	4	6	The DMA and IKMAA cooperated for the first time in preparation of a new national mine action strategy for 2023–28 and signed an MoU in March 2003 to facilitate cooperation. 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 but it was unclear what disbursements followed. The DMA remained a department of the Ministry of Environment lacking the legal mandate and institutional authority to effectively manage or coordinate mine action activities. It co-chaired a meeting of a key coordination mechanism early in 2023 (and then in September 2024), but did not convene technical working group meetings to address and coordinate the responses to operational issues.
<b>GENDER AND DIVERSITY</b> (10% of overall score)	5	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>ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION*</b> (10% of overall score)	4	Not Scored	Iraq does not have a standard relating to environmental management and protection. The issue has, however, reportedly been under consideration by the DMA and IKMAA since 2022. In September 2024 operator feedback was requested on 1 October 2024 GICHD conducted a workshop to set priorities in drafting NMAS to address the impact of climate change on mine action. Operators are regulated by their own organisation's global policies or standard operating procedures (SOPs). Extreme weather, including flooding, has posed a challenges such as migration of mines.
<b>INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING</b> (10% of overall score)	4	5	The DMA started the process of upgrading its IMSMA database from New Generation to Core in 2022 and had planned to complete the transition by the end of 2023 but the arrival of new management halted the process. 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. IKMAA pursued plans to upgrade its database with a tailor-made system based on open source technology.

Criterion	Score (2023)	Score (2022)	Performance Commentary
<b>PLANNING AND TASKING</b> (10% of overall score)	4	5	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 to cover the period 2023–28.
<b>LAND RELEASE SYSTEM**</b> (10% 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 GICHD since 2020 and in 2023 reviewed a range of standards and technical notes, including standards dealing with mine detection dogs and the storage, transportation and handling of explosives. The revisions and a new national standard for Management of Human Remains in Mine Action were approved by the Ministry of Environment in September 2024.
<b>LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE</b> (20% of overall score)	7	7	Federal Iraq reported more than doubling the amount of land released in 2023 to 146km <sup>2</sup> but the basis for this result, which it said included cancellation of 84km <sup>2</sup> in Diyala governorate, was unclear. The KRI received international funding in 2023 and continuing into 2024 that enabled it to hire vehicles to transport demining teams to their task sites, resulting in increased clearance. Mine Action Review estimates the total area released by clearance in Iraq in 2023 was 15% lower than the previous year.
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE</b>

\* New criterion introduced in 2024 to assess performance.

\*\* The weighting of this criterion was previously 20% of overall performance score, but is now given a 10% weighting.

## 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
- Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)
- 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 Tadamon 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)
- Fondation Suisse de Déminage (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 recorded mine contamination totalling 1,636km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2023, a nearly 5% drop from the 1,716km<sup>2</sup> it reported a year earlier which still left it among the world's most heavily mine-affected states. The end-2023 total comprised 1,420km<sup>2</sup> in Federal Iraq and 216km<sup>2</sup> in the KRI.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1: Mined area in Federal Iraq (at end 2023)<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	381	968,634,846	37	17,292,014	985,926,860
Improvised mines	1,250	301,813,862	477	132,193,518	434,007,380
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,631</b>	<b>1,270,448,708</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>149,485,532</b>	<b>1,419,934,240</b>

### FEDERAL IRAQ

Legacy minefields, heavily concentrated in southern governorates, make up over 60% of Iraq's total contamination and 70% of Federal Iraq's mine threat. Most of the mines 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 Table 1). Basrah governorate, comprising the Shatt al-Arab and Fao districts, which were fiercely contested during the war with Iran, makes up 83% of the Federal Iraq total (see Table 2).

The DMA has previously assessed that resurvey would sharply reduce the estimate of contamination.<sup>3</sup> The 986km<sup>2</sup> recorded at the end of 2023, however, was marginally higher than a year earlier after survey identifying 20.6km<sup>2</sup> of previously unrecorded mined areas, including 11.5km<sup>2</sup> in the central governorate of Diyala, 6.4km<sup>2</sup> in Wassit, and 1.8km<sup>2</sup> in Missan.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2: Legacy AP mined area by governorate in Federal Iraq (at end 2023)<sup>5</sup>**

Governorate	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Anbar	3	32,168	0	0	32,168
Basrah	69	814,746,376	1	962,731	815,709,107
Diyala	2	11,524,776	28	15,791,646	27,316,422
Kirkuk	2	10,113	0	0	10,113
Missan	239	57,002,712	3	400,183	57,402,895
Muthanna	4	38,978,577	0	0	38,978,577
Najaf	1	1,754,329	0	0	1,754,329
Ninewa	3	405,013	4	132,792	537,805
Salah al-Din	9	160,074	1	4,663	164,737
Wassit	49	44,020,709	0	0	44,020,709
<b>Totals</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>968,634,847</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17,292,015</b>	<b>985,926,862</b>

Since 2018, Federal Iraq's mine action resources have been concentrated on clearing improvised mines to free critical infrastructure and facilitate resettlement of people in areas liberated from Islamic State but operators continue to find large areas of previously unrecorded contamination. In 2023, the DMA added 222 areas of improvised mine contamination totalling 127.2km<sup>2</sup> to the database, two-thirds of it in Diyala governorate<sup>6</sup> and operators reported that under prevailing task order policy not all the newly-identified contamination was recorded in the database. The DMA recorded a net increase in the level of improvised mine contamination in 2022 but in 2023, as a result of land release operations, it put the area affected by improvised mines at 434km<sup>2</sup> (see Table 3), a 17% drop from the previous year.<sup>7</sup>

1 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), pp. 18, 22.

2 Ibid.

3 Interview with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, Director, DMA RMAC South, Basrah, 29 April 2019.

4 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 10.

5 Ibid., pp. 17–18. The totals for confirmed and suspected hazardous areas in Table 2 are each 1km<sup>2</sup> greater than in Table 1, possibly due to rounding errors.

6 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), pp. 12–15.

