

KEY DATA

**CLUSTER MUNITION
CONTAMINATION:**
UNKNOWN BUT MASSIVE

SUBMUNITION
CLEARANCE IN 2023

55.26 km²

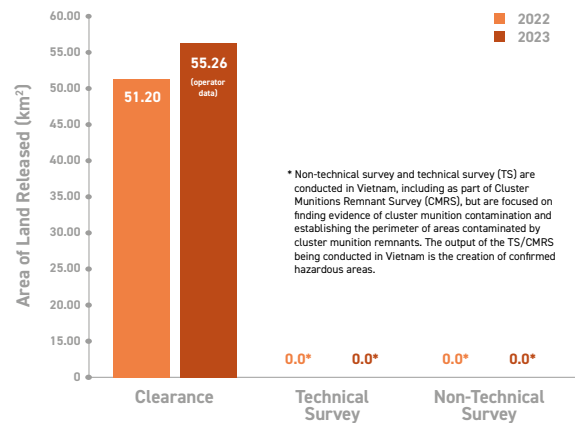
(OPERATOR DATA)

SUBMUNITIONS
DESTROYED IN 2023

11,675

(INCLUDING 1,228
DESTROYED IN SPOT TASKS)
(OPERATOR DATA)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Clearance of cluster munition-contaminated area by NGOs continued to accelerate in 2023, rising by 8%, although the number of cluster munition remnants (CMR) dropped by a quarter. NGOs completed technical survey (TS) of all accessible areas of Quang Tri province. The Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) started discussions with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) on upgrading the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Vietnam should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- VNMAC should set a strategy for expanding non-technical survey (NTS) and TS to enhance understanding of the extent of CMR contamination with a view to setting a national baseline.
- VNMAC should publish annual reports detailing results of survey and clearance by all accredited operators.
- VNMAC should elaborate and publish annual work plans for CMR, with clear targets for survey and clearance.
- Vietnam should complete revision of National Mine Action Standards (TCVNs), in line with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), as soon as possible.

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

- Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC)
- Provincial mine action centres and authorities (e.g. the Quang Tri Mine Action Centre (QTMAC), the Quang Binh Database and Coordination Unit (DBCUC), and Thua Thien Hue database unit (DBU))

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Ministry of Defence

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- PeaceTrees Vietnam (PTVN)

Cluster Munition Survey and Clearance Capacity Continued

OTHER ACTORS

- Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC)
- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

- Golden West Humanitarian Foundation (Golden West)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Vietnam is massively contaminated by CMR but no accurate estimate exists, even to the nearest hundred square kilometres. An explosive remnants of war (ERW) impact survey, started in 2004 and completed in 2014, was only published in 2018. It said that 61,308km² or 19% of Vietnam's land surface area was affected by ERW, but did not specify the area affected by CMR. It found, though, that CMR affected 32 of Vietnam's 63 provinces and cities.¹ According to VNMAC, the total area still contaminated with bombs, mines, and explosive ordnance in Vietnam was 56,000km², which accounts for approximately 17% of Vietnam's land surface. Contamination is mainly concentrated in central provinces including Quang Tri, Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, Nghe An, and Quang Ngai.²

VNMAC does not plan to conduct a separate survey for CMR, and instead is implementing its survey and clearance plan for all types of explosive ordnance.³ Vietnam is, however, slowly starting to gain a clearer picture of CMR contamination thanks to the expansion of Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS) into new provinces. In Quang Tri province, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is conducting a province-wide survey.⁴ Estimates of cluster munition-contaminated area are increasing sharply as survey progresses. In April 2023, NPA completed CMRS of all accessible areas in the province. In total, between 2015 and 2023, NPA defined a total of 1,270 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), covering 620km², of which more than 177km² has already been cleared.⁵ Of the 110 villages in the province that remain to be surveyed, 47 were made accessible to international operators in May 2023 and 63 villages remain inaccessible due to national security.⁶ The Quang Tri Mine Action Centre (QTMAC) is said to be interested in exploring the possibility for the military to be trained to conduct CMRS of these remaining villages.⁷

In Quang Binh province, a joint consortium between Mines Advisory Group (MAG), NPA, PeaceTrees Vietnam (PTVN), and the Provincial People's Committee (PPC) of Quang Binh, approved use of a CMRS approach in 2020.⁸ In the province,

