

Observations and Comments of the CCM Article 4 Analysis Group on the Extension Request submitted by Afghanistan in accordance with Article 4.5 of the Convention

The Analysis Group notes with disappointment the need for the submission of an extension request by Afghanistan as it had previously reported to be on track to meet its deadline of 1 March 2022. Nevertheless, the Group acknowledges the transparency exhibited and the efforts made by Afghanistan to fulfil its obligations under Article 4 of the Convention. The Group, therefore, commends Afghanistan for its prompt notification of the need to request a deadline extension following the discovery of previously unknown contaminated areas and inability to comply with Article 4 by the deadline.

While the Analysis Group agrees that the request submitted by Afghanistan is of a high quality and meets all the criteria set out by Article 4.6 of the Convention, additional information or clarification could further enlighten States Parties in their consideration of Afghanistan's request. In this regard, the Group requests additional information or further clarification from Afghanistan by **Wednesday 11 August 2021** on the following points:-

1. More information on the **remaining cluster munition contaminated areas** to be addressed:
 - (a) What is the actual area still to be addressed? Based on the Analysis Group's calculations, 10.25 km² remains to be addressed. However, the request indicates that the total area is only 9.9 km². Kindly clarify this discrepancy.

DMAC response:

As mentioned in page 10 of the extension request under the remaining contamination, 16 CM recorded hazards exist in IMSMA with the total size of 9.9 sq. km, this contamination need to be addressed during the extended plan. While, there is an ongoing project of CM funded by PMWRA and being implemented by DAFA covering 5 hazards with total size of 3.58 sq. km. The project started on 31-03-2021 and so far out of 3.58 sq. km 1.33 sq. km area is addressed. The remaining 2.25 sq. km area will be cleared till end of December 2021 time which is the end date for this project.

We, in the extension request, did not include the remaining area of the ongoing project, as we are confident that this will be addressed providing that there is no major change in security. The ongoing project area is under the control of AGEs.

While, at the same page we indicated that about 3 sq. km area with CM contamination exist to be surveyed in Zurmat district of Paktya Province, but as the area is under control of AGEs and due to its sensitivity, mine action intervention is not possible. Mine Action is carrying on robust community liaison to get consent of the AGEs to conduct the required NTS soon.

The list of remaining recorded CM is also shown in annex C to the extension request. Hope it is clarified.

- (b) Please clarify of all remaining CM hazards, which are ready for clearance and which require further survey or resurvey.

DMAC response:

Approximately 3 sq. km of suspected cluster munition contamination require survey that can't be currently accessed in Zurmat district of Paktya province, because of security situation currently prevent access. The list of hazards is therefore not available. Areas that are ready for clearance are listed in annex C.

- (c) More details on the type of contamination expected in the "new" areas would also help clarify the information provided (e.g. on p. 10 and/or table in Annex C) as the kind of CMs/submunitions may affect the productivity rate (and therefore funding needs and clearance schedule).

DMAC response:

The recorded CM hazards in Zurmat district of Paktya, Nangarhar and Samangan provinces, and the remaining un-surveyed CM contaminated areas in Zurmat district of Paktya province are contaminated with BLU-97 types. The recorded two CM hazards in Bamyan province are the CM of Russian type (AO 2.5).

The standard rate of 60,000 sq. m per month per DT is appropriate for all the mentioned sites.

- (d) Information on quality management would be very useful (under methodology);

DMAC response:

DMAC conducts external quality management of all mine action activities. The monitoring includes comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) before and during operations and Quality Control (QC) during and after operations. The QM is conducted in accordance with the national standards and SOPs.

The implementing partner assigned for clearance will also conduct the internal Quality Assurance during the clearance and Quality Control of the cleared land by their own experts.

- (e) The request informs that there are challenges in accessing the southeast province of Paktya due to the presence of Anti-Government Elements (AGEs). Are there any additional cluster munition contaminated areas (including any areas suspected to contain submunitions), beyond those already set out on page 10 of the Request, which Afghanistan has not yet surveyed, including areas where security conditions currently prevent access?

DMAC response:

DMAC does not expect additional areas that are unknown and contaminated with CM other than Zurmat district of Paktya yet. However, the NTS teams continue to explore and conduct village by village NTS and any such contamination is promptly exposed and

recorded. Also, the hotline number is used to register calls where accidents might happen or CM are visually found.

2. Clarification on the **work plan** included in Annex D of the extension request :

- (a) When would clearance operations take place in the province of Samangan, which has 2 recorded CM hazards? The 'CM clearance work plan' table provided is blank on that area.

DMAC response:

The clearance of Samangan CM hazards are planned to be conducted during May 2023. The related table in annex D is updated, while, it was already shown in the last table of the mentioned annex that shows the clearance plan on monthly basis.

- (b) The work plan shows that clearance operations are expected to be completed in October 2025. Additional information on what activities will be undertaken in the four months 1 November 2025 and 1 March 2026 would help States Parties better understand the need for this extra time.

DMAC response:

The additional four months include conducting handover ceremony, Post Demining Impact Assessment (PDIA), reporting and to respond if any additional CM area appeared/recorded. Given the volatile security situation and continued restrictions in access, these four months also serve as the contingency plan.

