



UNMAS Iraq ‘Clearance Mission’ Seen as ‘Tipping Point’ Between Past Conflict and a Normal Future

Kuwait City, 13 February 2018— Lives and livelihoods in Iraq’s liberated areas are being restored at long last

In Fallujah, as many as 1,800 vehicles and 100 pedestrians per hour can cross the re-opened ‘new bridge’ linking Baghdad with Al-Anbar Province. The fibre optic cable connecting more than 3,000 customers with Baghdad has been restored. The Jadidah fuel station, which had been closed for three years, now pumps an average of more than 31,000 litres for 300 vehicles per day.

In Mosul, the Al Qaysoor Water Treatment Plant has resumed providing clean and safe water to more than 300,000 customers across 34 service areas. The High Court can access deeds to validate land claims of residents returning to Ninewa Province. Valuable medical equipment, removed for safekeeping, awaits rehabilitation of a hospital in Mosul.

None of this progress would have been possible without infrastructure first being cleared of the explosive threats posed by debris of past conflicts and devices left by retreating ISIL forces, thus allowing the Government of Iraq, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Community to carry out the necessary rehabilitation work.

“We had almost lost all hope,” said Mr. Ali, manager of the Jadidah fuel station, speaking for its 20 employees. “We expected that the station would be blown up,” and it might well have been. United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)-directed teams safely removed 34 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) weighing a total of 435 kg from the station premises. “You (UNMAS) gave us our jobs back,” he said.

“We eliminate threats along roads, under bridges, from power and water plants, from schools, from critical infrastructure, so that those displaced by conflict can return to their homes, begin again to work, to educate their children, to contribute to society, to live a normal life,” said Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, prior to the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq.

Lodhammar says conference outcomes will help UNMAS to set priorities working in collaboration with the Government and other agencies supporting Iraq’s reconstruction. All infrastructure is important, but the sequencing of clearance missions itself is complex and the UNMAS top priority, Lodhammar says. “What comes first on our list in turn affects all other rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts ‘downstream’,” he says. “So, we always begin with a joint-assessment to establish our priorities.”

He cites the current UNMAS work to clear Fallujah’s power grid serving two areas outside of the city. As of December 2017, UNMAS-directed teams had searched nearly 34 km² along power lines and cleared 580 explosive devices. When the UNMAS work finishes, repair crews can begin restoring power to as many as 60,000 people and seven schools.

UNMAS-directed partners working at the community level, village level, even the ‘well level’ make a difference on a daily basis, Lodhammar says.

In Al Bokald, villagers spoke of the ground as their enemy. “We could not walk for fear that something would explode in our faces,” said one. Today, with explosive devices cleared, 20 families again have access to a well and water for their own needs and to grow their crops.

The story confirms for Lodhammar the need, primacy and urgency of the clearance mission as shared by all agencies engaged in Iraq’s reconstruction. “We have to do our job, safely, quickly and well so others can do theirs.”

In 2018, the mine action sector requires 216 million USD to respond to the rehabilitation efforts of retaken areas and critical needs in access to basic and municipal services, education and health of returning civilians. In the Reconstruction and Development Framework (RDF) presented at the Kuwait Conference, the Government of Iraq



will prioritize the clearance of explosive hazards to enable the reconstruction of Iraq and support of accountable governance, reconciliation and peace building, social and human development and economic development.

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