7 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

**Table 3: IED/Improvised mine contamination in Federal Iraq (at end 2023)<sup>8</sup>**

Province	CHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Anbar	817	107,358,335	243	60,963,523	168,321,858
Diyala	29	122,191,344	12	47,617,198	169,808,542
Kirkuk	35	24,053,884	18	1,908,970	25,962,854
Ninewa	236	30,873,652	192	20,577,529	51,451,181
Salah al-Din	133	17,336,648	12	1,126,299	18,462,947
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>301,813,863</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>132,193,519</b>	<b>434,007,382</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 area. IKMAA estimated its contamination at nearly 216km<sup>2</sup> (see Table 4), a total that is largely unchanged in recent years. But while the estimated area affected by legacy mines, found mainly in Slemani governorate, dropped by 4.3km<sup>2</sup> (2%) in 2023 from the previous year, the KRI said it had carried out new survey of liberated areas and added 3.4km<sup>2</sup> of previously unrecorded improvised mine contamination to its database, nearly three-quarters more than the previous year and the second successive big annual increase.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 4: AP mined area by governorate in the KRI (at end 2023)<sup>10</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	430	20,057,284	0	0	20,057,284
Erbil	377	47,389,072	0	0	47,389,072
Slemani	2,347	111,058,784	126	29,994,766	141,053,550
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>3,154</b>	<b>178,505,140</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>29,994,766</b>	<b>208,499,906</b>
<b>Improvised mines</b>					
Duhok	26	3,708,640	35	1,796,379	5,505,019
Erbil	2	1,756,747	0	0	1,756,747
Slemani	6	8,105	0	0	8,105
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>5,473,492</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1,796,379</b>	<b>7,269,871</b>
<b>Grand Totals</b>		<b>183,978,632</b>		<b>31,791,145</b>	<b>215,769,777</b>

#### OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Iraq also has extensive explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination. In Federal Iraq, this includes more than 200km<sup>2</sup> affected by cluster munition remnants (see *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2024*) and a wide array of other unexploded ordnance (UXO), including air-dropped bombs and artillery shells. The KRI reported nearly 42km<sup>2</sup> of ERW-contaminated area at the end of 2023, heavily concentrated in Garmyan governorate.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See Article 7 reports covering 2023 and 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2023), pp. 19, 20, and 23.

<sup>11</sup> Email from Niyazi Khalid, Deputy Director, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

## 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 the Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), which acts as both regulator and operator. The two bodies have functioned largely autonomously but in May 2024 signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate cooperation between them.

Nevertheless, the DMA and IKMAA collaborated in drawing up Iraq's draft National Mine Action Strategy 2022–28, the first produced jointly by the two authorities.<sup>12</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>13</sup>

### FEDERAL IRAQ

The inter-ministerial Higher Committee of Mine Action, which reports to the Prime Minister, oversees and approves mine action strategy, policies, and plans. The committee, which is chaired by the prime minister, includes representatives of the ministries of defence, interior, oil and environment as well as the National Security Council and IKMAA. 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>14</sup>

DMA coordination of mine action remains a major 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 there was no indication in 2023 the government planned to take up the idea.

The DMA co-chaired with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Iraq the last meeting of the Mine Action Area of Responsibility convened under the UN Humanitarian Cluster System attended by operators and international donors early in 2023. During the meeting UNMAS transferred the coordination responsibility to the DMA after the deactivation of the cluster system in Iraq.<sup>15</sup> The DMA with

support from UNMAS, chaired but did not convene the Coordination Meeting for Mine Action in Iraq (CMMAI) or other technical working group (TWG) meetings that provide a platform for addressing operational issues in 2023 or the first eight months of 2024.<sup>16</sup>

DMA policy, implementation, and coordination of mine action has also suffered from a rapid turnover of directors. The DMA has had at least 19 directors general since 2003, including three in the last year. All but one were appointed on an acting basis, which also limited their authority. At the start of 2023, the DMA was led by its deputy director Bakr Sahib Ahmed. Dr Sabah Hasan al-Hussaini, who assumed the position in February, was already the head of another directorate and returned full time to that position in August 2023. Shawkat Tayeh Masoud, a former director of operations who had left the DMA in 2022, returned as acting director in September 2023.

Under Director Masoud, the DMA experienced sweeping changes of senior managers and a restructuring. The DMA previously oversaw three Regional Mine Action Centres (RMACs) for the North, the Middle Euphrates (MEU) region and the South,<sup>17</sup> but RMACs North and MEU were closed down in early 2024.<sup>18</sup> RMAC South, located in Basra City, remains the focal point for Federal Iraq's response to most of Iraq's legacy minefields as well as CMR contamination. 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.<sup>19</sup>

The government approved a national strategic plan for 2023–28 in June 2023<sup>20</sup> 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 would provide recommendations to the Higher Council for Mine Action but it does not indicate any timeline for this review and as at June 2024 there was no sign of any move to conduct it.<sup>21</sup>

The strategic plan calls for strengthened national ownership and more national funding, recognising the dependence on external donor support as a key risk to sustainability of Iraq's mine action programme.<sup>22</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.<sup>23</sup>

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

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

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

15 Email from UNMAS Iraq, 10 September 2024.

16 Emails from demining operators in Federal Iraq, April–August 2024.

17 RMAC North covered governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Salah ad-Din; RMAC MEU included Babylon, included Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiya, and Wasit; RMAC South included Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi Qar.

18 Interviews with international mine action stakeholders in Geneva, April–May 2024.

19 Interview with Gus Guthrie, Country Director, NPA, in Geneva, 12 February 2020.

20 Email from Ahmed Aljasem, DMA, 8 August 2023.

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

22 Ibid., pp. 17 and 22.

23 Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, Deputy Head, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

Donor funding for demining operations channelled through UNMAS has declined significantly from its high point of US\$77 million in 2019 (some of it for activities in 2019–20) and faced the possibility of a further significant drop in 2024.<sup>24</sup> International donors have prioritised funding for clearance of improvised mines in areas occupied by Islamic State in western and northern governorates, largely bypassing the financial requirements for clearance of the south which are dependent on Iraqi government funding.

