



UNMAS Somalia

Case Study - DHS MPR#4

Somali women are a resilient force in the face of explosive hazards

Aged 36, Zahra Said Hassan is a dedicated and inspiring female explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operator with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) multi-skilled team (MST) Operating in Hirshabelle State, Somalia. Zahra hails from one of the native tribes and is a member of explosive threat mitigation project in support of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia.

Before joining the team as EOD operator, Zahra served as an explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) facilitator for two years. As the only female in a team of eight, she represents not only women in her community but also her entire clan, Playing a vital role in facilitating access, mobility, and the reach of humanitarian efforts.

Notably, Zahra is passionate about her role and is a committed team player. Like many women and single mothers, she balances multiple responsibilities, often needing to multitask and delegate. Zahra's mother is her pillar of strength, Stepping in as a caregiver for Zahra's son when she travels for assignments. With her son now enrolled in primary school, Zahra pays his tuition and holds high hopes for his future.

Zahra's team regards her as a self-driven, motivated and hardworking individual who is always willing and ready to deliver. She inspires them with her constant reminder that *'everything is possible'*. Reflecting on her role Zahra says, *"I have gained valuable knowledge and skills to help reduce explosive hazards in my country. As a single mother, I generate an income to support my family. I want to continue to keep my people safe while also supporting my family"*.

Zahra's team was deployed to the Buloburte district of Hiran region, tasked with conducting non-technical survey (NTS) and delivering awareness messages to the EO affected communities. Noteworthy, clearing the heavily contaminated area near Berdiga village was one of the remarkable activity that the team executed in the district. After an extensive and exhausting surface search, Zahra and her colleagues detected and removed 916 explosive remnants of war, covering 70,000 square meter of land. They also provided explosive ordnance risk education to 130 local residents including 25 girls, 93 boys, 3 women and 9 men. By the end October 2024, the recovered devices had been safely handed over to the Somalia National Armed Forces (SNAF) in Buloburte district.

The SNAF Commander had praises for the UNMAS and contracted team for their efforts, highlighting the significance of mitigating the threats of explosive hazards and contributing to the region's peace-building process.

The SNAF Commander also acknowledged the team's diversity in nationality and gender, stating, *"it is a step forward in Somalia, to see*



EOD operator Zahra with her teammates are ready for coordination meeting with district administration of Buloburte



UNMAS team presenting a banner in support of EO awareness messages during EORE session with children in rural area of Buloburte district



Zahra recording details of the newly found EO near Berdiga village

our women contributing to national security". Regarding the cleared area, the Commander announced plans to build additional military barracks and administrative facilities for SNAF units as well as enhance capabilities of regional security forces.

"What inspires me is the opportunity to constantly learn new things while creating a safe pathway for our community and ensuring children to play safely. I hope that, through our efforts, Somalia will one day become a safe and thriving environment with improved development and free of challenges," Said by Zahra.

Mr. Arale, a member of the Buloburte local authority, said, *"This is the most talented lady I have ever seen. Since 2017, I have witnessed Zahra working in a team predominantly composed of men travelling to various locations. Her continued presence on the team demonstrates that she is a hard-working woman and a role model for other Somali women."*



Explosive devices which were found and safely removed by Zahra's team to the EO collecting point

UNMAS Programme in Somalia and its implementing partner, Demineco Human Services (DHS), remain committed to further mitigating the threat posed by explosive ordnances through survey, land clearance, and providing the requisite awareness to local communities. Explosive threat mitigation through women's empowerment not only foster gender equality, but also as a strong foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world, compatible with the SDG 5 objectives through attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.