

UNMAS Iraq gender and diversity mainstreaming initiatives

In alignment with UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, UNMAS Iraq is continuously committed to mainstreaming gender into mine action activities. The aim is to respond to country-specific needs in line with the United Nations Gender in Mine Action Guidelines. UNMAS Iraq has prioritized gender mainstreaming since inception, integrating it into both internal and external activities. The mainstreaming expanded beyond project-level integration, incorporating gender-responsive practices into core systems and processes like recruitment, procurement, communications, grants and capacity building.

- **Technical Support to the Government of Iraq (GoI)**

Since 2018, UNMAS has trained 530 women from the Ministry of Interior (MoI), and Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) in a range of mine action topics, such as explosive hazard first responder (EHFR), EHFR Train The Trainers (T3), explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)/improvised explosive device disposal (IEDD), IED awareness and Device Scene Investigation Management (DSIM) and DSIM T3.

- **Explosive Hazard Management (EHM)**

Mine action is traditionally a male-dominated sector. UNMAS Iraq is challenging gender norms by creating mixed-gender clearance teams and by September 2023 has achieved 28% women within UNMAS Iraq's implementing partners. It is important to know that there were a few women staff within the clearance teams before UNMAS Iraq's initiative model of partnership.

In 2020, UNMAS Iraq presented the partnership model, which aims to create sustainable national non-governmental organizations (NNGOs) that can effectively and independently engage in needs-based EHM. Gender mainstreaming initiatives and efforts are being implemented against eight different capacities within the EHM partnership grants, including Management, Programmatic, Operational, Support, Quality Management, Leadership, Risk Management, and Resource Mobilization. UNMAS Iraq's efforts in advancing women's empowerment through the partnership model has resulted in several women staff members obtaining managerial positions, operational, and support functional roles. One woman reached the level of team leader within a technical team with one of the NNGOs. She now has all the required knowledge, skills, and experience to fill the post as team leader. Prior to engaging the national NNGOs in the partnership model, women were occupying limited roles like educators in EORE teams or as admin staff. Thus, UNMAS Iraq through the partnership model set a condition to increase the percentage of women in NNGOs to 25% in all functions with a focus on increasing the women's capacity and skills to enable them to compete in new roles.

- **Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE)**

Since 2016, UNMAS Iraq Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) teams have targeted 1,542,774 beneficiaries including 208,805 women, 528,946 girls, 600,394 boys, and 208,212 men. The EORE activities, approaches and tools ensure that the appropriate messages are tailored to the needs of the different age and sex groups, taking into consideration the social norms and values of the communities.

- **Gender and Diversity toolkits:** UNMAS Iraq developed a toolkit that provides practical tools to assist its implementing partners to effectively mainstream gender and diversity into mine action programs as appropriate and necessary.
- **Women in Mine Action Products:**
 - UNMAS Iraq published the book, "**My Sinjar Reflections**", which contains personal stories told by the former members of the mixed-gender clearance teams in Sinjar, Iraq. In the book, there are many stories of women, thoughts, struggles, and challenges they face as they work to clear their former villages from explosive ordnance. [Link](#)
 - **Gender Drama – Safe Home:** An online, six-episode TV series about a young Iraqi woman working with a demining company as a searcher, as she navigates the challenges she faces from her friends, family, and society. [Link](#)
 - **Recovering from Da'esh: Women at the Front Lines:** A documentary featuring the journey of two women deminers working with UNMAS Iraq implementing partners in Sinjar and Mosul. The film complemented a Netherlands-sponsored socio-economic survey conducted by UNMAS Iraq. [Link](#)
 - **The Socio-Economic Impact Survey** conducted by UNMAS Iraq in Ninewa Governorate in 2021 assessed the effects of women's employment in non-traditional mine action roles, focusing on empowerment. The study included 176 participants, with 41 women in the mine action sector. The results showed increased family support (from 34% to 66%), high community acceptance (88%), and improved self-perception, confidence, decision-making, and economic empowerment (93%) among women working in mine action. [Link](#)
 - UNMAS Iraq consistently showcases how promotion of women in mine action breaks barriers and gender stereotypes through case studies and sharing stories on the various social media platforms.

Gender Mainstreaming Events

- UNMAS Iraq conducted several events and workshops to advocate for women's participation in mine action and to discuss challenges, with GOI, international NGOs, and UN entities.
- UNMAS Iraq promotes gender equality in mine action and believes that it cannot be achieved without ending violence against women. For this, in 2022, UNMAS Iraq participated in the event of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence by inviting a woman searcher working with UNMAS Iraq's implementing partner to talk about her experience after joining the mine action sector.
- UNMAS Iraq took part in the organization of the International Woman's Day event in 2023 alongside other UN agencies. During the event, the Government of Iraq launched its National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023-2030, with special focus on the importance of women's political participation, protection of women and girls, economic empowerment, and climate change.
- UNMAS Iraq delivered a one-day gender workshop in Baghdad for 18 women officers from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence, and the Directorate for Mine Action. The workshop aimed to increase awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in mine action.