

Big Steps

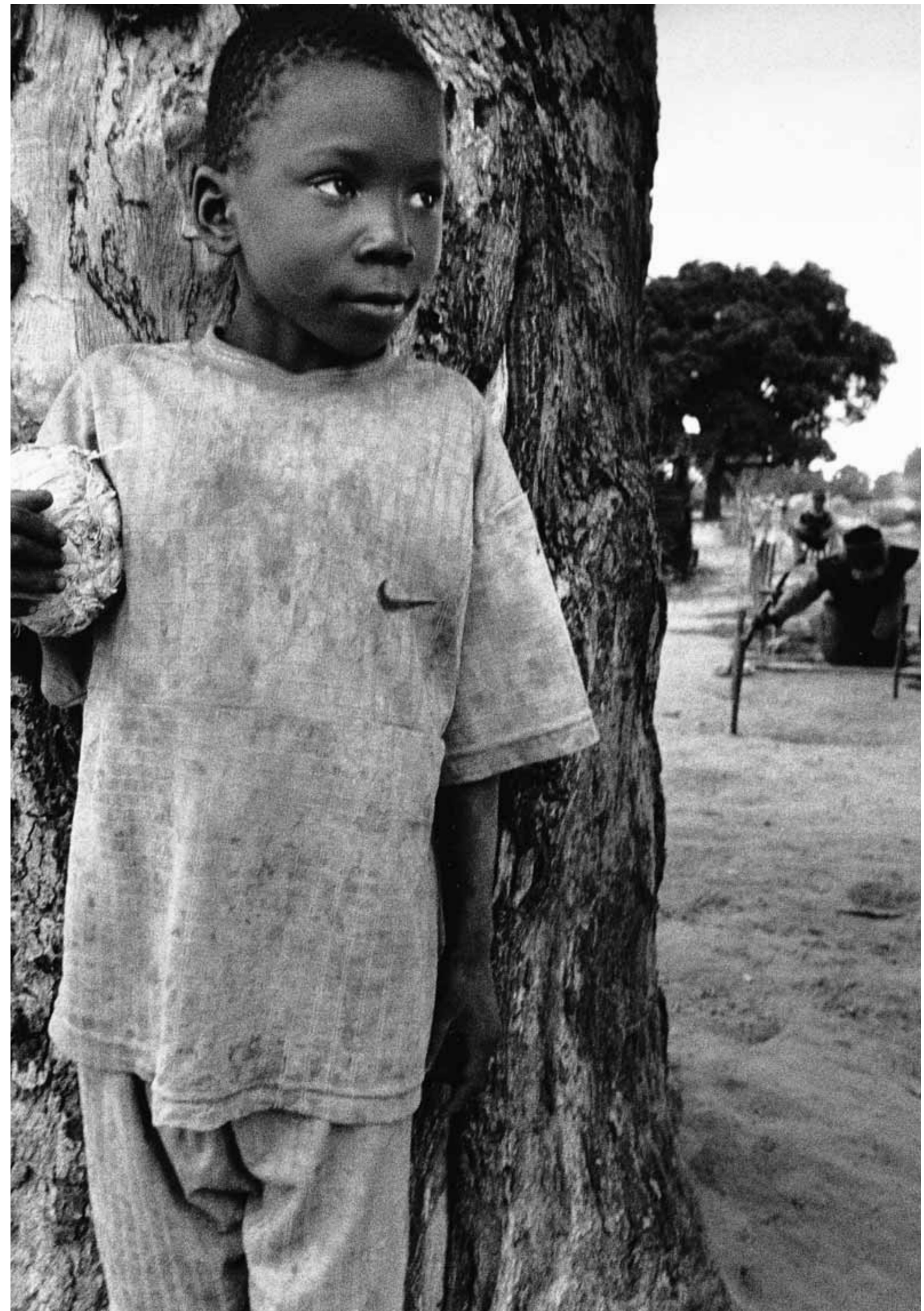
Since MAG (Mines Advisory Group) started in 1989, we've worked in countries all over the world, from Afghanistan to Zambia, helping conflict-affected people get their lives, their families and their communities back to normal.

