



MAG'S APPROACH TO SALW AND CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL (CWMD)

Background

MAG initially became involved in the destruction of small arms light weapons (SALW) informally during the 1990s. This was through provision of technical support to UN-run DDR (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration) programmes in Angola and Cambodia, with regard to assessment of the safety of weapons and ammunition handed in and implementing their destruction.

In 2001, large abandoned stockpiles of ammunition in southern Sudan, close to the borders of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), came to MAG's attention whilst conducting mine clearance activities in the area. Most of the abandoned stores were huts in the middle of villages where ammunition had been stockpiled.

Their presence caused a threat to the surrounding village – with the risk that they might blow up – and a wider threat in terms of providing easy access to weapons and ammunition for criminal elements or local guerrillas (the LRA – Lord's Resistance Army – were very active in the area at the time).

Unfortunately, many of the traditional MAG donors were unable to fund any response as their financial resources were tied to clearance of anti-personnel mines and

compliance with the Ottawa Convention. The following year, during survey and inventory of some of the stockpiles, SAM-7 Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) were discovered in one poorly secured store, along with the necessary trigger pack and batteries to enable firing. This was shortly after two similar missiles had been fired at an Israeli airliner as it left Mombassa, and the discovery of MANPADS led to MAG's first funding from an SALW-specific budget.

Whilst expanding mine clearance activities in north-western DRC, MAG came across large stockpiles of weapons which had been handed in as part of a DDR programme but, with no specific plan for their destruction, had been abandoned when peacekeepers withdrew.

Through actively networking, MAG has become aware of a number of regional co-ordination and advocacy organisations, and through them has been able to offer support to states within the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region with regard to meeting the obligations under global or regional agreements.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of MAG's involvement with SALW and conventional weapons

ABOVE: MANPADS BEING SAFELY REMOVED BY MAG IN SUDAN IN 2006

management and disposal (CWMD) is to assist states in achieving their obligations under the UN Programme of Action (POA) and similar regional agreements, such as the Nairobi Protocol.

Non-state actors seeking similar support will also be assisted in relation to SALW they are responsible for.

Activities and Expertise

Analysis of states' reports submitted for the review of the UN POA by 103 countries indicated the following:

- While conditions for reliable and effective stockpile management are well-addressed by some developed countries, references to this issue in terms of what actions are being taken to improve, especially by the most affected states, are vague;
- 71 per cent mention a need for support and training in relation to stockpile management and security.



Export, import, transit controls and national legislation were the most frequently addressed POA themes and this reflects MAG's findings to date – that the SALW sector generally seems to have many agencies and organisations involved in advocacy, policy and legislation, but very few who actually specialise in providing technical assistance and support.

MAG has identified the following areas where it has existing in-house expertise that can be applied to supporting SALW management and control initiatives:

- Assistance and advice relating to the destruction of weapons;
- Assistance and advice relating to the destruction of ammunition;
- Assistance and advice relating to safe and secure storage of weapons and ammunition;
- Training and support relating to effective stockpile management;
- Development and delivery of competency-based training programmes designed to make capacity-building and skills-transferral more focused and transparent;
- In collaboration with relevant global and regional bodies, developing a set of stockpile management standards that are realistic, appropriate and achievable in developing countries (management standards covering physical security of stored ammunition and weapons, as well as safety relating to bulk storage of explosives).

MAG is currently undertaking CWMD projects in Burundi, Cambodia, DRC, Iraq, Sudan and Vietnam. In addition, MAG conducted an assessment to the Central African Republic during February 2008 and is currently seeking funding for operations there.

In Cambodia, MAG currently deploys mobile rapid response Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams across the programme. Despite being one of world's most mine-affected countries, recent trends in Cambodia have shown that unexploded ordnance (UXO) and SALW are now causing more accidents and victims than landmines¹.

