

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia 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, Georgia has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Georgia should continue to engage in political dialogue with Azerbaijan, to enable full clearance of the Red Bridge border minefield.
- Georgia should grant access to The HALO Trust to complete survey and clearance of the remaining mined areas.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The full extent of mine contamination in Georgia is not known. According to estimates, as set out in Table 1, Georgia more than 2.3km² of mined areas across nine minefields. Contamination comprises both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. The problem includes Osiauri village, in Kashuri municipality, and Vaziani village, in Gardabani municipality, both of which are in military zones. Khojali mountain, in Mestia municipality, is on the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with Abkhazia, where the size of mined areas is not known.¹

Table 1: Mined area (at end 2018)²

Region	District/ Municipality	Village	Contamination	Mined areas	Area (m ²)
Kvemo Kartli	Marneuli	Kachagani (Red Bridge)	AP and AV mines	1	2,282,852
Kvemo Kartli	Gardabani	Vaziani (Military zone)	AP mines	1	N/K
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Barisakho 1, Barisakho 2	AP mines	2	4,275
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Kadoeti	AP mines	1	23,783
Shida Kartli	Kashuri	Osiauri (Military zone)	AP mines	1	N/K
Shida Kartli	Gori	Zemo Nikozi	AP mines and UXO	1	3,233
Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti	Mestia	Khojali	AP mines	1	N/K
Totals				8	2,314,143

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle UXO = Unexploded ordnance N/K = Not known

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) conducted a General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA) for Georgia from October 2009 to January 2010, which identified eight suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) and seven confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) in 13 districts, the latter of which totalled more than 4.5km² in estimated area.³ Of the 15 SHAs and CHAs in total, ten contained mines and five were contaminated with unexploded ordnance (UXO).⁴ Between 2009 and the end of 2012, HALO Trust cleared five of the minefields that had a humanitarian impact.⁵

The Red Bridge minefield is an unfenced 7km-long minefield consisting of densely packed lines of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines at the "Red Bridge" border crossing between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Laid in 1991 by Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, it is Georgia's largest minefield and the last major minefield not in the vicinity of a functioning military establishment. As at April 2019, there had been 88 accidents, 22 involving humans and 66 involving livestock.⁶

Abkhazia was declared mine-impact free in 2011 after 14 years of mine clearance. In 2017, there was an explosion at a local military ammunition store close to the village of Primorsky which scattered mines and UXO over a 4.5km² area.⁷ There may also be mined areas in South Ossetia as a result of the 1990–92 Georgian-Ossetian war, and the more recent 2008 conflict with Russia. The HALO Trust has planned to conduct non-technical survey in South Ossetia, but, to date, has not been granted access. South Ossetia is effectively subject to Russian control and is inaccessible to both Georgian authorities and international non-governmental organisation (NGO) demining operators.

Georgia is believed to be free of cluster munition remnants (CMR), with the possible exception of South Ossetia, which is occupied by Russia and inaccessible to both the Georgian authorities and international mine action NGOs (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2019* report on Georgia for further information).⁸ Georgia remains contaminated by other UXO, likely in South Ossetia and also within Georgia in former firing ranges.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD), renamed after a reorganisation in January 2019, sits under the State Military Scientific Technical Centre, known as DELTA, within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).⁹ The primary task of the HDCD is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including overseeing the national mine action strategy and quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC), and facilitating the development and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards, in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).¹⁰

For all mine action-related issues, The HALO Trust communicates with DELTA.¹¹ The Georgian authorities are supportive of the granting of visas for international staff and the importation of demining equipment. HALO Trust submitted several requests to the MoD seeking access to the remaining minefields, the last of which was submitted in April

2018. As at May 2019, HALO Trust had received permission to begin clearing two of the five remaining minefields at Khojali and Kadoeti, respectively. As at June 2019, permissions for the remaining three minefields had not been granted.¹²

The Georgian government funds the running costs of the HDCD as well as the Engineering Brigade, which carries out some battle area clearance (BAC).¹³

