



**NEEDS
DRIVEN.
PEOPLE
CENTRED.**

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IRAQ

Programme Highlights

Virtual Reality - a potential tool for risk education



Photo: Virtual Reality sessions are organized in Baghdad for all UN staff to better understand the reality on the ground (© UNMAS)

UNMAS has recently uploaded visual data of Mosul from a 360° camera to virtual reality goggles. When the goggles are on, the viewer is immersed in a real-life experience providing a link to what appears to be the endless task ahead of mine action clearance operators.

UNMAS expects to field-test an initial 50+ sets of the goggles as an integral part of modern risk education programmes for Humanitarians who may unfortunately encounter explosive hazards during their work.

“We see the advantage of placing residents and returnees in a ‘real’ situation so that they can recognise, avoid and then report potential hazards at minimal risk to themselves,” says Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS

Senior Programme Manager. *“The same for the authorities and police who need to see and know what to expect.”* The goggles may seem like a toy, and the exposure, like a ‘game’ but it is deadly serious. If people can see virtual threats, they can protect themselves against real threats.

Human Remains - a challenge for explosive hazard management in Mosul

Of the 465 suicide belts/vests cleared from Al Meadam district (West Mosul), nearly 45% were manually removed by UNMAS operators from human remains. Hundreds more bodies are scattered amongst the rubble - militant and civilians caught in the cross-fire. New dimensions to the challenge of working in Mosul: smells and images forever imprinted in the minds of our operators.



Photo: Searchers wearing protective equipment on a task in Al Meadam in Western Mosul. Video on Mosul [here](#) (© UNMAS)

As per the Standard Operating Procedure for handling human remains, teams on the ground were issued with protective equipment (disposable face masks, gloves, paper coveralls). A proactive peer support approach has also been followed so teams can talk, unwind, and get further help when needed. Mitigating the threat of explosive hazards in the area allowed families to retrieve the bodies of loved ones for burial, and allowed body removal teams (municipal workers and young volunteers) to remove remains and reduce potential health risks before the summer heat kicks in, and support return to normalcy.

Knowing all too well the importance of their work, and that their welfare is being considered, the High Risk Search teams can keep their focus on each explosive hazard that is located, one item at a time.



UNMAS has \$48M in secured and pledged funds in 2018 and is **seeking an additional \$216M** to support survey and clearance, risk education, capacity enhancement of Government as well as the Recovery and Resilience Programme and Humanitarian Response Plan.



Thank you to all our donors for their generous support.

Clearing schools - a milestone in relieving pressure on the education system



Photo: Explosive items found and removed in Al Shaymaa School ©UNMAS

Upon request from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNMAS search and clearance teams deployed to Al Shaymaa school in West Mosul to assess and remove explosive hazards before rehabilitation work could take place.

The school was reported to have been previously used by Da'esh for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) before being later occupied by the Iraqi Security Forces. Following a non-technical survey, no IEDs were discovered, however a quantity of small arms ammunition and items of unexploded ordnance were found and removed.

As many schools were destroyed in West Mosul, the displaced students and teachers have been re-assigned to other functional schools in the area. This has placed a noticeable strain on the education system, with schools hosting up to 1000+ students, spread across three shifts (or more) per day.

Mine Action Achievements



Clearance



Survey



Risk Education

UNMAS and partners achievements in May

2,188,418 m² of high priority areas surveyed, 46,126 m² cleared, and 5,029 explosive hazard items removed.

19 assessments and surveys completed in support of stabilization and humanitarian efforts.

1,625 risk education sessions delivered to 28,382 beneficiaries of which 45% were females and 66% were children.

Overall Mine Action sector since January 2016

1,711 km² surveyed, 140 km² cleared and 132,884 hazardous items removed.

Risk education sessions delivered to 1,348,438 beneficiaries from at-risk communities.



*Figures for the Mine Action sector are provided by the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA). Statistics obtained from the Government databases might not fully reflect the up-to-date numbers as reports are submitted on a rolling basis. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum and only reflect the achievements of humanitarian actors (not the Iraqi Security Forces)



UNMAS

Established in 1997, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is the recognized 'coordinator' of mine action within the UN system. UNMAS is an office within the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). UNMAS operates under UN legislative mandates of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, or at the request of the UN Secretary-General or his designated official, or an affected country. UN Security Council Resolution 2365 (2017) the first stand-alone text on mine action, "Expresses grave concern over the threat that landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices pose to civilians, refugees returning to their homes, ...and stresses the need to undertake appropriate measures to mitigate this danger effectively."