

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JUNE 2028
NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

KEY DATA

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

NATIONAL AUTHORITY ESTIMATE AT JUNE 2024

24KM²

AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2023

4.83KM²

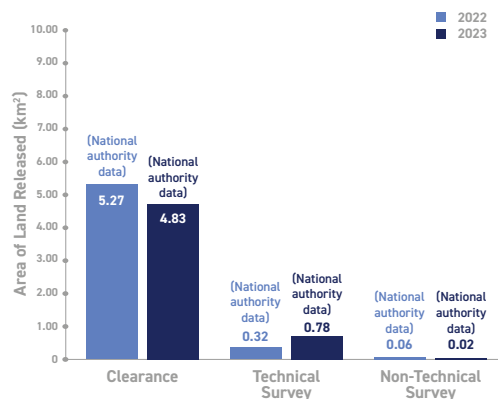
(NATIONAL AUTHORITY DATA)

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2023

19,288

(INCLUDING 76 DESTROYED
IN SPOT TASKS)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



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

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In March 2023, Sri Lanka launched its “National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027”, outlining a roadmap to meet its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 obligations by the end of 2027. Despite a decrease in clearance output in 2023, Sri Lanka met its land release target for the year. However, due to a significant increase in the baseline of anti-personnel (AP) mined area, annual land release targets have been revised, casting doubt on its ability to meet its deadline. The new targets are ambitious and depend on increased operational capacity, which may be challenging in a constrained funding environment. Additionally, as the National Completion Survey progresses, more areas of previously undiscovered AP mine contamination are likely to be added to the database.

FIVE-YEAR OVERVIEW

Over the past five years, Sri Lanka’s mine action programme has seen a significant improvement, with a national non-technical survey (NTS) conducted in 2021–23, a completion strategy developed, and coordination between the national mine action authority (NMAC) and operators enhanced. However, while the NTS was believed to provide an accurate baseline of contamination, additional surveys during the completion process have uncovered extensive, previously unrecorded AP mined areas. Sri Lanka had been one of the few States that could meet its Article 5 deadline without requiring an extension, but this now seems unlikely.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Sri Lanka should set a realistic Article 5 completion target by reassessing contamination levels and operational capacity, and engaging international partners for funding and other support.
- Sri Lanka should update 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.
- Sri Lanka should develop a resource mobilisation strategy, with clear funding targets to at least the end of 2027.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2023)	Score (2022)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	7	7	Sri Lanka's baseline of AP mined area significantly increased in 2023, with operators discovering nearly 11.4km ² of contamination during survey conducted as part of the National Completion Survey Process. The first round of completion surveys was expected to conclude by the end of 2024, which should provide a clearer understanding of the remaining mine contamination in Sri Lanka.
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 government that was increased in 2023. Sri Lanka had planned to adopt a resource mobilisation strategy in 2023 to increase both national and international funding but as at June 2024 the strategy was still under development.
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 for all mine action. No figures were provided by NMAC on the number of women employed in 2023, but only 5% of employees were female in 2022. There was no significant change in the proportion of women employed by operators from 2022 to 2023.
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION* (10% of overall score)	5	Not Scored	Sri Lanka does not have a separate national standard or policy on environmental management. Operators must obtain permissions from the relevant government ministries when working in forests and implement measures to protect wildlife, forests, and archaeological sites. Sri Lanka has developed a comprehensive framework of national policies, strategies, and action plans on climate change and sustainable development, aligned with its international commitments but is unclear whether mine action is explicitly mentioned in any of these documents. HALO also completed a 24-month environmental restoration project in July 2023, resulting in the planting of 5,000 mangroves in a coastal village that was part of the frontline during the civil war.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	5	5	Sri Lanka uses the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core and IMSMA New Generation in parallel as it was decided a full migration to IMSMA Core was not an efficient use of resources. While a data clean-up took place in 2022 and 2023, reporting between operators and NMAC continued to reflect disparities and inconsistencies. Sri Lanka submitted a comprehensive Article 7 report covering 2023.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	7	8	In March 2023, Sri Lanka launched its national mine action strategy, outlining plans for land release to 2027, including annual targets and a "completion process" to demonstrate and document Article 5 compliance. However, as contamination baseline has since increased, new land release targets have been set for 2024 to 2027.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM** (10% of overall score)	7	7	As at August 2024, Sri Lanka had still not adopted the revised NMAC nor updated the standards for technical survey, land release, and quality management. This had been planned to be done by the end of 2023. Sri Lanka's demining capacity remained largely the same from 2022 to 2023.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	7	8	There was a drop in clearance output from 2022 to 2023, but Sri Lanka was still able to meet its land release target for the year. However, its ability to meet its Article 5 deadline has been called into question following the substantial increase in the contamination baseline during the year. Although Sri Lanka has elaborated new annual targets for land release through to 2027 these are ambitious and rely on no further substantial additions to the baseline while ensuring that operators have the necessary capacity.
Average Score	6.6	7.1	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

* New criterion introduced in 2024 to assess performance.