It's arduous work since a vital part of our conflict recovery programmes is getting rid of leftover landmines, small arms, missiles and other abandoned weapons. And, with millions of square metres of contaminated land, where putting a foot wrong means injury or death, there is only one way to go about it. One small step at a time.

The big steps? They come next. Through negotiation with all sides of the conflict, through community liaison and winning donor support, we help to empower people to build a peaceful and prosperous future for themselves, free from the lethal legacy of conflict.

A strip of land cleared to allow farmers to work in their fields, a road made safe, a new school built on reclaimed land – these are the practical ways in which, every day, MAG's brave and dedicated people are helping to regenerate communities and to alleviate the poverty and suffering caused by conflict.

In this review, we'll report on our progress last year and the big steps we're making this year. Perhaps we should have called it 'Giant Strides'.





Our executive director writes...

Another year on, and the need for MAG's life-saving work remains as urgent as ever. Around the world tens of thousands of people are killed or maimed annually by landmines and the remnants of armed conflict. Abandoned weapons are at risk of getting into the wrong hands and conflict is still a major cause of poverty in many of the countries where we work.

In Cambodia, we've helped to cut casualty rates by 50 per cent since we started. And in Sri Lanka, Angola and also Iraq – where we've been working non-stop since 1992 – we've achieved major reductions to the terrible toll of death and serious injury.

We're aware that expertly clearing abandoned weapons is not what makes MAG unique. What sets us apart is our focus on the impact our work has on people's lives. We move into conflict zones to further the road to peace and development; we look at how conflict blights innocent lives and keeps entire communities in despair and poverty.

So today, while our ground clearance work continues, we are also destroying stockpiles where they pose a danger to lives; providing mine-risk education; retraining former soldiers; creating employment to stimulate local economies; helping to rebuild peace; and integrating our work with vital redevelopment programmes.

Above all, we're working closely with ordinary people – finding out what their priorities are, and how we can best help them to rebuild their lives. And our greatest satisfaction comes from watching them regain a sense of hope and optimism for the future, as agricultural land is restored, schools are reopened, river banks made safe for fishing and water wells repaired. As our agenda and our activities have widened in scope, so the performance criteria we set for ourselves have changed.

In some parts of the world, unexploded devices in unpopulated land may pose no significant threat; in which case, MAG has found more efficient ways of dealing with such areas which means our community liaison staff can focus our work where it matters most.

Today, after almost ten years of the Ottawa 'mine ban' Treaty, we measure our success not by the number of landmines and weapons we destroy, but by the number of lives we free from the devastating impact of their presence.

With your continued help and support, we can take even bigger steps towards freeing countless more lives. Thank you.

Lou McGrath
Executive Director

Support up by 34 per cent

From small beginnings in 1989, MAG has grown to be one of the largest organisations in our field today, and we owe this entirely to the commitment and the generosity of all our supporters and the dedication of our staff.

We rely heavily on contributions from individual donors, and we are pleased to report that donations from the public have increased by 34 per cent from the last financial year – thanks to more people choosing to make regular donations, leaving legacies, or raising funds by taking part in our bike rides, sponsored runs, car rallies or parachute jumps.

We also have a growing number of governmental and institutional donors, as well as support from trusts and the business community. And we believe this reflects a growing understanding of MAG's distinctive role during and after conflict.

As a result, we are better equipped than ever to develop and strengthen targeted programmes in conflict-affected countries, saving more lives and bringing hope and regeneration to more communities.

Clearly, our work is far from over. There's so much more for us to do and if we are to respond to emergencies or move into new areas we need to increase our public donations. One of MAG's greatest strengths is our efficiency: over 90 per cent of our total income directly supports our field operations. So you can be certain that any contribution you can afford will make a lasting and profound difference to people who urgently need our help.



