

Quarterly news roundup:

All field work – covering five provinces - has been completed for the Gender study that is being carried out in conjunction with UXO Lao.

The M&E team have been working on the database which will link inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts for each project and improve both information management and donor reporting. Links will also be made to IMSMA, the NRA database.

MAG's office in Khammouane will move from Gnommalath to Mahaxay during February.

Ruwantha Weerasinghe, Admin and Logistics Manager from MAG Sri Lanka, has started a six month assignment with MAG Lao to provide support to logistics and administration staff.

If you would like further detail on any of the above please contact us

MAGazine is produced by:

MAG Lao
Ban Sithanneua
Vientiane
Lao PDR
Tel: +856 (0) 21 251 849 / 252 004
Fax: +856 (0) 21 217 505
Email: maglao@laopdr.com

www.mag.org.uk

MAG Lao receives rare honour

Governor of Khammouane Province thanks MAG

In December MAG Lao was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by the Governor of Khammouane province, Mr Khambay Damlat.

The certificate was awarded in recognition of MAG's work in the province carried out during 2007. Three projects cleared UXO in Mahaxay, Gnommalath and Boualapha districts. 'These certificates are very rarely given to international organisations and we are very proud,' said Sivilay Chanthaphoumy, MAG's Office Manager in the province.



MAG's Executive Director also honoured in UK

MAG is delighted by the news that Lou McGrath, the organisation's Executive Director since 1997, has been appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Lou McGrath (55) has been listed in the British Queen's New Year Honours list for his services to mine clearance. He has been involved in the clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance since MAG was founded in 1989.



MAG Lao's work is made possible through the generous support of the following donors:



Project highlights:

Support to UXO Lao Operations Houaphanh



In conjunction with the Provincial Coordinator and his Deputy, a report on the future direction of the support was prepared. Now that administration and compliance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) have shown significant improvements. The report outlines a move towards improving individual skills and confidence with regard to Explosive Ordnance Disposal. SOP quizzes have started for senior EOD technicians and team leaders – a fun way to improve essential knowledge – with good results.

Female EOD Clearance Team Xieng Khouang Province, Lao PDR (co-funded by Good Gifts and AMR)



From
the People of Japan

The team is now operating as a complete unit and are able to conduct day to day tasks competently. They have cleared UXO from multiple sites across Nong Het district, finding and destroying grenades and mortars as well as BLUs (cluster bomb submunitions), the most common item found in Laos. During the last quarter the team was able to clear agricultural land in four villages.

Integrated UXO Clearance for sustainable outcomes in Khammouane Mahaxay district



The project continued to provide UXO clearance service in support of not only of Triangle but also International Relief and Development and the World Food Programme. Operations in the last quarter were focused on clearing gardens for Triangle and a dam/drainage project for WFP. Support to clearance of school grounds was also provided.

Mine Risk Education Support provided to the National Regulatory Authority MRE team



A new Lao national MRE Officer has started and a comprehensive induction will be provided over the coming months. The MRE posters are about to be printed, and the radio spots have also been approved. Guidelines for use of these materials have been developed and workshops for relevant persons will be held soon. The MRE strategy has received final approval and will be presented at the technical working group meeting in early February.

UXO action for sustainable community development (programme-wide funding)



MAG has continued to clear areas for toilets, water pipes and water tanks for the Lao Red Cross. The final access road for the World Food Programme (in the current financial year) is now being completed. Since April 2007 a total of 80,502 m² has been cleared for agricultural purposes (to improve food security).

UXO clearance, pro-poor tourism and sustainable management Plain of Jars, Xieng Khouang



At one of the jar sites (Ban Songhak), 1184 BLUs – known locally as bombies – were found in an area of approximately 500 square metres. The likely explanation is that two cluster bomb units were dropped from a very low height – and the submunitions did therefore not explode on impact. All UXO clearance at the four jar sites and to benefit local communities has now been completed. The target of clearing 140,000 square metres for agriculture has been achieved.

Humanitarian UXO clearance Lang Khan Development Zone, Boualapha district



About 200,000 square metres were cleared between October and December. Almost 4,500 items of UXO have been destroyed since the project began in January 2006, making an enormous contribution to improving food security and providing basic infrastructure in the project area.

The Partnership for Safe Educational Opportunities Boualapha, Mahaxay and Ngommalat districts



HDI funded teams have cleared 71 of the 101 schools requiring clearance, with 22 other schools having been cleared by other MAG teams. The three HDI teams have continued to work well supporting IRD. Areas for water boreholes and vegetable gardens have been remapped due to some planning changes. Clearance is now being concentrated in Mahaxay and Boualapha districts.

A word in your ear

Interview with Picsouban Mankhounkham (Toui), 26 - Community Liaison Team Member

'Without Community Liaison there would be no information for MAG to base its work on. It would be impossible for us to decide where to clear without input from the community.'

Community Liaison is the first step in MAG's UXO clearance process. It allows us to collect information and coordinate with the local community so that their needs are met.

We collect information such as the history of the village, number of UXO accidents, and the living conditions of the people.

When we assist the village to prioritise the clearance we look at many factors, but we try to help the poorest community members first.

If there are many poor families then those who collect scrap metal are prioritised [in order to provide them with an alternative means of income generation].

The part of my job I like the most is surveying surface bombs [bombs visible on the ground]. Clearing those bombs makes a lot of difference because it removes the possibility of children playing with them.'



Remember these faces

New people /new roles

All photos: MAG Lao



Nou Her – field assistant.



Amone – Senior Medic. Amone previously worked for MAG as a medic and Team Leader



Phonexay (Bob) – Provincial Operations Manager, Khammouane. Bob was previously a MAG Field Assistant

Did you complete our survey?

If you were one of those who completed our communications questionnaire back in October, thank you very much. The information provided will help us enormously.

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