MAG has historically used an NTS methodology—Evidence Point Polygon (EPP) mapping—to map initial CHAs. Since February 2022, NPA has taken over from MAG conducting TS in Quang Binh as part of the US Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs PM-WRA (PM/WRA) consortium.⁹ At the end of 2023 TS had been fully completed in 7 out of Quang Binh's 151 communes, confirming CMR contamination of almost 83km², and by the end of March 2024 survey had been completed in two more communes, with total CHAs amounting to 117.5km². Together with the results of survey under way in three other communes the total CHA identified at the end of March 2024 stood at 131km².¹⁰ NPA estimates that, in total, there is some 1,000km² of CMR contamination in the province and that it could take 27 years to complete TS, based on current capacity.¹¹

In Thua Thien Hue province, NPA in collaboration with VNMAC and the provincial authorities, has been implementing CMRS in four districts. Between 2011 and 2022, nearly 19km² of CHA had been identified, of which 15.8km² is in the western district of A Luoi. In addition to TS, NPA multi-task teams continued to clear CHAs and respond to any explosive ordnance reported to Hue Database Unit (DBU) or through the NPA hotline phone number.¹²

The United States dropped 413,130 tons of submunitions over Vietnam between 1965 and 1973, reportedly striking 55 provinces and cities. Vietnam's Military Engineering Command has recorded finding 15 types of US-made submunitions. Most submunition types were air-dropped, but artillery-delivered submunitions were also used in central Quang Binh and provinces to the south.¹³ Most of the CMR that international operators encounter in Quang Tri province are BLU-26, BLU-29, and BLU-61 submunitions, and occasionally Mk 20 Rockeye bombs,¹⁴ as well as BLU-63 (in Quang Binh province).¹⁵ In Quang Nam province, almost all the CMR previously cleared by Danish Demining Group (DDG, now Danish Refugee Council) were M83 submunitions.¹⁶

1 VNMAC, "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam, Based on the Explosive Remnants of War Contamination Survey and Mapping – Phase 1", provided by VNMAC 19 April 2018, p. 38.

2 Email from VNMAC, 14 July 2023.

3 Email from VNMAC, 14 July 2023.

4 Email from Resad Junuzagic, Country Director, NPA, 6 May 2019.

5 QTMAC website, accessed 7 July 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3rfPNGa>.

6 Email from Melissa Andersson, Programme Manager, NPA, 30 April 2024.

7 Interview with Jan Erik Støa, NPA, Oslo, 8 June 2023.

8 Email from Jan Erik Støa, NPA, 24 June 2020.

9 Emails from Helene Kuperman, MAG, 31 March 2021; and Valentina Stivanello, MAG, 29 April 2022.

10 Emails from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; and Sarah Goring, Country Director, MAG, 17 June 2024.

11 Email from NPA Vietnam, 16 June 2023.

12 Ibid.

13 "Vietnam mine/ERW (including cluster munitions) contamination, impacts and clearance requirements", Presentation by Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, People's Army of Vietnam, in Geneva, 30 June 2011; Handicap International, *Fatal Footprint, the Global Human Impact of Cluster Munitions*, Report, Brussels, November 2006, p. 15.

14 Interview with Magnus Johansson, NPA, Hanoi, 17 April 2018; and Michael Raine, MAG, Quang Tri, 18 April 2018.

15 Email from Helene Kuperman, MAG, 23 June 2020.

16 Email from Clinton Smith, Country Director, DDG, 23 March 2017.

OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

Vietnam has huge contamination from unexploded ordnance (UXO) and an unquantified mine problem (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Vietnam for further information). The ERW impact survey identified the most heavily contaminated regions as the central coastal provinces, the Central Highlands, the Mekong River delta, and the Red River delta.¹⁷ The experience of international operators in central Vietnam points to wide variations in contamination types from district to district. International operators report encountering mainly projectiles, mortars, grenades, and some aircraft bombs.¹⁸

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

VNMAC was established in 2014 by Prime Ministerial decree to strengthen the direction of mine action and provide a focal point for mine action operations.¹⁹ A Decree on the Management and Implementation of Mine Action Activities (Decree No. 18), which entered into effect in 2019 confirmed the Ministry of Defence (MoD) as the lead authority for the national mine action programme, in coordination with other relevant ministries and sectors;²⁰ while VNMAC will, under the direction of the Prime Minister and management of the MoD, "monitor, coordinate and implement mine action tasks".²¹ The government's Circular 195, which came into effect in 2020²² provides detailed guidance on the implementation of the provisions of the Decree.