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

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- 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 the end of 2023, NMAC reported total mined area in Sri Lanka at almost 21.6km² across 825 mined areas: 16.8km² across 654 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) and 4.7km² across 171 suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) (see Table 1). By June 2024, this had increased to more than 24.1km² across 900 mined areas.¹ These figures represent a significant increase on the 15.4km² across 621 mined areas reported at the end of 2022.²

Table 1: Mined area (at end 2023)³

Province	District	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total SHAs and CHAs	Total area (m ²)
Northern	Jaffna	18	814,992	2	71,402	20	886,394
	Kilinochchi	84	1,241,898	3	217,207	87	1,459,105
	Mannar	158	1,962,556	39	604,694	197	2,567,250
	Mullaitivu	298	11,273,552	44	2,024,324	342	13,297,876
	Vavuniya	44	837,996	26	1,043,724	70	1,881,720
North Central	Anuradhapura	1	12,705	0	0	1	12,705
	Polonnaruwa	3	0	4	70,233	7	70,233
Eastern	Ampara	2	11,135	12	0	14	11,135
	Batticaloa	26	381,018	17	616,135	43	997,153
	Trincomalee	20	295,682	24	96,010	44	391,692
Totals		654	16,831,534	171	4,743,729	825	21,575,263

The increase in the contamination baseline is largely due to the government-mandated National Completion Survey Process, which involves operators conducting survey at each Grama Niladhari Division (GND)—the smallest administrative unit at the village level in Sri Lanka.⁴ NMAC has reported adding 4.29km² to the database across 96 tasks in 2023.⁵ Operators reported discovering a total of 11.35km² of previously unrecorded mine contamination during the

year, aligning more closely with the difference in the contamination baseline between 2022 and 2023. Of this, SHARP identified 0.74km², DASH 0.31km², The HALO Trust 3.15 km², and MAG 7.15 km² (of which, 3.03km² was CHAs and 4.12km² SHAs).⁶ In addition, NMAC has added 1.6km² to the baseline as a “buffer” to allow for some polygons being larger than as recorded in the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA).⁷

1 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 6; and Statement of Sri Lanka, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 18–20 June 2024.

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

3 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 6.

4 Email from Philippa Coates, Donor Relations Manager, HALO, 13 June 2024.

5 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 7.

6 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, Director, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, Donor and Stakeholder Liaison Manager, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

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

As at May 2024, NMAC reported that the completion survey was ongoing in 425 GNDs, with 313 having been validated. Of the total GNDs surveyed, survey teams found no evidence or suspicion of explosive ordnance contamination in 201, recommending them for official declaration of completion, while follow-up visits were recommended for the other 224.⁸ The first round of completion surveys was expected to conclude by December 2024, providing a clearer understanding of remaining mined area.⁹

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.¹⁰ Indian peacekeeping forces also used mines during their presence from July 1987 to January 1990.¹¹

The SLA used both AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines, with all minelaying said to have been recorded¹² and made available to the national mine action programme.¹³ In Jaffna, where the minefields were laid by the SLA, the extent of contamination is well understood.¹⁴ The HALO Trust, in coordination with NMAC and its Regional Mine Action Office (the RMAO), has now cleared most of the accessible SLA-laid minefields in Jaffna district. The bulk of the contamination remaining is 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, with HALO tasked for the work.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ Typically, LTTE minelaying was less predictable and more sporadic, and many of the minefields are in jungle areas with limited human activity.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ The LTTE manufactured almost all the mines their forces used.¹⁹

While estimates of total contamination have been rising since 2021, they have fallen sharply from a high of 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.²⁰ In September 2021, NMAC initiated comprehensive NTS across all conflict-affected districts to identify previously unknown mined and ERW-contaminated areas.²¹ This survey has led to the discovery of significant amounts of mined area not previously detected. Past NTS had gaps in coverage, and recent efforts tended to be only reactive, particularly in areas with limited human interaction such as the Mullaitivu jungle.²² The newly found mined areas are often in forests, in areas to which communities have only recently returned. Additionally, some previously registered CHAs were found to be larger than expected.²³ The survey's findings have contributed to the development of Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027.²⁴

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.²⁵ 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.²⁶

8 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 7.

