



YEMEN

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2020
 (NOT ON TRACK TO MEET THE DEADLINE)

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2016

For 2015

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	For 2016	For 2015
Problem understood	3	3
Target date for completion of mine clearance	3	3
Targeted clearance	4	4
Efficient clearance	4	3
National funding of programme	2	2
Timely clearance	4	2
Land release system in place	5	5
National mine action standards	6	6
Reporting on progress	5	4
Improving performance	4	3
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	4.0	3.5

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

The Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) sharply accelerated operations in 2016 focusing on emergency clearance of all munitions but faced limited access to contaminated areas because of continuing conflict as well as funding and capacity constraints.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION

- Yemen should give access to international demining operators to increase technical expertise and capacity and accelerate clearance.

CONTAMINATION

Yemen is contaminated with mines from conflicts in 1962–69 and 1970–83, the mines that were laid in border areas between North and South Yemen before they unified in 1990, and those used in successive conflicts that erupted since 1994, including the present conflict that flared in March 2015 and has added more mined areas.¹ The extent of Yemen's contamination is not known.

A Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) completed in 2000 identified suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) containing mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) covering an estimated 922km² and affecting 592 mine villages across 18 of Yemen's 21 governorates. Yemen's first Article 5 deadline extension request in 2008 stated that 710km² had been released and 457 areas covering 213km² remained to be "addressed".² Yemen's latest Article 7 report submitted in 2017 said 569 SHAs covering 323km² remained and that survey was expected to identify additional contamination.³ In a 2017 progress report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) observed that "currently, there are very few tangible indicators measuring contamination or impact and what is available is outdated, ad hoc and often anecdotal."⁴

Multiple conflicts in the past decade that added to contamination included the 2010 insurgency in northern Saada governorate led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi⁵ and the 2011 insurgency around southern Abyan by militants belonging to Ansar al-Sharia, linked to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.⁶ YEMAC reported that insurgents in Saada had laid locally produced mines, later clearing some but missing others.⁷

In 2011, under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's Republican Guard reportedly laid thousands of mines in the Bani Jarmoz area near Sana'a. The number of mines and extent of area affected remain to be determined. Information provided to YEMAC by local inhabitants in February 2014 suggested 25 villages were impacted.⁸

A national NGO, Mwatana for Human Rights, documented mine use by Houthi forces and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh that killed at least 57 civilians in six governorates between July 2015 and October 2016. It reported they placed mines in residential areas, main streets, homes, farms, and paths frequented by civilians.⁹ A report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that in the conflict which escalated in March 2015 mines were laid in areas controlled by Houthi rebels and associated forces.¹⁰ Between the flare up in hostilities in March 2015 and mid-2016, most minelaying was carried out in Aden, Marib and Taiz governorates, which also experienced the most ERW incidents although Abyan and Ibb governorates also experienced heavy landmine-related casualties.¹¹

Locally produced mines have also become a significant feature of the conflict in the past decade. YEMAC reported Houthi forces emplaced locally produced mines in Saada governorate during the 2006–09 insurgency and frequently clears "cold" or abandoned devices.¹² Human Rights Watch said YEMAC had cleared locally produced mines in areas from which Houthi forces withdrew near the port city of Mokha in February 2017.¹³

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Yemen established a National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) in June 1998 by prime ministerial decree to formulate policy, allocate resources, and develop a national mine action strategy.¹⁴ NMAC, chaired by the Minister of State (a member of the cabinet), brought together representatives of seven concerned ministries. The government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi was driven from power in Yemen in February 2015 and moved to Saudi Arabia where he stayed for many months, putting into doubt mine action institutional arrangements.

YEMAC was established in Sana'a in January 1999 as NMAC's implementing body with responsibility for coordinating mine action in the country.¹⁵ It is supported by a Regional Executive Mine Action Branch (REMAB) and a National Training Centre in Aden, also set up in 1999, and a REMAB in al-Mukalla (Hadrामout governorate) that was added in March 2004. REMABs are responsible for field implementation of the national mine action plan. YEMAC opened a branch in Saada in April 2016.