Decree 18 is currently the highest-level legal document governing mine action activities in Vietnam and applicable to all domestic and foreign organisations operating in mine action in the country.²³ It established the legal basis for revising and updating national regulations (QCVNs) and standards (TCVNs) (see below the section, Land Release System) and for regulating information management. In February 2022, the Prime Minister ordered the preparation of an Ordinance for mine action in Vietnam to be issued by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly which will supersede Decree 18 in importance.²⁴ The ordinance is reportedly being prepared.

VNMAC is nationally funded but the National Mine Action Programme (Program 504) is funded by both the state and international donors.²⁵ According to VNMAC, government support for mine action has included the following

- establishing coordinating agencies and associations to support all levels of mine action;
- completing a legal framework, mechanism, and policies for demining (the MoD cooperates with other ministries to develop Circulars guiding QCVNs, TCVNs, and standing

operating procedures (SOPs) on quality management (QM), survey, and clearance, and related issues);

- facilitating the capacity development of demining organisations in management, administration, survey, and clearance;
- setting up a national QM system for survey and clearance in accordance with international standards; and
- developing an information management system.²⁶

VNMAC participated in all meetings of the Mine Action Working Group (MAWG), which provides a platform for all mine action stakeholders to discuss issues that impact the sector. MAG and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-chaired the meetings in 2023 while PeaceTrees Vietnam and UNDP were elected as co-chairs for 2024 and 2025.²⁷ In April 2022, MAWG members established sub-taskforces on capacity development, gender, the environment, victim assistance, and risk education.²⁸ VNMAC participates in all meetings of the MAWG and its sub-taskforces.²⁹ The MAWG met three times in 2023—in March, September, and December—allowing members to assess progress in the sector, the work of MAWG sub-task forces, development of the ordinance for mine action, and the TCVNs.³⁰

VNMAC is collaborating with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and UNDP in a project for ERW survey and clearance in central Vietnam. The \$29 million first phase conducted between 2018 and 2022 involved ERW survey and clearance in Binh Dinh and Quang Binh provinces. In the \$25 million second phase, starting in 2024 and running until 2026, BOMICEN will deploy 14 teams for survey and clearance in Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai and Thua Thien Hue provinces.³¹

MAG, NPA, PTVN, the GICHD, Golden West Humanitarian Foundation (Golden West), and UNDP all provide capacity

17 VNMAC, "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam", Hanoi, 2018, pp. 33–36.

18 Interviews with Resad Junuzagic, Jan Eric Stoa, and Magnus Johansson, NPA, Hanoi, 17 April 2018; and with Simon Rea and Michael Raine, MAG, Quang Tri, 19 April 2018; and emails from Clinton Smith, DDG, 23 March 2017 and 19 April 2018.

19 Prime Ministerial Decree (No. 738 of 2013) on the management and implementation of mine action activities, Hanoi.

20 Decree on Implementation and Management of Mine Action, No. 18/2019/ND-CP, 1 February 2019.

21 Draft Decree on the management and implementation of mine action activities, Hanoi, April 2018.

22 Emails from Jan Erik Stoa, NPA, 6 April 2020; and Tim Horner on behalf of Mr Phuc, VNMAC, 6 April 2021.

23 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023.

24 Ibid.

25 Email from Tim Horner, Senior Technical Advisor, VNMAC, on behalf of Mr Phuc, VNMAC, 6 April 2021.

26 Ibid.

27 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.

28 Email from Tim Horner on behalf of Mr Phuc, VNMAC, 6 April 2021.

29 Email from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.

30 Emails from Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023, Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; and Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.

31 Interview with Kwon Goosoon, Chief Technical Adviser for Mine Action, UNDP, in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

development support in Vietnam.³² In October 2021, MAG concluded a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with VNMAC to provide technical support and capacity building on explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), clearance, QM, and expanding digital risk education to new provinces. There are plans for a new MoU when the existing agreement expires.³³

NPA continued a project to build VNMAC's capacity as the sector coordinator funded by PM/WRA under which it provides a senior technical adviser (STA) and information management (IM) adviser. The STA is active in supporting donor engagement, international cooperation, and the updating of the legal framework for mine action in Vietnam. The IM adviser has worked with VNMAC on upgrading the IMSMA database, drafting technical regulations, and training personnel in its central IM unit and regional database units.³⁴