9 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

10 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.

11 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.

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

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

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

15 Email from Nadine Lainer, Deputy Programme Manager, HALO, 13 April 2023.

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

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

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

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

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

21 Statement of Sri Lanka on clearance, Nineteenth Meeting of States Parties (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.

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

23 Email from Asa Masleberg, GICHD, 30 August 2022.

24 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.

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

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

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.²⁷ These are being tackled at the same time as mined areas.²⁸

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 the establishment of policy and standards.²⁹ 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 the secretary of the ministry in question. Lack of consistent leadership can impede management of the mine action centre and reduce its effectiveness. NMAC currently sits within the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, after a re-shuffle in August 2022.³⁰ Prior to this, NMAC had undergone near yearly changes to its ministry affiliation.

Clearance operations are coordinated, tasked, and quality managed by an RMAO in Kilinochchi, working in consultation with District Steering Committees for Mine Action. The Committees are chaired by government agents heading district authorities.³¹ The RMAO also suffers from high turnover of staff with many military personnel, who are seconded, rotating at regular intervals.³²

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 APMBIC rather than on regulation of the mine action programme, was certified on 17 February 2022.³³

In 2023, the Sri Lankan Government made substantial in-kind contributions to its national mine action programme, including covering salaries and monthly allowances for operations and QA officers. Additionally, the government

provided office space for NMAC and logistical support for operations, contributing approx. US\$300,000.³⁴ This is an increase from the approx. \$85,000 that the government provided in 2022.³⁵ 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 was expected to be completed and approved by the middle of 2023, but as at June 2024 the strategy was said to be still under development.³⁶

Operators reported a generally supportive and enabling environment for mine action in Sri Lanka.³⁷ HALO noted that the relationship between the Sri Lankan government and the mine action sector has been strengthened following the launch of the National Mine Action Completion Strategy.³⁸ Both MAG and HALO reported improvements in the process of importation of demining equipment, including heavy machinery.³⁹

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) has worked very closely with NMAC since early 2015. The GICHD supported the development of Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Completion Strategy, which was launched in March 2023, and continues to support the implementation of the strategy through facilitation of meetings and workshops.⁴⁰

The HALO Trust conducted two capacity development trainings in 2023 for representatives from the RMAO, Sri Lankan Army, and NMAC. In September, HALO's Information Management and Geographic Information System (GIS) team provided training in the creation of clearance polygons in which four NMAC staff participated.⁴¹ MAG sponsored travel for RMAO staff to attend GICHD training courses.⁴²

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

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

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

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

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

32 Email from the GICHD, 13 May 2020.

33 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, at: <https://bit.ly/4eee1Dg>; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form A.

34 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 16.

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

36 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 25; and Statement of Sri Lanka, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 18–20 June 2024.

37 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

38 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

39 Emails from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024; and Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

40 Email from the GICHD, 2 May 2023; and Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 16.

41 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

42 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

In its 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 says it will, in close collaboration with partners, organise bi-annual donor coordination meetings and quarterly operations meetings.⁴³

In 2023, several high-level operational and coordination meetings were held, led by NMAC in collaboration with the GICHD. The meetings included workshops on the completion survey, staff livelihood transition workshops, and an NMAC review. In addition, NMAC conducted two donor coordination meetings for all mine action stakeholders.⁴⁴

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027 contains a specific section on gender and diversity. It recognises that mine action need to reflect the distinct needs of age and gender as people 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 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 that more than one third of women employed as deminers had no prior income. This contrasts starkly with the one in twenty men in such a situation.

As Sri Lanka nears completion, integrating gender and diversity considerations during the staff transition process will be crucial, as outlined in strategic objective 4.⁴⁵ When recruiting for survey and community liaison teams, NMAC recruits personnel to represent ethnic or minority groups in each area.⁴⁶ Relevant mine action data are disaggregated by sex and age.⁴⁷

Table 2: Gender composition of operators in 2023⁴⁸

Operator	Total staff	Women employed	Total managerial or supervisory staff	Women in managerial or supervisory positions	Total operational staff	Women in operational positions
SHARP	215	39 (18%)	15	5 (33%)	182	34 (19%)
DASH	429	84 (20%)	87	16 (18%)	342	68 (20%)
HALO	1,121	398 (35%)	123	26 (21%)	950	377 (40%)
MAG	1,040	238 (23%)	159	33 (21%)	963	210 (22%)
Totals	2,805	759 (27%)	384	80 (20%)	2,437	689 (28%)

NMAC has not provided figures for 2023 but in 2022 only 5% of its total employees were female, with no women in managerial or operational positions. The SLA HDU trained and deployed two female demining teams for the first time in 2022.⁴⁹

DASH and fellow national operator SHARP have 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.⁵⁰ DASH considers gender equality and employment of women important to its programme. There has, however, been a small decrease in the percentage of women it employed compared to 2022 when 22% of DASH's total employees were female, with women

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

44 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.; and Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 16.

