

Thousands of Iraqis to Benefit from Training on Dangers of Guns

Sulimaniyah, 20 January 2010. Mine Advisory Group (MAG) and UNICEF have commenced a training on the dangers of small arms and weapons in Iraq. Teachers from 60 schools in Diyala and Kirkuk governorates, staff from community-based organizations in Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, and Diyala, and youth are among those receiving information to provide to 12,000 community members on the dangers guns pose to the safety and well-being of children and young people.



Small arms casualties in Iraq are alarming. Although numbers are not available for the whole country, in 2008 the Kirkuk Provincial Department of Health alone recorded 313 deaths and 975 injuries of mostly children and youth as a result of accidental gunfire.

Mufleh Talouzi, Mine Advisory Group Iraq's Country Programme Manager, said: "In the 16 years since MAG has been working here our teams have seen too many times how children's natural curiosity and reduced sense of risk can be deadly."

Children are particularly at risk due to the large number of guns and easy access to them throughout Iraq. Many households own one gun and some much more. In addition, with the popularity of toy guns and weapons among children, accidents are occurring when a child swaps a pretend weapon for a real one without realizing it and knowing the dangers.

UNICEF Iraq Representative, Sikander Khan, stated "This training is a critical start to raise awareness of how the widespread presence of guns and other light arms in Iraq threaten the safety and lives of Iraqi children. By doing so, we hope needless child deaths will be avoided in the future".

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For more information on MAG's work in Iraq, see www.maginternational.org/iraq.

UNICEF

UNICEF is present in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

MAG

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