NPA also supported VNMAC to establish a fully-equipped mobile bomb cutting team. With support from the US Department of Defense (DoD), an NPA technical advisor conducted training in Hanoi followed by practical experience in Quang Tri province. Eight VNMAC personnel, including one woman, were certified in the use of the bomb cutting tools and methodology, and all equipment—including trailer, saw, and X-ray machine—were handed over to VNMAC.³⁵

Vietnam's regional mine action centres coordinate operations at the regional level with support from operators. Quang Binh province's database and coordination unit (DBCUC) tasks operators applying a prioritisation system introduced in April 2022 and holds regular coordination meetings with operators.³⁶ Quang Tri Mine Action Centre (QTMAC), supported by MAG and NPA, is implementing a five-year, 2021–25 action plan under which it sets task priorities and conducts quality assurance (QA) for operators in the province.³⁷

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

In 2013, Vietnam amended Article 26 of the Constitution so that "male and female citizens are equal in all aspects", prohibiting gender discrimination. State policy is to guarantee equal gender rights and opportunities. In mine action, women participate more in victim assistance and risk education, while national survey/clearance and information management are still male-dominated and managed by

the Vietnam Army.³⁸ A MAWG sub-task force on gender was established in 2022 and in December of that year MAG co-hosted a workshop in Hanoi on gender mainstreaming with UNDP.³⁹ In December 2023, members renamed it the Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion (GDI) task force to emphasise its focus on inclusivity.⁴⁰ In 2024, VNMAC for the first time put forward a female candidate to undertake EOD training.

Table 1: Gender composition of NGO operators in 2023⁴¹

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
MAG	743	217 (29%)	33	11 (33%)	687	194 (28%)
NPA	375	124 (33%)	12	8 (75%)	212	88 (42%)
PTVN	216	51 (24%)	13	6 (36%)	185	38 (21%)
Totals	1,334	392 (29%)	58	25 (43%)	1,084	320 (30%)

MAG Vietnam's gender balance remained largely unchanged in 2023, with women making up 29% of overall and operations staff, but to continue its promotion of diversity it had a country strategy workshop in October 2023 to discuss MAG's strategy for the next five years. In early 2024, it conducted consultation sessions with different groups of staff to support the development of its GDI action plan. Following this, a survey was also circulated to all staff to get deeper insights into the current situation of GDI in MAG Vietnam.⁴²

NPA, which established Vietnam's first all-female battle area clearance (BAC) team, continued to promote gender mainstreaming through a five-person Gender Working Group set up in 2023 and the integration of gender and diversity policy into programme development and training. All NPA's national staff received training on the issue in 2023. NPA also promoted gender and inclusion in the sector speaking at public events, including International Day for Mine Awareness and an event commemorating the 79th anniversary of the Vietnam People's Army emphasising the role of women in mine action.⁴³

32 Emails from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024 and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.
33 Emails from Valentina Stivanetto, MAG, 29 April 2022 and Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.
34 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.
35 Email from Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023.
36 Emails from Helene Kuperman, MAG, 10 April, 23 June 2020, and 31 March 2021; Jan Erik Støa, NPA, 24 June 2020; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PeaceTrees Vietnam (PTVN), 11 May 2021.
37 Email from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.
38 Email from the GICHD, 5 May 2023.
39 Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April and 19 May 2023.
40 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.
41 Ibid.; and emails from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.
42 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.
43 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

PTVN has gender and diversity policies in place and ensures equal opportunities for all staff within its recruitment, pay, training, and procedures for promotion. PTVN regularly

measures and tracks personnel data, which helps it better mainstream gender and diversity.⁴⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Mine action in Vietnam contends with a number of environmental challenges in its diverse habitats ranging from tropical forest to coastal wetlands, all of which are aggravated by climate change. Heavy rainfall and flooding, particularly during monsoon seasons, displace items of explosive ordnance, making their detection and removal more challenging. Additionally, erosion and sediment transport caused by intense rainfall can bury or expose explosive ordnance, necessitating frequent re-surveying and clearance of affected areas. Severe flooding following intense rainfall in Thua Thien Hue province in October 2023 prevented NPA deploying survey teams for several weeks and landslides necessitated relocating its clearance team from A Luoi, the province's most heavily contaminated district.⁴⁵