2004



2005

Our clearance work: a bigger bang

In 12 countries around the world, our life-saving work continues. Landmines are not the only threat; small arms, abandoned weapons, unexploded ordnance and other tools of armed conflict are among many different types of deadly device.

As you've read, we've come to regard clearing land as only the first step towards our wider goal of rebuilding conflict-affected lives. But we don't mean to imply that it's simple or straightforward. In fact, disposing of weapons safely demands enormous care, skill and expertise – especially when huge quantities of explosives are involved, and large numbers of people need to be evacuated or otherwise protected.

Take, for example, our Big Bang in the Vanni region of Sri Lanka, which we carried out in June 2005. Even by our standards, this detonation was something special, the culmination of many months' painstaking work by MAG teams. Refugees returning to the village of Kanakarayankulam needed safe land, and we identified more than 2500 dangerous items all of which we secured in a remote location, and destroyed with spectacular finality.



More than 1 million items cleared in Iraq, and counting...

Throughout the recent war in Iraq, MAG teams have been working without a break to remove dangerous items from as many key areas as possible. Many civilians – including many children – were being killed and hurt each day by landmines, cluster munitions and other abandoned ordnance.

We cleared more than 1,106,000 items in just one year. As a result, death and injury statistics in MAG operational areas have fallen from a monthly high of 500 during and after the conflict to an average of two to three per month today. At the same time, our work has also opened up access for the local population to return to their homes and allow other agencies to deliver their support.

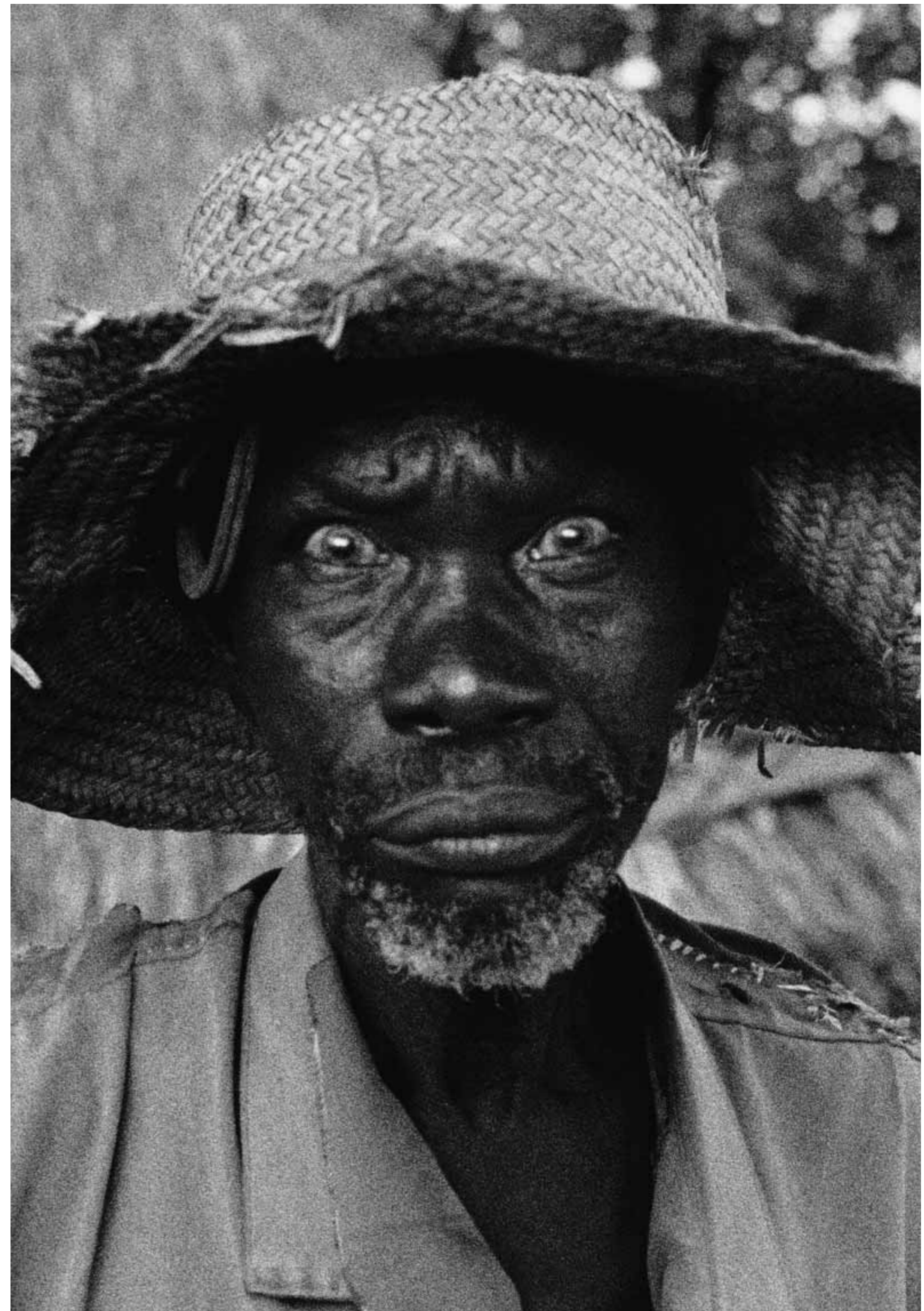
MAG was the only demining NGO in Iraq to remain active during the hostilities in early 2003. Our excellent reputation in the country is due to us providing much-needed employment and clearance, since 1992. Today the scope of our operations has expanded both above and below the Green Line that divided the northern Kurdish region from the rest of the country.

