

KOSOVO

TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION: 2021

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	2017	2016
Problem understood	7	7
Target date for completion of mine clearance	6	5
Targeted clearance	5	5
Efficient clearance	7	7
National funding of programme	5	4
Timely clearance	6	5
Land-release system in place	7	7
National mine action standards	7	7
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	5	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	6.0	5.7

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Kosovo released 1.12km² by survey and clearance in 2017, an increase on land released in 2016, though areas were still being cleared that prove not to contain any mines. An increase in donor funding enabled The HALO Trust to conduct more clearance in 2017 than the previous year. The Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC), with the support of The HALO Trust, has begun a nationwide socio-economic impact assessment, the results of which will guide the development of a new strategic plan for 2018–24.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Kosovo cannot accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) due to its political status, but its government should nevertheless commit to respect and implement the Convention and to clear all mined areas as soon as possible. This could be done through submission of a voluntary Article 7 transparency report, as the authorities in Western Sahara have done.
- Kosovo should report more accurately and consistently on land release and contamination data.
- Kosovo should ensure implementation of efficient land release operations, including optimum use of high-quality survey, to accurately identify the location of mined areas and avoid clearing areas that are not contaminated.

CONTAMINATION

Kosovo is contaminated by mines, cluster munition remnants (CMR), and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), primarily as a result of the conflict between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the late 1990s, and between FRY and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states in 1999.¹ At the end of 2017, 49 mined areas covered more than 1.6km², down from 58 mined areas over 1.9km² the year before.² The difference in the number of mined areas between the two years, though, cannot be satisfactorily reconciled.

Both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines were used during the conflict, in fixed-pattern minefields as well as more randomly in “nuisance” minefields. Many anti-personnel mines had low metal content, making detection more difficult.³ Although the total number of mines emplaced during the conflict is not known, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC) reported, as at 31 May 2000, a total of 7,232 mines cleared in the preceding year (3,448 anti-personnel mines and 3,784 anti-vehicle mines).⁴

The UN reported in 2002 that “the problems associated with landmines, cluster munitions and other items of unexploded ordnance [UXO] in Kosovo have been virtually eliminated”,⁵ but further investigation revealed considerably more contamination.⁶ In 2013, The HALO Trust and the KMAC conducted a joint non-technical survey of mined areas and cluster munition strikes across Kosovo, with the exception of four districts in

the north. The survey confirmed 130 hazardous areas: 79 mined areas covering an estimated 2.76km² and 51 cluster munition strikes covering an estimated 7.63km².⁷ The total of 79 mined areas was a considerable increase on the 48 mined areas that had been identified at the end of 2012.⁸ By the end of 2014, KMAC reported the number of confirmed mined areas had fallen slightly, to 77 covering 2.75km².⁹

Mines are found mainly on Kosovo’s borders with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but also in the area of Dulie Pass in south-central Kosovo.¹⁰ Mines in Kosovo impede use of land for agriculture, pasture, tourism, the building of infrastructure, and firewood collection, and most directly affect the rural poor.¹¹ Many of the minefields cleared by The HALO Trust in Kosovo are only a few metres from occupied houses.¹²

KMAC, with the support of The HALO Trust, is in the process of undertaking a nationwide socio-economic impact assessment to further understand the impact of CMR and mine contamination. The result will be used to prioritise release of the remaining hazardous areas according to need and according to national development priorities.¹³ The assessment began on 12 March 2018 and was expected to be completed at the end of May, however, there have been some delays due to difficulties obtaining information about land ownership. As at 1 October 2018, the impact assessment and prioritisation of future tasks was expected to be completed and signed off by the end of the month.¹⁴

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In January 2011, the EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] Coordination Management Section became KMAC under the Ministry of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). KMAC is responsible for managing the clearance of mines and ERW. It prepares an annual workplan in cooperation with demining non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and coordinates operations of both NGOs and the Kosovo Protection Force (KFOR). It also coordinates survey, quality assurance (QA), risk education, public information, and victim assistance.¹⁵

