

Take the plunge, abseil for MAG!

On Saturday 2 April 2005 MAG supporters will be taking part in a 100ft abseil at Aston Villa FC's stadium in Birmingham to raise at least £15,000 to support MAG's mine clearance work. If you want to take part in this exciting event, and would like to find out more, contact MAG before 31 March to reserve your place.

Run for MAG

Join the MAG team and take part in the annual Great Manchester Run on Sunday 22 May 2005 - a 10km run through the heart of Manchester. We'll provide sponsor forms, a MAG T-shirt and invitations to the post-race reception at a city-centre venue. The event will sell out quickly so contact MAG now to find out more.

Dive for mines!

If a 100ft abseil isn't high enough, how about a 10,000ft skydive? No experience is necessary but nerves of steel are essential. Registration fee and minimum sponsorship required. Contact MAG to find out about a skydive near you.

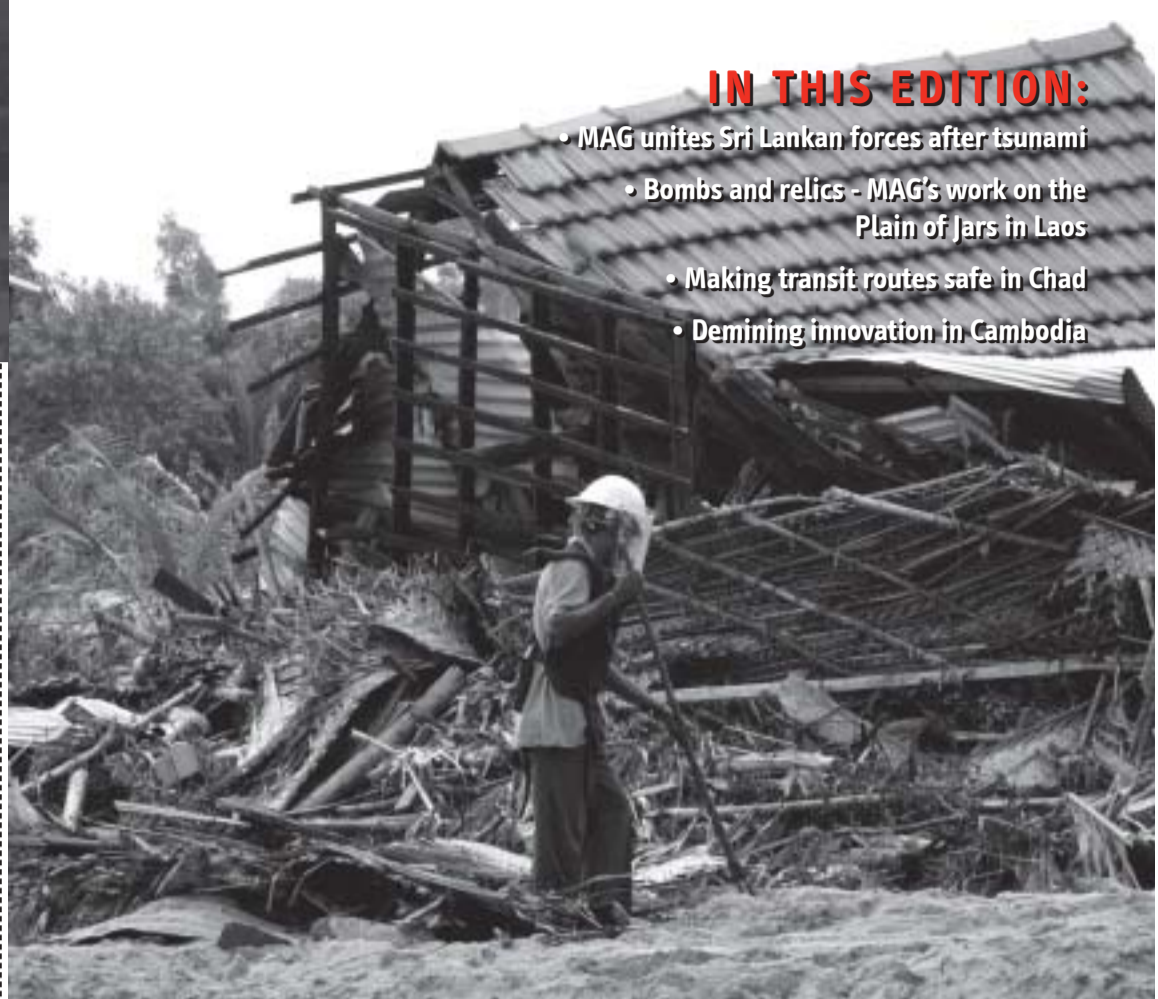
To find out more about any of the above events contact MAG on +44 (0)161 236 4311, email fundraising@mag.org.uk or visit www.magclearmines.org.

