



# MINE ACTION FACTSHEET

**4 April**

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

In December 2005, the General Assembly declared April 4 the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The declaration stemmed from recommendations by member states, who wanted to create an opportunity to sustain public awareness about the problem of landmines and explosive remnants of war and the efforts to eliminate them.



## What is Mine Action?

Mine Action is a collective term used internationally to refer to mine and explosive remnants of war clearance, Mine Risk Education, Mine Victim Assistance, destruction of mine stockpiles, and advocacy against the use of mines. It is not only about demining but also preventing death and injuries and promoting socio-economic reintegration of victims.

## What is the situation in Iraq?

Iraq is one of the most contaminated countries in the world. While there is considerable uncertainty regarding the exact figures, the Landmine Impact Survey (2004-2006) indicates that there are around 4,000 Suspected Hazardous Areas in 13 surveyed governorates, out of 18 in total. In addition, reports by Handicap International and Iraqi Ministry of Defence assess the magnitude of the contamination as follows:

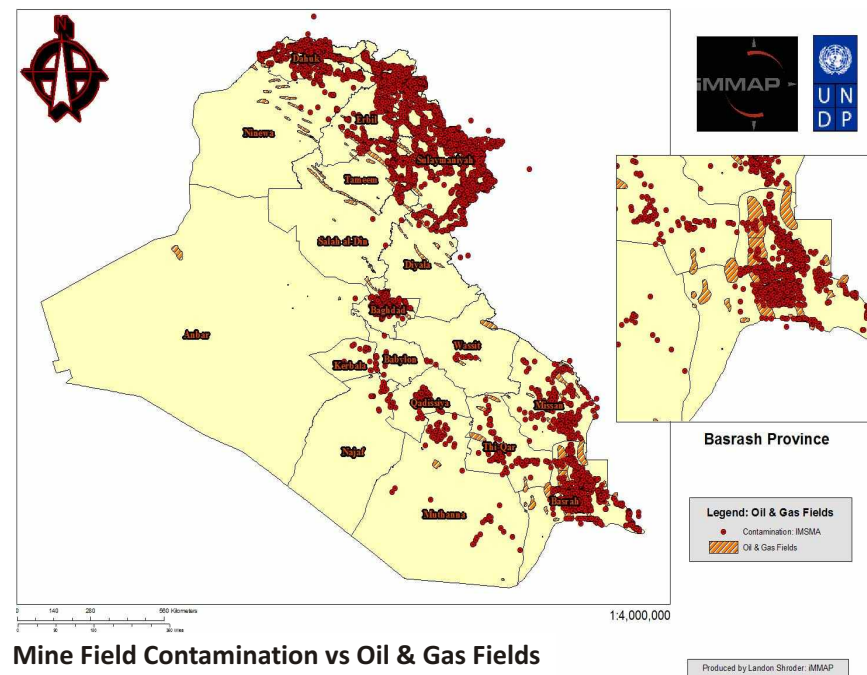
- Around 1,730 million square metres of contaminated land
- Some 20 million mines (as reported by the Ministry of Defence)
- The possibility of more than 50 million cluster bomblets
- Numerous unexploded ordnance sites
- A large number of abandoned munitions sites
- A total of over 1.6 million Iraqis affected
- Casualties (both injury and death) from failed cluster bomblets: 5,500 to 8,000

## Economic Impact of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of War

The map displays oil and gas fields, as well as known mine and explosive remnants of war contamination within a 20-kilometre radius. As one can see, this is a major impediment to the exploration and development of new oil and gas fields. In one instance, the Southern Oil Company informed UNDP that a contractor hired to explore a potential oil field discovered unexploded ordnance in the area, with the result that the firm had to suspend its activities until it is cleared.

Negative impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war is not only on oil and gas fields. Approximately 26 kilometres of the Basra railway network is contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, rendering it unsafe for use. To be able to run trains on the railway line again, 100 metres of land need to be cleared on each side of the track over the affected distance.

It is also affecting agriculture of Iraq. According to the Landmine Impact Survey (2004-2006), in the southern governorates (Basrah, Missan, Thi-Qar and Muthanana), 88 percent of the affected communities reported blocked access to areas that could