Iraq reported that government funding for mine action totalled about \$81 million in the decade to 2022 and averaged close to \$4 million a year in 2020–22<sup>25</sup> but has provided no details of the amount of government funding available to the sector, how it is disbursed, or the spending priorities. In 2023, the Iraqi government continued long-running negotiations with the UK government and UK-based companies on the terms of a \$400 million UK Export Finance loan to fund demining operations.<sup>26</sup>

## 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 is led by a director general who has ministerial rank. It coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garmian, and Sulaymaniyah (Slemani). IKMAA had a total staff of more than 900 personnel in 2023, including 432 in operations, largely unchanged from the previous year, but a budgetary crisis in the KRI in recent years has imposed severe constraints on the mine action sector.<sup>27</sup>

IKMAA has received support from Slovenian Aid since 2022 when it provided a grant of €168,000 through ITF Enhancing Human Security. The funds financed the hiring of vehicles, enabling IKMAA to deploy 15 demining teams and contributing to a rise in release of mined areas in 2022.<sup>28</sup> Additional Slovenian funding approved at the end of 2023 allowed the hiring of 48 vehicles which enabled teams to deploy in 2024.<sup>29</sup>

## OTHER ACTORS

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. Since 2021, as donor funding slowed and in line with a greater focus on localisation, UNMAS shifted its focus from explosive hazard management to providing technical support to the mine action authorities and their implementing partners.

The UNMAS mission in Iraq employed 100 people with 43 international staff in 2019 but by 2023 numbered only 51, of whom 7 were internationals.<sup>30</sup> The number of donors funding operations in Iraq through UNMAS has dropped from a peak of 21 in 2019 to 6 in 2023<sup>31</sup> and funding received by UNMAS for mine action in Iraq has also fallen sharply. In 2023, it received approximately \$12 million and by May 2024 it had received some \$4.5 million for the year.<sup>32</sup>

In 2023, the funds supported UNMAS partnership agreements with two national demining NGOs, IHSCO and SHO, which operated in Ninewa governorate. With the expiry of the agreement in 2023, the two organisations bid for, and received, direct grants to operate in Ninewa's Mosul and Sinjar districts. UNMAS also contracted a local company, AKAF, to conduct clearance in the Shatt al-Arab area of Basrah governorate and Swiss-based Global Clearance Solutions to conduct clearance in Ninewa. The operations resulted in clearance of a total of 2.5km<sup>2</sup> and 30 structures, along with 547 AP mines and improvised mines. It also provided technical support to the DMA and IKMAA and training for the Ministry of Interior police in EOD, IEDD, explosive hazard first responder drills and the use of drones.<sup>33</sup>

UNMAS co-chaired with the DMA a meeting of the Mine Action Area of Responsibility in early 2023 but after the UN dissolved its protection cluster, also in early 2023, it also scaled back its involvement in convening TWG meetings.

---

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Iraq's 2023–28 strategic plan recognises that the impact of contamination varies according to gender, age, and ethnic or religious affiliations, and requires specific activities targeting those needs, for which disaggregated data is a prerequisite.<sup>34</sup>

The previous National Strategic Mine Action Plan for 2017–2021 had referred to gender equality and gender mainstreaming within mine action activities as objectives of an effective programmatic response.<sup>35</sup> Iraq was the first country

---

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

25 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 40.

26 DMA Facebook report, 7 November 2023, accessed at: <https://bit.ly/3X90SGj>.

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

28 Interview with Jabar Mustafa, Head of IKMAA in Erbil, 18 May 2023; and email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

29 Emails from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 15 April and 13 May 2024.

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.

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

32 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 11 May 2023 and Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

33 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

34 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, p. 15.

35 Ibid., pp. 12, 18, 20, and 30.

in the Middle East and North Africa to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.<sup>36</sup>

IKMAA said it aims to improve its gender and diversity balance in line with Iraq's six-year national strategy but in 2023 employed only 123 women in its total staff of 991 (12%), and only 9 women among the 623 operations staff. IKMAA has plans to deploy all-female demining and EOD teams in all provinces but implementation is dependent on finding donor support.<sup>37</sup>

However, the DMA dropped reference to gender mainstreaming in 2023 following a backlash by Federal Iraq's conservative political parties on gender issues, which led the Communications and Media Commission to issue a directive in August 2023 banning use of the term "gender" in public communications.<sup>38</sup> The Council of Ministers instructed in November 2023 that the term "gender" should be replaced by "justice between men and women". The government still launched a National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023–30, which emphasised women's political participation and economic empowerment.<sup>39</sup>

It was not immediately clear what further action, if any, was planned by the DMA, which created a gender unit in 2017, adopted its first Gender Unit Action Plan in early 2021 and in 2022 cooperated with the GICHD and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) conducting training courses on gender balance and diversity.<sup>40</sup> Iraq's Article 4 deadline extension request under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), submitted in 2023 reported that the DMA, in partnership with NPA, had established and trained two mixed-gender teams (for technical survey and clearance).<sup>41</sup> The NGO Directorate ordered operators to submit gender survey tools for its approval.<sup>42</sup>

The wider impact on implementing partners (IPs) in Federal Iraq was still being assessed. UNMAS developed a Gender and Diversity toolkit to assist gender mainstreaming by implementing partners. In June 2023, it organised a workshop for female staff of the DMA and ministries of defence and interior and in November it held another workshop for IPs' female field staff.<sup>43</sup> But in the second half of the year, heightened political sensitivities surrounding gender led some NGOs to suspend plans for gender training for national authorities, communities, and other mine action stakeholders.

