

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Armenia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a state party to the APMBC, Armenia has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Armenia should clarify the extent of remaining mine contamination, including in military restricted zones.
- Armenia should mobilise the necessary resources to finish mine clearance and set a deadline for the completion of operations.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

At the end of 2018, Armenia had more than 5.7km² of confirmed mined area and a further 3.8km² of suspected mined area, as set out in Table 1. The mined areas contained anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines, or a combination of both, as well as unexploded ordnance (UXO).¹ Of 96 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), 56 contain anti-personnel mines, totalling just over 2.9km². Three of the six suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), totalling just over 0.1km², may also be contaminated by anti-personnel mines.² Territory seized from Azerbaijan during the conflict is believed to be significantly contaminated by mines and ERW, including unexploded submunitions.³ However, the precise extent of contamination in those districts is unknown.

Table 1: Mined area (at end 2018)⁴

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
AP mines	42	2,192,049	3	105,500
AV mines	40	2,807,879	3	3,728,442
AP and AV mines	11	706,046	0	0
AP mines and UXO	2	12,769	0	0
AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Totals	96	5,723,585	6	3,833,942

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle

Four of Armenia's eleven provinces still contain mined areas. Three are contaminated with both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, while the fourth – Vayots Dzor – is contaminated solely with anti-vehicle mines, as set out in Table 2.⁵ The difference in total mine contamination between the end of 2017 and end of 2018 cannot be explained or reconciled by the total area released during the intervening 12 months.

Table 2: Mined area by province (at end 2018)⁶

Province	Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
Gegharkunik	AP mines	3	584,022	2	105,123
	AV mines	5	2,428,128	3	3,728,442
Syunik	AP mines	33	1,440,476	1	377
	AV mines	22	296,696	0	0
	AP and AV mines	8	676,617	0	0
	AP mines and UXO	2	12,769	0	0
	AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Tavush	AP mines	6	167,551	0	0
	AV mines	10	15,603	0	0
	AP and AV mines	3	29,429	0	0
Vayots Dzor	AV mines	3	67,452	0	0
Totals		96	5,723,585	6	3,833,942

A Landmine Impact Survey was conducted in Armenia in 2005, followed by partial survey of 17 sites by The HALO Trust in 2012, and then again, in 2012–13, by the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD). FSD found 17 SHAs estimated to cover 26km² and 114 CHAs that covered 21km² in four districts bordering Azerbaijan. Thirteen of these areas, totalling 1.8km², contained only UXO and not mines.⁷ In 2018, the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE) stated that it planned to conduct non-technical survey in Gegharkunik province but that the military-restricted zones continued to be off limits for survey and clearance.⁸

Mine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination in Armenia is primarily the consequence of armed conflict with Azerbaijan in 1988–94, in which both sides used mines. The heaviest contamination is along the borders and confrontation lines with Azerbaijan, including the area in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and other territories controlled by the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Forces. Armenia's border with Georgia has been cleared of mines, whereas the border with Turkey, also mined during the Soviet era, is still contaminated.⁹ While non-technical survey in 2012–13 by the FSD did not find evidence of mines outside the buffer zones in Ararat province, which borders Turkey, certain areas on that border remain unsurveyed because they are controlled by Russian border troops.¹⁰

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The CHDE was established by the Armenian government in 2011 as a civilian, non-commercial state body responsible for conducting survey and clearance and identifying contaminated areas. In 2013, the CHDE was made Armenia's national mine action centre.¹¹ The CHDE can negotiate with international demining organisations, accept international funding, sign contracts, and receive international assistance.¹² The CHDE has an advisory board, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Defence, Emergency Situations, Territorial Administration, Education, and Justice.¹³

In 2013, in conformity with a government decree, the CHDE began developing national mine action legislation. The CHDE began drafting the law in 2015¹⁴ with the support of the OSCE office in Yerevan.¹⁵ As at April 2019, the CHDE expected to submit the draft mine action law to the new Parliament of Armenia for discussion before the end of the year following which it will need to receive government approval and be adopted by parliament.¹⁶

In 2018, the Armenian government allocated AMD212 million (approx. US\$433,000) to cover the costs of the CHDE. No separate funding was provided for survey and/or clearance operations. In 2019, the government allocated AMD339 million (approx. \$691,000) of which AMD110 million was for survey and clearance operations. Armenia does not receive any donor funding for mine action.¹⁷

The CHDE receives capacity development support from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). CHDE staff have been trained in land release, risk education, and information management.¹⁸

