



## International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

### PRESS RELEASE

On 8 December 2005, the United Nations General Assembly [declared](#) that April 4<sup>th</sup> of each year shall be observed as the *International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action*. It called for continued efforts by States, with the assistance of the United Nations and relevant organizations, to foster the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the civilian population, or an impediment to social and economic development at the national and local levels.

The Republic of the Sudan was engaged in two civil wars covering a 50 year period, Africa's longest running war. Throughout the conflicts, all parties used significant quantities of mines. As such, contamination is found in all 10 states in South Sudan, meaning that now, years after the peace agreement was signed, mines and ERW continue to impact communities by preventing them from receiving humanitarian aid and by stalling development and reconstruction.

Since arriving in country, 9 years ago, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) together with its implementing partners, and in collaboration with UNMISS, have closed 8,111 hazards, cleared and released over 1,120 km<sup>2</sup> of land, cleared 23,000 km of roads and destroyed 32,000 mines, 840,000 unexploded ordnance and over 2 million items of small ammunition in the process. We have also given Mine Risk Education to 2 million people.

UNMAS South Sudan, as part of UNMISS, has adapted its programme in South Sudan in response to the evolving needs following the current crisis. UNMAS has cleared all UNMISS Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites of UXO and continues to clear the PoC expansion areas. UNMAS also has begun clearance of Bentiu and Bor towns – including the Bor Market. This clearance is critical for the safety of civilians returning home. UNMISS and UNMAS will continue to respond to the ongoing crisis as it evolves through clearance, route verification and risk education in the areas of greatest need and as access allows.

Due to the current crisis, the focus of April 4<sup>th</sup> within South Sudan is on delivering life-saving Risk Education messages to those affected by the past and current conflict through Radio Public Service Announcements, Radio Interviews and a poster campaign. On the day itself, the National Mine Action Authority, in collaboration with UNICEF and UNMAS, is organising a Mine Risk Education quiz in schools around Juba to raise awareness amongst children, often those most at risk.

UNMAS will continue to work with UNMISS to clear contaminated areas created from past and ongoing conflicts. Although much has been accomplished by UNMAS in reducing the threat and impact of landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), there remains work to be done - 740 known hazards still exist.

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