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FEBRUARY 2005

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MAG take action clear mines

MAKE THE WORLD A SAFER PLACE: DONATE TO MAG TODAY

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I enclose a cheque payable to 'MAG' (tick if yes) or Please debit my credit/debit card (no AMEX)

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Exp date: / / Issue no: (Switch only)

Signed:

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Date:

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If you are a UK taxpayer MAG can claim an extra 28% on your donation at no extra cost to you. Just tick the box and we'll do the rest.

I am a taxpayer and wish MAG to treat all donations I have made since 6th April 2000 as Gift Aid donations, until further notice.

Note: you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the tax deducted from your donation (currently 28p for every pound given).

If you prefer not to receive MAG News and updates direct to your door please tick here. MAG will not pass your details to any other organisation.

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Mine Risk Education Saves Lives

MAG's Mine Risk Education (MRE) recently prevented certain bloodshed in the Angolan village of Bairro Luanga in Luau. Following almost 20 years spent as a refugee in neighbouring DR Congo, local villager Justino Kahombo knew exactly what to do after discovering a landmine close to his son's house, thanks to the MRE he received. MAG's MRE in the form of group sessions, leaflets, posters, school visits and more helps local communities recognise landmines and other unexploded devices. It also gives them guidelines about what safe actions to take if an explosive is spotted. Returning refugees are a top priority for MRE as the route home, or land used for re-settling, can often be mined or bombed. By making contact with people early and at a local level, through its community liaison work, MAG's technical staff are able to devise a strategy of clearance that benefits the most 'at risk' groups involved.

In Justino's case, he's in no doubt about the impact of MAG's MRE sessions: he knew not to deal with the landmine himself and alerted MAG's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team to the danger. They arrived the same day and removed not only the mine from in front of his son's house but an additional 16 landmines from the village, making it safe for the thousands of other families living in the area. Justino is delighted with the work done by MAG because to him each landmine or piece of unexploded ordnance (UXO) found and removed means clear and safe land on which he can build and cultivate. MAG's development of MRE highlights the importance not just of removing landmines but also ensuring that communities understand the dangers and are equipped to react in the safest manner.



Mine Risk Education is a crucial part of MAG's humanitarian mine action

Building a Future

On 10 January 2005 the productive sound of factory machinery was heard in Quang Tri in Vietnam as a new cassava processing plant began operations in the Hai Lang district. The opening of the plant provides exciting opportunities for both local residents and rural communities around the province.

The reason this was possible was due to the support of MAG's donors who provided the funding for us to clear the ground of unexploded bombs so work on the plant could begin.

In a partnership with the Quang Tri Provincial Peoples Committee (PPC), clearance work began in February 2003 and was completed four months later. A total of 26 hectares were cleared, uncovering and destroying 600 items of ordnance. As part of the process 18 families were relocated to new homes built next to the plant and each was given a small-holding of land for crop cultivation. In addition the factory also employs nine members from these households.

Cassava is an edible root that forms the basis of a wide range of products from foodstuffs to binding agents for paper and textiles. The new plant can process up to 300 tons of cassava each day which it turns into refined starch ready for export and delivery.

Although it is still early days, between 7,000 and 10,000 people from rural communities throughout Quang Tri will grow and supply cassava for processing and more partnerships with other provinces are planned.

MAG's humanitarian work here has contributed to alleviating the poverty in the region and given the community a real sense of hope and economic stability for the future. A terrific success story for Vietnam!