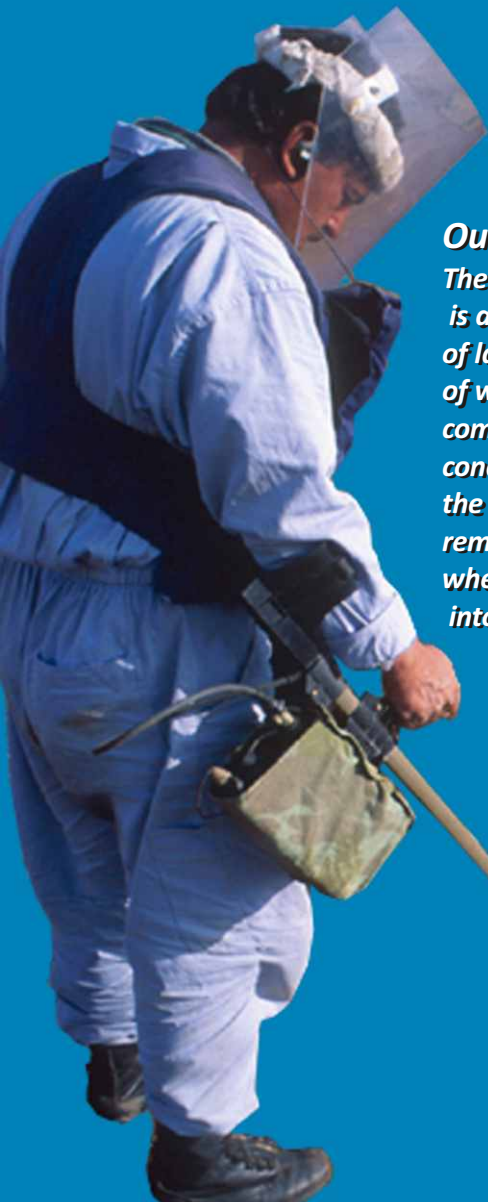


**Mine Field Contamination vs Oil & Gas Fields**

be used for irrigated crops, while 81 percent reported blocked access to areas that could be used as pasture land. The situation is similar in the south-central governorates (Babylon, Kerbala, Najaf, Qadissiya and Wassit), where 86 percent of the affected communities reported that access to pasture land and irrigated crops were blocked.

## Physical and Psychological Impact

- Around 8,000 victims with many more unreported
- 99% of all victims are civilians
- Over 25% of all victims are children
- Victims often lose their limbs, sight, or hearing resulting in lifelong disability and stigmatization
- Victims are often perceived as a burden to their families and are discriminated against by society
- Children are particularly affected when a parent or caregiver is injured or killed as they are often forced out of school and into work
- Landmines / explosive remnants of war violate nearly all children's rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



## ***Our vision***

***The vision of the United Nations is a world free from the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment, conducive to development and where the needs of mine and explosive remnants of war victims are met and where victims are fully integrated into their societies.***

### ***Institutional capacity building for long-lasting results***

In response to the fact that there is no legal framework governing Mine Action in Iraq, UNDP supported a draft Mine Action decree, which was developed as an interim solution until legislation is initiated and completed. The draft decree has been revised by the legal department of the Ministry of Environment, and it will be reviewed by the Council of Ministers soon. UNDP also provided the Iraqi authorities with a proposed national regulatory structure for Mine Action.

### ***Clearance for recovering land and restoring economy***

UNDP, together with the Danish Demining Group, has spent considerable financial and human resources since 2004 in establishing a national humanitarian Mine Action organization in Basra. It was registered as a non-governmental organisation in May 2007 under the name of the Rafidain Demining Organization. In 2008, Rafidain Demining Organization, together with Danish Demining Group, cleared 15 million square metres of land. This helped approximately 1,500 farmers and their families to return to their farm, and get 2,400 pupils back to school, by removing explosive remnants of war on the farmlands, at schools and other prioritized areas.

### ***Victim Assistance – Requiring socio economic re-integration***

Through a UNDP project starting in October 2007, three centres for orthopaedic, rehabilitation, and vocational training, which provide comprehensive victim assistance services, were restored to their full capacity. Those are the Kurdistan Organization for Rehabilitation of the Disabled (KORD) in Sulaymaniyah, Diana

Orthopaedic Limbs Centre (DPLC) in Soran District of Erbil governorate, and Prosthetic Limbs Centre, in Dahuk (PLCD).

As a result, 96 persons with disabilities benefited from income generation projects, while 34 persons received vocational training in carpentry, as blacksmiths, using computers, tailoring, and leather preparation. In addition, 34 home adaptations were done, benefitting the victims' use and access to their houses. All efforts were carried out to ensure the socio-economic reintegration of landmines and unexploded ordnance victims.

### ***Mine Risk Education – Saving children's lives***

UNICEF has supported Mine Risk Education for the last 11 years. Since 2006, around 2 million people have received Mine Risk Education in over 1,000 communities. UNICEF has trained 300 government staff and local NGOs, 2,850 teachers, 300 community volunteers, and 650 health and social workers.

### ***Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, also known as Ottawa Convention***

On 15 August 2007, Iraq acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and became its 155th State Party. The treaty entered into force in the country on 1 February 2008. Despite being given just a few months for its preparation after taking over Mine Action responsibility in April 2008, the Ministry of Environment was able to submit, with the support of UNDP and UNICEF, its first Article 7 Transparency Report by a 31 July 2008 deadline. It thus completed Iraq's first obligation under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty.