On the 15th of March, 2013, Abbas took his family’s cattle to graze in the fields of south Rumaila district in Basra. While he was walking he spotted a metal object and picked it up out of curiosity, not knowing that what he had in his hands was part of a cluster bomb. The bomb exploded in his face with severe consequences; he lost both hands, his right eye and his left leg was badly injured and may require amputation.

ABBAS ABDUL-AMEER, 12, BASRA

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HUDA HASSAN SHLASH, 10, BASRA

Hassan Shlash holds the only picture of his ten year old daughter, Huda, at the location where she died after picking up a cluster bomb from the ground. Hassan says his daughter was herding the family’s sheep when she found the bomb. “It must have been half buried in the ground. She found it and it exploded.”

Hassan first thought they were being attacked from the air but when he went outside he saw smoke about 100 meters from the house. “I ran to where the smoke was coming from. I found my daughter lying on the ground, still alive. But she died a couple of minutes later.” Hassan had worked in clearing mines before, “I had destroyed some myself, I know what a bomb looks like. My daughter didn’t.”

TARIQ MOHAMMED NASER, 45, SULAYMANIYAH

Tariq Mohammed Naser, from Maloma village in Sulaimaniyah, is a father of five children, three boys and two girls. Tariq says he is one of the luckiest and unluckiest people in Iraq. He has lost two legs and his left eye in two separate mine accidents. “I remember those days when I went to work in the land so I could support my family. Because the living conditions were so difficult at that time, I had to go work in those dangerous areas”.

Today, all Tariq has for support is his pension. “I can’t do anything anymore. I am not able to work and my family depends on my pension to live.” Tariq says if they had Community Safety Wardens in those days he might never had these accidents.

When armed conflict comes to an end, combatants often leave behind landmines, ordnance and unexploded weapons like cluster bombs and grenades. They all pose a major threat to civilians, particularly children who are drawn to play with unfamiliar objects.

In Iraq, years of war and internal conflict has left a dangerous legacy of landmines and unexploded ordinance. The widespread contamination is one of the largest in the world, with contaminated sites covering about 1,730 km$^2$ affecting agricultural areas, major oil infrastructure projects and border areas with Iran.

In 2012, 50 mine, cluster munition and explosive remnants of war-related incidents were reported in Iraq, with almost half of the victims being children under the age of 18.

The United Nation’s mine action team supporting the Government of Iraq is led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and includes the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), in addition to international and local NGOs.
Dangerous Legacy
the impact of landmines and remnants of war on Iraqis

**Miftin Lafta, 64, Missan**
Miftin Lafta is a shepherd from Al-Nisayer village in Missan. He lost his leg when he stumbled over a mine while herding his sheep in al-Teeb area near the Iranian border. He has not been able to work since the incident.

*(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)*

**Jabar Karim, 13, Basra**
Jabar was 11 years old when he found a piece of a cluster bomb. He was playing outside his house, picked up the bright yellow bomblet and it exploded in his face. Jabar lost his eyesight and his face was badly injured. Since the accident, Jabar is afraid of everything. Loud noises scare him, as do cars, and when he moves from one room to the next he wants to be accompanied. As a result he, spends his time in the living room listening to the television.

Jabar still has a piece of the cluster fragment in his neck, which causes pain. He hopes that one day there will be a treatment that will make him see again.

*(photo and profile by UNDP Iraq)*

**Zakaria Jubrail, 7, Dohuk**
"My name is Zakaria, I am 7 years old. I and my friends were playing football in the village on 18th March 2012. My friend Qais Sabir accidentally touched a mine. The explosion killed Qais and I was injured in my left leg. They took me to the hospital and did surgery on me. Now my leg is not straight and it swells sometimes. It is also painful during winter. I can no longer play football with my friends and I can't walk for long distances. It makes me angry and sad when my friends say 'your leg is crooked'. I get mad at them."

Zakaria Jubrail Fatah, Rizgari village, Dohuk.

*(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)*

**Mahdy Othman, 39, Sulaymaniyyah**
Mahdy Othman is a farmer from Amora village, Sulaymaniyyah, in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Mahdy lost his leg in a mine accident while he was trying to retrieve his horse, which had wandered into a minefield. "I wish that never happened," says Mahdy, "I can't be myself any more. But thank God for everything, I'm still alive."

Today Mahdy is a volunteer Community Safety Warden, supported by the Community Based Risk Education project run by Handicap International, and supported by UNICEF. Mahdy volunteered for the project to make sure that no one in his community goes through the experience he had to go through.