**Table 5: Gender composition of operators in 2023<sup>44</sup>**

Operator	Total staff	Women staff	Total managerial or supervisory staff	Women in managerial or supervisory positions	Total operations staff	Women in operations positions
DRC	74	(14%) 10	8	(0%) 0	56	(18%) 10
FSD	86	(9%) 8	16	(0%) 0	63	(8%) 5
HALO	132	(17%) 23	8	(25%) 2	82	(15%) 12
HI	40	(13%) 5	10	(0%) 0	30	(17%) 5
IHSCO	65	(31%) 20	17	(29%) 5	51	(6%) 3
MAG	612	(15%) 92	116	(12%) 8	523	(12%) 64
NPA	526	(20%) 105	144	(11%) 16	405	(19%) 76
SHO	155	(43%) 66	16	(31%) 5	86	(34%) 29
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,690</b>	<b>(19%) 329</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>(11%) 36</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>(16%) 204</b>

The political climate does not appear to have interfered with recruitment and deployment of female staff by operators. Mines Advisory Group (MAG) noted that female candidates made up 40% of recruits participating in an IED search course in 2023.<sup>45</sup> But declining donor support has taken a

significant toll of opportunities for women's employment in the sector. The Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD)'s female demining team was a casualty of funding cuts which reduced the number of its demining teams by one third but it has continued to seek support to re-engage the team members.<sup>46</sup>

36 Email from Ahmed Aljaseem, DMA, 6 June 2023; and Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, p. 16.

37 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

38 T. Alkuhadry, "As Iraq backslides on gender equality where are its women MPs?", *Aljazeera*, 9 September 2023.

39 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

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

41 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 26.

42 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, Programme Manager, NPA, 4 August 2024.

43 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

44 Emails from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, HMA Project Manager, DRC, 28 April 2024; Peter Smethers, Country Director, FSD, 27 April 2024; Charles Fowle, Programme Manager, HALO, 15 May 2024; Mohamed El Kaakour, Chief of Operations, HI, 27 and 30 July 2024; Khalid Ahmed, Project Manager, IHSCO, 3 August 2024; Lisa Jean, Country Director, MAG, 30 April 2024; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024; and Ismat Selevany, Director, SHO, 2 May 2024.

45 Email from Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024.

46 Email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 27 April 2024.



The HALO Trust and MAG experienced significant reductions in staff size but largely preserved the percentage of female employees. HALO provided women employees with monthly child care payments which it said helped to retain female staff and noted that its percentage of female staff exceeded the national employment average of 11%.<sup>47</sup> MAG also sought to ensure gender equity in employment terms, amending its redundancy policy to lessen the weighting of factors such as length of service that could disproportionately affect women who have only recently been recruited into mine action.<sup>48</sup>

NPA has a gender focal point position to promote mainstreaming which is funded until 2025 and recruited additional female staff in 2023 bringing the number to 105 out of 526 total staff, including 76 women in field roles out of 405 operations personnel.<sup>49</sup> National NGOs IHSCO and SHO were proportionately the biggest employers of women overall and SHO also had the highest percentage of women in operations (see Table 5).<sup>50</sup>

---

## 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. As the time of writing, this process was ongoing. Operator feedback had been requested in September 2024 and a workshop was conducted by the GICHD on 1 October 2024 to set priorities in drafting NMAS to address the impact of climate change on mine action.<sup>51</sup> This has not been released. Demining organisations mostly apply their own SOPs for managing the environment and minimising harm from operations.

Mine action in Iraq is having to respond to a range of environmental challenges aggravated by climate change. Operators say they deal increasingly with extremes of heat, with temperatures rising above 50°C at times. These impose limits on the hours when it is possible for deminers and mine detection dogs (MDDS) to operate, reinforcing the need to locate deminer camps close to task sites to minimise travel time and increasing consideration of seasonal factors in operational planning.<sup>52</sup> Federal Iraq and the KRI had to contend with severe flooding caused by intense rainfall raising the risk of mine migration outside identified hazardous areas.<sup>53</sup> Heat and drought have also contributed to wild fires in forests in northern Kurdish regions and southern Iraq's marshes.<sup>54</sup>

IKMAA reported mine action planning increasingly had to take account of climate change and the impact of extreme weather events and damage to infrastructure. IKMAA said it was developing a range of mitigation strategies including early warning systems.<sup>55</sup> The DMA did not respond to requests for information in 2024.

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 is looking into possibilities of partnerships with local organisations to follow up clearance with assistance to rehabilitate soil and irrigation systems to address acute problems of water quality and supply.<sup>56</sup> MAG has been looking to conduct trials on mechanical crushing of AP mines, for a more environmentally friendly disposal without a detonation.<sup>57</sup>

NPA has an environmental SOP followed during the planning and implementation of tasks. Teams avoid disturbing soil unless specifically required for technical survey 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>58</sup> In 2022, NPA appointed a global environmental adviser and piloted collection of environmental data in the course of non-technical survey (NTS). NPA is also developing support for local communities in rehabilitating irrigation canals and use of irrigation pipelines that help conserve water.<sup>59</sup>

---

## 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

---

47 Email from Charles Fowle, HALO, 15 May 2024.

48 Email from Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024.

49 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

50 Emails from Khalid Ahmed, IHSCO, 3 August 2024; and Ismat Selevany, SHO, 2 May 2024.

51 Email from Kim Feldewerth, HALO, 3 October 2024.

52 Online interview with Lisa Jean, MAG, and Simon Woodbridge, Technical Operations Manager, MAG, 15 August 2024.

53 See, e.g., "Mine directorate warns explosives displaced by heavy rain", *RUDAW News*, 24 March 2024.

54 "Kurdistan Region sees 348 fires in four days", *PUKMEDIA*, 21 June 2024; "Fire in Iraqi marshes spreads to Iran's Hor al-Azim", *IranWire*, 17 July 2024; A. Rasul, G. R. Faqe Ibrahim, H. M. Hameed, and K. Tansy, "A trend of increasing burned areas in Iraq from 2001 to 2019", Springer Link, 30 June 2020.

55 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

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

57 Email from Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024.

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

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

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>60</sup>

The DMA and IKMAA have both operated an IMSMA NG database with technical support from iMMAP, a commercial service provider based in Erbil and working under contract to the US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA). The DMA database is located at its Baghdad headquarters.

The DMA was preparing from 2022 to upgrade to IMSMA Core with support from the GICHD and iMMAP but in 2024 it changed plans. The DMA had installed an IMSMA Core server in December 2022, started field testing reporting forms in 2023, and was due to launch the system by December 2023.<sup>61</sup> It expected to start data migration by uploading risk education and victim assistance data before extending to include survey and clearance results.<sup>62</sup> In March 2024, however, the DMA informed the GICHD it had decided to halt the upgrade and continue working with IMSMA NG.

