



The 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**.

Violence affecting the work of mine action organizations in Colombia



Recent acts of violence by illegal armed groups are affecting the work of mine action organizations in Colombia. During May, two serious incidents occurred in the departments of Meta and Antioquia.

The first event occurred on Friday, May 6, when **armed actors incinerated two vehicles belonging to the Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines (CCCM, in Spanish)** in the municipality of Urrao, as part of the "armed strike" promoted by the so-called "Clan del Golfo". Fortunately, the CCCM personnel were unharmed.

The second event occurred on Tuesday, May 17, when a team of at least **12 members of the Colombian Army's Humanitarian Demining Engineer Battalion No. 4** were wounded after a terrorist attack with **explosive devices** in the municipality of Vistahermosa, Meta, while the personnel were on their way to carry out demining work. Six of the soldiers were seriously injured. Due to their humanitarian work, the soldiers of this battalion do not carry weapons for the development of their activities in rural areas.

**Sources: CCCM and Colombian Army reports after the incidents.*

Due to the deterioration of security conditions in Meta, the total suspension of humanitarian demining operations in the department was announced. Last December, the civilian organizations **The HALO Trust and Humanity and Inclusion (HI)** had already decided to suspend their work in this department after security incidents in which two vehicles of these organizations were incinerated.

In view of this challenging scenario and with the aim of reducing this type of incidents, the directors of civilian demining organizations operating in Colombia and UNMAS requested the OACP to speed up processes to micro-locate territories in municipalities where security conditions allow to continue deploying operations, and to promote a communications campaign to raise awareness about the humanitarian approach to demining.

UNMAS condemns these actions that limit the work of humanitarian organizations, threaten the integrity of the personnel and ultimately harm the rural communities that yearn to see their territories free of mines. UNMAS reiterates the call made from the United Nations to armed groups: humanitarian organizations **#NotATarget**.



*HUMANICEMOS DH operates with a grant from UNMAS, with the support of the European Trust Fund for Peace.
Photo: HUMANICEMOS DH.*

HUMANICEMOS handed over three new mine-free areas in La Montañita, Caquetá

Last February HUMANICEMOS DH, an organization made up of ex-combatants peace signatories, handed over three new mine-free areas, benefiting the population living in the communities of Unión Cordillera and El Porvenir in the municipality of La Montañita, Caquetá. **The three areas correspond to a total of 2,443 square meters**, land that had been abandoned since 2012 due to the suspicion of contamination with explosive devices. The population stated that in previous years, these areas were used by armed groups to set up camps, plant crops for illicit use and also witnessed fighting. The beneficiary communities also received Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) sessions given by ex-combatants in the process of reintegration. The official handover of these areas to the community took place after certification by the OACP.



Photo: Belinda Gómez / UNMAS.

Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines will start the first humanitarian demining operations in Córdoba

On May 25, the UNMAS Regional Coordination (RC) team presented the CCCM as the organization that will initiate humanitarian demining operations in **Puerto Libertador, the second municipality in Córdoba with the highest number of recorded Anti-personnel Mines victims (132) since 1990**, according to OACP data. The presentation was attended by municipal authorities, community and indigenous leaders, who have been waiting for years for these operations to begin. During the meeting, 51 communities were micro-located where the operations will be deployed. The RC team facilitates the inter-institutional articulation that allows the start of humanitarian demining tasks in the territories.



Photo: Mauricio Morillo / UNMAS.

Teachers of the Policarpa Municipality, in Nariño, receive EORE after clashes with armed actors

The Regional Coordinator of UNMAS in Nariño carried out a session on Explosive Ordnance Risk Education for teachers of the San Francisco Educational Institution, located in the Municipality of Policarpa, who **requested this session after a confrontation between armed actors in the area**. The impact on the teachers was significant, since most of them are new in this region and do not know the conflict dynamics. The session provided the teachers with tools to reduce the risks of accidents with explosive devices, and they took the opportunity to request additional EORE sessions for students.