The cassava processing plant now operating in Quang Tri thanks to MAG's clearance

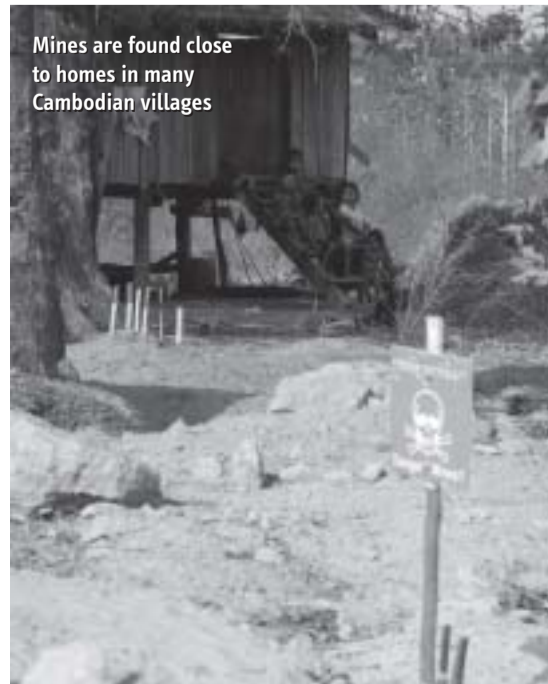
Demining Innovation in Cambodia

MAG has responded to a growing need for local initiatives that both increase financial benefits for the community and help mine clearance in Cambodian villages. Locality Demining (LD) is MAG's new multi-beneficial approach that involves employing and deploying people locally, enabling them to work close to their homes and earn a daily wage. It differs from the standard mine action model by cutting the need for transportation and accommodation costs and allows for salaries earned to stay within the community. Contracts last up to two years for each LD operator and, within that time, current staff say they are able to get out of debt, provide for their families and improve their overall standard of living. The success of the programme is felt throughout the communities involved.

So far 110 people in Cambodia, some from the poorest backgrounds, have undergone training to the same level as MAG's standard Mine Action Team (MAT) deminers. They work alongside three experienced members from MAG and also get slightly less pay; traditional MATs can travel some two hours or more to get to a site and still provide the same hours worth of demining. The training and the need to abide by MAG's strict Standard Operating Procedures is identical, so too is the support they receive from MAG as a respected organisation and innovator in its field.

One deminer says: "Now I can work and get an income every day. I can buy food for my family. Before I used to worry all the time."

MAG has been working in Cambodia since 1992 and has developed a number of partnerships with rural development Non Government Organisations (NGOs). In the case of LD, we're working closely with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in selecting suitable employees and ensuring that the benefits are felt in the long-term and after employment has ceased. LWF's community development workers have a role to play in supporting the deminers and their families with ideas and advice about how to spend and invest the money they earn. Their country representative says: "We always had high confidence in MAG. The locality demining model adds value to our work."

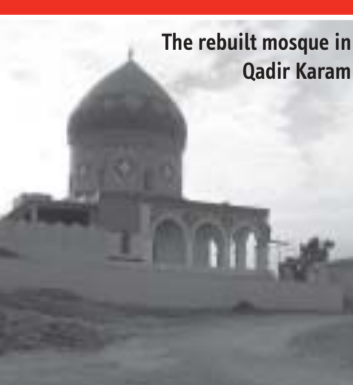


Mines are found close to homes in many Cambodian villages

Qadir Karam: A Village Reborn

Over a glass of tea, Jalal Salih Kaka Rash expresses his thanks for MAG's work in his village, work that has allowed him to finally return home. Generations of his family lived in the Iraqi village before being forced to flee in 1988 during the Anfal campaign. They returned to Qadir Karam in the summer of 2004 with the aim of rebuilding their lives and have received \$1,000 and 10 tonnes of cement from the Kurdish Regional Government to build a new house on the site where their previous home had been destroyed.

Mr Kaka Rash sighs as he explains that landmines are a big problem for him. He worries about his children playing in the minefields, and at the nearby water well he found 12 anti-tank mines. He and his neighbours are relieved that MAG will be checking all the wells in the area and delighted with the work already carried out.