The impact of massive landmine-laying between 1979 and 1996 on the population has been well-documented; however, limited attention has been granted to the former battlegrounds that were infested with other remnants of conflict², notably mortars, shells, rocket-propelled grenades, bullets and other ground-to-ground munitions.

These areas are now where Cambodia's rural poor reside, trying to build their livelihoods amongst the potentially lethal post-conflict detritus. A recent analysis of monthly statistical data, collected from the MAG teams operational in Kampong Cham province, indicates that a high percentage of ordnance located and destroyed is within the SALW category.

A MEMBER OF
MAG DRC STAFF
USES HYDRAULIC
SHEARS TO CUT UP
AN ASSAULT RIFLE

In 2007, an overwhelming 92 per cent of casualties in this province were caused by SALW/UXO – as opposed to landmine – incidents³. As a result, and due to the rise in deliberate handling, MAG is refocusing its EOD response in Kampong Cham to address this urgent issue and better target high-risk groups.

In Iraq, during the course of demining operations, MAG became aware of significant stockpiles of SALW ammunition in the north of the country. Many of the stockpiles were close to built-up areas and were inhibiting reconstruction projects; additionally, many of them were being looted for explosives.

MAG secured funding to establish dedicated mobile SALW teams in Iraq in mid-2007. A toll-free SALW telephone hotline was publicised, enabling communities to report stockpiles and caches to MAG. In July 2008, MAG's eight SALW emergency teams were deployed to 196 tasks, destroying 5,707 items of SALW ammunition, taking the number of items destroyed as part of the SALW project to more than 56,500.

In addition, in July, four dedicated Community Liaison teams were deployed from Dahok, Diyana, Sulimaniyah and Chamchamal sectors to identify and prioritise instances of SALW contamination for removal and destruction. These CL teams also started an SALW awareness project, which aims to warn children and other vulnerable groups about the dangers of SALW ammunition. A children's activity book, as well as posters and leaflets, has been specially designed to support the project.

MAG DRC has been running a CWMD project since October 2006. MAG DRC's CWMD strategy has been developed to cover all military regions in the country by the end of 2012, and has three distinct elements: assessment, destruction and capacity-building. The programme goal is to achieve the destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition in DRC before 2012 and ensure the safe storage of items, while building local expertise with Congolese authorities to ensure a national capacity for stockpile-management and disposal of surplus or expired weapons and ammunition.

The programme currently targets military stocks (army, navy and air force) and, in the near future, police stocks. The project has national coverage, with one dedicated Technical Operations Manager based in Kinshasa and four Technical Field Managers leading mobile destruction teams deployable to meet operational requirements wherever needed within DRC.

In addition, a weapons destruction workshop has been set up in Kinshasa. By the end of August 2008, destruction figures totalled 1,192,268 items of ammunition (weighing 229,161 tons) and 79,495 weapons.

MAG is committed to developing and expanding its work in the field of SALW/ CWMD through working collaboratively with national and international stakeholders and donors.



Notes:

¹ From 1 January 2004 to the end of December 2007, UXO-related accidents accounted for nearly 67 per cent of the 2,574 recorded landmine and UXO/SALW casualties in Cambodia. The total number of SALW/UXO victims is 1,542 compared to 1,032 casualties of landmines. This data was obtained from the Cambodian Mine and UXO Victim Information System (CMVIS).

² MAG uses the term remnants of conflict to describe all items recovered and destroyed as part of its humanitarian disarmament activities, which include anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, explosive remnants of war (ie. any type of explosive weapons, including ammunition, but not including landmines), abandoned and unexploded ordnance, and SALW. This term has been developed to reflect more accurately the broad range of clearance activities undertaken by MAG.

³ Source: Cambodian Mine and UXO Victim Information System (CMVIS).

THE MAIN AIM OF MAG'S CWMD WORK IS TO ASSIST STATES IN ACHIEVING THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE U.N. PROGRAMME OF ACTION AND SIMILAR REGIONAL AGREEMENTS