Big steps towards better lives

Let's be a little more specific about how our work goes beyond removing the physical threat of mines and other explosive devices, and helps individuals and communities start rebuilding their lives.

A few recent examples include: In Chad, our work clearing the debris of war has provided the local population with safe access to water and other essential resources. In the Quang Tri region of Vietnam, a new factory has recently opened on land cleared by MAG and is now providing employment for local people, assisting the economic recovery in the province. In Sudan, our 'Stay in the Tracks' campaign has saved lives by alerting road-users and aid convoys to the danger of anti-tank mines in the country's southern region. In the Sulimaniyah region of Iraq, the first harvest for 10 years took place this summer, yielding barley and wheat on land that was previously a deadly minefield. In Angola, our clearance work allowed roads to be reopened and bridges rebuilt so that vital aid and supplies could be delivered to isolated villages.

MAG is known for integrating our work around development projects with local and international partners who share our impact-driven approach.



An award-winning awareness campaign

Travelling around MAG's home town of Manchester last autumn, you couldn't miss our attention-grabbing ad campaign. Engaging passers-by with bold statements such as 'banana skin' and 'dog poo', it raised awareness of MAG's life-saving work by reminding people how easy it is to step on something unpleasant – and how deadly the consequences can be, in some parts of the world.

Our message also caught the eye of the judges in a number of prestigious competitions, winning two gold awards, as well as an entry into the renowned D&AD annual for 2006.

A further boost for MAG's public profile came in late 2005, when our cinema commercial hit the screens around the UK. Combining live action with animation, this hard-hitting 60-second commercial powerfully brings home the reality of the threat of landmines to a new audience with little awareness of the issue. It will continue to make an impact in UK cinemas in 2006.



