

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JUNE 2028
ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

KEY DATA

**ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)
MINE CONTAMINATION: MEDIUM**

NATIONAL AUTHORITY ESTIMATE

> 17 km²

AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2022

5.27 km²

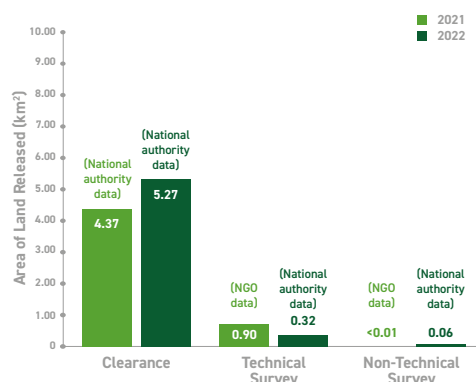
(NATIONAL AUTHORITY DATA)

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2022

27,177

(NATIONAL AUTHORITY DATA)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **LOW**

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Despite the financial and political crisis that gripped the country in 2022, Sri Lanka managed to increase its clearance output from the previous year and, in 2023, launch its "National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027", which provides a roadmap to the fulfilment of Sri Lanka's Article 5 obligations by the end of 2027. Sri Lanka is one of the few States Parties with large-scale contamination that is on course to complete clearance by the initial deadline set down in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- In accordance with its National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027, Sri Lanka should implement the "completion process" without delay, which includes ongoing non-technical survey (NTS) to identify previously unknown contamination, survey and clearance of registered hazardous areas, and the completion survey that will allow the government to declare released administrative areas as complete.
- Sri Lanka should update and adopt its national mine action standards (NMAS) without further delay.
- Greater efforts should be made to ensure that the national database is up to date and accurate.
- NMAC should establish an in-country forum/platform to bring together all relevant national and international stakeholders regularly to discuss progress and challenges in Article 5 implementation and help strengthen coordination.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2022)	Score (2021)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	7	7	Sri Lanka's NTS across all conflict-affected districts has added more than 8.8km ² of anti-personnel (AP) mined area to the database since its initiation in 2021. Due to be completed at the end of 2023, it should mean that Sri Lanka will have its most accurate assessment of remaining contamination to date, estimated at 15.4km ² as at the end of 2022.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	7	7	Sri Lanka's national mine action programme is nationally owned, with committed funding from the national government, which although reduced, was still provided in 2022 despite the financial and political crisis in the country. Sri Lanka plans to develop a resource mobilisation strategy in 2023 to increase national and international funding. While no in-country platform exists, regular meetings are held with operators and donors to foster collaboration and consult on sector issues.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	7	7	Sri Lanka's "National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027" includes gender and diversity as a cross-cutting issue across all mine action. There was a significant decrease in the number of women employed in the NMAC in 2022 from 2021. However, the Army's Humanitarian Demining Units (HDUs) trained and deployed two female demining teams for the first time.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	5	5	Sri Lanka will begin to use the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core and IMSMA New Generation in parallel from this year rather than conducting a full-scale migration. While a data clean-up took place in 2022, reporting between operators and NMAC continued to reflect disparities and inconsistencies. In its latest Article 7 report covering 2022, Sri Lanka only reported the cumulative multi-year land release totals for 2002–22 rather than disaggregated annual land release outputs.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	8	7	Sri Lanka launched its new national mine action strategy in March 2023. The strategy outlines Sri Lanka's plans for land release to 2027, including annual targets and elaboration of a "completion process", as the framework for the Sri Lankan Government to document and demonstrate compliance with Article 5.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (20% of overall score)	7	7	Sri Lanka has still not adopted the revised NMAS but has instead decided to update the NMAS on technical survey, land release, and quality management by the end of 2023. Sri Lanka's demining capacity remained largely the same from 2021 to 2022.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	8	8	NMAC reported clearance of nearly 5.27km ² of mined area in 2022, an increase from the previous year despite the financial and political crisis which caused operations to be suspended for a total of 74 days across the four NGOs. Sri Lanka is confident of its ability to meet its Article 5 deadline and has set out a roadmap for completion. This should be achievable provided no substantial discoveries of previously unknown mined area occur and that operational capacity can be maintained.
Average Score	7.1	7.0	Overall Programme Performance: GOOD

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
- National Mine Action Centre (NMAC)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Delvon Assistance for Social Harmony (DASH)
- Skavita Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Project (SHARP)
- Sri Lankan Army (SLA) Humanitarian Demining Units (HDUs)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust (HALO)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

As at end of 2022, NMAC reported that the total mined area in Sri Lanka stood just over 15.4km² across 621 mined areas: this comprised more than 13.5km² across 534 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) and almost 2km² across 87 suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) (see Table 1).¹ The total for 2022 is an increase from the almost 11.9km² across 360 mined areas reported as at the end of 2021.² This is due to the addition of mined area identified during the ongoing NTS, which has added more than 8.8km² (almost 7.1km² in 193 CHAs and more than 1.7km² in 64 SHAs) to the database.³ Anti-personnel (AP) mine contamination affects eight of twenty-five administrative districts. Mullaitivu remains the most heavily contaminated of these districts, followed by Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mannar.