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

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

47 Email from the GICHD, 13 April 2022.

48 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

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

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

holding 23% of operational positions, and 19% of managerial/supervisory level positions.⁵¹ DASH survey and community liaison teams are in close consultation with beneficiaries and comprise people from the affected minority community in the Northern province.⁵²

SHARP increased the proportion of female employees from 15% in 2022 to 18% in 2023 following the addition of a female multi-disciplinary team in 2023 which increased the proportion of women in operational positions.⁵³ SHARP is committed to maximising female representation, particularly focusing on those impacted by the war, such as war widows, families of casualties, and single mothers.⁵⁴

International operators HALO and MAG confirmed 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.⁵⁵ There was no change in the overall proportion of women employed by HALO from 2022 to 2023, though there was a slight increase in the proportion of women in operational positions, rising from 38% to 40%.⁵⁶

In 2023, HALO hosted a visit from their Global Disability and Inclusion Advisor, who provided gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI) training to all senior operations and support

staff. Additionally, HALO updated its recruitment policy to incorporate more inclusive practices seeking to promote and retain female staff. This includes implementing a minimum quota for female applicants, based on the proportion of women in HALO's workforce, to maintain or improve their current levels of women in leadership positions. In 2024, HALO is conducting a Gender and Power (GAP) analysis, which will offer deeper insights into gender dynamics, roles, and barriers in northern Sri Lanka and within their workforce. This analysis will establish a baseline to measure HALO's gender-transformative impact through to project completion.⁵⁷

There was no change in the proportion of women working at MAG from 2022 to 2023. 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 in non-demining tasks, and maintaining zero tolerance for gender-based violence. 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 of the country, and a mobility support initiative was organised, initially only for women, but later also for men.⁵⁸

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Sri Lanka does not have a dedicated national standard or policy on environmental management. Operators reported that when working in contaminated forest, permissions must be obtained from the National Forestry and Wildlife Commissions and the Archaeology Department, which conduct routine visits to help ensure no harm is done to wildlife, forests, and land of archaeological value.⁵⁹ In 2022, HALO, on behalf of NMAC and other operators, organised a Wildlife & Forestry Commission Technical Working Group to establish a collaborative, efficient, and environmentally sensitive approach to jungle/forest clearance, including the use of small mechanised assets. HALO and MAG have since received ad-hoc authorisation to use mechanised assets for certain forested tasks.⁶⁰

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 detailed 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.⁶¹ However, it is unclear whether mine action is explicitly mentioned in any of these documents.

Operators report that they take into consideration seasonal weather changes and associated risks when planning and prioritising survey and clearance tasks.⁶² For instance, HALO strategically reserves the clearance of dry areas, such as higher ground or raised soil areas like bund-lines or tank mounds, for the wet season. Conversely, during the dry season, HALO deploys clearance teams to wetland areas,

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

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

53 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 30 April 2023 and 6 June 2024.

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

55 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.

56 Emails from Nadine Lainer, HALO, 13 April 2023; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

57 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

58 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

59 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.

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

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

62 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

such as lagoons and low-lying regions, aiming to complete as much clearance as possible before the wet season's flooding restricts access.⁶³

DASH does not have an environmental policy but does have a standard operating procedure (SOP) in place and reported that it conducts environmental assessments to support the planning and delivery of survey and clearance tasks.⁶⁴ DASH has said that preserving the environment is considered a top priority in its clearance operations. DASH keeps vegetation removal to the bare minimum and where possible, fauna, flora, and soil layers are protected, as they are essential elements of the jungle, agriculture, and other livelihood activities post-clearance.⁶⁵

HALO has a global environmental policy and a global environment strategy but lacks a specific SOP. Before demining, HALO conducts an environmental screening checklist for each minefield to mitigate impact. HALO operates in areas where wetlands and other environments have been damaged by years of conflict, mine clearance, and saltwater intrusion. In some regions, mangrove swamps and other flora have grown over extensive mine lines and have had to be cleared.⁶⁶

In 2023, HALO conducted clearance across three island tasks in Kilinochchi District, requiring full excavation, the most invasive mine clearance method, which involves clearing ground and vegetation metre by metre. Environmental concerns are integrated into the clearance SOP, including preserving vegetation with trunks thicker than 5cm. Additionally, HALO teams replanted vegetation from seed post-clearance, a practice now recognised as best practice and set to be implemented in other areas where possible.⁶⁷

