

## Enhancing Role of Women in Mine Action: Inspiring Journey from Learner to Instructor

In communities affected by explosive remnants of war, women, girls, boys and men have distinct roles and responsibilities in their daily lives with different levels of information, available resources and tools, and mobility options. These factors affect their exposure level to explosive threats. Consequently, every community member can make a difference to protect individuals and live safely. While work related to explosive remnants of war has traditionally been a male-dominated field, women are increasingly stepping into key roles that support risk education and public safety.

Najma Abd Hashim, who works in the Women's Affairs Department of the Baghdad Police Command, is one such example. She participated in training sessions organized by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), focused on awareness and education about the dangers posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the safe behaviors needed to avoid them. This includes staying on designated paths, avoiding areas known to be contaminated, not touching or playing with suspicious objects, and reporting any suspected explosive devices. With her outstanding results in the training course, Najma was among the top graduates, which allowed her to secure a place in the advanced "Train-the-Trainers" (T3) course conducted by UNMAS.

UNMAS Iraq is keen to build a sustainable mine action response and build national capacity, particularly with the Ministry of Interior police officers. To this end, since UNMAS's inception in Iraq, a total of 244 police officials have participated in T3 technical training courses. These courses aim to provide the Mol trainees with the skills and abilities required to provide the same training to their colleagues at their duty stations

*"Delivering successful engaging training sessions requires strong communication skills, deep understanding of the subject, and continuous self-development,"* Najma said. Her passion and commitment led her to become an instructor, working alongside her colleagues to convey safety messages and reduce the risk of injury from mines and unexploded devices.

Aside from her professional role, Najma is also a talented artist and poet, who has participated in art exhibitions and written poetry through which she expressed her ideas, experiences and values. She took part in several educational, artistic, and media activities that highlight contemporary issues and proposals regarding women's rights.

Najma believes women have a vital role to play in promoting safe behaviors and protecting civilians. By participating in capability enhancement programs and acquiring the skills to educate others, women can become powerful influencers, conveying safety messages and promoting change within their families, friends, and communities. *"Building community networks, including various groups, can be an effective method to pass on lifesaving messages and raise awareness of explosive threats,"* Najma added.

Her journey is an inspiring example of the constructive impact of inclusive training and the significance of empowering Iraqi women in the mine action sector.