Table 1: Mined area (at end 2022)⁴

Province	District	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total SHAs and CHAs	Total area (m ²)
Northern	Jaffna	21	955,414	1	24,871	22	980,285
	Kilinochchi	73	1,657,989	2	233,245	75	1,891,234
	Mannar	124	1,333,030	29	169,505	153	1,502,535
	Mullaitivu	233	8,300,152	11	494,109	244	8,794,261
	Vavuniya	41	580,294	16	833,826	57	1,414,120
North Central	Anuradhapura	1	37,399	0	0	1	37,399
	Polonnaruwa	3	19,278	2	33,230	5	52,508
Eastern	Batticaloa	18	314,167	5	45,223	23	359,390
	Trincomalee	20	323,632	21	83,529	41	407,161
Totals		534	13,521,355	87	1,917,538	621	15,438,893

NMAC has added 1.6km² to the baseline as a “buffer” to allow for some polygons being larger than what is currently recorded in Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA).⁵

Sri Lanka has long been extensively contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). After a major clearance operation, most remaining contamination is located in Sri Lanka’s five northern districts, the focus of almost three decades of armed conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which ended in May 2009. Both sides made extensive use of mines, including belts of P4 Mk I and Mk II AP blast mines laid by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA), and long defensive lines with a mixture of mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including AP mines of an improvised nature, laid by the LTTE.⁶ Indian peacekeeping forces also used mines during their presence from July 1987 to January 1990.⁷ Much progress in land release has been achieved over the course of the last decade.

The SLA used both AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines, with all minelaying said to have been recorded⁸ and made available to the national mine action programme.⁹ In Jaffna, where the minefields were laid by the SLA, the extent of contamination is well understood.¹⁰ The HALO Trust (HALO), in coordination with NMAC and its Regional Mine Action Office (RMAO), has now cleared most of the accessible SLA-laid minefields in Jaffna district. The bulk of the remaining contamination is located in the Jaffna High Security Zone, which is currently only accessible to the SLA. In February 2023, the Sri Lankan government announced they would make 0.65km² of the contamination accessible for clearance and, as of writing, HALO had completed NTS and started clearance of this area.¹¹

Minefield maps and information on mine-laying strategy are not readily available for the LTTE-laid minefields, which pose more of a challenge to clear.¹² Typically, LTTE minelaying was less predictable and more sporadic, and many of the minefields are in jungle areas with limited human activity.¹³

1 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C.

2 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form C; and email from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, Assistant Director/Senior IMSMA Officer, NMAC, 2 August 2022. At the Nineteenth Meeting of States Parties to the APMB in November 2021, Sri Lanka reported remaining mined area stood as 12.55km².

3 Email from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 2 August 2022.

4 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Jayalath Rohana, IMSMA Officer, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

5 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, pp. 20 and 23.

6 Interviews with demining operators, Colombo, 29 March–2 April 2010; and with Maj. Pradeep Gamage, Officer-in-Charge, North Jaffna Humanitarian Demining Unit (HDU), Jaffna, 3 April 2007.

7 Ministry of Prison Reforms, Rehabilitation, Resettlement, and Hindu Religious Affairs, Sri Lanka National Mine Action Strategy 2016–2020, May 2016, p. 6; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form 1.

8 Ibid.; and interview with Rob Syfret, Operations Manager, HALO, in Kilinochchi, 12 September 2016.

9 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form 1.

10 Email from Belinda Vause, HALO, 3 April 2020.

11 Email from Nadine Lainer, Deputy Program Manager, HALO, 13 April 2023.

12 Email from Belinda Vause, HALO, 3 April 2020; and Statement of Sri Lanka, Fourth APMB Review Conference, Oslo, 29 November 2020.

13 Email from Belinda Vause, HALO, 3 April 2020.

Operators have encountered a wide range of LTTE devices, including AP mines with anti-tilt and anti-lift mechanisms. Tripwire-activated Claymore-type mines and, to a lesser extent, AV mines have been found, along with a number of forms of improvised devices to act as fragmentation mines, bar mines, electrical and magnetically initiated explosive devices, and mines connected to detonating cord to mortar and artillery shells.¹⁴ The LTTE manufactured almost all the mines their forces used.¹⁵

Estimates of total contamination have fallen sharply: down from 506km² at the end of 2010. A district-by-district re-survey in 2015–17 of all registered SHAs in the national database resulted in cancellation of more than 42km² of mined area and helped provide greater clarity on the extent of remaining contamination.¹⁶ In September 2021, NMAC initiated a comprehensive NTS across all conflict-affected districts to identify previously unknown mined and ERW-contaminated areas.¹⁷ This survey has led to the discovery of significant amounts of mined areas not previously detected. Past NTS had gaps in coverage, and recent efforts tended to be reactive, particularly in

areas with limited human interaction such as the Mullaitivu jungle.¹⁸ The newly found mined areas are often situated in forests, where communities have only recently returned. Additionally, some previously registered CHAs were found to be larger than expected.¹⁹ The survey's findings have contributed to the development of Sri Lanka's new national mine action strategy.²⁰

The NTS is being conducted jointly by the SLA HDU and four clearance non-governmental organisations (NGOs): international NGOs (INGOs) HALO and Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and national NGOs Delvon Assistance for Social Harmony (DASH) and Skavita Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Project (SHARP).²¹ As at July 2023, the NTS was ongoing in the Eastern Province and was expected to be completed before the end of the year.²² NMAC said the current baseline of AP mine contamination has been established through inclusive consultation with women, girls, boys, and men, including, where relevant, from minority groups.²³ According to Sri Lanka, all areas known or suspected to contain AP mines have been marked and warning signs in Sinhala, Tamil, and English prominently displayed.²⁴

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Aside from mines, Sri Lanka remains contaminated with a wide range of ERW, including unexploded air-dropped bombs (although these are very rarely discovered), artillery shells and missiles, mortar bombs, hand-held anti-tank projectiles, and rifle and hand grenades. Large caches of abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) also exist, particularly in the north.²⁵ These are being dealt with at the same time as the remaining mined areas.²⁶

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

NMAC has responsibility for priority setting, information management, quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC), coordination with demining organisations and cooperation partners, and establishing policy and standards.²⁷ NMAC suffers from frequent leadership and institutional changes, including under which ministry within the Sri Lankan government the Centre sits, while the Director of NMAC is a political appointee and is the Secretary of the ministry in question. Lack of consistent leadership can impede management of the mine action centre and reduce its effectiveness. NMAC now sits within the Ministry of Urban

Development and Housing, after a re-shuffle in August 2022.²⁸ Prior to this the NMAC had undergone near yearly changes to its ministry affiliation.