HALO also completed a 24-month environmental restoration project in July 2023, resulting in the planting of 5,000 mangroves in the coastal village of Kilaly, formerly part of the Muhamalai frontline during the civil war. Initially conceived as a response to the environmental impact of mechanical clearance, the project has shown high success rates in mangrove survival and community engagement. The site has gained support from the Sri Lankan Environment Ministry and the local angler's association. HALO plans to build on this success with further environmental projects, contingent on funding.⁶⁸

MAG has an environmental management SOP aligned with international standards, which it shared with NMAC to help develop environmental standards and policies for mine action, in particular to inform discussions with the Forestry and Wildlife Commissions on working responsibly in those areas.⁶⁹ Operators promote open dialogue with the forestry and wildlife departments to facilitate effective and efficient clearance. MAG conducts basic environmental impact assessments to guide the planning and delivery of survey and clearance tasks and prohibits the cutting of trees or bushes exceeding 10cm in diameter. MAG also plans to introduce specialised machinery, such as the Bearcat machine with FAE Mulcher, for tasks in the Mannar forests to minimise environmental impact in these sensitive areas.⁷⁰

SHARP does not have a policy on the environment but said that several environmental provisions are in its SOPs. SHARP reports conducting environmental assessments to support the planning and delivery of survey and clearance tasks, and says that manual clearance is the preferred method to minimise environmental damage.⁷¹

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.⁷²

A significant database clean-up took place in 2022 and 2023. As at May 2023, the GICHD, with funding from the US Department of State, was recruiting an information management (IM) advisor who will be based in Sri Lanka and provide IM support to NMAC and RMAO.⁷³ 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. It is not known if this advisor was hired.

In 2023, HALO's International GIS Officer dedicated two weeks each quarter to assist NMAC in maintaining and updating the IMSMA database. Additionally, HALO supports NMAC through capacity-building activities, strategy workshops, and training

63 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

64 Email from Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024.

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

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

67 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

68 Ibid.

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

70 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

71 Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, Director, SHARP, 6 June 2024.

72 Email from the GICHD, 2 May 2023.

73 Ibid.

to enhance IM, GIS, and the completion process.⁷⁴ Two NMAC officers also attended training on IMSMA Core organised by the GICHD in Switzerland.⁷⁵ MAG has supported the NMAC with a donation of three laptops and three tablets to support information management and reporting requirements.⁷⁶

Sri Lanka has long suffered with poor quality data, with 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 the RMAO.⁷⁷

Sri Lanka submitted an Article 7 report covering 2023 in June 2024 and included annual survey and clearance output figures that had been reported cumulatively in the report covering 2022.

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 APMB obligations in alignment with the SDGs.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹

As part of the land release and risk education strategic objective, NMAC, with the support of the GICHD and in collaboration with the operators, has developed a "completion process" – 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 GNDs as "complete", confirming its confidence that, at the time of signing the completion documents, there is no further evidence of mines in the GND. Each village officer in a district has to confirm they are not aware of any explosive ordnance contamination. When all GNDs within a district are complete, the district authority sign it off as "mine free".⁸⁰

All operators were conducting completion surveys in 2023 in line with the completion survey SOP.⁸¹ For example, MAG conducted a three-day training session on completion surveys for 31 Community Liaison Team members in August

2023. A pilot survey was then conducted in Vavuniya South GND in September and October, followed by expansion to Musali GND in November. Four teams, including four leaders, eight community liaison officers, and one supervisor, carried out completion surveys.⁸²

Sri Lanka planned to release 17km² of mined area across 11 districts from 2023 to 2027, with a land release target for 2023 of 4.5km² and four districts declared completed.⁸³ However, as the amount of contaminated area has gone up, Sri Lanka has formulated new land release targets for 2024 to 2027 for 23.44km² (see Table 3).⁸⁴

Table 3: Planned land release 2023–27⁸⁵

Year	Land release target (km ²)
2024	7.02
2025	5.89
2026	5.85
2027	4.68

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, or large-scale infrastructure are also prioritised.⁸⁶ 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

74 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

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

76 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 20 September 2024.

77 Email from the GICHD, 13 May 2020.

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

79 Ibid., p. 18.

80 Ibid., p. 20.

81 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

82 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

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

84 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 8.

