

Insight

MAG
America
Quarterly
Review



“MAG is doing amazing humanitarian work. They are taking the risk on themselves to save lives in our town.”

—Afaf Kdouh, Nabatieh Governorate, Lebanon

Fall 2011

I made my first trip to Lebanon in April of 2007. Less than 8 months had passed since the 2006 conflict with Israel in Lebanon, which left southern Lebanon and other areas of the country severely contaminated by unexploded cluster munitions. It is estimated that over 4 million submunitions were dropped over Lebanon during the 36-day war, and up to 1 million of these deadly items failed to detonate on impact. I saw countless numbers of these weapons scattered around during my trip – buried in the rubble of bombed-out houses and buildings, laying in the grass of families’ yards, and hanging from orange trees in once beautiful and productive orchards. The tragedies that resulted were shocking. In the months immediately following the ceasefire, there were an average of three casualties caused by cluster munitions every day. By the time I visited Lebanon the rate had dropped to 1-2 per week, but prior to 2006 this was the accident rate for an entire year. Unfortunately the devastation didn’t stop there. I met with local community members who were struggling to make an income and feed their families, because their agricultural land – their source of revenue – was devastated by hundreds, or even thousands, of exploded cluster munitions.

But thankfully among the tragedies there was an emerging story of hope. Immediately following the end of the conflict, MAG launched an emergency operation to restore safety to southern Lebanon. The day after the ceasefire we had teams on the ground, delivering life-saving risk education as people rushed back to their homes and conducting battle area clearance to begin destroying the millions of remaining cluster munitions – one item at a time. Between August 2006 and my April 2007 visit, our



teams had already destroyed over 14,000 submunitions, each one of which could have cost more lives and limbs.

I returned to Lebanon last September and was thrilled to see that the stories of hope had evolved to evidence of renewal. Villages that were nearly flattened and littered with thousands of dangerous submunitions in 2007 were declared safe and well on the road to recovery. Displaced community members were able to return to their homes, farmers were able to safely cultivate their land, and children could go to school and play without the fear of death or injury.

In closing, I want to thank you, our donors and supporters, for making this work possible, especially the U.S. State Department’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. Thanks to your generous support, MAG has been able to move families and entire communities in Lebanon out of fear and into a better life. But, as you will read about in this newsletter, the job is not over yet. Still a third of the contaminated land in Lebanon needs to be cleared. Help us finish the job and make Lebanon and

other suffering countries free of cluster munitions and other remnants of war.

Jennifer Lachman
Executive Director,
MAG America

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saves lives builds futures

Understanding Lebanon— A brief history

Lebanon sits along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea surrounded by big brother Syria along its northern and eastern borders and a suspicious Israel along its southern border. Originally developed as a Christian stronghold by the French following World War I, Lebanon gained its independence in 1943. Palestinian refugees flooded the country following the creation of Israel and still live in often dire conditions. In recent years Lebanon has become the base of operations for the armed militia Hezbollah.



In 1975 tensions between Muslim and Christian factions in Lebanon reached a boiling point and a complex civil war broke out. Israel and Syria quickly became involved and, over the next 15 years, fighting would kill 150,000 people while over half a million mines were laid throughout the country. Finally, in 1990, a reconciliation agreement was reached and relative peace was restored.

The next 15 years were fairly peaceful until the Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers in 2006 to set-up a prisoner exchange during a raid on that country. Israel responded forcefully, attacking Lebanon by air and sea, as well as sending soldiers into the southern part of the country. In a one-month period, 96,000 munitions were fired into Lebanon,

Lebanon has a bright future if its people can overcome regional instability and mend the scars of war.

scattering over four million cluster submunitions throughout the conflict zone. Over 1,000 Lebanese were killed, most of whom were civilians.

For a country with such a recent history of violence, there are signs of improvement. The Lebanon Mine Action Center (LMAC) completed a survey in April 2011 that determined roughly 55 million square meters of land in Lebanon had been contaminated by unexploded cluster munitions and mines. Of this, 66% of the cluster munitions have been removed, as well as 25% of the mines. As a result of this work, deaths and injuries resulting from mines and cluster munitions have plummeted from 156 in 2006 to nine in 2010.

Lebanon has a bright future if its people can overcome political instability and mend the scars of war. Compared to Syria, its largest neighbor and long-time occupier, the Lebanese are well educated with a literacy rate of 80% compared to 65% for Syria. Commerce has always been a strength of this nation. Before the civil war, Lebanon was a successful banking and tourist hub in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the civil war demolished the infrastructure necessary to maintain both of these industries. In 2000, the government began an austerity program with the goal of rebuilding the infrastructure needed to support a thriving free-market economy. Unfortunately this plan suffered a major setback when the Israeli invasion in 2006 resulted in \$3.6 billion in damages. With relative peace restored once again, Lebanon hopes to boost its profile as a tourist destination and rebuild its banking sector. Despite slow economic growth in the Middle East, Lebanon's GDP grew by 7.5% in 2010.