Clearance operations are coordinated, tasked, and quality managed by a RMAO in Kilinochchi, working in consultation with District Steering Committees for Mine Action. The Committees are chaired by government agents heading district authorities.²⁹ The RMAO also suffer from the impact of a high turnover of staff, following national elections, and also as military personnel are seconded and generally rotate fairly quickly.³⁰

14 Email from Valon Kumnova, HALO, 11 April 2014; and Sri Lanka National Mine Action Strategy 2016–2020, May 2016, p. 6.

15 Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form 1.

16 Emails from Belinda Vause, HALO, 3 April 2020; Valentina Stivanello, MAG, 6 April 2020; and GICHD, 13 May 2020.

17 Statement of Sri Lanka on clearance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; emails from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 2 August 2022; and GICHD, 13 April 2022; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form C.

18 Email from Stephen Hall, Programme Manager, HALO, 5 September 2022.

19 Email from Asa Massleberg GICHD, 30 August 2022.

20 Statement of Sri Lanka on clearance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; emails from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 2 August 2022; and GICHD, 13 April 2022; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form C.

21 Emails from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 2 August 2022; and Cristy McLennan, MAG, 29 April 2022.

22 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

23 Email from V. Premachanthiran, NMAC, 25 August 2020.

24 Statement of Sri Lanka on clearance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021.

25 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Strategy 2016–2020, p. 6; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Form 1.

26 Email from Matthew Hovell, Regional Director, HALO, 30 September 2018.

27 Article 7 Report, submitted in 2019, p. 12.

28 Emails from Asa Massleberg, GICHD, 30 August 2022; and Stephen Hall, HALO, 5 September 2022.

29 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Strategy 2016–2020, p. 9.

30 Email from the GICHD, 13 May 2020.

In November 2021, Sri Lanka announced that in line with the decision taken by the Cabinet of Ministers on 30 May 2021, approval was granted to publish the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines Bill in the Government Gazette and for it to be tabled in Parliament for approval. The Bill (Act No 3 of 2022), which focuses on the prohibitions in Article 1 of the APMBC rather than on regulation of the mine action programme, was certified on 17 February 2022.³¹

The Sri Lankan Government provided 20 million Sri Lankan rupees (approx. US\$61,000, based on exchange rates as at the time of writing) to cover the cost of NMAC in 2022, and 8 million Sri Lankan rupees (approx. US\$24,000) to cover the cost of mine action activities by the SLA HDU.³² This is a dramatic reduction from the 200 million Sri Lankan rupees in total provided in 2021, which is due to the financial and political crisis that Sri Lanka suffered in 2022 that resulted in widespread hardship across Sri Lanka.³³ Sri Lanka seeks to increase national funding for its mine action programme, expand its international donor base and explore other sources of funding. NMAC will develop a resource mobilisation strategy in line with the Oslo Action Plan Action Point 43, providing clear funding targets until the end of 2027. The strategy is expected to be developed and approved by the middle of 2023.³⁴

DASH, HALO, and MAG all reported that importation of demining equipment remained a slow and laborious process due to significant restrictions compounded by the dire economic situation.³⁵ HALO reported a positive working relationship with the NGO Secretariat and experienced a smooth visa application process for international staff with approval granted for the first time to host courses for international staff.³⁶ MAG reported a prompt approval process for international staffing visas, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), and accreditations.³⁷

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) has worked very closely with NMAC since early 2015. In 2022, the GICHD assessed the implementation of Sri Lanka's previous mine action strategy (2016–20) which guided the development of a new inclusive strategy (for 2023–27), with GICHD support, including the development

of the completion process. The GICHD and the Sri Lankan government facilitated two stakeholder workshops to provide the basis for the new strategy.³⁸

HALO continued to provide capacity development support to NMAC in 2022 focused on supporting the GICHD-led national strategy process as well as the development of the Completion Survey standard operating procedures (SOPs), and related completion declaration forms.³⁹ In 2022, MAG sponsored travel for NMAC and RMAO staff to attend the APMBC meetings in Geneva.⁴⁰

While no regular formal in-country platform exists for coordination of all stakeholders, regular meetings with national and international operators and NMAC/RMAO were held in 2022 to address topics such as outstanding NTS, task reallocation, civilian interference in minefields, and challenges with working on protected land. Due to economic conditions, monthly operational meetings were changed to bi-monthly or quarterly during the year.⁴¹ In addition, mid-year workshops were organised to foster collaboration between all operators and the Forest Department Sri Lanka. These workshops focused on setting standards, discussing novel approaches, and addressing environmental impact concerns while operating in forested areas. NMAC and the GICHD also held several multi-stakeholder workshops to formulate Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Completion Strategy and the completion process. A closing ceremony was organised to which all international donors were invited, providing them with an opportunity to share feedback on the Theory of Change.⁴² Operators reported being fully engaged in the process of developing the strategy and are regularly consulted by the national authorities on sector issues.⁴³

In its new National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, NMAC commits to ensuring regular and structured coordination and transparent information sharing with Sri Lanka government representatives, international donors, operators, and other partners, and will, in close collaboration with partners, organise bi-annual donor coordination meetings and quarterly operations meetings.⁴⁴

31 Statement of Sri Lanka on cooperative compliance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; Associated Press, "Sri Lanka approves law implementing anti-land mine treaty", *AP News*, 10 February 2022; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form A.

32 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

33 Email from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 2 August 2022; and Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 13.

34 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 25.

35 Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, Director/Programme Manager, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, Country Director, MAG, 12 April 2023; and Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

36 Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

37 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023.