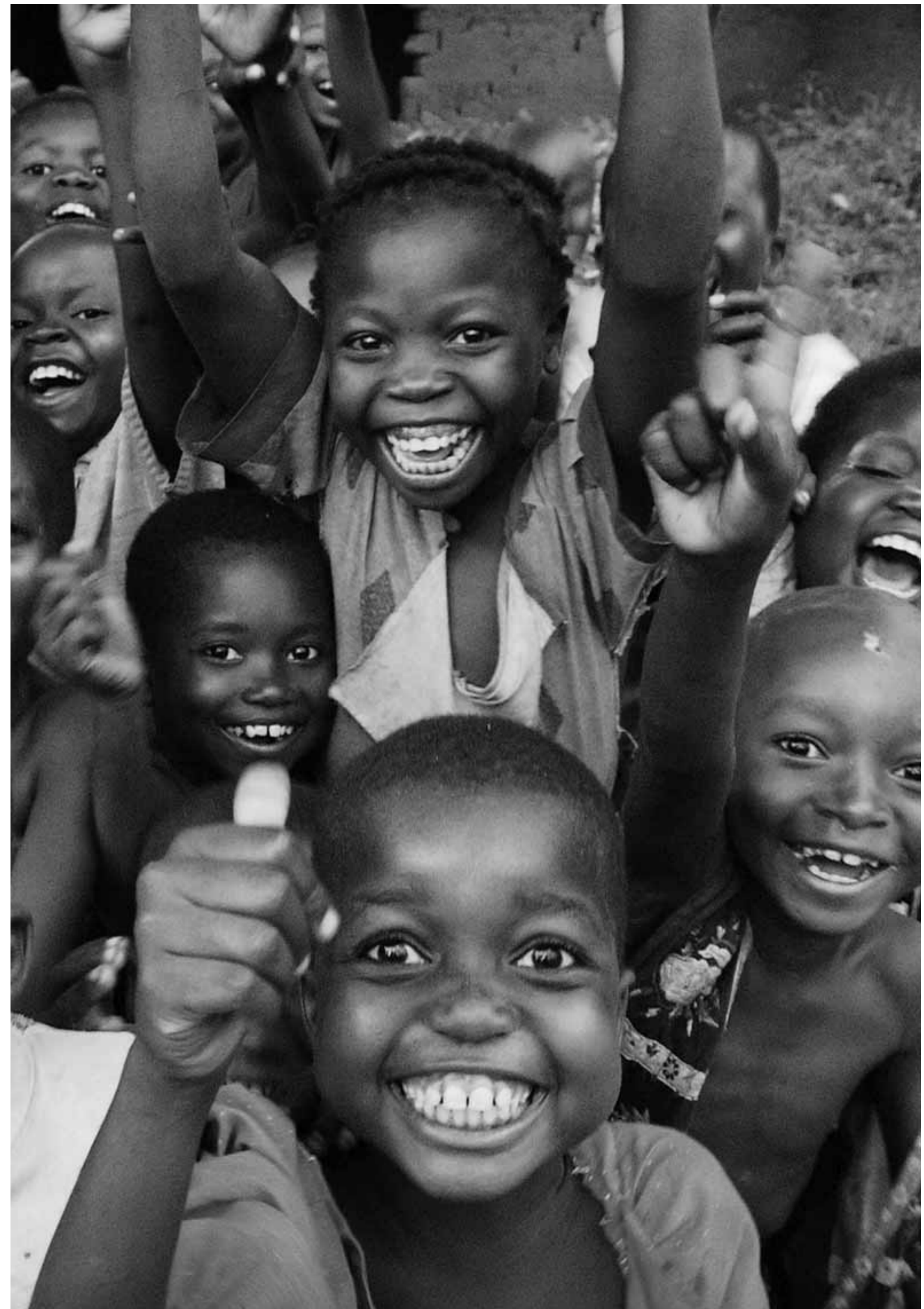
Africa: small steps towards massive change

It's sometimes hard not to be overwhelmed by the scale of the problems people face. When a country is in crisis, especially following civil war, clearing the tools of conflict has to be seen as part of a much bigger picture of devastated lives, displaced families and divided communities.

The key to our approach is to focus on people's most urgent needs, and to target our efforts on areas where we can achieve life-saving results.

We know that by taking a series of small steps, we can help make massive changes to people's lives. Take, for example, refugees travelling in large numbers into contaminated areas; MAG works with moving populations through our emergency clearance operations enabling other relief services to do their work. Providing human security, access to water, power sources and agricultural land; these are everyday events in our line of work. Also vital are our 'Small Arms and Light Weapons' programmes which help stop stockpiles of weapons circulating into the wrong hands. These include shoulder carried weapons capable of destroying a passenger aircraft from the ground. Disposing of this type of weapon couldn't be more paramount.