The policy change added to concerns about an information management system which IPs say suffers from significant data gaps and delays of up to two years uploading operating results. This means that the database and an online dashboard are not up to date and do not accurately reflect

annual progress. The DMA attributes delays to the need to correct reporting errors and apply quality control.<sup>63</sup> IPs 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>64</sup> Data verification and correction can add further significant delays.<sup>65</sup> The DMA introduced an Online Task Management System in 2019 to facilitate tasking but took it offline in October 2021, reportedly over sensitivities about the data available.

The limited number and high turnover of the DMA's data processing staff has further contributed to the DMA's information management challenges. iMMAP has progressively reduced the scope of its engagement with the DMA and reduced the number of its staff working in the DMA from five at the start of 2023 to two by the end of the year.<sup>66</sup>

IKMAA has also pursued an upgrade from IMSMA NG but opted to avoid costly IMSMA licenses and install a system tailor-made from open-source software, including PostgreSQL and PHP, and using the open-source geographic information system, QGIS. IKMAA said the system, developed with support from iMMAP, provided robust functionality and a user-friendly interface.<sup>67</sup> IKMAA completed migration to the new system in February 2024 and was due to close IMSMA NG at the end of July.<sup>68</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, officially approved in July 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>69</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, which became a major source of friction between the DMA and operators in 2018–19, has returned as a headache for implementing partners in Federal Iraq since 2022. The DMA issues tasks requested by operators after consultation with DMA operations and information management departments, also taking account of requests from government, local authorities, development plans and prioritisation criteria.<sup>70</sup> In 2021, UNMAS reported improved liaison and coordination with the DMA<sup>71</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>72</sup>

Since 2022, DMA issuance of task orders has suffered delays attributed in part to leadership and policy changes, the need for each order to be signed off by the DMA's director and the slow pace of communication between different DMA departments. Operators say it may take two months to receive task orders and cite a range of challenges: out-of-date data accompanying task orders, poor quality data for areas where the military has conducted demining operations. Operators reported that the introduction of new requirements for obtaining task orders which were not formally communicated to operators resulted in increased rejection of task order applications in the last quarter of 2023 which in turn led to clearance teams being stood down.<sup>73</sup>

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

61 Statement of Iraq, CCM Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19 June 2023.

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

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

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

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

66 Interviews with Clare Pritchard, Country Representative, iMMAP, in Erbil, 15 May 2023, and in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

67 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

68 Interview with Clare Pritchard, iMMAP, in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

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

70 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.

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

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

73 Emails from demining operators in Federal Iraq, April–August 2024.

The DMA issued a directive in October 2023 that an organisation which had conducted NTS of an area could not then receive a task order for clearing it unless they were the only organisation operational in that area or conducted a joint visit to it with the DMA. Joint visits, however, proved rare, were typically difficult, and took a long time to arrange due to the DMA's lack of budget for them, and were rushed affecting the quality of work.<sup>74</sup>

Operational planning in Federal Iraq is also complicated by shifts in a range of policy, bureaucratic, and security arrangements. Operators reported new requirements from tax authorities for international NGOs to pay income tax in 2023, led to a seven-week, sector-wide block on receiving access permits, causing some operations to be suspended.<sup>75</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 technical survey (TS). The standards were written in 2004–05 and existed in Arabic only. Since 2021, 23 of the 35 NMAS have been revised, approved by the Ministry of Environment and officially released. Some of the revised standards are reportedly only available in Arabic, including the NMAS on clearance of improvised mines. Discussions continued in 2023 on a range of standards and technical notes which, as of August 2024, still awaited official approval. These included:<sup>76</sup>

- NMAS 10.50: Storage, transportation and handling of explosives
- IMAS 07.20: Guide for the development and management of mine action contra
- IMAS 07.50: Management of human remains
- NMAS 09.40: Mine Detection Dogs (MDDs)
- NMAS 09.41: MDD Testing
- NMAS 09.44: MDD Health and Care

- Technical Note 09.30/02: Clearance of Depleted Uranium (DU) hazards
- Technical Note 10.20-02/09: Field Risk Assessment (FRA)
- Technical and Evaluation protocol 07.31.01: Mine Detection Dogs (MDD Test Sites)
- Technical and Evaluation Protocol 07.31.02: Mine Detection Dogs (MDD Handler Skills)
- Development of a technical note (NT) on the use of thermite.

Capacity constraints in the DMA have limited its ability to conduct quality management (QM) resulting in delays turning cleared land over to communities. In the past it accredited two international operators—Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and NPA—to conduct quality assurance (QA) in southern governorates and Ninewa respectively.<sup>77</sup> In 2023, the DMA asked operators to budget for providing at least one team for QA/quality control (QC) activities.

### OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

---

The survey and clearance capacity active in Federal Iraq is unclear. The DMA did not respond to requests for data in 2024, and no details were available of the number of teams or manpower engaged in mine action by, or on behalf of, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior (Civil Defence and the Directorate for Explosives Control), the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) and the Ministry of Oil. The DMA reported 28 commercial companies were accredited for demining in 2023 but it was unclear how many were active.<sup>78</sup>

The Ministry of Defence in the last information provided in 2019 said 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>79</sup> The Army also remains the only organisation authorised to conduct demolitions.<sup>80</sup> The Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence units employed 494 personnel divided into teams deployed in every governorate tackling unexploded ordnance and other ERW but did not conduct area clearance of improvised mines.<sup>81</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>82</sup>

---

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

77 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, p. 12.

78 Email from Ahmed Aljasem, DMA, 6 June 2023.

79 Interview with Brig.-Gen. Hassan, Ministry of Defence, Baghdad, 3 May 2019.

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

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

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

In the KRI, IKMAA reported it had a total of 57 teams and 362 operations staff in 2023, including alongside 35 manual demining teams (see Table 6), four EOD teams, five NTS teams, and seven community liaison/risk education teams. IKMAA said not all its demining teams were active in 2023 due to lack of vehicles to transport them but said four drones donated by HI had significantly enhanced its survey capabilities.<sup>83</sup>

Humanitarian demining NGOs in Iraq reported their operating capacity in 2023 dropped by nearly one-fifth from the previous year, with the number of deminers down from 970 to 785, reflecting a downturn in international donor funding for Iraq. MAG, the oldest of the international operators in Iraq also remained the biggest demining NGO with a total of 30 clearance teams and 214 deminers working in both Federal Iraq and the KRI. MAG additionally combined some smaller teams into bigger units, shrinking the number of teams from 45 to 30.