With the upsurge of conflict in 2014, YEMAC became, de facto, two organisations, split between the southern city of Aden controlled by the Saudi-led coalition and Yemen's internationally recognised but exiled government, and the capital Sana'a, under the control of the Houthi. The Sana'a office coordinates operations in the north and centre of the country and the Aden office oversees operations in southern provinces.¹⁶

The United Nations has supported mine action in Yemen since 1999 through a programme implemented by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) but from 2003 the programme came under national management. UNDP deployed an international adviser to YEMAC at the end of 2014 to support planning and programme management and in 2016 added a second international staff member as well as recruiting national staff in Aden, Saada, and Sana'a.¹⁷ UNDP planned to add another international technical adviser before the end of 2017, to be based in Aden.¹⁸

UNDP embarked on a new four-year project to run from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2020, seeking four main outcomes:¹⁹

- Mine and UXO contamination would be mapped and impact assessed nationwide using primary and secondary resources.
- Non-technical and technical survey is conducted and mines and ERW cleared in the priority areas identified.
- Risk education on the developing threat of mines and UXO is provided to affected communities.
- Assistance to ERW survivors is enhanced with the identification of more implementing partners to support emergency care, rehabilitation, and vocational training.

UNDP estimated that to operate at full capacity, Yemen's mine action programme needed some \$15 million. Available funding for 2017 was estimated at around \$6 million.²⁰ Before 2015, Yemen had contributed some \$3 million to \$4 million annually but its contribution ceased in 2015 and 2016 after the escalation of hostilities.

Strategic Planning

YEMAC does not currently have a strategic plan for mine clearance but worked with UNDP on addressing the emergency threat to communities posed by all munitions, including mines, locally produced mines,

cluster munition remnants, and unexploded aircraft and ground-launched ordnance. UNDP identified three main goals for emergency operations: preventing the situation from getting any worse; mitigating the impact of existing contamination; and for the longer term addressing Yemen's APMBBC obligations.²¹

Operators

All survey and clearance of mines and ERW are conducted by YEMAC. By the start of 2016, it had some 850 staff, of whom between 350 and 400 were said to be active, under the management of offices in Sana'a and Aden. These included three UXO clearance teams set up at the end of 2015 to focus on contamination in cities.²² YEMAC recruited 50 more staff in 2016 and at the peak of its activities in November had some 550 deminers engaged in field operations.²³ By mid-2017, YEMAC reportedly had close to 800 active personnel.²⁴

Danish Demining Group (DDG) has offices in Sana'a and Aden, and in 2016 provided risk education and explosive ordnance disposal training and equipment for YEMAC, mainly through its Aden office. DDG said it was in discussion with UNDP about expanding support to include training in non-technical survey and information management.²⁵ The Marshall Legacy Institute was due to visit Yemen in September 2017 to assess the possibilities of reviving a Sana'a-based mine detection dog (MDD) programme with support from Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).²⁶

LAND RELEASE

YEMAC conducted clearance in nine of Yemen's twenty-one governorates in 2016, clearing 3km² in what UNDP called a "quantum leap" from the previous year, when teams were able to conduct only very limited emergency spot clearance.²⁷ The acceleration appears to have continued in the first half of 2017 when YEMAC reportedly cleared 2.9km².²⁸

Survey in 2016

Continuous conflict in Yemen since March 2015 has prevented systematic survey. UNDP was working with Handicap International and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining in 2017 on a rapid survey of contamination and impact based largely on open sources.²⁹ YEMAC said it planned to re-survey 18 governorates over three years to 2020.³⁰

Clearance in 2016

Of the 3km² of clearance in 2016 most occurred in Sana'a governorate (1.3km²) though the vast majority of mines were destroyed in the south. YEMAC reportedly destroyed 189,037 items of explosive ordnance in 2016, including 16,440 anti-personnel mines, 1,048 improvised devices, and 16,750 anti-vehicle mines. Aden governorate alone accounted for the destruction of 16,198 anti-personnel mines and 9,476 anti-vehicle mines. Substantial numbers of anti-vehicle mines were also cleared in Hadramaut (4,779), Lahej (1,692), and Taiz (934).³¹

In the first half of 2017, nearly 70% of the area cleared was in four governorates, including Sana'a (0.75km²), Hajjah (0.5km²), Sa'ada (0.43km²) and Aden (0.34km²). YEMAC cleared 334 anti-personnel mines and 1,373 anti-vehicle mines, most in the highly conflicted governorate of Taiz (255 anti-personnel mines and 1,099 anti-vehicle mines).³²

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the five-year extension granted in 2014), Yemen is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 March 2020. This is Yemen's second extension to its Article 5 deadline and it is not on track to meet this new deadline.

