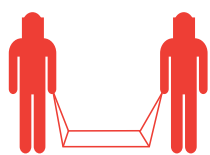




### Highlights **JANUARY 2021**

**UNMAS** continues to deliver remote safety videos conveying life-saving messages to new rotation of TCC arrivals.

**UNMAS** continues to implement and comply with all **UNISFA** measures for mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure the wellbeing of staff and implementing partner personnel.



## 90,012 m<sup>2</sup>

of land assessed by clearance teams as safe from explosive hazards



## 173 km

of routes assessed as safe from explosive hazards



## 3

Explosive Remnants of War destroyed



## 503

men, women, girls and boys in Abyei area received Explosive Ordnance Risk Education



## 270

UNISFA military and civilian staff received safety training



# ERW incident in Agok area

# Three Steps to Safety: STOP. Don't Touch. Report.

Following numerous years of armed conflicts in the Abyei area, the presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) continues to pose a threat to the lives and livelihoods of the local communities. Based on historical records of reported incidents involving explosive hazards, children continue to be the most at-risk group, with boys being at the highest risk as they are driven by their curiosity, investigative, mobile, playful and brave nature. More often than not, boys want to discover, prove, or find out what happens if they tamper with unfamiliar objects they find, putting their lives in great danger.

On January 14th, three boys aged between 6 and 13 years old were involved in an ERW incident in Mading Deng Mathiang village,

situated approximately 400 meters from the Agok market area in southern Abyei. Six-year-old Nyok Deng encountered an old fuse element of a hand grenade while playing nearby his house. He invited his friends, 11-year old Joth Chan and 13-year-old Mony Luak Chan to join him in playing with the unknown object. Driven by their curiosity, the boys set the object on fire with a lighter. It did not take long before they heard it explode and fragments of the burnt fuse were spread into the air, causing them minor injuries. "When I heard the boys screaming, I came running towards them and saw that they had been injured and so I rushed to the community protection committee (CPC) to seek help in transporting them to the hospital for treatment. I told the CPC officer what had happened, and he found us a private car to take us to the hospital where the boys received treatment," stated the mother of one of the boys.



The news of the incident had quickly spread through the community, reaching local journalist Mr. Joseph Athian, who alerted UNMAS through social media on January 15th. Upon receiving the alert, UNMAS teams responded swiftly and deployed to the area to conduct an investigation into the incident. On January 16th, the UNMAS team visited the Agok CPC and met with protection officer Mr. Anur Deng Magek, who pointed them to the burnt remains of the unknown object. The team identified the object as an old fuse element of a hand grenade. Upon meeting the victims and their families at the scene of the incident, UNMAS Community Liaison, Mr. Agany Deng Angelo, reached out to the remaining community members who confirmed that there is no history of a permanent military presence or barracks in the area.

Based on the team's findings, emergency explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) sessions were organized on January 17th, targeting the victims, their families and other community members. The UNMAS teams passed on safety messages and further encouraged the children and the community members to stay away from any unfamiliar object and always report to the CPC members, UNISFA, UNPOL or UNMAS personnel. After the session, one of the victims, Joth Chan, stated "I will never touch anything I don't know again, if I happen to find it, I will run away and report to my mother, and I will also not let my friends play with things we don't know."

EORE efforts in the area have been further intensified in the following weeks, and in a joint effort with UNPOL, explosive risk safety training sessions were additionally provided to all CPC members and children at risk in the Agok area.



On January 25th, an UNMAS team led by Programme Manager, Mr Nico Bosman, participated in a radio interview with Air Information Radio Service (AIRS) in Agok, and further discussed the incident with particular emphasis on safety messaging and reporting channels for the community. During the interview, the team also clarified the UNMAS mandate, the programme's achievements, and the ongoing and planned activities in the Abyei area, while thanking AIRS journalist, Mr Joseph Athian, for efficiently using social media to report the incident.