38 Email from the GICHD, 2 May 2023.

39 Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

40 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023.

41 Emails from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023; and GICHD, 2 May 2023.

42 Ibid.

43 Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, Director/Programme Manager, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

44 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 25.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Sri Lanka does not have a separate national standard or policy on environmental management. Operators reported that when working in contaminated forest, permissions must be obtained from the National Forestry & Wildlife Commissions, and Archaeology Department who conduct routine visits to help ensure no harm is done to wildlife, forests, and land of archaeological value.⁴⁵ In 2022, HALO organised, on behalf of the NMAC and other operators, a Wildlife & Forestry Commission Technical Working Group. The purpose of which was to agree a more collaborative approach to the clearance of jungle/forested tasks in the most efficient and environmentally sensitive way, including with the use of small, mechanised assets. HALO and MAG have now received ad-hoc authorisation to use mechanised assets in certain forested tasks.⁴⁶

Sri Lanka is vulnerable to climate change-induced hazards, including tropical cyclones and flooding, which will impact the mine action programme and operational planning. Despite facing moderate disaster risk levels, climate change projections predict long-term alterations to the monsoon pattern and ecological regions. In response, Sri Lanka has a comprehensive normative framework, including national policies, strategies, and action plans on climate change and sustainable development, aligned with its obligations as a State Party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and signatory to the Paris Agreement.⁴⁷

DASH does not have an environmental policy or SOP in place but said that preserving the environment is considered a top priority in its clearance operations. DASH keeps vegetation removal to the bare minimum. Where possible, fauna, flora, and soil layers are protected, as they are essential elements of the jungle, agriculture, and other livelihood activities post-clearance.⁴⁸

HALO has a global environmental policy (Version 2 was published in August 2022) but no SOP. Prior to demining, HALO conducts an environmental screening checklist for each minefield to mitigate impact. HALO works in areas where the environment, in particular wetlands, have been damaged by years of armed conflict, subsequent mine clearance operations, and saltwater intrusion. In some areas, mangrove swamps and other flora have grown over extensive mine lines and have had to be cleared. In addition, HALO Sri Lanka recently started the implementation of a wetland conservation and restoration project in collaboration with a national NGO on land cleared by HALO.⁴⁹

MAG has an environmental management SOP, based on international standards. MAG shared the SOP with NMAC to support the development of environmental standards and policies for mine action, in particular to inform discussions with the Forestry and Wildlife Commissions on working responsibly in those areas.⁵⁰ SHARP does not have a policy or SOP on the environment but said that it conducts its operations with great care to prevent any damage to the environment.⁵¹

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027 contains a specific section on gender and diversity which recognises that mine action activities need to reflect the distinct needs of age and gender as they are affected differently by explosive ordnance contamination due to their roles and responsibilities. Sri Lanka commits to ensuring that all mine action activities are sensitive to gender and diversity issues and to continue efforts to mainstream these issues across mine action. It recognises that mine action should be tied to the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality. It notes the benefits and importance of offering employment opportunities in mine action to women

and includes the findings from a 2020 GICHD study which revealed that half of all female deminers were the sole income earners in their households, and more than one third of women employed as deminers had no prior income, in contrast to one in twenty men.

As Sri Lanka nears completion, integrating gender and diversity considerations during the staff transition process will be crucial for sustainable and successful outcomes, as outlined in strategic objective 4.⁵² When recruiting for survey and community liaison teams, NMAC recruits personnel to represent ethnic or minority groups in each area.⁵³ Relevant mine action data are disaggregated by sex and age.⁵⁴

45 Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

46 Emails from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Cristy McLennan, MAG, 16 August 2023.

47 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 16.

48 Email from Brig. (ret.) Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 28 April 2022.

49 Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

50 Emails from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 3 and 16 August 2023.

51 Email from Lt.-Col. (ret.) Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 5 August 2022.

52 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, pp. 16–17.

53 Statement of Sri Lanka on Victim Assistance, 19MSP (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021.

54 Email from the GICHD, 13 April 2022.

Table 2: Gender composition of mine action operators in 2022⁵⁵

Operator	Total staff	Women employed	Total staff in managerial or supervisory positions	Women in managerial or supervisory positions	Total staff in operational positions	Women in operational positions
NMAC	21	1	2	0	17	0
SHARP	181	28	15	5	166	23
DASH	454	100	89	17	337	78
HALO*	1,270	441	101	21	1,079	415
MAG	1,007	234	25	5	938	207

* As of March 2023.

NMAC reported that only 5% of its total employees in 2022 were female, with no women in managerial or operational positions, a dramatic decrease from the previous year. In 2022, for the first time, the SLA HDU trained and deployed two female demining teams.⁵⁶

DASH and fellow national operator, SHARP, have both sought to progressively increase the number of women employed, including in operational positions, recognising the positive impact employment has on women and their families' well-being.⁵⁷ DASH considers gender equality and employment of women important to its programme. In 2022, 22% of DASH's total employees were female, with women holding 23% of operational positions, and 19% of managerial/supervisory level positions.⁵⁸ DASH survey and community liaison teams are in close consultation with beneficiaries and are comprised of people of the affected minority community in the Northern province.⁵⁹

In 2022, 15% of SHARP's total employees were female, with women holding 13% of operational positions, and 33% of managerial/supervisory level positions. SHARP is committed to maximizing female representation, particularly focusing on those impacted by the war, such as war widows, families of casualties, and single mothers. In 2023, SHARP aimed to increase the number of female deminers by one more unit.⁶⁰

International operators HALO and MAG confirmed that they have gender policies in place, with a focus on achieving equal access to employment, gender-balanced survey and clearance teams, gender-focused community liaison outreach, disaggregated data collection, and a gender focus to be employed during pre- and post-clearance assessments.⁶¹

HALO reported that as at March 2023, 35% of its total staff in Sri Lanka were women. This included 38% of all operations staff and 21% of managerial/supervisory level positions.⁶² In 2022, HALO collaborated with other demining operators to conduct a staff survey, which will inform the sector's Staff Livelihood Transition strategy, with a specific focus on supporting groups like female heads of households in their transition to sustainable livelihoods post-2027/28. In line with HALO Sri Lanka's programme strategy for 2023–27, gender-related priorities include providing equitable access to training and advancement opportunities for female staff, and ensuring the well-being of female employees through safeguarding mechanisms, access to childcare, and support for women's health and for pregnant/lactating mothers.

