

Quarterly news roundup:

- The total number of square metres cleared by MAG in 2009 was 7,405,854, an increase of 76 percent over 2008. Staff numbers remained the same. The introduction of the single person drill combined with other changes in methodology produced this improvement.

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed for a new project in association with World Vision and funded by AusAID (as part of the LANGOCA initiative). Operations commenced during January.

- Technical Operations Manager John McFarlane was interviewed for the BBC 'Tropic of Cancer' tv series

- MAG's first 12-technician / 12 detector clearance team started work in Khammouane in September, and so far has cleared about three times the amount of land an eight technician / four detector team averages. MAG will enlarge all teams to 12 technicians / 12 detectors over the coming year.

- A survey of national staff was undertaken to quantify the positive changes that have occurred as a result of employment with MAG. Many staff reported that their family situation had improved as a direct result of working for the organisation.

New MAG Lao PDR photo report online at:
www.maginternational.laopdr

Make spoons not war

MAG reduces risk from scrap metal spoon production



Metalworkers in Ban Naphia, Xieng Khouang province produce about 150,000 spoons a year - made almost entirely from war scrap. The spoons are sold for around ten US cents each.

The RISE project (a collaboration between Helvetas, Sunlabob and the Lao Government) is now working with the village to produce aluminium souvenirs such as bracelets, which will be sold to tourists in order to generate extra income for the village.

One challenge facing the project is ensuring the safety of the aluminium supply chain, as collecting scrap metal collection is a major cause of UXO accidents. MAG was asked to provide Risk Education as part of

the project, having gained relevant experience through a recent project related to the scrap metal trade.

MAG Community Liaison staff have worked with both the spoon casters and the scrap metal dealers who supply the metal, teaching them to reduce the risks they face. Several people from Ban Naphia have been injured by UXO over recent years.

Some of those MAG has worked with have been trained as peer educators, so that they can spread the safety messages to others.

Sources of the aluminum used to make the spoons include the stabilisation fins of cluster bomb casings, flares, certain fuses and parts of fighter jets.

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



Project highlights:

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



MAG carried out UXO clearance and MRE activities in collaboration with various development partners over the last quarter, enabling a range of development actions to take place in safety. In Xieng Khouang alone, land was cleared for more than 100 latrines and several water pipes (for ADRA), for a village hall, school sites, a road and water piping (for the Poverty Reduction Fund), and for irrigation and rice paddy expansion (for Concern Worldwide).

Mainstreaming UXO Clearance into Rural Development Initiatives Khammouane



This project has two teams. The roving team removed 296 items of UXO over the last quarter. The clearance team cleared a total of 617, 717m² over the same period.

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



Support to the NRA's Mine Risk Education (MRE) unit commenced in March 2007 and was completed at the end of December 2009. During the final three months the MAG TA assisted the NRA to coordinate the MRE sector wide workplan for 2010. This involved liaison with all MRE operators and marks a significant move towards greater cooperation and solidarity in the sector. The unit also responded to Typhoon Ketsana, which resulted in previously buried items of UXO being brought to the surface. With technical advice from the MAG TA and support from UNICEF, a workshop was held to develop emergency MRE materials. The materials will be distributed in early 2010 by MRE operators, district authorities and emergency relief organisations.

Reducing the burden of UXO in vulnerable communities Khammouane



A Project Officer has been recruited to build the capacity of three officials from district level and one from provincial level. The officer will conduct a series of practical and theoretical training sessions to equip local government representatives with the skills to survey and prioritise land clearance. This is a significant step towards prioritising UXO clearance to match local development plans.

The partnership for Safe Education Opportunities Khammouane



This project was completed in November 2009. Since October 2008 (when this phase of the project started), 428 agricultural sites, 40 schools and five infrastructure sites were cleared. The total area of land cleared was 2,611,812m², an increase of 326% on the project target (800,000m²). The increase in productivity can be explained by the introduction of single person drills, under which each member of a clearance team has a detector.

All inclusive

How the Community Liaison (CL) process involves beneficiaries in UXO clearance

“Like a bridge that crosses between community members and MAG,” is how Khammao describes the CL process.

“CL provides the information needed to ensure that our work benefits the community,” says Khammao, who is MAG’s CL supervisor in Khammouane province.

“Most CL staff are from the local area so we understand the real situation in the villages round here,” he says. In addition, CL teams always include both men and women to ensure that their clearance needs – which are often different – are taken into account.

One of the main jobs of the CL staff is to help communities select and

prioritise land for clearance. Several criteria are used, including the need to assist the poorest families first, the planned use of the land and the extent and impact of UXO contamination.



Mr Khammao. Photo: MAG Lao PDR

Before any UXO clearance work actually takes place, community meetings and individual meetings are held to learn about UXO contamination in the village and how it affects people.

“In the last village I worked in, a villager just walked straight up to me and asked ‘Could you please clear my land first?’ But we could not give him an answer until the prioritisation process was finished,” says Khammao.

Once the prioritisation is done, the location of items of UXO known to the community are recorded using handheld GPS devices. Khammao describes a recent task. “I surveyed a small field belonging to Mrs. Maak, a widow with three children.

She showed me an aluminum tube containing yellow bombies lying on the ground.



A BLU 24B - the type found by Mrs Maak.
Photo: Sean Sutton / MAG

“She was afraid to carry on farming, but did not have any other land to use. So she had just stopped using part of the field, even though her field was small,” he says. This story illustrates exactly how UXO contributes to poverty – through denying the use of land needed to grow crops.

The known items of UXO are destroyed first, after which prioritised areas of land are thoroughly searched, and any other items of UXO are dealt with.

After clearance is completed, CL staff provide a handover certificate to each landowner, ensuring that they have a formal record of the details of the clearance.



A CL staff member presenting a handover certificate. Photo: Bart Verweij / MAG

Facts and figures

Programme statistics,
October - December 2009

Square metres cleared	1,171,482m ²
Villages where clearance took place	33
Community members hired to cut vegetation (Village Assisted Clearance)	960
Land cleared for food security (% of total)	95%
UXO destroyed	6003
Beneficiaries (clearance)	27,858
Beneficiaries (Mine Risk Education)	17,396

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