From 2005, we focused on three new countries: Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Chad. Our aim in 2006 will be to significantly improve people's way of life in the areas where we operate. Working in close co-operation with agencies such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), MAG has already been able to respond to the spontaneous return of refugees in DRC.





Making the world safer, one village at a time.

“We knew about the landmines and were scared, but we had no choice,” says Kim Heourn, sitting outside her small house in Spoung, a village to the west of Cambodia, near the border with Thailand. MAG cleared safe paths through the village, enabling fellow aid agency, CARE, to build a water pump and filter pond, giving the villagers a clean supply of water for the very first time.

Kim has lived in the village for six years. During the civil war her parents fled the country and lived in a refugee border camp in Thailand. When the family returned to Cambodia it took them a while to find somewhere to settle. “There was no chance of living anywhere else,” she says. Eventually, she moved with her husband and daughter and settled in Spoung with enough land to build a house and have a small plot for farming.

MAG’s work, alongside that of CARE, has had a huge impact on the villagers. Before CARE could get access to build the filter pond, the nearby river was the only source of water and was used by the villagers for bathing and sanitation as well as drinking, causing a lot of illness. Now water from the river is used mainly for watering the crops and never for drinking. “I’m really so grateful to MAG,” says Kim. “Everyone here feels safer and we have access to clean water so we don’t worry about sickness anymore.”

In all, MAG teams found and destroyed more than 60 dangerous items in and around the village. Grocery store owner Sem Savy reflects the feelings of her fellow villagers: “MAG has done a proper job here and I feel 100 per cent safe,” she says. “There have been no accidents in the areas already cleared, and I no longer fear for myself or my family while we’re walking along the paths of the village or working nearby.”

Replacing bombs with crops – employing local people

“The bomb exploded, sending a fragment of metal straight through his arm.” Khonsavan is describing an incident that happened when he was at school, and an eight year old boy was playing with an item he'd found.

From an early age, Khonsavan witnessed many accidents caused by remnants of conflict, mainly involving children. Today, he works for MAG as the supervisor of a Village-Assisted Clearance (VAC) team in the village of Houay Dok Kham in Lao PDR. There are 25 people in the team working to clear a massive 210 hectare site, which will eventually be used by the villagers to grow rice and other crops.

VAC is a MAG innovation to aid community development and sits alongside our other initiatives such as 'locality demining'. In both cases, the aim is to allow community participation, enabling local people to be involved with the clearance of their own land. In this way, we help to boost the local economy in two ways: by creating paid employment for people living in the locality, and also by reclaiming contaminated land for agricultural use.



Financial Review

Income has increased considerably from the previous financial year in line with our increased level of operations into new countries.

By concentrating on profile-building and fundraising events, voluntary income was also increased by 34 per cent; we spent just 0.4 per cent of our total income on fundraising activities.

As an 'action' organisation our conflict recovery programmes in-country have always taken priority. We have a modest and busy headquarters which keeps costs low and our donors' money where it should be. It's these important steps that we feel set us apart and make MAG a charity worth backing.

Summary statement of financial activities

Year ended 30 June 2005

	2005	2004
	£000	£000
Incoming resources		
Donations, legacies and other voluntary income	293	219
Grants from government, European Commission and UN agencies	12,422	7,992
Charitable institutions, foundations, non-governmental organisations	9,565	5,159
Other	926	722
Expenditure		
Public fundraising costs	82	95
Field programme costs	16,215	13,494
Programme support costs	1,217	1,141
Administration and management costs	147	115
Total funding held at 30 June 2005*	10,155	4,610

*The majority of funds carried forward are committed grants to projects being implemented in financial year 2005–2006.

This summarised information has been extracted from the full audited accounts; a copy of which is available on request from MAG's head office in Manchester.

Thanks to all MAG supporters and donors
who allow us to carry out our conflict recovery
programmes in some of the poorest countries
in the world.

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