85 Ibid.

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

pressures and livelihood activities are vital considerations in the prioritisation process in relation to resettlement plans.⁸⁷

With Sri Lanka approaching completion, all known remaining tasks have now been allocated to operators.⁸⁸

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. But the NMAS were never approved. 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 SLNMAS 04.10: Non-Technical Survey; SLNMAS 04: Land Release; and SLNMAS 08: Quality Management.⁸⁹ Updating and approving these standards by the end of 2023 was one of the targets of the Completion Strategy 2023–2027. The GICHD was planning to support this effort from 2023. Alongside this, all operator SOPs were to be reviewed in line with the updated NMAS by the end of 2023.⁹⁰ As at June 2024, this had not yet happened.⁹¹

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 2027.⁹² 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 2023.⁹³

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2023, demining operations were again conducted by the SLA HDU; national NGOs, DASH and SHARP; and international NGOs, HALO and MAG (see Table 4). The NGOs and INGOs are entirely funded by international donors.

With respect to survey capacity in 2023, DASH had one team conducting NTS and QA totalling five personnel.⁹⁴ SHARP had one survey and training team comprising a team leader and five personnel who carried out NTS as part of the completion survey, one QA team totalling three personnel, and one MDT team of 22 personnel conducting TS of one CHA.⁹⁵ MAG deployed four NTS teams, for a total of twelve personnel.⁹⁶ HALO deployed four NTS teams of consisting of one survey officer and two medics per team.⁹⁷

Table 4: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2023⁹⁸

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers	Dogs and handlers	Machines	Comments
DASH	12	282	0	0	Clearance teams also conduct TS
HALO	67	437	0	27	Clearance teams also conduct TS
MAG	50	650	0	26	Clearance teams also conduct TS
SHARP	7	136	0	0	Clearance teams also conduct TS
SLA HDU	N/K	N/K	N/K	N/K	
Totals	136	1,505	0	53	

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

88 Email from Asa Mattleberg, GICHD, 29 August 2023.

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

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

91 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

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

93 Email from Asa Mattleberg, GICHD, 29 August 2023.

94 Email from Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024.

95 Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 19 September 2024.

96 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

97 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

98 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

DASH and SHARP reported no change in capacity from 2022 to 2023.⁹⁹ HALO experienced a reduction in capacity during the same period, attributed to reduced funding and the decision not to replace staff lost to natural attrition.¹⁰⁰ MAG reported no significant change in capacity but recruited staff due to turnover caused by emigration.¹⁰¹

DASH and SHARP expect to operate with the same capacity in 2024.¹⁰² HALO was planning to recruit 70 new deminers in 2024.¹⁰³ MAG was planning to reduce capacity in 2024 to 48 clearance teams due to a drop in funding and rising costs.¹⁰⁴

In early 2023, HALO trialled the use of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) drone technology in the densely vegetated Kokkuthoduvai and Muhamalai minefields. Standard drones could not penetrate the vegetation, but LiDAR, which uses lasers to create detailed 3D terrain models, allowed HALO to detect trenches, bunkers, and mine-lines beneath the canopy. Following successful trials in Angola, HALO's Remote Sensing Specialist conducted an initial visit in March and a full trial in June. The trials revealed several hidden features, including trenches and firing points, and identified three new mine lines in Muhamalai. This data will inform HALO's future operations planning.¹⁰⁵

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

According to NMAC data, a total of 5.63km² of mined area was released in 2023, of which 0.02km² was cancelled through NTS, 0.78km² was reduced through TS, and 4.83km² was cleared, with 19,212 AP mines destroyed during clearance and an additional 76 AP mines destroyed during spot tasks.

According to operator data, a total of 5.75km² of mined area was released in 2023, of which 0.01km² was cancelled through NTS, 0.42km² was reduced through TS, and 5.31km² was cleared with 18,927 AP mines destroyed.

SURVEY IN 2023

According to NMAC data, a total of 799,099m² was released through survey in 2023, of which 21,655m² was cancelled through NTS (see Table 5) and 777,444m² was reduced through TS (see Table 7).¹⁰⁶ This is an increase from the 372,853m² reported as released through survey by NMAC in 2022, of which 316,111m² was cancelled through NTS and 56,742m² was reduced through TS.¹⁰⁷

The data reported by NMAC varied from the NGOs' own survey data, in some instances significantly. According to operator data, a total of 432,799m² was released through survey in 2023 of which 10,096m² was cancelled through NTS (see Table 6) and 422,703m² was reduced through TS (see Table 8).¹⁰⁸ This is a reduction from the 700,721m² reported as released through survey by operators in 2022: 193,485m² cancelled through NTS and 507,236m² reduced through TS.¹⁰⁹

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 the RMAO updates IMSMA based on the weekly progress reports of operators; and the fact that cancellation and reduction data are added by NMAC onto the IMSMA database only upon completion of the land release process), or possibly errors in entering or extracting the data.

