

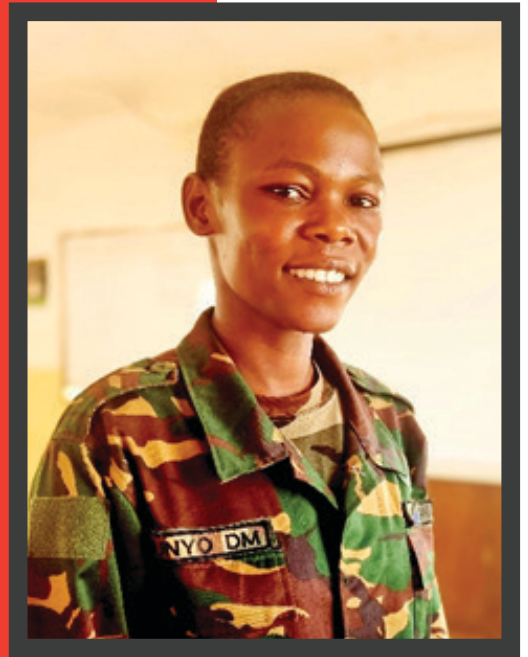
SUCCESS STORY ON PRIVATE DORICA IHUNYO

“The most effective way to do it, is to do it.”

These inspiring words from Amelia Earhart, an American aviation pioneer, are reflected in Private Dorica Ihunyo’s motivation to “protect her country and build peace on the continent”.

Though worlds and generations apart from Earhart, Private Ihunyo, a 28-year-old Tanzanian Soldier, can only be considered a pioneering woman with equal passion and dedication to her field of expertise and success.

Ihunyo, originally from Musoma, a city on the east shore of Lake Victoria, in Tanzania, grew up the daughter of farmers, yet aspired to more than her environment could offer. Looking beyond the means of her family, she knew she wanted to achieve something which contributed to the security not only of her small community and country, but to the stability of the continent she calls home. This drive motivated her to join the military in 2017.



Despite the challenges of being one of few women in the male-dominated military environment, Ihunyo thrived because she set her mind to overlook the challenges to achieve her goal of contributing to peace and security.

This drive and motivation were evident when the UNMAS training team met Private Ihunyo, in her home country of Tanzania during a pre-deployment training mission to the country. The mission, to provide context-specific Search and Detect training to elements of the future Tanzanian Battalion earmarked to deploy to the Central African Republic in January 2025, is a major priority for the Mission’s Force and aligns with the MINUSCA mandate.



The Force’s Search and Detect capacity strengthens Force protection and safety of security of peacekeepers and supports mobility and protection of civilians. However, the precedent for Search and Detect courses have been to expect 100% male participants, even though troop contributing countries (TCCs) are encouraged to nominate women to participate in such exercises.

The disparity in male against female participation during such training is due to several factors, including lack of female personnel in operational functions, cultural considerations on gender roles and responsibilities in peacekeeping or on mixed teams, or simply lack of knowledge of the possibility for women to take an active role in mine action.

It was therefore refreshing and commendable for the Tanzanian military to nominate a young ambitious female private, in the person of Private Ihunyo, for the training, and the UNMAS training team was not disappointed to meet her.

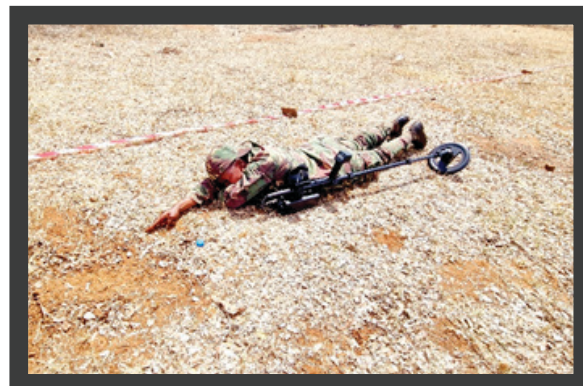
During the training, Private Ihunyo set a standard for her male colleagues, demonstrating that she was not just a placeholder. For the duration of the three-week course, from 9 to 27 September 2024, Ihunyo asserted herself by enthusiastically engaging with every aspect of the course, including the practical sessions. As the only female alongside 24 male colleagues, she did not shy away from getting the best out of each session. She followed the course with keen interest, intelligently contributing to discussions, and quickly developed the ability to apply her newly acquired knowledge in the field.

An enthusiastic learner, Ihunyo, was able to pick up new techniques and procedures and mastered the use of specialized detection equipment used by Searchers to locate buried explosive devices and frequently set an example for her teammates. All this, to the great appreciation of her trainers and the admiration of her colleagues.

It was therefore no surprise to anyone when Private Ihunyo effectively demonstrated her skills and understanding during her evaluations, showcasing her ability to expediently utilize the concepts and techniques she learned throughout the training. Private Ihunyo successfully passed the course and received her certificate of completion, validating her Search and Detection skills and knowledge.

When she deploys to the Central African Republic in January 2025, as a first-time peacekeeper and member of one of her battalion's Search and Detect Teams, she will be one of the very few female peacekeepers to do so, achieving not only that but also her personal ambition to "be an ambassador and a role model for future female candidates, inspiring others with my dedication and achievements".

Private Dorica Ihunyo aspires to someday achieve the rank of Master Sergeant, and no one who has met or worked with her can doubt that it is in her future because... she is doing it.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Achieving gender parity, including in operational positions, is a recommendation under the United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes.
- The MINUSCA Force Search and Detect teams are key assets supporting Force Protection, Mobility and Protection of Civilians, especially in the West of the country where mines pose a threat to peacekeepers and civilians since 2020.
- Deploying mixed gender teams can be of great advantage, when the context allows.