HALO acknowledges the prevalence of social issues within the Northern Sri Lankan community, including widespread domestic violence, which can impact workplace dynamics and performance. In 2022, HALO partnered with a local mental health service provider to conduct mandatory wellbeing workshops for all staff, with options for individual counselling sessions. Addressing issues like domestic violence is a priority, and HALO aims to offer follow-up sessions on specific topics.⁶³

MAG reported that in 2022, 23% of its total staff in Sri Lanka were female, including 22% of operational staff. MAG implements various initiatives to promote women's participation in mine action, including encouraging female applications for vacancies, offering equal opportunities for career advancement, providing separate sanitation facilities, accommodating pregnant women with non-demining tasks, and maintaining zero tolerance for gender-based violence.

55 Emails from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July and 29 August 2023; Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 and 17 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

56 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

57 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Strategy 2016–2020, Reviewed version, September 2018, p. 6; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form 5.

58 Email from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023.

59 Email from Brig. (ret.) Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 28 April 2022.

60 Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

61 Emails from Belinda Vause, HALO, 9 August 2019 and 3 April 2020; Beth Lomas, MAG, 26 July 2019; and Valentina Stivanello, MAG, 6 April 2020.

62 Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

63 Ibid.

The Staff Transition Team conducted internal surveys on sexual and gender-based violence, followed by gender sensitisation training. Additionally, gender and market surveys identified in-demand occupations for women

deminers in the North and East, and a mobility support initiative was organised, initially only for women, but later opened also to men. All survey data are used to inform future staff transition initiatives and overall MAG activities.⁶⁴

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

With support from the GICHD, a full migration of Sri Lanka's IMSMA database to IMSMA Core had been scheduled to take place in 2023. But it was decided that, rather than a full migration, IMSMA NG and IMSMA Core will be used in parallel, with Survey123 being used for Sri Lanka's completion survey. This is in recognition of Sri Lanka's limited resources and the time and effort a full migration would require.⁶⁵

A significant database clean-up took place in 2022 and this was continuing into 2023. As at May 2023, the GICHD, with funding from the US Department of State, is recruiting an information management (IM) advisor who will be based in Sri Lanka and provide IM support to NMAC and RMAO.⁶⁶ It is expected that the data clean-up and IM advisor will improve data quality and reduce the disparities between operator and national authority data.

Sri Lanka has long suffered with poor quality data demonstrated by the significant differences in the reported land release between operators and NMAC. Challenges to information management and the establishment of a sustainable national IM capacity stem in part from a lack of resources and also the high level of staff turnover at NMAC and RMAO, as military personnel are seconded and generally rotate fairly quickly.⁶⁷

NMAC officers have received IM training from the GICHD and training in geographic information system (GIS) and mapping from the GICHD and HALO.⁶⁸ In 2023, two NMAC officers attended training on IMSMA Core organised by the GICHD in Switzerland.⁶⁹

In its latest Article 7 transparency report covering 2022, Sri Lanka reported the cumulative amount of mined area cancelled, reduced, and cleared in 2002–22, but not annual survey and clearance output for 2022, which the Convention requires it to report.⁷⁰

PLANNING AND TASKING

In March 2023, Sri Lanka launched its National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, developed with the support of the GICHD. It outlines the mine action programme's strategic orientation to 2027, building on past achievements and incorporating lessons from previous strategies. The strategy reinforces Sri Lanka's commitment to fulfil its APMBBC obligations in alignment with the SDGs.⁷¹

The strategy sets four main goals:

1. Land release and EORE
[explosive ordnance risk education]
2. Coordination and national ownership
3. Management of residual contamination
4. Staff transition.⁷²

As part of the land release and risk education strategic objective, the NMAC, with the support of the GICHD and

in collaboration with the operators, has developed a "completion process", as the framework for the Sri Lankan government to document and demonstrate compliance with Article 5. This involves NTS to identify previously unknown contamination, ongoing survey and clearance of registered hazardous areas, and the completion survey. The completion survey will allow the government to declare administrative areas as "complete", confirming its confidence that all reasonable effort has been applied to identify and clear all mined areas and that there is no further evidence of mines in the administrative area, at the time of signing the completion documents. Each village officer in a district will have to confirm that they are not aware of any explosive ordnance contamination. When all villages within a district are complete, the district authority will sign it off as "mine free". All stakeholders will implement completion surveys in line with the completion survey SOP, developed in 2022.⁷³

64 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023.

65 Email from the GICHD, 2 May 2023.

66 Ibid.

67 Email from the GICHD, 13 May 2020.

68 Emails from Belinda Vause, HALO, 3 April 2020; and Asa Massleberg, GICHD, 29 August 2023.

69 Email from Asa Massleberg, GICHD, 29 August 2023.

70 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form F.

71 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, pp. 1 and 5.