- (c) Adding a more detailed EORE plan would further strengthen the Request particularly indicating how the risk education messages will be tailored according to gender and diversity considerations; any plan for needs assessments to inform EORE planning and implementation, and if there are any specific challenges foreseen regarding EORE during the extension period. These could be included in the EORE work plan that is currently missing from annex D.

DMAC response:

Afghanistan remains heavily affected by explosive ordnance, continuing to threaten Afghan lives. Explosive Ordnance (EO) contamination currently affects about 2.5 million people living in close proximity to landmines; people on the move including returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) who either flee due to conflict or return post-conflict, people who travel within their communities for day to day needs such as visiting marketplaces, hospitals, relatives, attending ceremonies, and children playing or going to school.

Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) is vital to educate affected communities on the dangers of EOs. EORE ensures that communities are aware of the risks of mines, unexploded ordnance and/or abandoned munitions and are encouraged to behave in ways that ensures their safety, reduce the risk to people, property and the environment. The objective is to reduce the risk to a level where people can live safely and recreate an

environment where economic and social development can occur free from the constraints imposed by explosive ordnance contamination.

For the effective implementation of EORE in the at-risk communities and groups, DMAC with the help of the relevant actors have established different approaches as Formal and Informal. Under the formal EORE approach the dedicated EORE team consisting of a male and female couple instructor provides EORE to a specific number of audience not exceeding 25 participants with a specific curriculum. While in the Informal approach other other mine action teams and sources/resources such as media, exhibition peer-to peer and other methodologies are used to deliver EORE to impacted/at-risk communities.

To expand the reach of EORE, almost fifty percent of all EORE teams are female staff and their objective and obligation remains reaching girls and women in the communities.

Key challenges for the effective EORE include:

- Insecurity and geographical issues that prevents the access of teams in the targeted locations
- Ongoing conflict in the country that results in an increased number of civilian casualties
- Lack of adequate funding to implement the planned activities
- Cultural and social limitations, especially with provision of EORE to women and girls

Below is the plan of EORE activities in Afghanistan for the next five years:

S-No	Strategic goal	Strategic Objective	Activity
1	Appropriate innovative and gender and diversity-sensitive land release, EORE and WAM save lives and result in behaviour change and safe access to land, supporting livelihood activities	Minimize the threat posed by EO through land release and EORE, with focus on at-risk populations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Provision EORE to impacted communities by mobilizing standalone EORE 10-14 teams annually to at-risk communities 2- Provision of EORE to communities impacted by the ongoing conflict using resources under the quick response teams (QRTs) and mixed NTS/TS/EORE teams 3- Provision of EORE to returnees and IDPs using teams that are established at the Transit/Encashment centres in five locations 4- Provision of EORE messaging through mass media to population that are hard to reach due to security reasons 5- Provision of EORE using billboards stationed on highways connecting at-risk provinces and districts

2		Improve operational effectiveness and efficiency by utilizing relevant good practices, new technologies, and information management	6- Conduct the revision of EORE AMAS in the light of the amended IMAS and international frameworks 7- Undertake the development of EORE adult flip chart 8- Undertake the revision of EORE trainer guideline to align it with the recently published behaviour change document
3		At-risk groups are continuously identified, documented and targeted through tailored EORE interventions and materials including through the Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) approach and use of new technologies.	9- Conduct the EORE Knowledge, Attitude, Practice and Behaviour Survey to understand people's perception about EORE and risk-taking behaviours. The KAP-B survey findings will be used to improve current practices and change the methodologies of delivering EORE. 10- Establish cooperation and linkages with humanitarian actors and government agencies on the inclusion of EORE in their activities.

3. **Work plan funding:** The request indicates that the US State Department (PMRWA) is the main donor for the clearance of CM contaminated areas in Afghanistan and that it has agreed to cover funding for all remaining cluster munition clearance operations identified in the Request. Could Afghanistan confirm that there is secured funding to cover all of cluster munition clearance operations to be undertaken during the extension period?

DMAC response:

As it was stated in the extension request, the main donor for funding the recorded CM for Afghanistan is the PMWRA who funded the CM clearance projects since 2017 year at all. The email communication we had with PMWRA, they committed to provide fund for addressing the remaining recorded CM starting from late 2022/early 2023 onward. But at this stage there is no any secured fund.

4. Annex C - the use of universally understood terminology in the identification of hazards (HazardName) in the table on page 19 could enhance State Party understanding.

DMAC response:

DMAC is currently working on data clean-up and receiving technical support from GICHD in this regard. This remains as one of the priority areas for the MAPA.

5. There is no mention of residual risk in the Request. How does Afghanistan plan to address the residual risk of submunitions discovered after completion?

DMAC response:

There are 17 civil servants working with DMAC while other staff of DMAC are the contracted staff paid by either UN or US. Once the treaty is achieved and all known EO hazards are cleared, and peace took place in the country, then the contracted staff of DMAC may not be needed any more, while the 17 civil servant will continue to manage the program, and with the support from EOD capacity of MoI and MoD will provide response to the residual risk.