

June 2021

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project, which is co-financed by the European Union Humanitarian Aid, aims to reduce the immediate and long-term impact of explosive ordnance on civilians and humanitarian operations in Syria through coordination and explosive ordnance risk education. As lead of the mine action area of responsibility, UNMAS contributes to improving the safety of at-risk communities by establishing a humanitarian mine action sector, capable of effectively delivering on the objectives of the Humanitarian Response Plan. The UNMAS Syria Response Programme defines and implements specific activities in accordance with emerging humanitarian needs and through needs-based prioritization, involving an analysis of the explosive ordnance threat, population dynamics, survey data, and the wider humanitarian response.



Coordination— UNMAS Syria Response Programme represents the mine action area of responsibility within the UN-led coordination mechanism for Syria; leading the mine action sub-cluster at the Whole of Syria level; and the mine action sub-sector from Damascus. UNMAS provides technical expertise and support to the humanitarian clusters and sectors and mine action partners. Within this line of effort, UNMAS has been encouraging safer programming for humanitarian workers, training security focal points in risk awareness, and integrating risk education into the programming of different humanitarian clusters and sectors to expand the operational scope and reach the people most in need. Central to its coordination functions, UNMAS manages the information management system for mine action, collating explosive ordnance data from partners into a central database and analyzing available information to enable needs-based prioritization, and inform the wider humanitarian response with data, mapping, and the identification of hazardous areas. Incorporating this information with the findings from other sectors helps provide an overview of the contamination in identified areas, and provides a foundation for more targeted mine action activities, guiding safer humanitarian relief efforts. To promote an equal and inclusive prioritization mechanism, UNMAS adopts sex, age and diversity sensitive collection of data. .



Risk education is a life-saving component of the humanitarian response and a priority for humanitarian mine action, as it is the first critical step to preventing civilian casualties from explosive ordnance and building people's resilience, specifically their capacity to recognize and mitigate explosive risks. Risk education messaging is prioritized based on information gathered by surveys and coordination with other humanitarian actors. The materials are tailored to age, sex and localized threats to provide the groups who are at risk with life-saving information, reduce the likelihood of accidents and promote safer behaviours.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Risk education reach— UNMAS has been supporting and coordinating risk education teams deployed in Homs and Hama. Since the launch of the project and up until 31 May 2021, the teams have reached 185,859 people (39,806 women, 25,500 men, 60,851 girls, 59,702 boys) through face-to-face sessions, and 7,946 people via online sessions.



Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Capacity Enhancement & Mainstreaming— UNMAS trains EORE facilitators from implementing partners and other humanitarian partner organizations to increase risk education capacity and coverage. From December 2019 to 31 May 2021, UNMAS SRP trained 212 (91 women, 121 men) EORE facilitators and EO awareness focal points from implementing partners and partner humanitarian organizations (Homs and Hama governorates, Eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus, Dar'a and Aleppo). UNMAS SRP will ensure monitoring for those new EORE teams and liaise with humanitarian partners to ensure accurate reporting and offer quality assurance for field teams. In addition, UNMAS provided explosive ordnance awareness to a total 560 humanitarian workers (257 women, 303 men) from UN Agencies.



Raising awareness— A billboards awareness campaign on the risks of explosive ordnance was implemented over 9 months, displaying safety messages on 45 billboards along the highways in 9 governorates, until 31 March 2021. Twenty additional, smaller billboards were installed in Rural Damascus to remain permanently onsite.

On the occasion of the International Mine Action Day on 4 April, in 2020 UNMAS and UNICEF launched a SMS campaign with risk education messages to all subscribers of the 2 Syria mobile companies, reaching millions of people across the country. To amplify the reach, 2 radio spots and 1 video spot were broadcasted through 5 radio and 1 TV channels with high audience rates and national coverage. On the same occasion in 2021, UNMAS and UNICEF launched a similar SMS campaign with a set of 5 different messages sent to all subscribers. UNMAS also organized an awareness event in Aleppo on 6 April, that was attended by over 50 representatives from the government, UN agencies, international and national NGOs .

On 1 July 2020, UNMAS and UNICEF launched a multi-platform media campaign, where awareness visual content was shared on 15 Facebook news pages and 4 newspaper websites. Throughout July, awareness videos and radio spots were broadcast on 2 TV and 17 radio channels.

Since July 2020, UNMAS has provided over 275,463 risk education leaflets and posters to 19 NGOs, INGOs and UN Agencies for distribution to communities and during risk education sessions implemented by partners trained by UNMAS.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

From the Field: Kawkab, Rural Hama

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While facilitating awareness sessions about explosive ordnance hazards for different age groups in rural Hama, the trainers realised that many people in the area were re-using explosive ordnance in their homes as decorative objects; not knowing the risk they were taking. Furthermore, they were not aware that they should immediately report to the competent authorities when they find any suspiciously looking object laying around.

In one of the sessions, there was an elderly woman among the attendees, a breadwinner for her orphaned grandchildren. When the facilitators introduced the different types of explosive ordnance, she started crying. She remembered her grandson who was killed in an explosion of one of those objects, and told everyone how following that tragic accident, she started to collect all strange looking objects she found, in fear they were explosive. She collected them, she said, and threw them away so that no one would get hurt; not knowing the risk she was taking. But now, that she had learned about the importance of staying away from these dangerous objects, she said:

"I wish you were here to teach us earlier. If I had known this information before, I might not have lost my grandson. I would have protected him from danger. I had no idea I needed to report. I thought I was saving other children's lives by collecting those objects and throwing them away. But, now, after this session, I know better how to protect my grandchildren and myself as well."

