



# WORLD WITHOUT MINES NEWSLETTER

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PROJECT: SOUTH SUDAN



Photo: DanChurchAid

Raising risk awareness in rural areas saves lives.

## „Open your eyes!“

The south of Sudan is heavily contaminated with explosive remnants of war. World Without Mines is joining forces with DanChurchAid to raise awareness about this deadly hazard – and one way they are doing this is through a pop song.

Juma Gardi Thomas works outside the capital city of South Sudan, Juba, at the waste dump near Jebel Kujur. Here, the 57-year-old searches among the heaps of rubbish that are full of contaminants such as arsenic, lead and chromium, for materials that can be recovered and sold. The little money he earns this way goes to support his wife and ten children.

Juma has not been in this business for long. He used to be a soldier – in a country that is constantly being shaken by civil



Photo: DanChurchAid

Juma Gardi Thomas, refuse collector, now also acts as the contact person for reporting explosive remnants of war.

wars. With only one major interruption, Sudan was continuously at war for fifty years. The fighting finally ceased in 2011, when Sudan attained independence. But, just two years later, opposition broke out between the Sudanese president and vice-president. The armed conflicts still persist. As a consequence of this endless warring, large areas of the country are contaminated with land mines, grenades and other munition.

**70 victims every year**

As a war veteran who is very familiar with the region, Juma Gardi Thomas knows that numerous troops not only had their living quarters in the vicinity of the waste dump, but also their munitions depots, and he is very aware of what this means for him and the other approximately one thousand refuse collectors working at the dump: explosive remnants of war are scattered everywhere here. Children who discover them treat them as toys, while the refuse collectors keep what they find and sell it.

World Without Mines therefore decided to work to educate people in these situations about of the deadly hazard in their midst. It's a mission of great urgency: in the last ten years, there have been 700 casualties of the remnants of war in South Sudan. In March 2015 alone, seven people died when they set a fire to help clear a piece of land, not knowing that a munitions depot was hidden just below the surface. In April of last year, four little boys were killed while they were playing with a mine they had found near the marketplace in the capital city, Juba. The risk awareness and education campaign is being carried out by our partner organisation DanChurchAid, who has been



The pop band „Jay Family“ is popular among children and young people; in their song they warn of the dangers of mines and other remnants of war.



**The Republic of South Sudan**  
 South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011. Previous to this, the area was an autonomous region within Sudan from 1972 to 1983 and then again from 2005 to 2011. The civil war that erupted in mid January 2013 resulted in around 50,000 deaths and the displacement of 2.2 million people. Although a peace treaty was signed in August 2015, the country is still in unrest.

**Key information:**

- Form of government: Federal republic
- Capital city: Juba
- Official language: English
- Inhabitants: 12 million
- Size: 640,000 square kilometres
- Independence: 9 July 2011



Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, is situated on the west bank of the White Nile.

active in the area of humanitarian demining since 1999 and is very well established in the region.

**The waste dump is finally safer**

As part of their educational work, the team from DanChurchAid visited the waste dump of Jebel Kujur and happened to meet war veteran Juma Gardi Thomas – a meeting which was to prove fortuitous for both sides. Juma was able to pinpoint the likely locations of the remnants of war, so the team could move ahead with the demining effort. It also became apparent that Juma's personal interest in the matter went far beyond eliminating the leftover explosive ordnance in his immediate surroundings. Juma wanted to get involved in the risk awareness and education programme himself.

Thus, the team began preparing Juma to be a local contact person whose goal would be to keep other refuse collectors and their children from regarding the weapons as toys or as a source of potential income. The approach worked. Juma: „As soon as someone finds munition or remnants of war, they come and inform me. I then pass on the information.“ This has made life around the waste dump safer: „These people have no alternative to working here, they depend on the waste dump. But now they are at least able to recognise and respond appropriately to the hazards.“

The project in South Sudan financed by World Without Mines made it possible last year to inform 13,780 people about the hazards of remnants of war and to specially train 173 locals as field reps – like Juma Thomas. In addition, 25 reports on localities contaminated with old munition were drawn up and submitted to the UN authorities responsible.

**World Without Mines is making music.**

World Without Mines and DanChurchAid wanted to direct their risk awareness campaign particularly at young men – the target group that is hardest to reach and is therefore at greatest risk. DanChurchAid commissioned „Jay Family“, a well-known, local pop band, to write a song describing the danger of remnants of war and making people aware of the risk. World Without Mines financed production of the song. The song's refrain says „Mines are dangerous, my brothers and sisters. They are killing many people – open your eyes!“ On the International Day for Mine Awareness, 4 April 2016, the song premiered on several local radio stations, with „Jay Family“ performing live.

**OTHER PROJECTS ON RISK AWARENESS AND EDUCATION**



„Mines kill“: At sporting events we use promotion material to draw attention to the danger of mines.

**Example: Bosnia-Herzegovina**

For years we have been doing educational work in Bosnia. In cooperation with school authorities and sport associations, we address the dangers of mines and organise special events. We also conduct workshops in which the topic is treated in creative, playful ways. School children prepared and performed two theatre pieces to mark the occasion of the International Day of Mine Awareness 2015.

**SUPPORT**

**Your last will and testament can save lives**

More and more, people are looking to do good even after their lives come to an end by supporting a charitable organisation. World Without Mines helps people in mined areas to bring safety and new perspectives back into their lives. A donation gifted in your will enables children to go back to school and families to cultivate their fields again.

Would you like to know more about World Without Mines or do you have questions about wills and bequests? Our co-directors, Gabriela Fuchs and Sandra Montagne, would be happy to talk with you at your convenience, on a confidential basis (info@wom.ch or 044 241 72 30).



Demonstration in Geneva of how mines can be detected using dogs and the latest technology.

Photo: World Without Mines

## International Day for Mine Awareness

At the International Day for Mine Awareness, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) organised events in Geneva to promote knowledge about and the commitment to demining. The World Without Mines Foundation also participated.

At the Place des Nations in Geneva, a sculpture representing a gigantic chair with only three legs, created by the artist Daniel Berset, has stood for more than two decades, symbolising the tragic consequences of anti-personnel mines. On 4 April this year, it was accompanied by a series of events. Visitors could observe live demonstrations by a de-mining specialist. A mine sniffer dog wearing a technologically innovative harness was also on site to demonstrate how mined areas can now be made safe and available for the population faster and more economically than before. This project is supported by the organisations GICHD, Digger DTR and World Without Mines. Find out more in our September newsletter.



### Together against mines

In recent years, awareness about demining has been declining, along with financial support. Therefore, in advance of the International Day for Mine Awareness, the involved organisations decided to band together for a campaign named #togetheragainstmines. Photographs showing the red triangle symbolising mine danger was distributed via social media to renew interest for this important issue.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank our donors for keeping awareness of this problem alive and supporting our efforts to one day achieve a world without mines.



Photo: World Without Mines

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World Without Mines Foundation  
Badenerstrasse 16, 8004 Zurich  
Telephone +41 44 241 72 30  
info@wom.ch, www.wom.ch  
Account no. for donations: 87-415116-3



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