The rebuilt mosque in Qadir Karam

MAG's work in Qadir Karam began just after the start of the war in 2003, when advanced teams discovered huge areas of mined land surrounding the village and thousands of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines stored in the mosque pictured. As the army fled, the bridge across the nearby river had been destroyed making access extremely difficult. Locals who remained in the area regularly visited the mosque despite the dangers; if one bomb exploded it would have caused a chain reaction, completely destroying the building and killing or injuring anyone inside. MAG's Mine Action Teams (MATs) conducted

emergency work and removed and destroyed the stockpile item by item. The access route was also cleared allowing repairs on the bridge to be carried out.

Currently there are two MATs clearing minefields over a vast area of 300,000sq/m and thanks to MAG's work the original population is now beginning to go home. More than 250 families returned in the summer of 2004, with many more expected over the coming months. Like Mr Kaka Rash and his family, each will be given a grant and cement to rebuild their homes. In addition, businesses such as shops and restaurants will be developed and the surrounding agricultural land will be sown with wheat.

Qadir Karam is just one of many villages that MAG has helped in Iraq. It's an example of how your support and our commitment to both saving lives and working with local people can rebuild communities and ensure future prosperity.



Jalal Salih Kaka Rash and some members of his family outside the home they're building

MAG UNITES SRI LANKAN FORCES AFTER TSUNAMI

One of the few positive stories to come out of the tsunami disaster is the unique co-operation MAG sparked between the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), its Humanitarian Demining Unit (HDU), and the Sri Lankan military. When the army base at Kallady in Batticaloa was destroyed, MAG negotiated an agreement with the military, the TRO and MAG work together to clear mines from the area.

MAG's executive director, Lou McGrath, says: "There were initially fears that, following the tsunami, the military presence in Tamil areas could bring about renewed conflict. Such co-operation is, to date, unprecedented and is a good example of confidence and peace-building through mine action. It's clear landmines are a common enemy to all." Soldiers returned to their camps after the flood to find a number of mines around the perimeter of the camp. As civilians from nearby houses began to salvage their belongings more mines were discovered. According to Sri Lankan army records a total of 149 landmines were to known to have been laid in the area.

MAG worked swiftly with the TRO to erect warning signs and distribute thousands of Mine Risk Education (MRE) leaflets soon after the tsunami hit. Thirty-three mines have now been discovered and the process of clearing through the debris and rubble in meticulous detail continues with more mines found daily. So far there have been no reported mine-related accidents in the Batticaloa and Vanni districts as a result of the tsunami damage.

MAG's head of operations, Rob White, says: "We cannot be complacent; we need to continue providing assessment, mine marking, educational operations and clearance throughout the coming months."

MAG has also supported the relief effort using vehicles to move bodies from the disaster area and transporting food and emergency supplies to temporary holding camps.

Three teams have tirelessly worked on the clear-up despite at least 30 deminers losing their homes in the disaster. One mechanic lost 50 members of his extended family and many others working with MAG have lost some or all of their immediate families.

To support MAG's work, please either donate via our website magclearsmines.org or call 0800 072 3999



MAG's vital Mine Risk Education leaflet after the tsunami hit



Displaced mines are immediately marked



MAG deminers clearing in the aftermath of the tsunami



Remote-controlled vehicles used as part of the clear-up

All photos © MAG unless indicated - Sri Lankan Photographs © Mark Shenley

Making Transit Routes Safe

Thanks to the support of our donors MAG has been able to expand into new and highly contaminated territories. Chad in Africa, is one of MAG's newer programmes and will be operating two projects in the north of the country, both of which will help the local population travel in safety.



MAG's teams make their way across the desert plains of Chad

In October we started a project clearing unexploded ordnance (UXO) and minefields surrounding an old Libyan supply base. Due to their placement on and around transit routes, these pose a serious threat to the local and nomadic populations. To carry out this work, MAG has provided one team leader and two technical advisers to train, supervise and manage two 22-person Mine Action Teams (MATs) and one 17-person Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team.

Clear and safe routes to water sources are crucial in a country such as Chad, two thirds of which is desert. MAG's second project, funded by the US Department of State, is a Rapid Assessment of all water access routes. The funding meant MAG could provide two technical advisers to visit affected areas in the north and north east in February this year. Once priorities are identified a technical team, using a combination of machine and manual clearance, will begin operating in these regions while other minefields will be 'demarcated' for future clearance.

Jamie Franklin, MAG's project co-ordinator for Chad, says: "The operations will be of huge benefit to local communities. They will have safer and improved access to water and essential resources."