Strategic Planning

The current 2015–18 multi-year strategic plan for the Kosovo Mine Action Programme aims to reduce the social, economic, and environmental impact of mines, submunitions, and other UXO in Kosovo.¹⁶ A new strategic plan for 2019–24 is being developed with the aim of clearing all minefields by 2021.¹⁷ The nationwide baseline socio-economic impact assessment conducted in 2018 will guide the development of the new strategic plan.¹⁸

Legislation and Standards

Kosovo has a law on humanitarian demining, which was adopted on 11 April 2012, in addition to a number of other relevant regulations.¹⁹ Kosovo has mine action standards in place, which are said to conform to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).²⁰

Quality Management

KMAC has two QA officers, who conduct site visits at least once a week to ensure work is conducted in accordance with the standards as well as the standing operating procedures (SOPs).²¹

Information Management

KMAC uses the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.

Operators

The KSF provide clearance capacity in Kosovo, including around-the-clock EOD emergency response.²² NGOs have also been conducting land release of mined area

in Kosovo, including The HALO Trust, the Bosnia-based Mine Detection Dog Centre (MDDC), and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).²³

KSF reported that in 2017 it deployed one platoon for demining operations; a reduction from the three platoons it deployed the year before.²⁴

In 2017, The HALO Trust deployed nine manual demining teams and two battle area clearance (BAC) teams, with an average total operational staff of 97 (deminers, team leaders, supervisors, and medics combined). This was a similar capacity to 2016.²⁵

In December 2014, NPA received accreditation to conduct non-technical survey for BAC, and subsequently conducted non-technical survey for CMR-contaminated areas in July 2015.²⁶ NPA subsequently received accreditation for technical survey, BAC, and risk education in July 2016. It started technical survey for CMR in November 2016, with follow-on clearance beginning in February 2017.²⁷ In 2017, NPA supported KSF demining operations with one team of two mine detection dogs (MDDs). As at September 2018, the MDDs had also been deployed for technical survey in northern Kosovo.²⁸

LAND RELEASE

A total of just over 0.23km² of mined area was released by clearance in 2017 and a further 0.89km² reduced by technical survey.

Survey in 2017

In 2017, KMAC reported that The HALO Trust reduced 88,934m² by technical survey.²⁹

Clearance in 2017

KSF and the HALO Trust cleared a combined total of more than 0.23km² in 2017, an increase from just over 0.15km² in 2016.³⁰

Table 1: Mine clearance in 2017³¹

Operator	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed
KSF	1 suspended	16,690	2	0
HALO	12 cleared and 8 suspended	215,575	30	1
Totals		232,265	32	1

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle

KSF cleared one mined area in 2017, totalling 16,690m², destroying two anti-personnel mines. Clearance of the mined area was suspended at the end of the year due to the onset of winter and the consequent end of the demining season.

NPA deployed two MDDs in support of KSF, clearing 4,055m² of the 16,690m² and destroying one anti-personnel mine. KSF also conducted EOD spot tasks during which it destroyed 129 anti-personnel mines in 2017.³²

In contrast to the figures reported by KMAC for 2017, The HALO Trust reported that it had cleared 12 areas and suspended 8 others totalling 229,265m². This is 14,151m² more than KMAC reported that they cleared. Despite working in confirmed mined areas, The HALO Trust cleared 35,188m² which contained no anti-personnel mines. In 2017, The HALO Trust destroyed three anti-personnel mines during EOD callouts.³³

According to KMAC, confirmed mined areas with high impact are prioritised for clearance.³⁴ Clearance tasks are selected from the high priority areas where people are prevented access to land for cultivation and grazing, but also where communities are prevented from safely accessing wooded areas to gather firewood.³⁵

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Kosovo is not a state party to the APMBC, but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires the clearance of mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.