*(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)*
Dangerous Legacy
the impact of landmines and remnants of war on Iraqis

HUSSEIN ALI, 8, DOHU

“I was 8 years old; my friend handled a mine when we were playing. The mine went off and he died. My friend Zakaria and I got injured. They took me to the hospital and removed the fragments from my leg. I can’t play like others, and it hurts me during winter because the roads in our village are muddy and not paved. What bothers me most is that I was delayed one year at school. I sometimes feel very sad because I can’t play, and it hurts me a lot during cold season.”

Hussein Ali Rashid, Rizgari village, Dohuk.

(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)

SABEEH KHANJER, 55, MISSAN

Sabeeh Khanjer lost his leg in a mine explosion in Al-Teeb in Missan near the Iranian border. Sabeeh is a shepherd; he has not been able to get back to work since the mine accident. UNICEF’s partner Handicap International provides support to mine victims such as Sabeeh.

(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)

AYUB YOUNIS, 18, DOHU

On a Friday afternoon in January 2011, Ayub Yonis went out walking to the village mosque to pray. He had only walked a couple of meters from his front door when he stepped on a missile that exploded under his foot. Ayub was severely injured and his left leg had to be amputated. He was 17 years old preparing to graduate from high-school that year.

Ayub’s town, Bardarash in Dohuk, is an area where minefields are known to exist near an old military station. While some work has been done in 2008 to clear the minefields located close to the nearby hills and villages, the local population says that the minefields were not completely cleared and every now and then some mines or missiles are exposed and drift down the hills into the village streets during heavy rains.

(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)

IBRAHIM QADER ALI, 45, & QADER ALI, 88, SULAYMANYIAD

Ibrahim, left, sits with his father at their home in Kani Manga village in Sulaymaniya. Ibrahim lost his leg when he was six years old from a mine accident while taking care of his family’s sheep. He says his life has been full of challenges since then.

Some years later, Ibrahim’s father, Qader, lost his right leg during a mine accident while collecting wood for fire. Qader says that because of their situation they don’t go out much or participate in village life. But Ibrahim is happy to be involved in UNICEF’s Mine Risk Education efforts, “We want to be involved more in the community based risk education project, I hope my community will benefit from it and no one will suffer like me and my father.”

(profile and photo provided by UNICEF’s implementing partner Handicap International)
UNICEF’s Quick Impact Project Provides Iraqi Children with Safe Spaces to Play

Nawand village sits high in the mountains of Iraq’s Kurdistan Region. As a result of being on the frontline of the Iraq-Iran war, it became surrounded by 14 minefields. To reduce the risk these mines to the community, The Community Based Risk Education project started working in the area through a network of volunteer Community Safety Wardens to spread safety messages and educate the village community about the risks.

But many parents in the village still feared for the safety of their children as there were no secure areas for children to play in. To address this issue, the community was encouraged to develop a proposal to build a safe space for children inside the village.

With support from UNICEF and Handicap International, Nawand’s dream for a safe playground for children was realized in early 2013 through the UN’s Quick Impact Project fund. “We now have to come and get our children from the playground because they won’t come home for dinner” says Muzafar Osman Qadir, Nawand’s community safety warden, “But we know they are safe.”

Many of the injuries you read about in this pamphlet were caused by unexploded remnants of war, specifically parts of cluster bombs.

In 1991, cluster-bombs containing over 50 million sub-munitions were used in Iraq. It is estimated that almost one third of them, or around 16 million sub-munitions, failed to detonate. They form a continued hazard to this day.

Children see the bright yellow colour of Blu97 sub-munitions (right in the adjacent photograph) or the round Blu61 (left) and are tempted to pick them up, often with devastating consequences. Make sure you are informed about these menaces and inform the people around you.

Dhiya’s first accident involving a piece of a cluster bomb was when he was 12. He was on his way to school when he spotted a bright yellow stick in the ground. He tried to pick it up not knowing it was a bomblet. It exploded as he touched it costing him an eye and his left leg below the knee.

His second accident was in 2003 as he was going to look for work. This time he saw a round metal ball which he attempted to pick up when it exploded causing him to lose his right hand.

Still, the accidents didn’t stop Dhiya from studying to become an accountant and teaching himself how to use a computer. He is a father of three and says he desperately needs work. He has taught himself to write with his left hand and passes most of his time reading and re-reading the accountancy books he used when he was studying.

(profile and photo by UNDP Iraq)