More than 30 years of civil conflict have resulted in extensive landmine and UXO contamination in Chad. In 1997 the Chadian authorities signed and ratified the Ottawa Treaty and established the High Commission for National Demining (HCND) as the national mine action agency. MAG is working closely with the HCND and other government authorities on both these projects.

Bombs and Relics

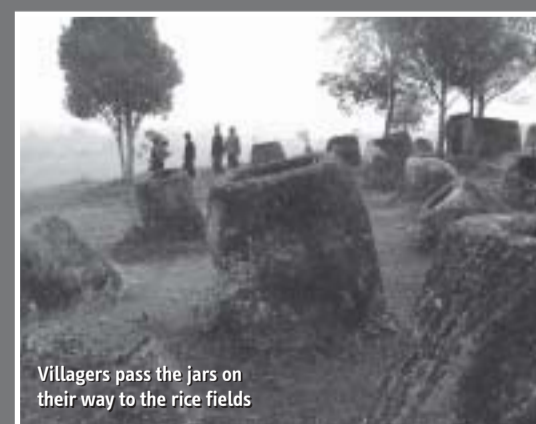
"MAG's work is actually very similar to archaeology!" So says Julie Van Den Berg, an archaeologist working alongside MAG on the incredible Plain of Jars site in Laos. "The area to be cleared is planned and marked out very carefully, all information is recorded, and when they find something they have to be very careful not to disturb it."

Hundreds of stone urns fill the landscape of the Xieng Khouang province, an area that is sadly also littered with unexploded ordnance (UXO). The jars' purpose remains a mystery. What were they used for? And why did people thousands of years ago carve and transport them from stone quarries over eight kilometres away? Investigations are now underway to find the answers to these questions, precisely date the jars and secure World Heritage status for the area.

Trenches zigzag throughout the region and huge craters from 1000lb aerial bombs pepper the terrain; reminders of the heavy bombardments that took place in the 1960s and early 1970s. Working to make areas of the Plain of Jars safe and assisted by funds from the New Zealand government, MAG has completed the first 26-hectare site, uncovering and destroying 127 explosive items including bomblets, rockets, artillery shells, mortars and 20mm anti-aircraft rounds. The work is an integral element of the project being conducted in a unique partnership with UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation). It's hoped that the mystery surrounding the jars will be solved following the clearance and that the area can be accessed in safety by both villagers and tourists alike.



MAG technical field manager Stuart Broome and archaeologist Julie Van Den Berg discuss clearance plans for the site



Villagers pass the jars on their way to the rice fields



Clearing UXO among the mysterious urns in the Plain of Jars

Welcome to this latest edition of MAG News. In it you will discover how MAG is saving lives and building futures for millions of conflict-affected people. Landmines and unexploded bombs remain as deadly today as the day they were laid. It means that in some parts of the world, long after wars have finished, men, women and children are living with the constant danger of death or injury.

MAG has long been considered a pioneer in mine action and I am pleased to announce MAG's first Locality Demining programme in Cambodia where communities are actively contributing to the mine clearance process and playing a vital role in creating a safer future for themselves. You can read more about MAG's Locality Demining programme in this newsletter.

MAG is making vast progress but it is a race against time to prevent innocent people becoming victims of this man-made menace. To continue this life-saving work MAG relies entirely on contributions, so please consider how you can get involved either by making a donation or by taking part in a MAG event. All contributions, however small, will help. See the back page for more details.

Together, with your support and MAG's expertise, we can make this world a safer place.

Thank you.

Lou McGrath
MAG Executive Director

MAG wishes to thank the following donors for making our work and exhibitions such as this possible: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Department of International Development (UK), Office For Weapons Removal & Abatement (US), ECHO, AAR Japan, Medico International, Stichting Vluchteling, Europe Aid, Survey Action Centre, Medicines Sans Frontiers, Zero Landmine Campaign, Adopt-A-Minefield, Roots of Peace, Manx Landmine Action, Governments of Japan, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden (SIDA), Norway, Finland, Jersey Overseas Aid, Guernsey Overseas Aid, Freeman Foundation, UNMAS, UNICEF, ALS, UNDP, SPAS and our loyal members from the general public who are part of MAG's growing community.