MAG's mechanical capacity remained unchanged but it trialled modifications of assets to try to increase efficiency and productivity. These included modifying an Armtrac 20T unmanned ground vehicle equipped with front tiller, flail, and mine rotary comb attachments, so that it can be used for vegetation removal and mechanical ground preparation on conventional mine clearance in the KRI. It also tested fitting a magnet to draw metal fragments in areas with high metal contamination to reduce the number of detector signals requiring deminer investigation. It worked with IKMAA trialling and training staff in use of thermite technology, mostly on UXO.<sup>84</sup>

FSD had to reduce the number of its manual teams from nine to six in August 2023 due to a substantial cut in funding from the United States (PM/WRA). FSD shared a number of drones with its national partner, SHO, which are employed to assist the set-up of demining sites as well as improve and accelerate NTS. FSD has also applied to bring in a FindMine drone which is under development in partnership

with Switzerland's Urs Endress Foundation and can carry ground-penetrating radar to enhance NTS.<sup>85</sup>

The HALO Trust operated three eight-person teams in 2023, up from one team in the previous year, but having previously worked in Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates it was supported from April by only one donor and worked exclusively in Salah al-Din. It expected it would also have to reduce the number of operational teams in 2024 due to reduced donor funding.<sup>86</sup>

HI deployed two multi-task teams conducting NTS, TS, clearance, and EOD which at the start of the year worked in Kirkuk governorate but from August shifted to more heavily contaminated Salah al-Din.<sup>87</sup> NPA operates one of the biggest NGO demining programmes with 27 teams conducting clearance and TS but trimmed the number of deminers to 144 (from 167 in 2022) though it acquired an additional mechanical asset. Together with MAG, NPA was the only operator working with mine detection dogs (MDDs) in 2023, increasing the number of dogs from five to twelve in 2023.<sup>88</sup>

Federal Iraq's two national demining NGOs, IHSCO and SHO, both operated in Ninewa governorate, but IHSCO worked with four clearance teams mainly in Tel Kaif district while SHO's six clearance teams focused mostly on Sinjar and Makhmour. Volatile security due to the activities of Islamic State cells periodically interfered with survey and clearance, particularly in remoter locations.<sup>89</sup> Funding also poses a particular challenge to national NGOs whose three-year partnership grants from UNMAS concluded at the end of 2023. The two organisations bid for, and received, direct grants to operate in Ninewa's Mosul and Sinjar districts<sup>90</sup> but no mechanism exists for direct funding of NGOs through the national budget. SHO continued to receive technical support from HAMAP, but in mid-2023 HAMAP cut its international advisers from two to one due to funding constraints and SHO's reduced requirement.<sup>91</sup>

**Table 6: Operational clearance capacities deployed in Iraq in 2023<sup>92</sup>**

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Dogs and handlers	Machines	Comments
IKMAA	35	280		6 teams/ 34 personnel	Clearance teams conduct TS; also deploys 4 EOD/BAC teams with 12 personnel
DRC	1	7			1 manual mine clearance team in Basra.
FSD	7	42		1 team/ 9 personnel	

83 Email from Nazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

84 Email from Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024.

85 Email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 27 April 2024.

86 Email from Charles Fowle, HALO, 15 May 2024.

87 Email from Mohamed El Khaakour, HI, 27 July 2024

88 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

89 Emails from Khalid Ahmed, Project Manager, IHSCO, 3 August 2024 and Ismat Selevany, Director, SHO, 2 May 2024.

90 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

91 Email from Zakaria Abbioui, Country Coordinator for Iraq and Lebanon, HAMAP-Humanitaire, 2 September 2024.

92 Emails from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024; Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 28 April 2024; Peter Smethers, FSD, 27 April 2024; Charles Fowle, HALO, 15 May 2024; Mohamed El Khaakour, HI, 27 July 2024; Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024; Khalid Ahmed, Project Manager, IHSCO, 3 August 2024; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024; Ismat Selevany, SHO, 2 May 2024.

Table 6 Continued

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Dogs and handlers	Machines	Comments
HALO	3	24		3 teams/ 16 personnel	1 big mechanical team of 8 people and 2 assets and 2 small teams of 4 people and 1 asset each. Also 1 NTS team, 1 Community Liaison team and 1 EORE team.
HI	2	14			2 multi-task teams
IHSCO	4	16		1 team/ 7 personnel	4 TS teams/20 staff, 1 NTS/5 personnel and 4 CL/EORE teams/12 personnel.
MAG (Federal Iraq)	22	154	2 teams/ 6 dogs	4 teams/ 24 personnel	11 mine action teams, 6 multi-task teams and 2 IED search dog teams.
MAG (KRI)	8	60	1 teams/ 4 dogs	2 teams/ 9 personnel	Demining capacity includes 4 mine action teams, 2 multi-task teams, and an MDD team
NPA	27	144	3 teams/ 12 dogs	10 teams/ 11 personnel	
SHO	6	42		1 team/ 7 personnel	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>6 teams/ 22 dogs</b>	<b>28 teams/ 117 personnel</b>	

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

Iraq reported more than doubling the mined area released in 2023 but did not provide details showing the basis for this result. Federal Iraq and the KRI reported releasing a total of nearly 146km<sup>2</sup> through survey and clearance compared with 72km<sup>2</sup> the previous year. Demining NGOs recorded a small (2%) drop in the results of their operations and Federal Iraq did not identify which operators conducted land release and who achieved the increased outputs reported for the year.

Based on its assessment of available data, the Mine Action Review's best estimate of clearance results in 2023 believes that Iraq cleared a total of 14.35km<sup>2</sup> of areas affected by AP mines, including improvised mines in 2023 (see Table 12).