Table 5: Area cancelled through NTS in 2023 (national authority data)¹¹⁰

District	Area cancelled (m ²)
Jaffna	20,720
Vavuniya	740
Mannar	179
Pollanaruwa	16
Total	21,655

99 Emails from Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024.

100 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

101 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

102 Emails from Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; and Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024.

103 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

104 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

105 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

106 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 6.

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

108 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

109 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.

110 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 6.

Table 6: Area cancelled through NTS in 2023 (operator data)¹¹¹

District	Operator	Areas cancelled	Area cancelled (m ²)
Vavuniya	MAG	2	9,901
Mannar	MAG	1	179
Pollanaruwa	MAG	1	16
Totals		4	10,096

Table 7: Area reduced through TS in 2023 (national authority data)¹¹²

District	Area reduced (m ²)
Jaffna	39,789
Kilinochchi	19,570
Mannar	4,684
Mullaitivu	292,179
Vavuniya	415,123
Batticaloa	6,100
Total	777,445

Table 8: Area reduced through TS in 2023 (operator data)¹¹³

District	Operator	Areas reduced	Area reduced (m ²)
Batticaloa	MAG	4	26,695
Jaffna	HALO	3	8,457
Kilinochchi	HALO	9	27,456
	MAG	1	4,113
Mannar	MAG	4	14,389
Mullaitivu	SHARP	8	63,663
	DASH	6	38,868
	HALO	10	69,135
	MAG	12	76,703
Vavuniya	MAG	4	93,224
Totals		61	422,703

CLEARANCE IN 2023

According to NMAC, a total of almost 4.83km² of mined area was cleared in 2023, with the destruction of 19,212 AP mines, 33 AV mines, and 21,623 items of UXO (see Table 9), and a further 76 AP mines were destroyed in spot tasks.¹¹⁴ This is a decrease from the 5.27km² of clearance reported by NMAC in 2022, although the number of AP mines destroyed in 2022 (27,177) was higher.¹¹⁵

111 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 6.

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

Clearance data for 2023 reported by NMAC varied from that reported by the NGOs directly. According to operator data, a total of 5.31km² was cleared in 2023 with the destruction of 18,927 AP mines (see Table 10).¹¹⁶ This is an increase from the 4.87km² reported by operators in 2022, although a decrease in the reported number of AP mines destroyed (24,529).¹¹⁷ The reason for the differences is not known although in previous years NMAC said it was due to its data being 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.¹¹⁸

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.¹¹⁹

Table 9: Mine clearance in 2023 (national authority data)¹²⁰

District	Clearance (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Jaffna	60,972	214	0	408
Kilinochchi	1,434,385	8,714	28	15,635
Mannar	241,967	539	0	39
Mullaitivu	2,539,970	9,045	2	5,362
Vavuniya	341,021	382	3	137
Anuradhapura	24,694	0	0	33
Polonnaruwa	34,294	70	0	1
Batticaloa	120,478	231	0	8
Trincomalee	31,535	17	0	0
Totals	4,829,316	19,212	33	21,623

Table 10: Mine clearance in 2023 (operator data)¹²¹

District	Operator	Areas cleared	Clearance (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Batticaloa	MAG	13	130,253	231	0	8
Jaffna	HALO	8	69,076	26	0	15
Kilinochchi	SHARP	7	93,924	1,080	7	252
	DASH	27	317,363	1,423	6	554
	HALO	114	839,966	6,093	17	842
	MAG	5	410,081	224	0	703
Mannar	MAG	18	303,251	540	0	34
Mullaitivu	SHARP	11	164,123	255	0	137
	DASH	21	336,397	3,374	0	134
	HALO	80	1,343,201	3,993	2	446
	MAG	34	761,232	1,349	3	104
Pollanaruwa	MAG	5	38,580	70	0	1
Trincomalee	MAG	6	31,535	17	0	0

116 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

117 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.

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

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

120 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.

