

Iraq

FSD clears improvised explosive devices and other explosive remnants of war so that the displaced population can return to their villages.

FSD is implementing an Explosive Ordnance (EO) survey and clearance project in areas of central and northern Iraq recently liberated from ISIS. The FSD project started with the mobilisation phase in October 2015; clearance and survey operations commenced in March 2016.

The project aims to reduce the threat from EO in liberated areas to allow the safe return of internally displaced people to their communities. In this instance EO specifically refers to IEDs being employed in the role of improvised landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), resulting from the occupation of large areas of Iraq by ISIS and the subsequent military operations by Iraqi Security Forces, Peshmerga and Coalition forces required to remove ISIS.

ISIS laid IEDs, as Victim Operated improvised landmines, in staggering numbers as part of their defensive plan, not only in minefield style obstacle belts but also as booby traps in houses and buildings in occupied villages. Once the security situation has normalised, ERW becomes a significant concern and the risks from IEDs and UXO becomes a significant blockage to the return of displaced people to their homes and livelihoods.

The operating conditions are quite challenging. Technical challenges arise from the improvised nature of the explosive devices, the sheer numbers involved and the fact that FSD is breaking into a relatively new field of humanitarian mine action – clearance of Improvised Minefields. The environment also poses challenges - with temperatures well into the 40s during 7 months of the year, cold and wet weather during the winter and a lack of infrastructure due to the conflict. While ISIS was mostly defeated in 2017, there is a continued security threat of insurgency type attacks in many parts of the country.

Since March 2016, FSD has primarily worked in the Governorates of Kirkuk (Daquq and Kirkuk Districts), Erbil (Makhmur District) and Nineveh (Al-Hamdaniya District) and Survey and Clearance Operations were started in South Mosul District in 2018. Results, so far, have been encouraging – buildings and houses have been cleared for their former inhabitants, schools and other community buildings have been made safe for use and large areas of previously contaminated pasture land, and cropland has been released to farmers. FSD has removed more than 13,500 explosive hazards (IED's and UXO) and cleared over 6.5 million square meters since clearance operations commenced. FSD has also provided over 2000 Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) sessions to approximately 36000 men, women, boys and girls in Mosul District.