

UNMAS IRAQ

Insight



A mine researcher during an explosive ordnance clearance activity. Tel Kaif, October 2023.



UNMAS Iraq workshop on empowering women working with UNMAS Iraq implementing partners, Erbil, November 2023.

Programme update

During the fourth quarter of 2023, UNMAS Iraq continued to deliver **eight** training courses to **123** (**four** women and **119** men) Government of Iraq (GoI) Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Ministry of Defence (MoD) personnel to enhance their technical skills to locate, identify, and respond to the explosive ordnance (EO) threats and enhance public safety.

In alignment with the UNMAS Gender and Diversity plan, UNMAS Iraq continued to promote women's participation in mine action. In November 2023, a **one-day** workshop was organised by the UNMAS Iraq Gender Task Force for **18** women from UNMAS Iraq implementing partners (IPs), aiming to increase the technical skills and participation of women in the mine action sector. Furthermore, as part of UNMAS Iraq's technical support for the MoI, **four** women officials were trained in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the Explosive Hazard First Responder (EHFR) train-the-trainers (T3) course.

Clearance operations continued in the Tal Keif and Makhmour districts in Ninewa governorate. A total of **253,766** square meters of land were cleared, and **581** EO items were rendered safe. Agricultural areas which were EO contamination have been

been cleared and released. The clearance operations enabled the local communities to safely access the areas and resume livelihood activities such as agriculture.

In November 2023, the Ministry of Education (MoE), in collaboration with the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), endorsed the inclusion of awareness-raising messages regarding the risks of EO in primary, intermediate, and secondary school curricula for the academic year of 2023-2024. This was achieved following two years of UNMAS advocacy efforts as well as intensive coordination and discussions with GoI national authorities. This initiative ensures that students from primary to secondary level will receive valuable lessons enabling them to recognize and avoid EO risks.

In December 2023, UNMAS Iraq successfully concluded the partnership model after three years of implementation. **Two** National (NGOs) have been trained and enabled through partnerships with International NGOs and are fully accredited to implement EO clearance operations. These two NGOs are expected to autonomously operate for the next two years and onwards.

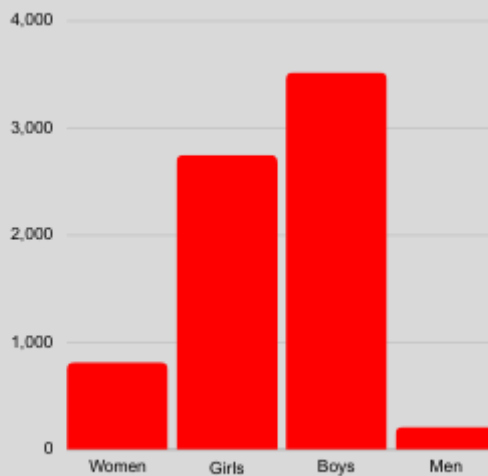
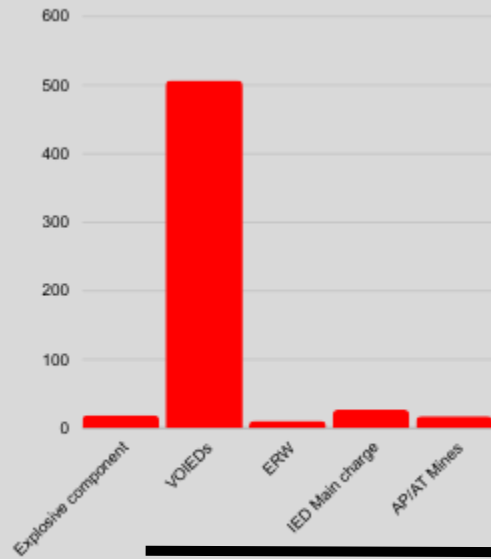
Achievements

**566,363 sqm
Cleared**

**581 EO
Rendered safe**

615 direct EORE sessions

Eight training courses



A story from Iraq

The sun was rising over Qarach village. A new day was starting but this day was special for the residents of Qarach, as their land had finally been freed of explosive ordnance and ready for a new, and safe, season of farming. Qarach is a small village in the southeast of the Makhmur district, known for its countryside lifestyle. The people of Qarach earn their living by farming wheat and barley crops alongside herding livestock.

In 2014, the residents of Qarach village were forced to leave their homes and belongings behind and flee to survive from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacks. Later, in 2017, the town was liberated following extensive military operations.

After the conflict had ended, there were many items of explosive ordnance inside, and in the surroundings of the village. The majority of civilian casualties following liberation were attributable to explosive ordnance items, including explosive remnants of war. These events were yet another reminder that civilians are the ones suffering the consequences of conflict.

UNMAS Iraq implementing partners, Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD), in partnership with Shareteah Humanitarian Organization (SHO), have over the last few years cleared vast areas from explosive ordnance in Makhmur. The clearance operations have contributed to the safe and dignified returns of those displaced and have enabled resilience initiatives in rebuilding the village and farming the lands.

Qasim Jamal, one of the UNMAS Iraq beneficiaries, shared his gratitude and stated, “ I was very excited watching the tractor plow the land, it was a dream to know that the land is safe and free from explosive ordnance. I am very grateful for the efforts invested and the hard work carried to clear our land. Now, we are waiting for the new farming season to re-farm the land.”



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For more information:

Pehr Lodhammar, Chief Mine Action Programme, UNMAS Iraq, lodhammar@un.org