United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Colombia newsletter informs about the main technical assistance activities carried out through the projects implemented in the country to strengthen the mine action sector, in conjunction with the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP, in Spanish) - Descontamina Colombia.

The impact of anti-personnel mines in Colombia

Colombia registered 73 new victims of anti-personnel mines during the first half of 2021, according to statistics of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP, in Spanish), a slightly lower figure compared to the same period in 2020, during which the OACP registered 78 new victims. During this period, the month in which the most victims were recorded was in February, with 26 casualties.

As of June 30, 2021, the Colombian authorities have registered a total of 12,062 victims of anti-personnel mines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) since 1990, the year in which the official registration began. To learn more about the impact of anti-personnel mines in Colombia, UNMAS share the following viewer with the figures and historical statistics of the national government.

*All the data in the graphs correspond to the first semester of 2021. Source: OACP*
Analyze the psychosocial consequences of anti-personnel mines and explosive ordnance in children and adolescents, as well as some remarkable experiences in psychosocial support for this population, will be some of the topics that academics, children protection actors and the mine action sector will discuss in a virtual event that will take place on Thursday, August 19 at 10:00 am. This event is organized by the Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR), in alliance with the Child Protection AoR, the Catholic University of Colombia and the Colombian Association of Psychology Faculties (ASCOFAPSI, by its spanish acronym). Representatives of OACP, UNMAS, UNICEF, Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo, and other key stakeholders will participate.

At the request of the OACP, between July 12 and 23, UNMAS and the Swiss Foundation for Demining (FSD) provided seven training sessions on Non-Technical Survey (NTS) and Technical Survey (TS) to mine action organizations that operate in Colombia. These sessions were held within the framework of the recent update of the National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and their objective was to improve the knowledge of the personnel to strengthen the efficiency in land release. An average of 75 representatives from the Army’s Humanitarian Demining Brigade, the Marine Corps Explosives Group, civil humanitarian demining organizations, the Ministry of Defense and the OACP participated in each virtual session. These trainings were supported by Germany.

At the request of the OACP, between July 12 and 23, UNMAS and the Swiss Foundation for Demining (FSD) provided seven training sessions on Non-Technical Survey (NTS) and Technical Survey (TS) to mine action organizations that operate in Colombia. These sessions were held within the framework of the recent update of the National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and their objective was to improve the knowledge of the personnel to strengthen the efficiency in land release. An average of 75 representatives from the Army’s Humanitarian Demining Brigade, the Marine Corps Explosives Group, civil humanitarian demining organizations, the Ministry of Defense and the OACP participated in each virtual session. These trainings were supported by Germany.

Analyse the psychosocial consequences of anti-personnel mines and explosive ordnance in children and adolescents, as well as some remarkable experiences in psychosocial support for this population, will be some of the topics that academics, children protection actors and the mine action sector will discuss in a virtual event that will take place on Thursday, August 19 at 10:00 am. This event is organized by the Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR), in alliance with the Child Protection AoR, the Catholic University of Colombia and the Colombian Association of Psychology Faculties (ASCOFAPSI, by its spanish acronym). Representatives of OACP, UNMAS, UNICEF, Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo, and other key stakeholders will participate.
Pablo is a civil engineer with a master’s degree in project management, with 20 years of professional experience. In 2006 he joined the mine action sector in Colombia as a UNICEF consultant. In 2007 he led the creation of the Mine Action Presidential Program (PAICMA, in Spanish) and the first units that today make up the national capacity to carry out humanitarian demining. He was in charge of the creation of the National Mine Action Standards with which the first non-governmental organizations were accredited. Pablo represented Colombia as a technical expert before the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and he was a member of the IMAS Review Board for four years.

Pablo, who has received training and has worked in countries such as Norway, USA, Jordan, Kenya, Cambodia, Afghanistan and South Sudan, joined UNMAS Colombia in 2014, where he has had a leadership role in the implementation of the pilot demining projects between the government of Colombia and FARC-EP guerrilla in the framework of the peace negotiations, and later in the formulation and design of HUMANICEMOS DH, a mine action organization composed and led by ex-combatants in the process of reintegration as a result of the Peace Agreement of 2016. Pablo has been in charge of the UNMAS Programme in Colombia since 01 July, making it the first UNMAS programme that is completely led by national personnel.

About UNMAS Colombia

Since 2010, UNMAS has supported the National Mine Action Center of Colombia, under the direction of the OACP, humanitarian demining, victim assistance and explosive ordnance risk education organizations, to increase the capacity of the mine action sector and strengthen its coordination and regulatory frameworks, considering best global practices. UNMAS works in Colombia with the support of the European Union, through the European Trust Fund for Peace; and the Governments of Germany, Italy and Republic of Korea, whom we thank for their contributions in 2021.