LANDMINE CLEARANCE

Wishing for a Return to the Safety and Economic Security of 2006

In the summer of 2006, during the 36-day conflict with Israel, 3.9 million cluster submunitions were dropped on southern Lebanon. It is believed that over 1 million failed to detonate, leaving the threat of potentially fatal contamination on people's land and in some instances actually in their homes. These 36 days – just a little more than a month - forever altered the lives of so many Lebanese people. Even now, five years after the conflict, many are still living in fear and struggling economically. Their only wish is to return to the life they were living in 2006. For many, MAG is making that wish a reality.

Saada Mostafa Baalbaky is a middle-aged woman from Kfar Rommane village that was targeted during the 2006 conflict. During the 2006 war, her family slept at their neighbor's house because her house was an exposed target. Her land and home were left contaminated with unexploded munitions threatening the safety and lives of her family. When she and her family



returned to their house, they found bombs everywhere: in her living room, the kitchen, in the water tank and under the family's fig trees.

Saada saw the Lebanese Armed Forces and MAG conducting surface clearance of land in her village just days after the ceasefire. MAG was able to clear Saada's family land in 2007 as part of a total of 35,722m² of land cleared. The MAG team removed ten M77 submunitions before it was safe for her family to use the land. The MAG team was in the strike area for four months, including two months on Saada's land. She recalls: "I will never forget MAG who were removing danger from my land. I will keep remembering how hard they worked in summer and winter, from the early morning hours. Nothing can express my feelings toward them, without them our life was hell."

As a result of the contamination, Saada lost 21 chickens and seven of her eight olive trees, plunging her family into poverty. Since MAG finished clearance on Saada's land, she has been able to rebuild and is growing different kinds of plants such as marrow, tomatoes, pepper, coriander and parsley. By growing the crops, Saada does not need to buy vegetables from the market, saving her money to invest in her family and her future.

Saada is grateful for MAG and the clearance effort conducted in her village and concludes: "my country suffered a lot, and the people who supported us to regain our land safely were MAG staff. Please keep funding them. They are saving our lives."



Work in Lebanon Made Possible by the Support of the U.S. Department of States' Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement

Sometimes MAG's Most Important Work is Off the Field

Beirut, Lebanon

In September 2011 from representatives around the world convened in Beirut for the Second Meeting of States Parties (2MSP) to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The Convention bans the use, stockpiling, production, and trade of cluster bombs globally and supports the clearance of affected countries. The use of cluster munitions in Lebanon in 2006, and the resulting tragedy, fueled the international movement against cluster munitions that resulted in the historic adoption of the Convention in Dublin in May 2008. Sixty-six states are party to the CCM, which became binding international law on August 1, 2010.



The Beirut meeting convened representatives from over 115 governments, civil society organizations, the UN, and cluster munitions survivors to discuss progress made against the Convention's obligations. Overall the sense was that the CCM has been remarkably successful with new signatories, and existing members are already achieving the destruction of stockpiles of cluster munitions well ahead of the eight year deadline. Efforts to clear contaminated States Parties within the ten year deadline of 2020 also look like they will be successful.

The success of the CCM is an important and laudable step in helping to rid the world of the devastation caused by cluster munitions. However, it is believed that millions of bomblets still

plague communities around the world. In Lebanon, for example, MAG is working alongside other organizations in support of the national authority's goal to clear the remaining 33% of land contaminated by cluster munitions by 2016. Safe access to land for agriculture, housing, grazing, commercial crops and businesses will allow the owners and users to return to the physical safety and economic standard of living they enjoyed in 2006. Until the land is cleared, those communities face tremendous physical risk and economic hardships, preventing them from moving forward with their lives.

For MAG, support for these conventions and treaties is an integral part of our work to remind the world community that this problem cannot be ignored. Steve Goose, chair of the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC) and director of the Arms Division at Human Rights Watch, echoed the sentiment, "Governments need to demonstrate that they are acting with the urgency and comprehensiveness that they have promised in eliminating cluster munitions and addressing the effects these inhumane weapons have on civilians all over the world."

The 11th Meeting of the State Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty will be meeting later this year in Cambodia, and MAG will again be present at this important convention. This event is particularly significant as it returns to the place where world leaders began working together to ban landmines. Cambodia remains one of the most heavily affected countries in the world – another reminder that our work is far from done.

MAG was well represented at the Lebanon meeting with members of staff from around the world. In the words of MAG Director of Operations Rob White, "The opportunity for everyone who is concerned about cluster bombs to meet together is special to this sector -from contaminated countries like Lebanon to donor countries, the UN and clearance organizations like MAG to meet and talk face-to-face."

For Hussein Tabaja, a MAG employee in Lebanon who normally works in the field as a Site Supervisor, the most important aspect of this convention, though, is the results. Tabaja spent two days in Beirut ready to answer technical questions for delegates visiting the MAG booth and he summed up his experience as follows: "I hope the effort brings in support from donors to clear Lebanon; if it happens then it's worth being here and is the same as being on the site destroying items."

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Join the Team Today!

(NO TRAVEL REQUIRED)

Raising Awareness + Raising Funds = Landmines Destroyed!

Simply hold a fun awareness or fundraising event in your community.