Vietnam lacks a national mine action standard on environmental management but VNMAC has engaged actively in IMAS Review Board discussions on a revised IMAS chapter on the environment, gaining experience expected to feed into drafting a TCVN on the environment planned once the IMAS process is complete.⁴⁶ The MAWG's Environment Task Force met in November 2023, focusing on promoting environmental awareness and best practices among operators to reduce the environmental impact of mine action operations in Vietnam.⁴⁷

MAG Vietnam's operations follow an environmental SOP in place from MAG's Global Technical Standards, which are based on IMAS 07.13. Additionally, in 2023, MAG engaged an environmental consultancy group, Keep Vietnam Clean (KVC), to conduct an environmental impact assessment of its operations focused on waste management and energy saving. KVC visited MAG teams in Quang Tri and Quang Binh in January 2024 to assess the impact of field operations and

current management practices with a view to presenting findings and recommendations for MAG's future plans later in 2024.⁴⁸

NPA completed trials of a "Green Field Tool" in 2023 and started rolling out the initiative which is designed to systematically measure and monitor the environmental impact of its field operations and guide the implementation of mitigation measures at both the programme and global levels. The tool addresses factors including vehicle emissions; the impact of operations on vegetation, soil, and water resources; and measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change. NPA Vietnam's Environment Protection Coordinator is monitoring the programme's application of the tool and will be working with NPA's head office and other programmes in developing improvements. Among measures adopted by the programme in 2023 NPA collaborated with local partners in Thua Thien Hue province using co bang, a local grass, to make sandbags for demolitions as a way to reduce plastic waste.⁴⁹

PTVN organised training courses on environment and climate change for staff with instruction from consultants in Hue University's Centre for Climate Change Study in Central Vietnam. PTVN reported that its management and staff began integrating lessons learned from the courses in activities. Among other actions in 2023, PTVN planted bamboo trees in Quang Tri's Huong Ha district to support efforts of local authorities in preventing soil erosion and providing raw materials for local communities. PTVN planned to update environmental management policies in 2024 and to revise materials used to follow environmentally friendly standards.⁵⁰

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

VNMAC has declared the development of information management a top priority.⁵¹ It issued regulations establishing a national information management system in July 2022 requiring all provinces to submit standardised reporting of mine action data into the national IMSMA database.⁵² VNMAC provided training and a laptop containing IMSMA with all provincial data for authorities in each province.⁵³ VNMAC quality checks data for consistency and

completeness. VNMAC is also responsible for the QA of the data received by the commercial operators.⁵⁴ As at April 2024 18 provinces had submitted reports.⁵⁵

VNMAC, supported by NPA's capacity development project, completed consolidation of data from five different IMSMA databases into one national IMSMA database in December 2022.⁵⁶ VNMAC is now preparing to upgrade the database

44 Emails from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023 and 27 May 2024.

45 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

46 Ibid.

47 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.

48 Ibid.

49 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

50 Email from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.

51 Interview with Mr Hop, VNMAC, Geneva, 22 June 2023.

52 Email from Tim Horner, NPA, 7 September 2022.

53 Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023; Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.

54 Email from Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023.

55 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

56 Email from Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023.

from IMSMA New Generation to the latest edition, IMSMA Core. VNMAC and its NPA IM advisers started discussion on the upgrade with the GICHD in 2023, and in March 2024 the GICHD conducted an assessment of VNMAC's database to prepare for transition to Core in 2025.⁵⁷

Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue provinces have operated mine action databases that collect and analyse data and task operators. The operators report activities to these databases which in turn report to VNMAC's central Information Management Unit. Binh Dinh is reportedly the next key province that VNMAC wants to focus on.⁵⁸

PLANNING AND TASKING

Programme 504, approved by the Prime Minister in April 2010, set out a National Mine Action Plan for 2010–25. The plan, which covers mines, CMR, and other ERW, aimed to “mobilize domestic and international resources in making efforts to minimize and finally create impact-free environment for social economic development.” The programme called for clearance of 8,000km² of ERW between 2016 and 2025⁵⁹ and planned to complete an impact survey to map contamination nationwide, develop national standards, and establish a database management centre.⁶⁰ Vietnam does not yet have a strategy specifically targeting CMR and plans to address all ERW comprehensively. VNMAC would benefit from elaborating a national mine action strategy and annual work plans for CMR, with clear targets for survey and clearance.

