



Introduction

Due to a series of armed conflicts that divided the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1996 and 2003, large parts of the country have suffered from fighting between government forces, different rebel factions and external militaries. An estimated 3.3 million people are believed to have died as a result, and 2.3 million were displaced and had to leave their homes. All along the former frontline, the remnants of conflict constitute a serious threat to the resident population, returnees and humanitarian organisations alike, as well as the ongoing peace process in the country.

MAG has been operating in DR Congo since July 2004, where it established its national headquarters (“siège social”) in Lubumbashi as well as an operational base in Pweto (both in Katanga province). The national headquarters was moved to Kinshasa in 2005 and then to new larger premises in 2006. The office in Lubumbashi remains in use and provides support for the operations in Katanga. In November 2005 MAG began operations in Equateur, first by establishing a regional support office in Mbandaka, similar to that in Lubumbashi, and then deploying operations across the province.

Throughout 2006 the programme saw considerable expansion, with MAG becoming the largest humanitarian organisation specialising in landmine, weapons and arms clearance operating in DR Congo. During 2007 the programme will consolidate its position and methods of working so that it has a solid administrative foundation upon which to develop operations, as expansion into new geographical areas is planned in provinces where teams are currently deployed. A key focus remains our support of the country’s Security Sector Reform through the destruction of small arms and light weapons - MAG is ideally placed to become a major stakeholder in the actual destruction of weapons due our extensive knowledge and experience. We’ve laid the foundations for this by developing relationships with national agencies, establishing skilled teams and procuring the necessary equipment. MAG will continue to address the humanitarian needs of communities in Katanga and Equateur through targeted clearance of dangerous areas and destruction of hazardous items (including landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and stockpiles of small arms and light weapons). This is supported by Community Liaison activities - by talking to communities and villages and fully understanding their needs we’re able to identify, prioritise, map and plan our clearance. Partnerships with local and international NGOs will also continue to be explored to maximise the impact our operations have by linking them with the wider development goals of the country.

Photo above: Items collected over two days are destroyed in a controlled demolition.

Photo front cover: MAG staff giving a Mine Risk Education (MRE) lesson in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Dubie. Many of the villages from which the people have fled are reported to be contaminated by unexploded ordnance and landmines.

Operational Capacity

The MAG DR Congo programme currently has 14 international staff and employs around 100 national staff. Fourteen of these are women, including one female deminer and four Community Liaison officers.

All clearance is carried out manually using electronic and visual search techniques.

During 2006 MAG completed 1,300 tasks, clearing around 87,000 m/sq of more than 55,500 dangerous items. Mine Risk Education (MRE) was delivered to approximately 120,000 people using diverse techniques such as theatre, music and dance, billboards, flyers, community presentations and radio broadcasts. These activities took place in villages, returnee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, schools and market places.



Equateur

MAG teams based out of Mbandaka undertake explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) tasks and Community Liaison work in Equateur, deploying on pirogues and boats, and using the Congo river as principle transportation route to undertake clearance of agricultural land in rural communities. This is an example of how MAG has used innovative techniques to reach isolated and rural populations in DR Congo, where there are only 3,000km of paved roads in a country four times the size of France.

Katanga

From Lubumbashi and Pweto, MAG deploys landmine clearance and EOD teams and provided MRE through Community Liaison teams. These operations included the clearance of a Way Station on behalf of International Organisation of Migration (IOM) to assist the repatriation of 13,000 refugees from camps in Zambia; the clearance of health centres used by the NGOs MSF and Coopi; destruction of arms used by Mai Mai insurgents; and clearance of land for agriculture, redevelopment and resettlement.

Partnerships

MAG maintains a close relationship with the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC), which currently functions as the National Mine Action Authority in DR Congo. We also work with other humanitarian NGOs and agencies, as well as relevant government and military authorities. In 2006 we worked with logistics, weapons and ordnance specialists within the Forces Armées De La Republic Democratic Du Congo (FARDC) on the destruction of a stockpile of small arms and light weapons discovered in a warehouse in Mbandaka town. Cooperation with other UN agencies include UNDP (coordination of activities within the Security Sector Reform process), and UNICEF. Continuing work with UNHCR to assist IDPs and refugee populations returning home is a key aspect of MAG’s future plans.

