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Oil-for-Food Programme in Iraq

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Oil-for-Food Programme in Iraq

The Oil-for-Food Programme was established in April 1995 as a temporary measure to ease the unintended consequences of UN sanctions on Iraq's civilian population. The first Iraqi oil sold under the programme to pay for humanitarian supplies was exported in December 1996, and the first shipments of food arrived in March 1997. The Oil-for-Food Programme now covers 24 sectors of need. It has prevented the further degradation of public services and infrastructure and has made a significant difference in the humanitarian situation nationwide.

by Ian Steele, *United Nations Office of the Iraq Programme*

Landmine surveys and mine clearance operations funded by the United Nations Oil-for-Food Programme since 1998 have paved the way for thousands of Iraqis in the three northern governorates to re-establish their farming and grazing lands and restore infrastructure vital to their economic progress.

Survey teams, managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), found that one in every five people in the three northern governorates of Iraq lives in a community with a risk of death or injury from unexploded mines and other ordnance. The surveyors identified 3,444 minefields and 1,096 mine-affected villages during landmine mapping operations undertaken between 1997 and 2000. An extensive Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) conducted in Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah governorates from February 2001 to April 2002 also shows that 24 of the 25 districts in the northern governorates and some 740,000 people are impacted by landmines.



Landmine surveys and clearance operations funded by the Oil-for-Food Programme have enabled thousands of Iraqis in three northern governorates to re-establish farming and grazing lands and restore vital infrastructure. c/o *Sonia Dumont, UNOHCI/OIP Oil-for-Food Programme*

The data that has been gathered is being used to guide strategic demining operations and mine risk education (MRE), with the following results:

- Landmine accidents have declined.
- Community safety and confidence to pursue normal activity in cleared areas has been restored.

- Crop and livestock production in cleared areas has increased.

The UNOPS survey found that a total of 339 square kilometers (almost one percent of the three northern governorates) contain landmines and almost 94 percent of the identified areas contain anti-personnel mines as well as other pieces of UXO. The minefields were laid at various times throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Since 1998, UNOPS has worked with local deminers who have been trained in mine clearance techniques, including the use of detectors, mechanical flailing machines and mine-sniffing dogs. Local demining non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were established in mid-2002 to ensure sustainable capacity.

Since 1998, the UNOPS Mine Action Programme has cleared some 76,500 mines from 9.1 million square metres of land, of which 3.95 million square metres have already been returned to the local population for productive use. Elsewhere, communities remain restricted in their ability to move safely from place to place, to farm their land and tend livestock, and to collect fuelwood and drinking water for their homes in safety.

In addition to clearance operations, the programme has worked with some 2,000 mine accident and war victims, providing minor and major surgery, prostheses for lost limbs, and other rehabilitation services. Tens of thousands of women and children have received MRE that trains them to navigate their environment more safely and to report—but not touch—unfamiliar objects. Mined areas that have been identified but not yet cleared are marked with warning signs.



Puppet shows are used to reinforce MRE for young children and communities. This programme in the village of Shekhan in Erbil is conducted by the Kurdistan Organization for Mine Awareness with support from UNOPS. *c/o Munir Khorani, UNOHCI/OIP Oil-for-Food Programme*

The UN Office of the Iraq Programme has invested about \$110 million (U.S.) in the mine action programme for northern Iraq since 1998. Please visit <http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/index.html> for more information.

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