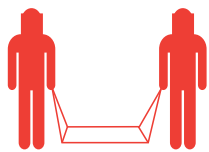




### Highlights **FEBRUARY 2021**

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



**18,119 m<sup>2</sup>**  
of land assessed by  
clearance teams as  
safe from explosive



Mechanical clearance using MW240 in Tajalei



**115 km**  
of routes assessed  
as safe from  
explosive hazards



**6** Explosive  
Remnants of War  
destroyed



Manual mine clearance in Koladit



**596**  
men, women, girls and  
boys received  
Explosive Ordnance  
Risk Education



**105**  
UNISFA military and  
civilian staff  
received safety



Explosive ordnance risk education for street children in Agok

# MINE ACTION AND HEALTH, SAFETY, SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL (HSSE) ACTION

Since the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) are primarily a construction project service provider, it is often taken for granted that Health & Safety (HS) is a strong cultural aspect to everything that UNOPS do. However in recent years it has also started to incorporate more and more consideration into the social and environmental management (SE) aspect of its operations. Collectively the mixture of HS and SE has been formulated as HSSE.

Since mine action projects by UNMAS utilise, and are bound, by the protocols and overarching principles of UNOPS, it therefore makes sense to follow the HSSE processes within mine action, but there is a unique difference between construction industry best practices and mine action safe working practices. Mine action, by its very nature, is intrinsically dangerous and there have, for many years, been very robust and stringent procedures and guidelines which are global and 'well tried and tested' so to speak. The challenge UNMAS now face is to use the UNOPS HSSE principles and reporting requirements and adapt them to mine action procedures in order to demonstrate that we offer our workers and beneficiaries an extremely safe and environmentally sound place in which to conduct our projects here in Abyei.

To this end, the UNMAS focal point for HSSE in UNMAS - UNISFA has been proactive in following the guidance from UNOPS HQ (both in Copenhagen and also the Peace and Security Cluster in NY, to whom many UNMAS projects fall under) to ensure that UNMAS-UNISFA is fully compliant in its adaptation and implementation of HSSE. So what does this mean in reality?

Whenever UNMAS here in Abyei tasks our implementing partner, The Development Initiative (TDI), to conduct clearance operations, we must ensure that they fully incorporate HSSE into the planning process of the tasks and also document the process which can be monitored during operations. Before TDI start work on a given site, they must conduct a full risk assessment of all H&S aspects, which is quite normal since demining has a lot of activities that already fall into this category and have excellent risk mitigation measures in place already, but they must now also consider the environmental and social impact of their work. This element is not entirely new, there is now much more accountability required in this area. The team leaders on the ground must be aware of the welfare of people in and around the worksites and ensure that all possible measures are in place to ensure their safety and the protection of the environment.



Roshan Christy, TDI Operations Manager stated: "Typical HSSE activities would include a waste management plan that follows the UNISFA mission policy, a thorough assessment of potential pollution to nearby water sources. This is particularly important in an area which is largely arid and dry, where water sources are highly important for local farmers and populations. The team must also consider what hazardous materials it uses during operations, and ensure that people who may come into contact are fully trained and briefed on their hazardous nature. They must take every possible precaution to ensure an environmental incident does not occur. The teams also routinely discuss HSSE through regular tool box talks, an informal practice at grass roots level to remind team members on specific elements as required. These are around 15-20 minute sessions and focus the team on the real tasks at hand and how particular elements of HSSE apply to what they are doing at any given stage of their work."

UNMAS quality assurance takes place throughout the task process and even approves the implementation plan that TDI has to submit (prior to starting operations) to show its risk assessments in HSSE in addition to its normal demining methodology plan of action. By this level of understanding and monitoring, TDI is able to comply with, and even surpass the minimum requirements laid down by UNOPS. We have a huge duty of care to protect all people, both workers and beneficiaries as well as protect the fragile operating environment we work in.

Leslie Levick, UNMAS-UNISFA HSSE Focal Point said: "Explosives create all sorts of hazardous threats to people, flora and fauna and mitigating all possible risks of contamination and accidents or incidents is the number one priority with HSSE. UNMAS-UNISFA is proud to lead by example in this global UNOPS initiative and with constant communication across the entire UNMAS project here in Abyei on the importance of HSSE with the ultimate goal (Goal Zero) being to eliminate harm to people, animals and the environment at all costs doing what we do. UNMAS reports monthly to UNOPS HQ on all aspects of HSSE, and details such as incident statistics, environmental issues and what training and capacity development was conducted, all provide real time evidence that Goal Zero is on track."