KMAC expects to complete clearance of anti-personnel mines in Kosovo by 2021, but it reported in 2018 that securing funding for NGOs may pose an obstacle to this completion date.³⁶

Table 2: Mine clearance in 2013–17³⁷

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2017	0.23
2016	0.15
2015	0.22
2014	*0.84
2013	*0.40
Total	1.84

* Figure combines mine clearance and BAC

The Kosovo government provided approximately €135,000 in financial support to KMAC in 2017, up from approximately €125,000 the year before. The KSF

received €980,000 for mine and CMR clearance in 2017, up from €960,000 in 2016. KMAC expected the same level of funding in 2018.³⁸

In 2015, HALO Trust reported securing a commitment from an anonymous donor, who pledged to fund mine clearance in Kosovo, and to offer matching funds for clearance of all remaining mined areas provided HALO Trust can raise the other half.³⁹ HALO Trust secured funding in 2016 that allowed it to increase the number of clearance teams. HSTAMIDS (Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System) was introduced to its programme in 2015,⁴⁰ which HALO Trust finds has increased clearance speed in almost all the minefields in which they have been deployed.⁴¹ The increased clearance that HALO Trust conducted in 2017 is due to new contracts with the United States and the Netherlands that started in October 2017. The Netherlands contract supports one team of deminers, and a matched contribution to the United States funding contributes to two demining teams.⁴²

Unfortunately, misinformation persists that mine and CMR clearance was completed in 2001, whereas the reality is that significant contamination remains to be cleared. Kosovo is a poor country, and needs economic assistance to help it complete mine clearance in a timely manner, otherwise completion risks being prolonged to decades after the end of the conflict.⁴³

- See United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), "UNMIK OKPCC EOD Management Section Annual Report 2005", Pristina, 18 January 2006, p. 2; and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo*, Rev'd Edn, Geneva, June 2001, pp. 6 and 15, at: https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0780.pdf.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, Head of Mine Action Centre, KMAC, 4 May 2018
- ICRC, *Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo*, June 2001, p. 15.
- Ibid.
- "UNMIK Mine Action Programme Annual Report – 2001", Mine Action Coordination Cell, Pristina, undated but 2002, p. 1.
- HALO Trust, "Failing the Kosovars: The Hidden Impact and Threat from ERW", 15 December 2006, p. 1.
- HALO Trust, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 20 February 2014.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 18 March 2015.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 30 July 2013.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 12 April 2016; and Andrew Moore, Caucasus and Balkans Desk Officer, HALO Trust, 1 October 2016; and from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- Email from Ash Boddy, Regional Director, HALO Trust, 29 April 2017.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018; and Tom Wellings, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 7 May 2018.
- Emails from Tom Wellings, HALO Trust, 7 May and 5 October 2018.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 1 August 2012.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 20 February 2017; and Andrew Moore, Regional Director Europe, HALO Trust, 2 June 2016.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- Email from Tom Wellings, HALO Trust, 7 May 2018.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 June and 3 July 2017.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 12 April 2016; and Andrew Moore, 2 June 2016.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- HALO Trust, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First CCM Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.
- HALO Trust, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First CCM Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- Ibid.
- Email from Rhys Mansel, Capability Support Officer, HALO Trust, 28 May 2018.
- NPA, "Cluster Munition Remnants in Northern Kosovo: non-technical survey of contamination and impact", September 2015.
- Emails from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 4 May and 5 May 2017.
- Email from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 24 September 2018.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018. There is a discrepancy in the reported data between The HALO Trust and KMAC as The HALO Trust did not report any technical survey in 2017.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 March 2017.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018. There is a slight discrepancy in the reported data, as HALO Trust reported that its clearance totalled 229,726m² rather than 215,575m². Email from Tom Wellings, HALO Trust, 7 May 2018.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018 and Terje Eldøen, NPA, 24 September 2018.
- Emails from Tom Wellings, HALO Trust, 7 May 2018 and Arber Binakaj, Data & IT Manager, HALO Trust, 21 September 2018.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- Email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 29 April 2017.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- See Landmine Monitor and Mine Action Review reports on Kosovo covering 2011–14.
- Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- HALO Trust, "Kosovo" webpage, accessed 12 May 2016, at: <https://www.halotruster.org/where-we-work/europe-and-caucasus/kosovo/>; and email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 29 September 2017.
- Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 1 October 2016.
- Email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 29 April 2017.
- Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 4 May 2018.
- HALO Trust, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First CCM Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.