In February 2022, VNMAC shared a five-year plan for the 2021–25 final phase of the National Mine Action plan, which was prepared by the government without input from NGOs or other members of the MAWG.⁶¹ The plan was updated and eventually adopted in June of 2023 for the last two years to 2025. It focuses on improving organisational structures, enhancing legislation and national standards, fostering international cooperation for funding and resources, conducting research and development, establishing a national mine data system, promoting ERW risk awareness, and providing assistance to ERW victims.⁶² The government is developing a 20-year plan for 2025–45. Targets and objectives have been set for survey, clearance, and risk education, and responsibilities have been identified within the different government agencies.⁶³

VNMAC has said that its objectives for 2021–25 included completing the organisational structure, legal framework, and policies for mine action; ensuring effective mine

action management; fostering international cooperation to mobilise the required resources; completing the information management system for mine action nationwide; and implementing survey and clearance over 5,000km², with priority given to heavily contaminated areas.⁶⁴

Vietnam does not have a national prioritisation system for CMR clearance.⁶⁵ In Quang Binh province, the system for reporting and tasking by the provincial DBCU became effective in 2021 and is said to have been conducted efficiently by the DBCU, with the DBCU reporting to the VNMAC.⁶⁶ A province-wide prioritisation system is now being applied in Quang Binh province.⁶⁷ The DBCU submitted a Quang Binh Provincial Mine Action Programme 2024–2035 to the Provincial People's Committee for official approval in the first quarter of 2024. The programme sets specific objectives and timelines to minimise the impact of CMR and ERW contamination, with the longer term ambition of becoming impact-free by 2045.⁶⁸

In Quang Tri province, a prioritisation process is in place along with an effective system for task allocation, both of which are managed by QTMAC.⁶⁹ The criteria for prioritisation are established based on consultation and agreement between QTMAC and operators. The QTMAC tasks all mine action operators in the province and annual work plans are approved by provincial authorities, in cooperation and dialogue with operators.⁷⁰

In Thua Thien Hue province, tasking for NGO operators is decided by provincial authorities in accordance with the provincial socio-economic development plan.⁷¹

57 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

58 Email from Kimberley McCosker, NPA, 21 April 2022.

59 Prime Minister, “Decision on Approval of the National Mine Action Plan Period 2010–2025”, Hanoi, 21 April 2010.

60 STA Capacity Development Project (NPA), “Vietnamese legal framework in mine action”, January 2023.

61 Emails from Tim Horner on behalf of Mr Phuc, VNMAC, 6 April 2021; Valentina Stivanello, MAG, 29 April and 20 June 2022; and Kimberley McCosker, NPA, 22 June 2022.

62 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.

63 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

64 Email from Doan Thi Hong Hai, Capacity Development Project Officer, NPA, on behalf of Mr Phuc, VNMAC, 3 June 2022.

65 Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023 and Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023.

66 Email from Kimberley McCosker, NPA, 21 April 2022.

67 Email from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.

68 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.

69 Emails from Simon Rea, MAG, 16 June 2019; Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019; Helene Kuperman, MAG, 31 March 2021; Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 11 May 2021; and Kimberley McCosker, NPA, 13 May 2021.

70 Emails from Jan Erik Støa, NPA, 6 April 2020; Simon Rea, MAG, 24 April 2019; Helene Kuperman, MAG, 31 March 2021; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.

71 Email from Jan Erik Støa, NPA, 6 April 2020.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Vietnam has two types of national standards: National Technical Regulations (QCVNs), which are mandatory for all operators, and National Mine Action Standards (TCVNs), which are only guidelines for organisations that do not receive Vietnamese funding.⁷²

The TCVNs, 15 in total, are under review but include: (1) General regulations, (2) Appraisal and certification of MA organisations' capacity, (3) Monitoring & Evaluation, (4) Contamination inspection, (5) Survey, (6) Safety assurance, (7) Survey and clearance; (8) Disposal of landmines/bombs, (9) Medical insurance, (10) Inspection over incidents, (11) Collecting, processing and providing mine action information, (12) Quality management, (13) Risk management, (14) Risk education, and (15) Victim assistance. The review process is time-consuming as it involves several government ministries. In early 2024, the TCVNs were being reviewed by the Ministry of Science and Technology. VNMAC hoped that the TCVNs would be approved before the end of 2024.⁷³ A further TCVN on environmental protection in mine action is also expected to be developed.⁷⁴