The national authority has received capacity development support from HALO Trust and the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The HALO Trust has provided training on clearance and survey techniques and, in 2018, donated a mine action vehicle to the HDCD.¹⁴ The GICHD has provided training for HDCD staff on the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database, IMAS, and ammunition storage.¹⁵

GENDER

DELTA and The HALO Trust each have gender and diversity policies. HALO Trust supports use of mixed-gender teams to conduct survey, which allows for greater engagement with women and children.¹⁶ If HALO Trust is given permission to work in the remaining minefields in Tbilisi Administered Territories (TAT), community liaison and survey teams will be mixed gender and inclusive of ethnic minorities.¹⁷

There is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance teams in Georgia, including for managerial level/supervisory positions although proportionately the number of women remains low. In Abkhazia, The HALO Trust worked with local women's organisations during its July 2018 recruitment drive in an effort to achieve gender parity. As at April 2019, 30% of its operational and management staff were female.¹⁸

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The HDCD uses the IMSMA database and, according to The HALO Trust, the data is accurate. Data archives go back to 2009 and are regularly updated, based on HALO Trust's operations reports and on work by the Engineering Brigade.¹⁹ The IMSMA database is administered by a certified specialist within the HDCD, trained by the GICHD, who receives regular refresher training in the latest procedures.²⁰

The data in the national information management system is accessible to The HALO Trust.²¹ HALO Trust uses its own IMSMA-compatible data collection forms that DELTA have approved while the HDCD QA/QC team, also have their own forms.²²

PLANNING AND TASKING

Georgia has a national mine action strategy. Its main aims and targets are focused on the remaining clearance of anti-personnel mines and other areas contaminated with ERW.²³ The annual workplans for 2018 and 2019 centred on battle area clearance (BAC) and minefield clearance within TAT.²⁴

In April 2019, due to access not being granted to the remaining minefields, The HALO Trust had suspended all operations in Georgia, apart from one two-month

task clearing abandoned ordnance at Chonto, near the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia. The Abkhazia programme will continue operations at Primorsky and HALO will also respond to explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) call-outs.²⁵

Georgia is said to have a long-term capacity to address anti-personnel mine contamination, with plans in place for dealing with residual risk and liability.²⁶

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

As at April 2019, Georgian National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards and Guidelines were still under development. The IMAS and International Ammunition Technical Guidelines are being translated into Georgian.²⁷

The HALO Trust has standing operating procedures (SoPs) in place for all its activities, including survey, mine clearance, and EOD. No modifications or enhancements were made to these SoPs in 2018 or early 2019.²⁸

OPERATORS

The HALO Trust, which is the only international operator working in the country, conducts survey and both BAC and mine clearance.²⁹ DELTA retains a small demining and EOD capacity in TAT. The Engineering Brigade has been carrying out BAC in Gonio, a former military polygon in the Adjara region, and also responds to EOD call-outs. The State Security Service of Georgia also carries out EOD spot tasks. In Abkhazia, the emergency services (EMERCOM) have a small EOD capacity, though HALO Trust is generally relied upon to deal with all items of UXO.³⁰

Within The HALO Trust, operational staff deployed in 2018 were responsible for both survey and clearance. In TAT, HALO's operational staff decreased from 38 in 2017 to 18 in 2018. In 2019, HALO made all operational staff in TAT redundant. In Abkhazia, the programme began 2018 with 28 staff, which increased to 77 in July to cope with expanded operations at Primorsky. This was reduced to 35 staff at the beginning of 2019.³¹

In TAT, quality management (QM) is conducted by DELTA. In Abkhazia, The HALO Trust is responsible for its own QM.³²

OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2018, The HALO Trust had two mechanical assets deployed in Anaklia region in western Georgia, for UXO clearance. The Abkhazia programme also has two mechanical assets which it used for clearance at the Primorsky ammunition store explosion site. The HALO Trust also uses a drone to collect aerial footage of a task.³³

Mine detection dogs (MDDs) were used by the Engineering Brigade during BAC in the Gonio former military polygon, Adjara region. The State Security Service of Georgia has several MDD teams which it uses for EOD spot tasks.³⁴

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2018

A total of 415,604m² of mine and ERW contaminated area was released in 2018, of which 377,846m² was cleared, and 37,758m² was reduced through technical survey. A total of 664 mines were destroyed, including those destroyed during EOD spot tasks.