GENDER

The CHDE does not have a gender policy and implementation plan but has reported that gender has been mainstreamed in Armenia's draft national mine action strategy. During community liaison activities, all groups affected by mine contamination are consulted, including women and children. The CHDE is said to offer equal employment opportunities for both men and women. Two of the department heads within the CHDE are female and out of a total of 47 employees 15 are women (32%), most of whom occupy senior or specialist roles. However, there are no women working in the survey or clearance teams.¹⁹

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

With FSD's support, the CHDE set up and manages the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.²⁰ In 2018, the CHDE had planned to install IMSMA Core but this was deferred to 2019.²¹

PLANNING AND TASKING

The draft National Strategic Plan on Mine Action was approved by the Armenian government in 2018 and it was expected that it would be adopted in 2019. The main objectives of the draft Plan are to address, as a priority, anti-personnel mines in CHAs that have a humanitarian impact, increasing community safety in support of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.²²

Priority for clearance is based on CHDE criteria. Priority is given first to contaminated areas that are up to 1km away from a population centre, then to those near agricultural land, and finally to contaminated areas that negatively affect the environment. These are mostly located in the mountains. To optimise efficient deployment of resources, clearance plans are typically drawn up on a community-by-community basis.²³

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

In 2013, with the assistance of FSD, the CHDE developed the Armenian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and submitted them for government approval. The NMAS were approved by the government in April 2014.²⁴ In 2018, amendments were made to the NMAS for mine risk education, accreditation of demining organisations, and mine detection dogs (MDDs). According to CHDE, reviews of the NMAS are conducted following the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and international best practice.²⁵

The CHDE will further develop its standing operating procedures (SoPs) once the draft law on mine action has been adopted.²⁶ SoPs on manual mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) have already been elaborated.²⁷

OPERATORS

All demining in Armenia is conducted by the Armenian Peacekeeping Engineering Brigade (PKEB) and the CHDE. In 2018, the PKEB deployed three teams of seven clearance personnel. In addition, the CHDE deployed one technical survey team. In 2019, both technical survey and clearance capacity were planned to be increased.²⁸

Quality management is conducted in accordance with IMAS and the NMAS. Quality assurance (QA) is conducted by dedicated officers who make regular field visits to inspect cleared land.²⁹ Quality control (QC) is conducted once clearance of the land has been completed, but prior to handover.³⁰

OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Six MDDs were introduced in Armenia but failed their accreditation in 2017 and were returned so could not be involved in demining operations as planned.³¹ As at April 2019, there were no plans to bring back MDDs to Armenia although the CHDE is open to discuss the possibility of involving MDDs in its operations in the future.³²

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2018

No anti-personnel mined area was cancelled or reduced through survey in 2018. A total of 46,881m² of ERW-contaminated area was reduced in the Chambarak locality in Gegharkunik province.

In 2018, a total of 9,237m² of anti-personnel mined area was cleared from Davit Bek CHA in the Kapan locality in Syunik province. During clearance, only one anti-personnel mine was found. In addition, in 2018, the CHDE implemented the following clearance activities: clearance of 3,128m² of anti-vehicle mined area in Togh in Syunik province and clearance of 6,676m² of ERW in Kornidzor in Syunik province.

No target date has been set for the completion of mine clearance in Armenia, due to the uncertainty over future capacity and funding.³³ Moreover, over the past five years, demining in Armenia has been slow and productivity rates paltry, as Table 3 illustrates. In 2018, very little demining took place. Armenia claims that challenges in its mine and ERW clearance include the low level of contamination and the random distribution of mines.³⁴

Operational capacity was expected to increase in 2019 with clearance continuing of the Davit Bek CHA. This is near a highway directly affecting people's safety and will be used for pasture once clearance is completed.³⁵ Going forward Armenia will struggle to complete clearance without a significant increase in funding and capacity.

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2014-18

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2018	*0.01
2017	0
2016	0.02
2015	0.07
2014	0.04
Total	*0.14

* Area rounded up.

1 Email from Margaret Lazyan, Head of Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance, Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE), 8 August 2018.

2 Ibid.

3 Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), "ANAMA 2017".

4 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 September 2019.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", Yerevan, 2013, p. 12.

8 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.

9 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014 and 28 April 2017, and interview in Geneva, 1 April 2014.

10 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", CHDE, Yerevan, 2013, p. 9; and emails from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016; and Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.

11 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015.

12 Armenian Ministry of Defence, "The New Legal Status of the Humanitarian De-Mining Center", 13 February 2014; and email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 September 2018.

13 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.

14 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.

15 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.

16 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014.

21 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.

22 Ibid.

23 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.

24 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.

25 Ibid.

26 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.

27 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.

28 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 23 August 2019.

29 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015.

30 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.

31 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.

32 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.; and email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.

35 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.