72 Ibid., p. 18.

73 Ibid., p. 20.

Sri Lanka plans to release 17km² of mined area from 2023 to 2027. As at the end of 2022, 15.4km² of confirmed and suspected hazardous area remained and the NMAC has added 1.6km² to the baseline as a “buffer” to allow for some polygons being larger than what is currently recorded in IMSMA. As at the end of 2022, 11 explosive ordnance-affected districts remained and the completion process will allow Sri Lanka to declare a certain number complete every year (see Table 3).⁷⁴

Table 3: Planned land release 2023–27⁷⁵

Year	Land release target (km ²)	EO-affected districts declared completed
2023	4.5	4
2024	4.5	2
2025	4	2
2026	3.5	1
2027	0.5	2

Sri Lanka's mine action programme has a well-developed prioritisation system, outlined in NMAC's National Mine Action Strategy 2016–20. The primary priority is clearance of land for resettlement, particularly the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Further to this, contaminated land planned for livelihood activities (mostly agricultural land), access to public services, and large-scale infrastructure, are also prioritised in accordance with NMAC's national mine action strategy.⁷⁶ According to NMAC, despite marking of contaminated areas and sustained risk education, returnees are likely to enter contaminated areas, especially agricultural areas, to meet their basic livelihood needs. As such, socio-economic pressures and livelihood activities are vital considerations in the prioritisation process in relation to resettlement plans.⁷⁷ As Sri Lanka is approaching completion, all remaining tasks have now been allocated to operators.⁷⁸

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

A review of Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), taking into account the local context, was carried out in 2017 with the input of all operators and support from the GICHD. The revised version of the NMAS was never approved and adopted. An NMAC Board of Inquiry (BoI) investigation, following a fatal incident in Trincomalee at the end of 2021 on land that had been released, made recommendations that included the updating of SLNMA 04.10: Non-Technical Survey, SLNMA 04: Land Release, and SLNMA 08: Quality Management.⁷⁹ Updating and approving these standards by the end of 2023 is one of the targets of the National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027. The GICHD was

planning to support this effort from 2023. Alongside this, all operator SOPs are to be reviewed in line with the updated NMAS by the end of 2023.⁸⁰

In 2022 and 2023, the GICHD and HALO supported the development of a completion survey SOP and completion survey forms, allowing for consistent implementation of the completion process until the end of 2027.⁸¹ The GICHD also provided IM support to ensure that completion survey data can be collected, stored, and analysed effectively. The GICHD supported NMAC in organising related training for all operators in March and June 2023.⁸²

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2022, demining operations continued to be conducted by the SLA HDU; national NGOs, DASH and SHARP; and INGOs, HALO and MAG. The NGOs and INGOs are entirely funded by international donors.

With respect to survey capacity in 2022, the SLA HDU deployed 8 NTS teams totalling 15 personnel and 6 technical survey (TS) teams totalling 18 personnel.⁸³ DASH had 4 teams conducting NTS and quality assurance (QA) totalling 17 personnel and 1 team of 3 personnel conducting QA and EORE.⁸⁴ SHARP has 1 NTS team of 3, 2 clearance teams deployed in technical

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 20 and 23.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Email from Belinda Vause, HALO, 3 April 2020.

⁷⁷ Article 7 Report, submitted in 2019, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Email from Asa Massleberg, GICHD, 29 August 2023.

⁷⁹ Email from Stephen Hall, HALO, 16 May 2022.

⁸⁰ Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 22.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Email from Asa Massleberg, GICHD, 29 August 2023.

⁸³ Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

⁸⁴ Email from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023.

survey totalling 44 staff, and 2 QA teams totalling 5 persons.⁸⁵ MAG deployed 9 NTS teams, for a total of 18 personnel.⁸⁶ HALO deployed between three and five NTS teams per month with each team consisting of four personnel.⁸⁷ TS capacity for DASH, HALO, and MAG is included in Table 4 below, as clearance teams also TS as required.⁸⁸

Table 4: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2022⁸⁹

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers*	Dogs and handlers	Machines**	Comments
DASH	13	257	0	0	
HALO	86	712	0	30	Monthly average across 2022 includes deminers who are also paramedic trained. Machines include front loaders, excavators, backhoes, tillers, and tractors with numbers deployed varying each month.
MAG	50	650	0	24	
SHARP	6	120	0	0	
SLA HDU	6	208	8 dogs; 20 handlers	5	Machines include Bozena and MV 4
Totals	161	1,947	8 dogs; 20 handlers	59	

* Excluding team leaders, medics, and drivers. ** Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters.

DASH reported an increase by one team in its NTS capacity from 2021 to 2022 while SHARP increased its clearance capacity by two teams.⁹⁰ MAG and HALO's capacity remained largely the same.⁹¹ All operators expect to operate with the same capacity in 2023.⁹²

The National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027 stresses the importance of QA and quality control (QC) and while the RMAO has several QA officers responsible for conducting QA visits to all operations insufficient funding and resources hamper their ability to fulfil this responsibility effectively and efficiently.⁹³

DEMINER SAFETY

On 30 May 2022, an accident involving a P4 test mine occurred in the Maritimapatou/Mullaitivu forest area, resulting in injuries to two HALO employees. One employee sustained injuries to the right hand, which resulted in the amputation of the tip of a finger following a secondary infection, and to the left arm and the right side of his face. The other employee sustained temporary hearing loss. The investigation concluded that the explosion was due to the failure of the glue barrier, intended to stop the mechanism from firing, and shear wire. Sri Lanka's NMAC prescribe the use of test mines containing a live detonator to ensure that metal detectors are able to detect certain types of

minimum-metal mines at the required clearance depth of 15cm. The live detonator is left in with its firing mechanism blocked in order to test detection of these mines with their original metal content.

With approval from NMAC, HALO Sri Lanka no longer uses test mines and they have been replaced with test pieces (for detection depth tests) and explosives-free test mines (for HSTAMIDS clearance). The results of the investigation were shared widely among the humanitarian mine action sector and donor base in Sri Lanka.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

⁸⁶ Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023.

⁸⁷ Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

⁸⁸ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; and Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

⁸⁹ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023; and Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

⁹⁰ Email from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

⁹¹ Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; and Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

⁹² Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

⁹³ Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 14.