### FEDERAL IRAQ

Federal Iraq reported release of 143km<sup>2</sup> in 2023 (see Table 7), 85% of it involving areas liberated from Islamic State and affected by improvised mines in central and northern governorates. Government plans to accelerate release of areas affected by legacy mines in the centre and south, where it is pursuing big infrastructure development plans, but in 2023 release of these areas dropped 43% compared with the previous year.<sup>93</sup>

Table 7: Federal Iraq land release results for 2023<sup>94</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	0	19,568,023	3,047,844	22,615,868
Improvised mines	106,862,505	43,793	13,485,231	120,391,527
<b>Totals</b>	<b>106,862,505</b>	<b>19,611,816</b>	<b>16,533,075</b>	<b>143,007,395</b>

<sup>93</sup> Article 7 Reports covering 2022, p. 24; and covering 2023, pp. 25, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2023), pp. 25, 29.

## SURVEY IN 2023

The biggest single component in the 2023 land release spike reported by Federal Iraq was a threefold increase in cancellation of areas affected by improvised mines through NTS. This accounted for three quarters of the total area released in 2023 but was largely due to the area cancelled in just one governorate, Diyala, which reportedly amounted to 84.4km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>95</sup> The DMA did not respond to requests for information and it was unclear which organisation was active in Diyala and could have conducted it. The area reduced by TS dropped to 19.6km<sup>2</sup>, 17% lower than in 2022, and without the Diyala NTS result Federal Iraq's overall land release total would have fallen well short of the previous year's results.

International and national demining NGOs, which did not operate in Diyala in 2023, reported a 54% increase in the mined area they cancelled but that was largely due to NPA, which said it cancelled nearly 27km<sup>2</sup> in Anbar in 2023 (see Table 8), compared with less than 2km<sup>2</sup> in 2022. NPA attributed the increase to better understanding of the contamination and more innovative approaches to tackling it.<sup>96</sup> Despite the increase, operator data shows the area they reduced through TS was only one third of the previous year's level and, as a result, the total area released through survey increased by just 8%.

**Table 8: Release of mined area through survey in 2023 (NGO data)<sup>97</sup>**

Operator	Governorate	Area cancelled (m <sup>2</sup> )	Area reduced (m <sup>2</sup> )
DRC	Basrah, Mosul	0	417,798
FSD	Ninewa	1,935,780	1,320,180
HALO	Anbar, Salah al-Din	3,818,822	163,211
HI	Salah al-Din, Kirkuk	142,020	381,226
IHSCO	Ninewa	198,806	415,203
MAG	Ninewa	1 679 218	0
NPA	Anbar	26,708,521	1,288,210
SHO	Ninewa	8,622	222,632
<b>Totals</b>		<b>32,812,571</b>	<b>4,208,460</b>

## CLEARANCE IN 2023

Federal Iraq reported clearing 16.5km<sup>2</sup> in 2023 (see Table 9), up from 11.1km<sup>2</sup> in 2022, an increase of almost 50%. The increase was largely reported in clearance of areas affected by improvised mines, particularly in Anbar governorate, but the number of improvised mines cleared dropped from 10,577 in 2022 to 8,401 in 2023.<sup>98</sup> Clearance of legacy mined areas was at largely the same level in 2023, although the number of mines cleared rose by more than one third to 4,847, according to official data. The army, militias, and commercial operators contracted by the Ministry of Oil also reportedly conducted clearance in 2023 but the DMA did not provide details. A national contractor, AKAF, reportedly cleared 444,574m<sup>2</sup> and 127 legacy AP mines in Basrah in a project funded by the European Union through UNMAS.<sup>99</sup>

Demining NGOs, with the exception of DRC, focused on areas affected by improvised mines in central and northern governorates (see Table 10), but they faced reduced donor support and manpower and reported clearing 33% less area in 2023 than the previous year and 40% less mines.

**Table 9: Mine clearance in Federal Iraq in 2023 (official data)<sup>100</sup>**

Improvised mine clearance	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Improvised mines destroyed
Anbar	4,308,898	4,622
Kirkuk	657,418	765
Ninewa	8,204,702	2,806
Salah al-Din	314,213	208
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>13,485,231</b>	<b>8,401</b>
Legacy mine clearance	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed
Basrah	2,373,630	2,707
Missan	654,696	2,140
Salah al-Din	19,518	0
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>3,047,844</b>	<b>4,847</b>
<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>16,533,075</b>	<b>13,248</b>

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>96</sup> Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

<sup>97</sup> Emails from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 28 April 2024; Peter Smethers, FSD, 27 April 2024; Charles Fowle, HALO, 15 May 2024; Mohamed El Khaakour, HI, 27 July 2024; Khalid Ahmed, IHSCO, 3 August 2024; Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024; Ismat Selevany, SHO, 2 May 2024.

<sup>98</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 29.

<sup>99</sup> Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

<sup>100</sup> Article 7 Report (covering 2023), pp. 25 and 29.

**Table 10: Mine clearance in Federal Iraq in 2023 (NGO data)<sup>101</sup>**

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed (including improvised mines)	UXO destroyed
DRC	Basrah,	148,712	4	2
FSD	Ninewa	831,777	522	336
HALO	Anbar, Salah al-Din	828,846	467	1,023
HI	Kirkuk, Salah al-Din	258,941	1,407	0
IHSCO	Ninewa	281,962	1,284	0
MAG	Ninewa	3,045,264	1,637	728
NPA	Anbar	2,528,870	2,589	182
SHO	Ninewa	968,934	641	64
<b>Totals</b>		<b>8,893,306</b>	<b>8,551</b>	<b>2,335</b>

### KRI

The KRI has consistently focused on tackling legacy AP mines and for the third successive year recorded a hefty increase in the area cleared which it initially reported amounted to 1.3km<sup>2</sup> in 2023 (see Table 11), up from 0.8km<sup>2</sup> in 2022. It also reported an increase in the number of AP mines cleared to 3,067 from 2,548 in 2022. IKMAA says it does not conduct NTS and combines TS with clearance. The total released area included 343,640m<sup>2</sup> of area reduced.<sup>102</sup> IKMAA later reported area cleared in 2023 as 1,487,658m<sup>2</sup>, including 343,640m<sup>2</sup> reduced area, and increased the number of AP mines destroyed to 3,414.<sup>103</sup>

