



## MAG Sri Lanka Programme Update July / August 2009



Final modification and testing of 4 new excavators with rake attachment is currently ongoing prior to field deployment at the beginning of October

**Reporting Period:** 01 July - 31 August 2009

### **Activities & Outputs Summary:**

- **Rapid village assessment operations started in Vavuniya District in the north**
- **Ongoing General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA), technical survey and clearance in Mannar District**, in support of the planned return of families displaced by conflict
- **18 anti-personnel mines and 93 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) uncovered in Mannar**
- **Search and clearance of a total of 43,704m<sup>2</sup> of land** through a combination of manual and mechanical methods in Batticaloa District, with the removal of **2 items of UXO**
- **Major programme expansion with 5 new Mine Action Teams and 4 new Community Liaison Teams deployed following funding approval from US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, AusAID and DFID**

### **Impact Summary:**

4,883 individuals from 1,332 families are scheduled to return to the 33 villages where rapid assessment was undertaken by MAG staff during the reporting period. The programme is now in the process of significant expansion with the aim of maximising impact over the coming months in terms of IDP returns. It is anticipated that further returns will take place during October to villages in Mannar District where teams have been working over the past few months.

## ACTIVITIES

### Northern Sri Lanka

The programme is working in support of efforts to declare villages safe for the return of IDPs currently being housed in camps around Vavuniya. Approximately 280,000 IDPs from across the north remain in camps - the Government of Sri Lanka has stated that it plans to resettle 80% to their home areas by the end of 2009.

MAG is currently working in support of this initiative by undertaking survey and clearance in support of the return of IDPs to Mannar and Vavuniya Districts. In conjunction with the District Mine Action Office in Vavuniya and the Sri Lankan Army, MAG conducted rapid assessment of 33 villages in Vavuniya District during late July and early August. Of these villages, 7 require follow-on survey and / or clearance, whilst the remaining 26 were declared safe for returns. Further rapid assessment in support of returns is planned for September. In addition, GMAA was completed in the Adampan area in Mannar District during August, enabling clearance plans to be developed for that area.

Clearance is ongoing in Pallaikuli village in Mannar, where a total of 117 mines and 112 items of UXO had been recovered in close proximity to the village from the start of operations in May until the end of August. It is expected that the work at this village, where 77 families are due to return, will be completed during September.

### Eastern Sri Lanka

All operational activities in the east continued to be undertaken from the base in Batticaloa. Clearance continued on a large task area in Kajuwatta North, in the north of Batticaloa District. The Japanese Government continued to support the programme by funding the mechanical clearance component - one Bozena-B4 mechanical flail was deployed in Batticaloa, with the other machine deployed in Mannar in the north.

In addition, staff in the east completed GMAA in 4 villages – Kurukkankankulam, Vittpanaimadhu, Puludumannodai and Aliodai - all in Eralaikulam GN. Confirmed and / or suspected mined areas were identified in each of the villages, which will require clearance in the future.

### Future Plans

MAG's activities in eastern Sri Lanka will end for the time being during September 2009 due to the priority in the north. All the remaining staff in Batticaloa will be relocated to the north by the end of the month. The programme will deploy a total of 6 Mine Action Teams, 2 Bozena teams, 4 Technical Survey teams (each with modified excavator) and 6 Community Liaison Teams by the beginning of October. Plans are now being made to increase this capacity further to meet projected needs and support IDP returns.

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- *Hurvis Foundation*
- *Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust*
- *Rowan Trust*
- *AusAID*
- *US Department of State, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement*
- *UK Department for International Development (DFID)*

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