

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 16

Issue 3 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 31

October 2012

Country Profile: South Sudan

CISR JOURNAL

James Madison University

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Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2012) "Country Profile: South Sudan," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 16 : Iss. 3 , Article 31.

Available at: <http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol16/iss3/31>

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Country Profile: South Sudan

Two decades of fighting between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement in southern Sudan ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005. The agreement allowed for a referendum, by which residents of southern Sudan voted for independence in July 2011, creating the country of South Sudan.¹

Contamination Overview

Along with the call for a referendum, the CPA established mine action programs in Sudan, including southern Sudan to address the landmines laid by both sides during the civil war (1983–2005). The war left each of what are now South Sudan's 10 states contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war.² Mines remain along South Sudan's borders with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.^{3,4} While the states of Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei and Upper Nile are the most affected, severe flooding and ongoing security dilemmas prevent workers from determining the full extent of mine contamination.⁴ Land disputes have resulted in a new ERW threat in the states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity.⁴ Even though the CPA-established programs helped eliminate some of the mines, the number of victims from mines/ERW has increased in recent years, indicating that much work remains.

The Southern Sudan Demining Authority was created under the United Nations Agency for Mine Action Capacity Building and Programme Development in South Sudan. It has since been replaced by the South Sudan Mine Action Authority. Prior to the split, this agency, along with Sudan's National Mine Action Authority, provided citizens with access to mine risk education and victim assistance programs and reopened more than 45,000 km (27,962 mi) of roads.³ SSMAA's international demining partners include DanChurchAid, Danish Demining Group, MAG (Mines Advisory Group) and Norwegian People's Aid. Other organizations working in South Sudan include commercial demining companies such as Mechem, MineTech International, The Development Initiative, and national demining operators such as the Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service. In addition, organizations providing MRE, such as MAG and Handicap International, are working in South Sudan.^{3,4} In fiscal year 2011, the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) granted a total of US\$2.8 million to MAG, NPA, *Fondation Suisse de Déminage* (Swiss

Foundation for Mine Action) and the African Great Lakes Regional Centre on Small Arms in Nairobi for the removal and destruction of landmines and the reduction of small arms/light weapons in South Sudan.⁵

Casualties

Even with recent progress, casualties from landmines and ERW remain high. According to the *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*, between 1964 and 2011, 4,791 casualties (1,340 killed; 3,451 injured) were reported.⁴ As of May 2012, 4,481 total casualties from landmines/ERW were reported.⁶ However, South Sudan's limited communications infrastructure and health facilities mean that victims often go unidentified.⁶ In addition to under-reporting, the threat that landmines pose in high-traffic areas also deters clearance initiatives in South Sudan. Unlike other contaminated countries where the threat is often away from pedestrian traffic, ERW in South Sudan are located on heavily-traveled bridges and roads.⁷ Uncleared pedestrian pathways and roads prevent humanitarian aid and clearance operations from accessing the most affected areas of the country. The United Nations Mine Action Service reports that "each year, people are maimed and killed in accidents ...and development and reconstruction is stalled due to the threat of landmines."^{6,7} In addition, "the socio-economic cost of landmines and ERW in terms of agricultural production, food security ...and freedom of movement is incalculable," resulting in food shortages and dire economic situations.⁶

Future MRE and Demining Programs

The SSMAA has nine MRE teams and states that it has delivered risk education to more than 1.3 million people. International and national organizations involved in mine action in South Sudan, including MAG, Association for Aid and Relief Japan, Operation Save Innocent Lives, Operation Landmine Action and Victims Support, Christian Recovery and Development Agency, and Unity and Cultural Development Centre, continue to develop projects designed to increase levels of victim assistance and MRE. Currently, MRE is delivered through media such as radio, television and mobile phones.⁸

Although MRE is available in some school districts, the SSMAA hopes to mainstream MRE under the Ministry of Education by the end of 2016. Implementing MRE into the school curriculum remains difficult since it is not a universally supported goal, and implementation cost estimates total US\$1 million.⁸ MRE efforts continue to focus on internally displaced persons and other at-risk populations. While new victim assistance programs in the form of job training and psychosocial support have been proposed, UNMAS suggests that the combined cost for all of the programs to be implemented in the near future will require additional funding of US\$15 million.⁶

~ Kathleen Sensabaugh, CISR staff

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Figure 1. South Sudan
Figure courtesy of CIA World Factbook.

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Endnotes

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[TOP OF PAGE](#)

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