Photo: Colombia Humanitarian Team /OCHA.

UNMAS supports mission in Antioquia to deliver humanitarian aid to indigenous communities

Through the Regional Coordination Team in Antioquia, UNMAS provided financial support to facilitate the logistics for the delivery of humanitarian aid to indigenous communities victims of the armed conflict and anti-personnel mines in the municipalities of Caucaasia, Murindó and Arboletes. This inter-agency mission, carried out in early April, was organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia (OIA) and cooperation agencies from the Basque Country. **Thanks to this joint effort, some 1,000 humanitarian aid kits were delivered during the mission.**

This is how the Mine Action Day was commemorated in the regions

On April 4, International Mine Awareness Day was commemorated. In Colombia, mine action organizations, national and local authorities **organized multiple activities focused on recognizing the resilience of victims of Anti-personnel Mines (APM) and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)**. Through the Regional Coordinators deployed in the departments most affected by the presence of explosive devices, UNMAS accompanied the following public activities articulated by the OACP and the Victims Unit (UARIV, in Spanish):

Antioquia



In Medellín, an EORE workshop was held in alliance with the Corporación Paz y Democracia, aimed at victims of APM/UXO, in which some 35 people participated. In addition, **the Mayor's Office of Medellín held a public event in which the victims witnessed didactic activities** on mine risk prevention.

Córdoba

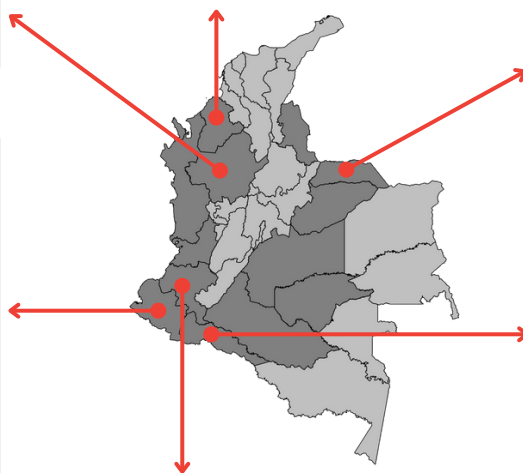


In Montería, a **psychosocial support workshop** was held with survivors of **APM/UXO accidents**, in which playful activities were developed in which the victims addressed their healing, adaptation and resilience processes after their accidents.

Arauca



In Arauca, an EORE session was organized by the Lutheran Foundation, in which **survivors of landmine accidents told their life stories**. The event, in which the Governor's Office of Arauca, the Arauca Municipal Mayor's Office, associations of mine victims and other allies participated, closed with a symbolic act of planting trees in the municipality's central park.



Nariño



In the house of the Guachavés Indigenous Council, located in the municipality of Santacruz, **a meeting was held focused on the survivors and families of people who died in accidents with APM/UXO**, who shared their testimonies and their processes of forgiveness after the victimizing events. Santacruz is one of the municipalities most affected by explosive devices, and about 70% of its inhabitants belong to indigenous communities.

Cauca



An EORE activity was held in Popayán, which included **a walk, a symbolic tree planting ceremony and sports activities**, with the participation of mine accident survivors. The activities were carried out in alliance with victims' associations, the Governor's Office of Cauca, the Mayor's Office of Popayán, the National Army and National Police.

Putumayo



In Mocoa, accompaniment was provided to the Governor's Office of Putumayo and the Army's Humanitarian Demining Brigade in a **EORE session for victims of APM/UXO in the department.**

This project has the financial support of:



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FORE session

In the city of Yopal, a radio program was broadcast on Manare Radio to raise awareness of the danger posed by APM/UXO. During the program, the community was informed about the effects of explosive devices in the department and the attention and prevention actions carried out by the different mine action entities.

A circular portrait of a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a blue polo shirt and a blue protective vest. The vest has a name tag that reads "Dr. J. J. J. J." and a large black circular patch on the front. He is standing outdoors in front of green foliage and a stone wall.