⁹⁴ Emails from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April and 17 August 2023.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

According to NMAC data, a total of more than 5.64km² of mined area was released in 2022, of which 5.27km² was cleared, 0.57km² was reduced, and 0.32km² was cancelled. A total of 27,177 AP mines, 69 AV mines, and 4,224 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) were destroyed during the year.⁹⁵ Survey and clearance data from NGOs differs from NMAC data. All data provided are included below.

SURVEY IN 2022

According to NMAC data, 316,111m² was cancelled through NTS in 2022 (see Table 5) and 56,742m² reduced through TS (see Table 7). The data reported by NMAC varied from the NGOs' own survey data, in some instances significantly. DASH, HALO, and MAG reported to Mine Action Review cancellation of a combined total of 193,485m² through NTS (see Table 6) and reduction through TS of 507,236m² (see Table 8).⁹⁶

The reason for the discrepancies between NMAC and operator survey data is not known, but is likely due to data held/not held in the national IMSMA database, including a back-log of entries outstanding (including a one-week information gap between operator and NMAC data, as RMAO updates IMSMA based on the weekly progress reports of operators; and the fact that cancellation and reduction data are added by NMAC to IMSMA only upon completion of the land release process) or errors in entering or extracting the data.

Table 5: Release of mined area through NTS in 2022 (NMAC data)⁹⁷

District	Operator	Area cancelled (m ²)
Colombo	Sri Lanka Army	52,730
Jaffna	HALO	163,686
Kilinochchi	SHARP	76,683
Mullaitivu	MAG	14,078
Vavuniya	MAG	8,934
Total		316,111

Table 6: Release of mined area through NTS in 2022 (operator data)⁹⁸

District	Operator	Area cancelled (m ²)
Kilinochchi	SHARP	76,483
Mullaitivu	DASH	82,019
Jaffna	HALO	1,434
Kilinochchi	HALO	0
Mullaitivu	HALO	2,172
Mannar	MAG	8,365
Vavuniya	MAG	23,012
Total		193,485

Table 7: Release of mined area through TS in 2022 (NMAC data)⁹⁹

District	Operator	Area reduced (m ²)
Kilinochchi	HALO	7,886
Mannar	MAG	4,700
Mullaitivu	DASH	12,493
	HALO	10,415
	MAG	9,257
Vavuniya	MAG	11,991
Total		56,742

Table 8: Release of mined area through TS in 2022 (operator data)¹⁰⁰

District	Operator	Area reduced (m ²)
Kilinochchi	HALO	10,041
Mannar	MAG	58,776
	SHARP	9,306
Mullaitivu	DASH	43,332
	HALO	181,713
	MAG	90,277
Vavuniya	MAG	113,791
Total		507,236

⁹⁵ Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

⁹⁶ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

⁹⁷ Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

⁹⁸ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

⁹⁹ Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

CLEARANCE IN 2022

According to NMAC, a total of almost 5.27km² of mined area was cleared in 2022, with the destruction of 27,177 AP mines, 69 AV mines, and 4,224 items of UXO (see Table 9).¹⁰¹ This was an increase on the nearly 4.37km² of mined area cleared in 2021, when 23,266 AP mines, 60 AV mines, and 3,513 items of UXO were destroyed during the year.¹⁰² Clearance output in 2021 was limited by restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic and increased in 2022 once the restrictions had been lifted.¹⁰³

Clearance data for 2022 reported by NMAC varied from that reported by the NGOs directly (see Table 10). NMAC believed the main reason for the differences was due to the fact

that its data is updated based on completion reports, while clearance operators use daily progress reports. NMAC also noted that sometimes operators do not consider district borders or take into account their area of responsibility in their reporting.¹⁰⁴

All AP mines are destroyed by the SLA – Engineers Brigade. As per national standards, humanitarian demining operators are not authorised to conduct explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) in Sri Lanka.¹⁰⁵

Table 9: Mine clearance in 2022 (NMAC data)¹⁰⁶

District	Operator	Clearance (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Anuradhapura	SLA HDU	1,248	39	0	0
Jaffna	HALO	36,392	152	0	114
	MAG	5,895	37	0	6
	SLA HDU	93,555	17	0	0
Kilinochchi	DASH	375,924	5,407	26	1,022
	HALO	968,573	7,507	5	1,266
	MAG	38,850	343	1	113
	SHARP	360,250	790	26	297
	SLA HDU	16,605	169	4	31
Mannar	MAG	561,033	1,479	1	26
Mullaitivu	DASH	110,786	2,780	0	41
	HALO	1,477,561	4,794	0	263
	MAG	677,658	2,146	4	515
	SHARP	146,293	159	0	273
	SLA HDU	29,644	34	0	2
Trincomalee	MAG	7,131	53	0	1
	SLA HDU	21,735	1	0	0
Vavuniya	DASH	5,247	515	0	38
	MAG	334,130	755	2	216
Totals		5,268,510	27,177	69	4,224

101 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

102 Email from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 13 September 2022.

103 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

104 Email from Mahinda Bandara Wickramasingha, NMAC, 13 September 2022.

105 Email from Valentina Stivanello, MAG, 6 April 2020.

106 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

Table 10: Mine clearance in 2022 (operator data)¹⁰⁷

District	Operator	Mine clearance (m ²)	AP mines destroyed*	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Jaffna	HALO	36,392	151	0	441
Kilinochchi	SHARP	135,961	790	26	199
	DASH	375,906	3,810	14	739
	HALO	949,908	7,494	5	6,927
	MAG	36,719	350	1	109
Mannar	MAG	570,043	1,403	1	109
Mullaitivu	SHARP	139,065	116	0	156
	DASH	116,033	2,782	14	73
	HALO	1,475,917	4,706	0	2,668
	MAG	668,962	2,133	4	493
Trincomalee	MAG	17,479	53	0	1
Vavuniya	MAG	344,260	741	2	215
Totals		4,866,645	24,529	67	12,130