SURVEY IN 2018

There was no non-technical survey undertaken in 2018. The HALO Trust reduced 37,758m² through technical survey in Anaklia village in Samegrelo-Svaneti region.³⁵ This is a slight reduction from the 39,568m² reduced through technical survey in 2017.

CLEARANCE IN 2018

In 2018, The HALO Trust cleared 389,204m² and destroyed 556 anti-personnel mines (see Table 2). In TAT, no mines were found in the areas cleared; only 33 items of UXO.³⁶ This is a large increase from the 9,256m² cleared at the Chognari minefield in 2017. The HALO Trust conducted BAC in 2018, focusing its mine clearance on Abkhazia.

Table 2: Mine clearance by The HALO Trust in 2018

Region / Village	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Shida Kartli, Dvani	1	102,551	0	0	11
Shida Kartli, Dzevera	1	5,600	0	0	22
Abkhazia, Primorsky	1	269,695	556	4	38,021
Totals	3	377,846	556	4	38,054

In addition, national operators destroyed nine anti-personnel mines in TAT while The HALO Trust destroyed 99 anti-personnel mines in Abkhazia during EOD spot tasks in 2018. None of the mines found in Abkhazia had been laid; they were all either being stored in personal stockpiles or had been discarded in uninhabited areas.³⁷

No target date has been set for completion of anti-personnel mine clearance in Georgia. Georgia has identified clearance of the Red Bridge minefield as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.³⁸ Georgia previously reported plans to start clearance of the Red Bridge minefield in 2015.³⁹ Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives met in 2015 to discuss demining the minefield,⁴⁰ but only survey was permitted. The HALO Trust conducted non-technical survey between 1 and 3 July, and then began technical survey on 4 July 2015. The following month, however, the Azerbaijani military demanded that technical survey operations be halted.⁴¹ Georgia reported discussing with Azerbaijan during 2018 regarding the clearance of Red Bridge minefield.⁴² However, as at April 2019 The HALO Trust had not been granted permission to restart clearance there.⁴³

In Abkhazia, the main priority is the clearance of Primorsky, where an unplanned explosion in 2017 contaminated the surrounding territory with mines and UXO. In 2018, HALO received funding from the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. With adequate funding, HALO Trust hopes to finish the clearance of Primorsky by 2021.⁴⁴

- 1 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 25 April 2018.
- 2 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 3 Email from Irakli Kochashvili, Deputy Head, International Relations and Euro-Atlantic Integration Department, Ministry of Defence, 6 September 2009.
- 4 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 4 June 2015.
- 5 The HALO Trust, "Where we work: Georgia", accessed 11 July 2019, at: bit.ly/2yTgNwu.
- 6 Email from Matthew Walker, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 7 The HALO Trust, "Where we work: Georgia", accessed 11 July 2019, at: bit.ly/2yTgNwu.
- 8 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Matthew Walker, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 9 Ibid.; Decree 897 issued by the Minister of Defence, 30 December 2010; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016 and 10 June 2019; Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 21 March 2017 to 31 March 2018), Form A.
- 10 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.
- 11 Email from Michael Montañ, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 21 June 2019.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March and 10 June 2019.
- 14 Emails from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 10 June 2019.
- 15 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March and 10 June 2019.
- 16 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 22 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 23 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 24 Ibid and 10 June 2019.; and email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 25 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 26 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 29 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
- 30 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 31 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 32 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 33 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid., and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 38 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 39 Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and response to Mine Action Review questionnaire by Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.
- 40 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.
- 41 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 42 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 43 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 44 Ibid.