Additionally we have worked with the national NGOs Humanitas Ubangi and Tosalisana, training them to deliver Mine Risk Education. Building on this training, MAG has recently signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation with the Humanitas Ubangi in a programme to develop and build a national clearance and Community Liaison capacity over the next three years.

Photo story right: MAG Clearance and Community Liaison teams travel up the Congo river by boat to deliver Mine Risk Education and remove unexploded ordnance in Equateur province.





MAG expertly clears abandoned weapons and landmines, but that isn't what makes us 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 work with communities to lessen the threat of death and injury, while releasing safe land and other vital resources back to the people who need them. Our approach is long-term, enabling countries to rebuild and develop their social and economic potential.

With 17 years experience in 35 countries, MAG currently has operations in Angola, Cambodia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Vietnam.

Democratic Republic of the Congo



Small Arms and Light Weapons

MAG launched a nationwide small arms and light weapons destruction programme in September 2006 contributing to DR Congo's Security Sector Reform process. In light of the country's historic 2006 elections, MAG's clearance work and small arms destruction will continue to assist the country's overall stability in the crucial post-election period. The goal of this programme is to destroy unserviceable and surplus weapons and ammunition before 2012 and ensure the safe storage of retained items. Concurrent with the destruction of weapons, the programme is designed to build local expertise with the Congolese authorities and develop a sustainable national capacity. This will promote the security and safety of the local population by reducing the threat of continued or illicit use of weapons, whilst contributing to peace building on a national level.

Small arms destruction takes place using strategic cutting techniques with hydraulic shears and industrial saws to render the weapon, and the remnant parts, completely unusable. Destruction centres will be established in strategic locations within the country to maintain the capacity for weapons destruction. The programme is also working to generate a detailed map and inventory of all unserviceable and surplus small arms and light weapons. Such a map is the first step in reducing the number of weapons in circulation and will allow MAG, as well as other operators including the Congolese government, to plan efficient destruction operations. Furthermore it will create an accurate working record of surplus stocks and reduce the supply, demand and availability of these weapons, limiting the potential illicit spread across borders to neighbouring countries and helping stem regional conflict and promote peace building. While information gathering MAG will develop and maintain working relationships with key stakeholders, which will augment future work in this area.



Photo Above: A MAG team prepares to destroy 100 rocket propelled grenades, twenty 120mm mortars and four anti-tank mines.

Photo Right: In a warehouse next to the hospital in Mbandaka town there are about a dozen rooms filled with small arms, light weapons and ammunition. Much of the material had been badly kept, was in poor condition and needed to be destroyed to prevent it falling into the wrong hands in this potentially insecure environment. MAG set up a demolition area 30km from the town to safely carry out the destruction of these items.

For more detailed information about MAG's work visit:

www.magclearsmine.org



MAG would like to thank the individual and institutional donors that support its work in DR Congo: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; UK Department for International Development (DfID); Guernsey Overseas Aid; ECHO; US Department of State Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement; UNHCR; UNICEF; VFA (UNMAS as back donor); Pooled Fund; Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; EuropeAid and Canadian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

MAG relies on donations. To support MAG please send a donation to the address below or use the donation page on the web site or call our credit card donation line in the UK: 0800 0723 999. US Taxpayers may prefer to donate to MAG's partner organisation, MAG America, a 501(c)(3) not for profit. Visit www.magamerica.org.

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List of Abbreviations

CL - Community Liaison EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal. **MAG** - Mines Advisory Group **MAT** - Mine Action Team **MRE** - Mine Risk Education **NGO** - Non Governmental Organisation **UXO** - Unexploded ordnance (shells, mortar-bombs, rockets, air dropped munitions etc)