In addition, HALO destroyed 115 AP mines during spot tasks.¹⁰⁸ The NMAC reported that of the 27,177 AP mines found and destroyed during clearance in 2022, 1,504 were of an improvised nature.¹⁰⁹

SHARP cleared two tasks totalling 9,306m² which proved to contain no AP mines, one of which is ongoing and other was suspended.¹¹⁰ DASH cleared two tasks which proved to contain no AP mines.¹¹¹ HALO cleared one task totally 21,054m² with no AP mines although items of UXO were found and destroyed and reduced 5,057m².¹¹² MAG cleared four tasks which proved to contain no AP mines totalling 16,578m².¹¹³

SHARP increased the amount of mined area cleared in 2022 from 2021 due to greater capacity.¹¹⁴ DASH's overall land release output remained roughly the same although clearance and TS output dropped while NTS output grew as teams were deployed to the ongoing nationwide NTS project.¹¹⁵ HALO reported an overall increase in land release output in 2022 with more area cleared, cancelled, and reduced due to a drop in the loss of working days due to COVID-19 compared to 2021.¹¹⁶ Operational days were lost in 2022 due to nationwide curfews imposed at the peak of Sri Lanka's political and economic crisis as well as from fuel shortages.¹¹⁷

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE

APMBC ENTRY INTO FORCE FOR SRI LANKA: 1 JUNE 2018
↓
ORIGINAL ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JUNE 2028
ON TRACK TO MEET ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE LIKELIHOOD OF COMPLETING CLEARANCE BY 2025 (OSLO ACTION PLAN COMMITMENT): LOW

Under Article 5 of the APMBC, Sri Lanka is required to destroy all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 June 2028. Sri Lanka should still complete clearance by this deadline if it can maintain clearance capacity.

¹⁰⁷ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.

¹¹⁰ Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

¹¹¹ Email from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023.

¹¹² Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

¹¹³ Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023.

¹¹⁴ Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023.

¹¹⁵ Email from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023.

¹¹⁶ Email from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

¹¹⁷ Emails from Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023; and Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023.

Sri Lanka's original target to complete mine clearance by the end of 2020 was overly ambitious and contingent on significantly increasing funding and capacity. The hoped-for increase in capacity of the SLA HDUs did not materialise,¹¹⁸ with expansion hindered by the army's focus on responding to the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks in April 2019 and by the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic. Progress towards the 2020 target was also hampered by the continued discovery of previously unknown mined area, adding substantially to the contamination baseline.

Table 11: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2022	5.27
2021	4.37
2020	4.59
2019	*2.94
2018	3.46
Total	20.63

*Mine Action Review calculation

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

The new National Strategy includes managing residual contamination as a strategic objective, with transition to a response to reported contamination by the end of 2027. The SLA HDU, supported by the Police Task Force for EOD call-outs, will manage residual contamination. The government has committed to ensuring the SLA HDU is appropriately equipped, staffed, and resourced to fulfil its responsibilities. A staged transfer of the national mine action database to SLA HDU, along with IMSMA Core training for relevant staff, should facilitate a smooth transition. Sri Lanka recognises the importance of accessible mine action data, including on previously surveyed and cleared areas and the location of explosive ordnance incidents, and the capacity to collect and store future data.¹²¹

The National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027 also includes staff transition as one of its objectives. The National Strategy follows the model developed by MAGs in its “Skills Acquisition and Post-demining Livelihood Transition Strategy”, which supports staff in transitioning to alternative economic activities after redundancy, incorporating a staged transition process into high-demand occupations.

In accordance with the National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, Sri Lanka is confident that it will be able to identify and clear all AP mined area by the end of 2027.¹¹⁹ Whether this is realistic depends in part on how much more mined area is discovered and added to the database during completion of NTS in 2023 and during the “completion surveys”. However, the land release targets set out in the strategy, which are based on a contamination estimate of 17km², should be achievable if current capacity is maintained.

In 2022, despite facing a severe financial and political crisis that inflicted widespread hardships across the country, Sri Lanka was able increase its clearance output from the previous year. However, the crisis had detrimental effects on the mine action programme, leading to fuel shortages that caused the suspension of mine action operations for a total of 74 days across the four NGO operators.¹²⁰ The National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027 highlights financial sustainability as a major risk to the programme's success, affecting the achievement of strategic targets and completion by 2027. Both the NMAC and the RMAO are under-resourced and suffer from high staff turnover.

The National Strategy also aims to integrate gender dimensions effectively for non-discriminatory and sustainable outcomes. With funding support through MAG, the government plans to establish an inter-governmental Staff Transition Coordination Platform by mid 2023 and, with the private sector, by the end of 2023. A pilot redundancy programme is scheduled for 2024 as part of the staged transition process. Alongside this, demining staff will be encouraged to participate in tailored training to gain new skills, including training that is gender responsive.¹²²

MAG has supported SHARP and DASH with their staff transition programmes with 120 DASH employees being trained in financial literacy in 2022.¹²³ MAG's Staff Transition Unit, with support from external service providers, is developing fast-track vocation training courses that recognise the prior learning of their demining staff, in order for them to move into the construction sector at an accelerated pace once the sector begins to demobilise. The construction courses under development so far include tiling, building, painting, and heavy vehicle operation.¹²⁴

118 Email from Belinda Vause, HALO, 9 August 2019.
119 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 19.
120 Email from Jayalath Rohana, NMAC, 6 July 2023.
121 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, pp. 28–29.
122 Ibid., pp. 30–33.
123 Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023; and Ananda Chandrasiri, DASH, 11 April 2023.
124 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 12 April 2023.