121 Ibid.

Table 10 Continued

District	Operator	Areas cleared	Clearance (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Vavuniya	HALO	1	4,857	1	0	1
	MAG	19	468,818	251	0	57
Totals		369	5,312,657	18,927	35	3,288

In addition, HALO destroyed 76 AP mines and 25 items of UXO during spot tasks.¹²² In 2023, of the 18,927 AP mines destroyed during clearance a total of 6,360 were improvised mines, with 3,557 destroyed by DASH, 121 by HALO, and 2,682 by MAG.¹²³

In 2023, operators cleared 38 tasks covering 268,605m², which proved to contain no AP mines. Of this, SHARP cleared 3 tasks covering a total of 115,120m², DASH cleared 13 tasks across 104,192m², HALO cleared 19 tasks totalling 35,995m², and MAG cleared 3 tasks covering 13,298m².¹²⁴

SHARP reduced the amount of area cleared in 2023 from 2022 as there were more battle area clearance (BAC) tasks in 2022.¹²⁵ DASH reported a significant decrease in area cancelled, as all operators are now required to provide proof of contamination certified by Sri Lankan Army personnel. However, there was a moderate increase in the areas reduced and cleared in 2023.¹²⁶ HALO reported a slight reduction in land release in 2023 from 2022 mainly due to a decrease in programme capacity. Additionally, mechanical teams have been deployed to more technically challenging areas, which involve raised or sunken soil areas that require extensive excavation, slowing clearance operations and reducing output.¹²⁷ MAG reported an increase in land release in 2023 compared to 2022, primarily due to the absence of disruptions to operational days as in 2022, operations were hindered by fuel shortages and nationwide curfews.¹²⁸

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE

APMBC ENTRY INTO FORCE FOR SRI LANKA: 1 JUNE 2018
↓
ORIGINAL ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JUNE 2028
NOT ON TRACK TO MEET ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE LIKELIHOOD OF COMPLETING CLEARANCE BY 2025 (OSLO ACTION PLAN COMMITMENT): NONE

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 is not likely to meet this deadline.

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,¹²⁹ 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)
2023	4.83
2022	5.27
2021	4.37
2020	4.59
2019	*2.94
Total	22.00

*Mine Action Review calculation

Sri Lanka had been confident in its ability to identify and clear all AP mined areas by the end of 2027, in line with its national completion strategy.¹³⁰ Despite a drop in clearance output in 2023, it still met its land release target for the year. However, the discovery of large areas of previously unknown AP mine contamination during the completion surveys

122 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

123 Emails from Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

124 Emails from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024; Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024; Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024; and Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

125 Email from Sarath Jayawardhana, SHARP, 6 June 2024.

126 Email from Anil Udaya Kumara Kuruwita Arachchige, DASH, 10 June 2024.

127 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.

128 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 11 June 2024.

129 Email from Belinda Vause, HALO, 9 August 2019.

130 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, p. 19.

has significantly increased the size of the contamination baseline. Consequently, Sri Lanka has set new land release targets through to the end of 2027, based on an updated contamination estimate of 23.44km². These targets are ambitious and depend on no further substantial additions to the baseline and ensuring that operators have the necessary capacity.

The National Mine Action Completion Strategy for 2023–2027 identifies financial sustainability as a major risk to the programme's success, potentially impacting the achievement

of strategic targets and the 2027 completion goal. Both NMAC and the RMAO are under-resourced and face high staff turnover, while operators struggle to secure significant, multiyear funding commitments from donors. In 2024, NMAC, in collaboration with the GICHD and operators, was planning to analyse a range of completion scenarios based on remaining contamination and available funding. This analysis will help Sri Lanka determine a realistic Article 5 completion date.¹³¹

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 expected 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 can 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, along with the capacity to collect and store future data.¹³²

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. The National Strategy also aims to integrate gender dimensions effectively for non-discriminatory and sustainable outcomes. With funding support through MAG, the government planned to establish an interministerial Staff Transition Coordination Platform by the middle of 2023 and, with the private

sector, by the end of 2023. A pilot redundancy programme was 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.¹³³ MAG reported that several meetings have been held to coordinate information on the plans for demobilisation and transition, involving government departments, multilateral agencies, and the private sector. However, a formal coordination platform is still under development. While several targets under Pillar 4 of the National Strategy are in progress, the timelines will need to be adjusted in line with ongoing clearance efforts and the projected completion timeframe.¹³⁴

In November 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between NMAC, the Northern Provincial Council, and the Departments of Agriculture (DOA) and Animal Production and Health (DAPH). This formal collective framework is the first of its kind between the mine action sector and the Sri Lankan Government and will help to guide and harness national cooperation in support of the staff livelihood transition strategy. A follow-up meeting was held in December 2023 with the DAPH, DOA and Department of Industries (DOI) and mine action operators in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu to discuss staff livelihood transition initiatives according to employment gaps in each region.¹³⁵

131 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 8.

132 Sri Lanka National Mine Action Completion Strategy 2023–2027, pp. 28–29.

133 Ibid., pp. 30–33.

134 Email from Cristy McLennan, MAG, 20 September 2024.

135 Email from Philippa Coates, HALO, 13 June 2024.