Share your passion for MAG's work by becoming a MAG Deminer today!

To get started or for more information visit www.maginternational.org/deminer

saves lives builds futures



American Task Force for Lebanon: A Champion for Cluster Munitions Removal and Victims Assistance

The American Task Force for Lebanon (ATFL) is a non-profit organization comprised primarily of dedicated Americans of Lebanese heritage and others, working to promote security and prosperity in a free and democratic Lebanon, while enhancing Lebanon's relationship with the United States. Lebanon, bordered by Syria and Israel, does suffer from the instability in the region but remains one of the world's most progressive countries regarding the protection of civil rights for its citizens.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) and landmine contamination has been one of the top initiatives for ATFL support, particularly since the 2006 bombings in Lebanon. Dr. George Cody, Executive Director of ATFL, explains why this issue is so critical, "This issue affects so many people directly. A farmer or a child can pick up cluster munitions while engaging in normal activities and be killed or severely injured."

During a recent trip to attend the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2MSP), Dr. Cody was able to view the progress Lebanon has made since the war in 2006, but also met many victims still suffering, often because victim's assistance centers lack the resources to meet the need. ATFL advocates that this issue must be addressed with a three prong approach-clearance, victims'

assistance, and education-and works to promote balanced support among these areas.

ATFL and its network have financially supported MAG for the last several years to do work in Lebanon in two of these areas: clearance and education. ATFL has helped raise more than \$2.3 million from the United States Government in 2008-2009 to clear unexploded cluster munitions in southern Lebanon and an additional \$104,000 from private sources in 2009-10, generating a \$200,000 match from the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement to help fund MAG's work in Lebanon.

"ATFL has been proud of its association with MAG and the clearance figures that show 67% of Lebanon is UXO free," says Dr. Cody, "and hopefully the world community will continue its work removing these deadly munitions until everyone in the country can live safely. In the southern part of the country, which is largely agricultural, there is still significant contamination threatening families' abilities to provide for themselves."



Extraordinary Americans Supporting MAG: Cathy Gibson

Cathy Gibson was always somewhat aware of the dangers mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) posed for communities around the world, but it wasn't until she joined the Rotary Club of Seattle in 2000 that she became actively involved in mine action. As it turned out, her Rotary club was already active in mine action and some of her fellow members had established an International Rotarians for Mine Action group. In 2008, Cathy headed to the Rotary International Convention in Los Angeles where she ended up helping staff at the Mine Action booth. After meeting a number of "mine action champions", including MAG's Pat Patierno, Cathy said her passive interest quickly became a desire to actively help.



Shortly after her eye-opening experience at the convention, Cathy joined a group of Rotarians headed to the Balkans, where they toured several mine-impacted countries seeing first hand the devastation caused by mines and UXO. As part of the visit they toured the world-renowned Institute for Rehabilitation of Slovenia, a center specifically founded to help mine victims recover. This experience left Cathy "stunned at the long legacy of landmines" and frustrated that more was not being done to rid the world of this scourge.

Inspired by her tour of the Balkans, Cathy headed up another Rotary expedition to Lebanon in 2010. When asked why she picked Lebanon, Cathy responded by saying she was



intrigued by the "cross-current of multiple conflicts over time" and wanted to "understand how a country could survive such trauma". At times during her visit she described feeling as if she were in some kind of twilight zone. In some cities there were completely abandoned areas due to the high levels of mine and UXO contamination. In other cities "there would be some rebuilt buildings, but if you go two blocks around the corner there were shattered buildings...just rubble."

After returning from her Lebanon trip, Cathy felt it was extremely important to share what she had experienced. With the help of a couple other Rotarians she developed a presentation on her experiences in Lebanon and what other Rotary clubs could do to help. Her efforts paid off and she quickly gained strong support. Working with MAG and a Rotary club based in Beirut, she spearheaded a proposal to raise \$5,000 to make repairs to essential pieces of mine removal equipment that, once back in operation, would allow thousands of people to return to their land.

When asked why of all the humanitarian issues to focus on she choose mine action, Cathy told us because it is a compound problem that addresses multiple issues. It tackles the issues of land rights, humanitarian aid, and sustainable communities. In short it is "a comprehensive approach to a complex and challenging problem," she said. When she isn't attending Rotary events and meetings, or participating in mine action activism, Cathy works as a Managing Partner at the Evolve Partner Group.

MAG America is proud to release:

Surviving the Peace

Surviving the Peace is a story of devastation and hope. The film follows the devastation of one family, whose lives were tragically altered by UXO, and MAG's fight to remove landmines and unexploded ordnance to give families in so many countries a chance for a better future. Be part of the fight.

To view this video online go to:
www.maginternational.org/usa/news/surviving-the-peace-launch/



everyone can make the world a better place.



Share this film with your friends, family, and co-workers. Use Facebook, Twitter, Emails--spread the word!



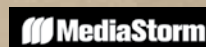
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ASK US HOW YOU CAN **ORGANIZE A VIEWING.** SHARE THIS FILM WITH A GROUP OR ORGANIZATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Start by watching this short film.



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