**Table 11: AP mine clearance in KRI in 2023 (including release through TS)<sup>104</sup>**

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed
<b>Legacy AP mines</b>			
Dohuk MAC	Dohuk	203,551	93
Erbil MAC	Erbil	471,931	781
MAG	Dohuk, Slemani	402,331	244
Slemani MAC	Slemani	242,070	1,949
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1,319,883</b>	<b>3,067</b>

The KRI for the first time also recorded significant clearance of land contaminated by improvised mines, amounting to a total of 1,442,929m<sup>2</sup>, destroying in the process 156 improvised mines. This included clearance in Dohuk of 1,398,189m<sup>2</sup> attributed to MAG and 44,740m<sup>2</sup> attributed to FSD, but the data was not consistent with results reported by the operators.<sup>105</sup>

### CONSOLIDATED MINE CLEARANCE DATA

Based on its assessment of available data, the Mine Action Review's best estimate of clearance results in 2023 believes that Iraq cleared a total of 14.35km<sup>2</sup> of areas affected by AP mines, including improvised mines in 2023 (see Table 12). The total comprised 11.79km<sup>2</sup> in Federal Iraq, with the destruction of 13,294 AP mines and 2.56km<sup>2</sup> in the KRI with the destruction of 3,223 AP mines.

**Table 12: Consolidated mine clearance in Iraq in 2023 (Mine Action Review assessment)**

Region	Contamination type	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed	Comments on data sources
Federal Iraq	Legacy mined area	3,047,844	4,847	National authority data

101 Emails from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 28 April 2024; Peter Smethers, FSD, 27 April and 6 August 2024; Charles Fowle, HALO, 15 May 2024; Mohamed El Khaakour, HI, 27 July 2024; Khalid Ahmed, IHSCO, 3 August 2024; Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024; Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024; and Ismat Selevany, SHO, 2 May and 6 August 2024.

102 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 25.

103 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024. The revised data raised the total area cleared in Dohuk to 250,685m<sup>2</sup> and included clearance in Garmyan of 421,633m<sup>2</sup> and in Halabja of 58,300m<sup>2</sup>.

104 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), pp. 24, 25.

105 Ibid., p. 24. FSD reported it has never conducted clearance in Dohuk but in 2023 cleared seven hazardous areas totalling 339,017m<sup>2</sup> in the former "Grey Zone" destroying 75 AP mines (email from Peter Smethers, FSD, 6 August 2024), and MAG reported clearing 388,578m<sup>2</sup> of AP mined area in Dohuk and Kirkuk clearing 481 AP mines (email from Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024).

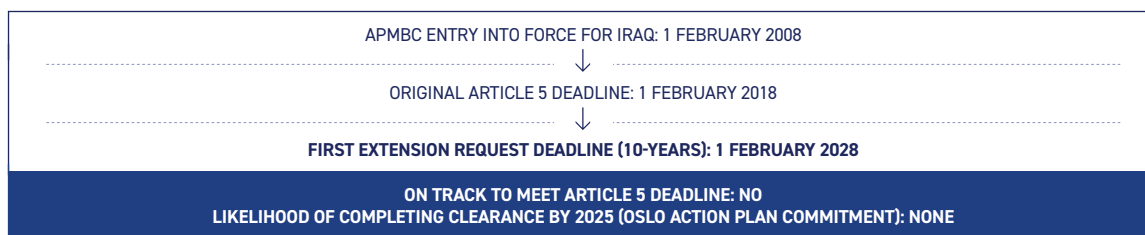
Table 12 Continued

Region	Contamination type	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed	Comments on data sources
Federal Iraq	Improvised mined area	8,744,594	8,447	Operator data
KRI	Legacy mined area	*1,114,018	3,067	National authority data (revised)
KRI	Improvised mined area	1,442,929	156	National authority data
<b>Totals</b>		<b>14,349,385</b>	<b>16,517</b>	

\* Area reduced through TS is not to be considered clearance.

Humanitarian demining organisations additionally reported destroying a total of 73 AP mines in EOD spot tasks.<sup>106</sup>

## ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the 10-year extension granted by states parties in 2017), Iraq is required to destroy all anti-personnel 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.

Land release in the last five years has lowered estimates of Iraq's total mine contamination by one third,<sup>107</sup> but primarily as a result of international donor funding. What remains is some of the heaviest contamination in the world while declining donor support has already resulted in significant cuts to operating capacity of humanitarian demining organisations in Iraq and looks set to accelerate in response to competing priorities in Ukraine and Gaza and perceptions of Iraq's status as an oil-rich country. The Iraqi government, meanwhile, has provided no clarity on plans for financing the mine action sector. After years of discussion on taking up UK Export Financing the government reportedly issued a call for tenders in August 2024 to five pre-selected UK-based organisations but little was known about government plans for managing the loan or for disbursing it.<sup>108</sup>

The institutional framework in Federal Iraq also remains a major impediment to efficient management and coordination of mine action. The rapid turnover of DMA directors is a long-standing problem that was aggravated in 2023–24 by internal upheavals reported to have followed the latest appointment. Its lowly status and small budget of about \$7 million a year risk weakening coordination and implementation of the national strategy and increasing

dependence on state bodies such as the army and PMF that are less accountable to the national mine action authority and less focused on humanitarian demining to international standards than wider security responsibilities.

Table 13: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km <sup>2</sup> )
2023	*14.4
2022	*17.0
2021	11.6
2020	7.7
2019	*15.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>66.4</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.<sup>109</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 2023

106 Emails from Peter Smethers, FSD, 27 April 2024; Charles Fowle, HALO, 15 May 2024; Lisa Jean, MAG, 30 April 2024; and Ismat Selevany, SHO, 2 May and 6 August 2024.

107 Estimated contamination has fallen from 2,426km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2018 to 1,636km<sup>2</sup> at the end of 2023.

108 Telephone interview with international mine action expert, 18 August 2024.

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