QCVNs were promulgated by the MoD in a Circular (No. 59) August 2022 after extensive review in recent years by four working groups, co-chaired by VNMAC, and after extensive consultation with operators and international organisations, including the GICHD.⁷⁵ They include general provisions, technical regulations, regulations on safety and on management, the responsibilities of organisations and individuals, and organisation and implementation.⁷⁶ In Quang Tri, QTMAC coordinated with operators to provide a consolidated report to VNMAC on any discrepancies between the QCVNs and operator SOPs.⁷⁷

Additional circulars were issued relating to the revised NTS, TS, and clearance procedures (Circular 121) along with guidelines to determine the rate per shift of demining machines and equipment (Circular 121) and guidelines for determining costs in EO clearance estimates (Circular 122).⁷⁸

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Most clearance in Vietnam is conducted by the Army Engineering Corps and 43 military-owned commercial companies. Vietnamese officials have previously reported that it had 250 mine clearance and BAC teams nationally,⁷⁹ but the current strength and deployment of military-related demining is unknown.

International operators active in 2023 included: MAG, working in Quang Binh and Quang Tri provinces; NPA, working in Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue provinces, and most recently also in Kon Tum province since late 2022; and PTVN, who have been working in Quang Tri province since 1995 and now also in Quang Binh province.⁸⁰

MAG operated in 2023 with the same capacity as the previous year, consisting of 41 clearance teams with 410 personnel working in Quang Binh and Quang Tri provinces. These were backed up by 14 clearance support teams with another 70 personnel, and eight community liaison teams conducting NTS, EORE, and impact assessments. In 2024, it has restructured capacity to boost clearance. In 2022, MAG

had stopped conducting TS and converted its survey teams to clearance. From June 2024, MAG resumed conducting TS in Quang Binh and integrated all the support personnel into clearance operations, increasing the size of existing clearance teams from 13 to 14 members each and adding three more clearance teams, bringing the total number of clearance personnel to 484.⁸¹

NPA continued working in three provinces in 2023: Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue. Its total operational capacity of 212 staff included 11 NTS teams but it reconfigured its TS and clearance capacity in the course of the year. For the first four months of 2023, NPA worked with 14 TS teams with 101 staff and 9 clearance teams with 130 deminers. After completing survey of all the accessible villages in Quang Tri, it converted 10 of the TS teams into 5 clearance teams leaving 21 staff employed in TS and 213 personnel working on clearance. NPA expected that an increase in funding from PM/WRA in 2024 would allow a small increase in survey capacity in Quang Binh and clearance capacity in Quang Tri.⁸²

⁷² Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.

⁷³ Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

⁷⁴ Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023; Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.

⁷⁵ Emails from Kimberley McCosker, NPA, 8 April 2021 and 21 April 2022; Valentina Stivanetto, MAG, 29 April 2022; GICHD, 24 April 2022; and Tim Horner on behalf of Mr Phuc, VNMAC, 6 April 2021.

⁷⁶ STA Capacity Development Project (NPA), "Vietnamese legal framework in mine action", January 2023.

⁷⁷ Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023.

⁷⁸ "Vietnamese legal framework in mine action", January 2023; and email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023.

⁷⁹ Interview with Sr. Col. Nguyen Thanh Ban, Engineering Command, Hanoi, 18 June 2013.

⁸⁰ Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 5 April 2023; Do Quy Linh, NPA, 16 June 2023; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 3 May 2023.

⁸¹ Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May and 17 June 2024.

⁸² Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.

PTVN, also working in Quang Binh and Quang Tri provinces, did not conduct any survey but operated 11 clearance teams with 110 deminers in 2023, unchanged from the second half of 2022. PTVN's capacity included two multi-task teams primarily focused on EOD in Quang Binh but also available to do area clearance. In the first half of 2023, PTVN had deployed 142 clearance personnel and in 2024 it expected the number to increase.⁸³

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

NGOs reported clearing 55.3km² of CMR-contaminated land in three provinces in 2023 (see Table 3), 8% more than the previous year. Vietnam's army and army-owned commercial companies do not publicly report results of any activities. The NGOs destroyed a total of 11,675 submunitions in 2023: 1,822 in the course of TS, 8,625 during clearance, and the remaining 1,228 in EOD spot-task operations. The total represented a 25% drop from the previous year, primarily due to a sharp contraction in the scope of TS in 2023.⁸⁴

