

## Quarterly news roundup:

Jo Durham left MAG in March in order to start a PhD related to the Mine Action Sector. David Hayter is the new Acting Country Programme Manager.

Ambassador Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited MAG field operations in Xieng Khouang and Khammouane between 21-24 April.

A senior official from the US Department of Defence visited US-funded projects in Xieng Khouang on 26th April.

AusAID began funding a six month extension of the 'Humanitarian UXO Clearance' project in Khammouane.

Two Khammouane-based projects, one funded by The Humpty Dumpty Institute/US Department of Agriculture and one by the US Department of State, have been extended for another year.

Global Medic carried out further training during April.

A UXO Visitor Information Centre is now open in our Vientiane office, open 8am-12pm and 1pm

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



## Safer scrap

Foundry project to clear 20,000 items of UXO

Photo: Sean Sutton / MAG

### An innovative MAG project to clear UXO from a foundry in Phonsavanh is now underway.

The foundry is the final destination of much of the scrap metal collected in Xieng Khouang.

Villagers collect scrap and sell it to local dealers, who in turn sell it to the foundry. Here the metal is melted down and made into steel rods used in construction.

The scrap collected often includes UXO, much of which is live.

"After there were accidents at the foundry, the owners stopped melting down UXO and just let it pile up," said Soth Phommalin, MAG's Provincial Programme Manager in Xieng Khouang.

Over 20,000 items of UXO are currently stored here, including cluster bomb submunitions, rockets, grenades and White Phosphorus rockets.

It is possible that if one item in one of the piles exploded, it could set off a series of detonations.

Around 45 people work at the foundry, and there are houses of local residents within sight. If there was a major accident it could result in numerous casualties.

The project will clear UXO from the foundry and scrap dealers' yards, reduce the acceptance of UXO as scrap metal and provide scrap dealers with safety briefings and a reporting system for UXO.

The project is funded by the US Department of State.

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



# Project highlights:

## Support to UXO Lao Operations Houaphanh Province



Structured problem solving activities have started. This involves giving staff hypothetical scenarios and giving them one hour to come up with a plan for disposal and protective works for the surrounding area. Technical instruction periods have also begun, predominantly for large bomb fusing. The MAG team has also been involved in Quality Assurance visits to clearance sites.

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



From  
the People of Japan

The team destroyed 91 items of UXO over the last quarter, and cleared more than 60,000 square metres of agricultural land in Nong Het district. The team received several media visits during the quarter including visits from Reuters and Agence France Presse.

## Integrated UXO Clearance for sustainable outcomes in Khammouane Mahaxay district



This project ended at the end of March. The total area cleared was 272,017 square metres (217% of target), benefiting 25 communities in the districts of Mahaxay, Gnommalath, and Bualapha. These communities identified 44 tasks for schools grounds, school improvement activities, dam/drainage, roads, and bridges in support of IRD, Triangle, and WFP.

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



Guidelines for use of the recently developed MRE materials focusing on high-risk groups such as scrap metal dealers, are now finished. Training on use of the materials will take place in May and June. A workshop has already been held on the MRE radio spots, with participants from national and provincial radio stations and Departments of Information and Culture. A review of national standards (including standards for MRE) was conducted at the end of March.

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



Two UXO clearance teams in Xieng Khouang operated with DFID funds during April, destroying 25 items of UXO and clearing land for agriculture and water and sanitation work. DFID funds are used across the programme as necessary.

## Scrap metal foundry UXO clearance and EOD project Xieng Khouang



The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in late February 2008. Preparations started at the end of March and activities at the Foundry, with Foundry staff and scrap dealers have now begun. So far the team has responded to a total of 240 spot tasks reported by the community, destroying 920 items of UXO.

## Reducing the burden of UXO in vulnerable communities Khammouane province



This project commenced in April. MAG's activities will be largely determined by the clearance needs of the World Food Programme, our main development partner in the province. This is a joint project with UXO Lao.

## The Partnership for Safe Educational Opportunities Boulapha, Mahaxay and Ngommalat districts



In Boulapha and Gnommalat districts, food insecurity for over half the year is not uncommon and increasing land available for food production is crucial in contributing to poverty reduction and improving school attendance. During April, land was cleared for an IRD school, agricultural land and for drainage works conducted by the World Food Programme. In addition, 39 sites were handed over to community members.

# A word in your ear

Interview with Noimany Pialeuxay, driver for All-Female Team

"MAG was the first organisation in Phonsavanh to recruit a female driver, and everyone was talking about it. I wanted to apply because I like driving. Some men said to me that I couldn't do it, that I wouldn't get the job.

I'm not nervous driving a four-wheel drive car. In the past I've driven a Russian six-wheeler truck!

We have to work as hard as possible so that this [UXO] problem does not exist in the future.

I feel proud because I am one of a team, helping people to be safe from UXO contamination.

Our work really benefits communities. In Nong Het, the next generation won't have to face the same problems.

Many women ask me if MAG is still recruiting. When women see our team working they realise that they can do the same if they are trained."

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*Xieng Khouang's all-female team (one of two such teams operated by MAG Lao) is currently funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF).*



Photo: Nick Axelrod / MAG

## MAG Team Leaders attend EOD-3 training

UXO Lao invites MAG staff to participate

Photo: Ben Johnson / MAG

At the invitation of UXO Lao, eight MAG Team Leaders are currently attending an EOD 3 training course.

This course will provide the staff with a formal qualification that enables them to work independently in the field, and manage the day-to-day operations of their teams by themselves.

'We are very grateful to UXO Lao for providing this opportunity,' said David Hayter, Acting Country Programme Manager.



Mr Kouaneng Ha, one of the MAG Team Leaders attending the training

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