



UNMIS

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The United Nations in Sudan Launches a Public Information Campaign on Mine Awareness

Khartoum, 29 January 2007- A UN public awareness campaign on mines has been launched today with an Information Day held at the El Salam IDP camp in Jabal Awlia in Khartoum.

The UN Public Information Awareness Campaign on Mine Awareness is jointly organized by the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and United Nations Mine Action Office (UNMAO) in close coordination with UN Agencies, including UNICEF and UNDP, as well as with national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The campaign aims at raising awareness among the Sudanese population, particularly IDPs planning to return to their areas of origin, on the danger of mines and Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs) in the areas most affected by war.

During the campaign, twenty (20) information days on Mine Awareness are scheduled during the year 2007 throughout Sudan.

Landmines were an integral part of the 22 years of the North-South conflict. As a result, landmines have affected central and southern Sudan and east of Kassala near the Eritrean border. Darfur is affected by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), which comprise Abandoned Ordnances (AOs) in addition to Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs). Mines are also considered to be a threat in Sudan's borders with Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya and Uganda. Some of these mines were laid as far back as World War II.

According to UNMAO, though the problem of mines and UXOs in Sudan will take years to solve in a definite manner, significant achievements have been made. These include clearance of 1,474,030 km of roads/routes from mines; destruction of 2,581 Anti-Personnel mines and 1,150 Anti-Vehicle mines; destruction of 318,281 of Explosive Remnants of War and 225,677 of Small Arms Ammunitions.

More information on mine and UXOs in Sudan is available in the fact sheet attached.

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Landmines in Sudan

Sudan is recovering from 22 years of civil war. The two main phases of the conflict were 1955-1972 and 1983-2005. The latter phases ended with the signing of the CPA on 9 January 2005.

Landmines were an integral part of the conflict, with all the parties using significant quantities of mines to defend their positions and to disrupt the movement and operation of the other parties. The CPA agreement brings greater civilian mobility and thus greater exposure to the mine threat.

In many ways the conflict was a classic guerrilla war, with the government using landmines to protect garrison towns, and to interdict the movement of insurgents, and the rebels using landmines to interrupt government troop movement and limit access of government forces to towns. As a result landmines have affected central and southern conflict areas, and east of Kassala near the Eritrean border. Darfur is affected by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), which comprise of Abandoned Ordnance (AO) in addition to Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). The country's borders with Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya and Uganda are also considered to have a serious threat from mines, some of which were laid as far back as WWII. The true extent of landmine and ERW contamination is unknown, pending a full landmine impact survey, currently ongoing.

In this type of fast-moving warfare, records are rarely kept, and those that may exist are often inaccurate or out of date. It is therefore impossible at this stage to objectively and accurately determine the extent of the mine-contaminated area in the Sudan and the impact on the local population, although it can be safely stated that roads, services and arable land were all targeted by combatants. ERW is scattered throughout the Sudan. In addition to large amounts of abandoned ordnance, UXOs ranging from aircraft-dropped bombs to small items used by ground combatants are commonly found.

Effects of ERW on population

ERWs pose a significant threat to the people of the Sudan. In February 2005 an ammunition dump exploded in Juba, killing 39 and injuring more than 90. In North Darfur, in 2005, a child brought a hand grenade to school which was dropped by a friend, injuring at least 18 students. In Abyei in June 2006 a soldier brought a hand grenade to a local gathering, and dropped the grenade, which exploded and injured at least 27.

These are just three examples amongst many of the effect of ERWs on the people of Sudan. Ammunition dumps pose a huge risk due to the improvised nature of the storage facilities, and environmental factors, such as heat, which changes the internal dynamics of the munitions, as well as rainwater, which erodes storage facilities. Children are attracted to the shape, color and unusual shape of ERWs.

The fear landmines cause also impedes travel and transportation. Currently the return of internally displaced persons and refugees is being hindered by the threat of mines, WFP estimates that it is four times as costly to distribute food items by air than by land, whilst over 2370 victims have been reported in the last five years, a figure that is likely to be an under-reporting of the problem, due to the lack of active surveillance and distance from medical facilities.

Landmine Clearance

Mine clearance and verification, as well as verification of suspected contaminated land, is an extremely slow business. There are various ways of demining, and, depending on the terrain and conditions, ground processing equipment, detection dogs, and men undertaking clearance by hand may be employed. (The latter is known as manual clearance) Despite

significant technological and training advances in the former two methods, manual clearance is still the most certain method of ensuring an area is clear. Other constraints in Sudan include the size of the country and the logistical difficulties that brings, the harsh climate and terrain, which reduce the effectiveness of the dogs and mean that five months of the year are lost due to the rainy season in the south. However, whilst the problem of landmines and ERWs in Sudan will take years to clear, there have been significant achievements in Sudan. These include as (as of Jan 2007):

Total m² cleared: 10,202,710
 Roads/routes cleared: 1,474,030 km
 Roads assessed: 11,003 km
 Dangerous areas identified: 1,696
 Dangerous areas cleared: 602
 Anti-Personnel mines destroyed: 2,581
 Anti-Vehicle mines destroyed: 1,150
 Explosive remnants of war destroyed: 318,281
 Small Arms Ammunition destroyed: 225,677
 Mine Risk Education provided: 980,211 persons

Role of United Nations Mine Action Office (UNMAO)

To coordinate, facilitate and oversee quality assurance of all mine action activities in the Sudan. This role sees UNMAO provide technical and management advice to the National Mine Action Centre which was launched by official presidential decree in March 2006, and which has offices in Khartoum and Juba. The UNMAO also oversees overall mine action coordination, external quality assurance, fundraising and public information and project management. The Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) has been set up and is capable of receiving, displaying and analyzing data. UNMAO, in coordination with UNMIS- Public Information Office and other UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP as well as with national and international NGOs, is delivering mine risk education that includes mine awareness to the Sudanese people, especially to communities at risk. UNMAO is also tasked with conducting accident investigations and overseeing the development of victim assistance initiatives..

UNMAO has a headquarters in Khartoum, as well as a Northern Regional Mine Action Office in Kadugli and a Southern Regional Mine Action Office in Juba. There are further sub-offices in Damazine, Kassala, El Fasher, Yei, Wau, Rumbek, and Malakal.



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