SURVEY IN 2023

Survey by NGOs confirmed 62.4km² in 2023 (see Table 2), less than half the level of 2022. The downturn came after NPA completed TS of all the non-restricted villages in Quang Tri and shifted the TS teams in that province to clearance. As at April 2024, only the 63 villages inaccessible to international operators remained to be released, putting the possibility of completing survey in reach and focusing attention on the need for local and national authorities to agree a comprehensive plan for finishing the job.⁸⁵

Continuing TS in Quang Binh had completed seven of its 151 communes by the end of 2023 when NPA confirmed 33km² as contaminated by CMR bringing the province's total CHA to 83km². By the end of March 2024, survey had been completed in nine communes and the total CHA had risen to 99km².⁸⁶

Table 2: Technical survey of cluster munition-contaminated area in 2023 (NGO data)⁸⁷

Operator	Province	Area surveyed (m ²)	Area confirmed (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
NPA	Quang Binh	14,600,000	32,987,446	666	92
NPA	Quang Tri	15,722,500	31,444,112	1,156	776
Totals		30,322,500	64,431,558	1,822	868

* The total area surveyed included box skipping, of which 457,500m² was physically surveyed.

CLEARANCE IN 2023

The overall 8% increase in NGO clearance of CMR-affected in 2023 was mainly driven by higher output in Quang Tri province which accounts for about 75% of the total (see Table 3). MAG's clearance in Quang Tri rose 10% over 2022 output and made up close to half the provincial total, offsetting a slight drop in the area cleared in Quang Binh. Its productivity was adversely affected by heavy rainfall in the final quarter of 2023 when total operational hours lost came to 21 days.⁸⁸ NPA's conversion of its Quang Tri survey teams to clearance

enabled it boost clearance there by 30% but flooding and landslides in Thua Thien Hue cut its clearance in that province by more than half.⁸⁹ PTVN attributed an overall increase of 10% in the CMR land it cleared in 2023 to increased capacity in Quang Binh and the availability of its EOD teams for clearance. In addition to the main area clearance operations recorded in Table 3, PTVN said it cleared a total of 39,695m² in response to community requests in Quang Tri and Quang Binh.⁹⁰

83 Email from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.
84 Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May and 17 June 2024; Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.
85 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Email from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024.
89 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024.
90 Email from Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.

Table 3: CMR clearance in 2023 (NGO data)⁹¹

Province	Operator	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
Quang Binh	MAG	9,752,699	2,442	2,467
Quang Binh	PTVN	1,997,701	466	169
Quang Tri	MAG	26,455,159	3,875	3,893
Quang Tri	NPA	9,537,148	1,374	2,790
Quang Tri	PTVN	6,858,640	149	1,106
Thua Thien Hue	NPA	660,555	319	148
Totals		55,261,902	8,625	10,573

MAG, NPA and PTVN also destroyed a total of 1,228 submunitions in the course of spot task operations in 2023: 1,030 in Quang Binh province, 88 in Quang Tri, and 110 in Thua Thien Hue.⁹²

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

The absence of a baseline estimate of Vietnam's CMR contamination or any public reporting of clearance conducted by military units or military-owned commercial companies prevents any meaningful assessment of Vietnam's overall progress towards completion. Moreover, Vietnam's National Mine Action Plan for 2021–25 set targets for ERW clearance without disaggregating CMR-specific goals. However, clearance by NGOs in 2023 was more than 40% higher than in 2019 (see Table 4) attesting to advances in survey and clearance supported by VNMAC and provincial authorities in Quang Tri, Quang Binh, and Thua Thien Hue and the slowly widening footprint of operations into other areas.

Table 4: Five-year summary of NGO clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2023	55.3
2022	51.2
2021	48.0
2020	48.5
2019	38.5
Total	241.5

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

The GICHD has been supporting VNMAC, NPA, and UNDP in the review of the current legislative and normative framework, with a focus on residual risk management. As a preparatory step, the GICHD and the VNMAC, with the support of UNDP and NPA, have been assessing the existing residual risk management capacity and the required or desired capacities that VNMAC needs to manage residual contamination.⁹³

⁹¹ Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024; Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.

⁹² Emails from Sarah Goring, MAG, 17 May 2024; Melissa Andersson, NPA, 30 April 2024; and Phạm Hoàng Hà, PTVN, 27 May 2024.

⁹³ Email from the GICHD, 24 April 2022.