In an update to its extension request submitted in 2016, Yemen underscored the challenges posed by continuing hostilities, and the lack of adequate or multi-year funding for its operations. It said: "When there is a cessation to hostilities and YEMAC has greater access to the contaminated areas, a more accurate plan will be developed with greater accuracy in determining the end date."³³

- 1 Article 5 Extension Request Update, 10 March 2016, p. 4.
- 2 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.
- 3 Article 7 Report (for 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017), Forms D and L.
- 4 UNDP, "Mid-Year Report, 2017", 20 July 2017, p. 4.
- 5 Article 7 Report (for 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010), Form I.
- 6 "Yemen: Landmines stall IDP returns in the south", *IRIN*, 28 June 2012, at: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95752/YEMEN-Landmines-stall-IDP-returns-in-south>.
- 7 Article 7 Report (for 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012), Form I.
- 8 "Yemen Initial Report to the President of the 13th Meeting of States Parties", submitted by Kassem Ahmed al-Aggam, Chairman, National Mine Action Committee, 30 March 2014.
- 9 Mwatana for Human Rights, "Concealed Killer", Sana'a, April 2017, p. 21.
- 10 "Situation of human rights in Yemen", Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN doc. A/HRC/33/38, 4 August 2016, p. 10.
- 11 Handicap International, "Focus on the contamination of explosive weapons in Yemen," March 2017, p.12.
- 12 Article 5 Extension Request Update, 10 March 2016, p. 5; UNDP, "Mid-Year Report, 2017", 20 July 2017, p. 4.
- 13 Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Houthi-Saleh Forces Using Landmines", 10 April 2017.
- 14 Article 7 Report, Form I, 31 March 2009.
- 15 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2008, p. 2.
- 16 Interviews with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February 2016; UNDP, "Support to eliminate the impact from mines and ERW – Phase IV, Annual Progress Report 2014", undated but 2015.
- 17 UNDP, "Support to Eliminate Mines and Explosive Remnants of War, Annual Progress Report 2016", Yemen, undated but 2017, p. 6.
- 18 UNDP, "Mid-Year Report, 2017", 20 July 2017, p. 3.
- 19 UNDP Project Document, Emergency Mine Action Project, May 2017, pp. 7–8.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 UNDP, "Support to eliminate the impact from mines and ERW – Phase IV, Annual Progress Report 2016", Undated but 2017, p. 7.
- 22 Interview with Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC, and Stephen Bryant, UNDP, in Geneva, 17 February 2016.
- 23 Ibid; and UNDP, "Support to Eliminate Mines and Explosive Remnants of War, Annual Progress Report 2016", Yemen, undated but 2017, p. 8.
- 24 UNDP, "Mid-Year Report, 2017", 20 July 2017, p. 6.
- 25 Email from Megan Latimer, Programme and Operations Coordinator (Afghanistan, Colombia, Ukraine), DDG, 29 May 2017.
- 26 UNDP, "Mid-Year Report, 2017", 20 July 2017, p. 5.
- 27 UNDP, "Support to eliminate the impact from mines and ERW – Phase IV, Annual Progress Report 2016", Undated but 2017, p. 11. The governorates in which YEMAC was active in 2016 were Abyan, Aden, Al Dhale'e, Hadramaut, Hajjah, Lahej, Saada, Sana'a, and Taiz.
- 28 UNDP, "Support to eliminate the impact from mines and ERW – Phase IV, Annual Progress Report 2016", Undated but 2017, p. 10.
- 29 UNDP, "Mid-Year Report, 2017", 20 July 2017, p. 3.
- 30 Article 7 Report (for 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017), Form L.
- 31 Email from Aleksandar Mihajlov, Mine Action Planning and Monitoring Specialist, UNDP, Yemen, 12 March 2017.
- 32 Email from Aleksandar Mihajlov, UNDP, Yemen, 24 September 2017.
- 33 Article 5 Extension Request Update, 10 March 2016, p. 3.