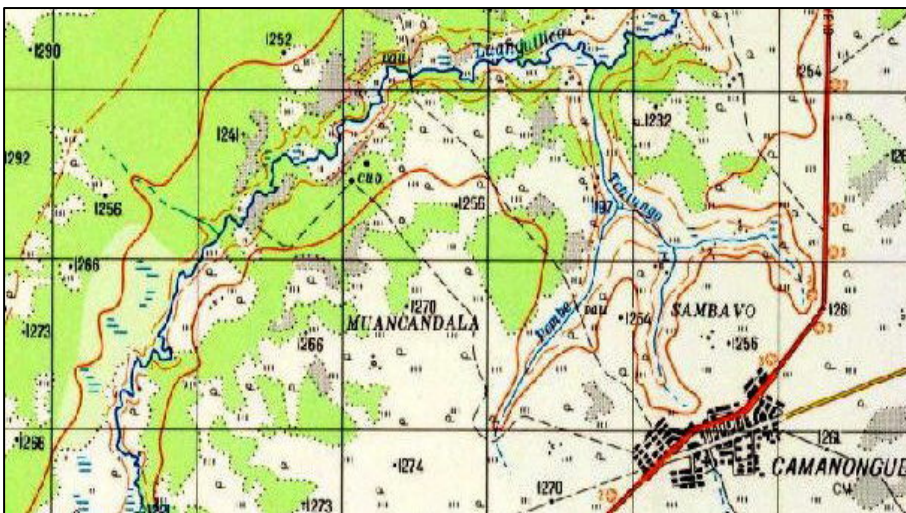




*MAG's Executive Director, Lou McGrath, discusses the impact of MAG's community clearance with a local elder in the village of Canhengue*



MAG has started to clear land in the Tchawia minefield around the town of Camanongue. The site, mined in 1988, is one of the forty most highly impacted sites in the country with the area having seen a significant expansion in population since the end of the conflict. Having assessed the needs of the local population, MAG will initially clear and verify an area of 51,000m<sup>2</sup>. With the site just 53 kms northeast of Luena and on the main road connecting Moxico and Lunda

Sul, the site remains a considerable threat to the local community and those travelling between the two Provinces.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS:**

**Clearance and verification of 75,031m<sup>2</sup> of land and road** through a combination of hand, electronic and visual search techniques

**Mechanical preparation of 76,385m<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land** by MAG Angola's Mechanical Operations Units.

**Removal and destruction of a total of 1,542 items** (weighing over three tons) including 1,297 small arms light weapons, 1 anti-personnel mines, 104 unexploded ordnance (UXO), and 140 abandoned rounds of ammunition

**Completion of 66 emergency clearance tasks** thus benefiting **28,644** men, women and children

**15 mine risk education sessions** conducted benefiting **2,353** individuals

### Distribution of 15,000 leaflets and stickers to high risk communities

Following the verification of 245 kms of road (please refer to *Issue One*) and as part of MAG's ongoing community-based approach to clearance, MAG is currently distributing 10,000 leaflets and 5,000 stickers highlighting the danger of contaminated verges. The road is a key link to the interior of Moxico province and, as stated by Bradley Guerrant, WFP Country Director in Angola, it is "a vital lifeline for the entire region and tens of thousands of people will now be able to move around freely again". MAG has also begun clearance of the high risk verges which are primarily within 60 kms of Luena where offensive and defensive positions were most resilient.



### MAG's Executive Director discusses clearance with local elders

During a recent visit to the Angola Programme, Lou McGrath, MAG's Executive Director, met local elders to discuss clearance priorities in the communities where the impact of mine and UXO contamination is greatest. Of particular interest was the village of Canhengue, located just a couple of kilometres from the extensive Alto Campo mine site and particularly vulnerable given its proximity to the minefield. Villagers, in the past, have often entered Alto Campo to collect firewood on their way to and from Luena market (6.5 kms away) causing a number of fatal accidents. According to local elders, the villagers are particularly pleased with the clearance of the area given the negative impact of the mine field on the area. As one elder, fifty-two year old, Fernandes dos Santos, stressed to Lou McGrath, "there used to be a lot of accidents but now everyone has safe access to the land between Canhengue and the market". According to Lou, "the discussions I had with the elders of Canhengue village, the sight of children playing freely and villagers being able to carry out their normal day-to-day activities, without fear of death or injury, highlighted the importance of MAG's continued and very valuable presence in the region."

### MAG activities facilitate electoral registration

In the build-up to the 15th September (deadline for registration) and with the full consent of the provincial authorities, MAG and its partner Kalofulofu, assisted in the distribution of NDI posters and leaflets relating to electoral education. Such an approach was deemed appropriate following comments made by the Coordinator of the Interministerial Commission for the Electoral Process (CIPE), Virgilio de Fontes Pereira, who noted that considerable areas of the Province were inaccessible. MAG and its partners were able to access those areas deemed contaminated and distribute the registration material in areas which other organisations were not able and/or unwilling to access. As stated last year by the US State Department, landmines remain a "serious impediment to conducting elections in Angola". In the build-up to the presidential and legislative elections, MAG aims to work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that access to polling stations is as extensive as possible so voters can cast their ballot in a safe and democratically conducive environment.

### News Round-Up

- In late October, MAG and the Luanda International School will be holding a week-long Landmine Awareness Raising Week whereby MAG will be making presentations and providing classes on community-based demining and follow on development activities
- In September, MAG received a number of important pieces of equipment from SRSA and WFP. These included vehicles and trailers which will be used to transport heavy duty machinery used for reducing the size of suspect hazardous areas.
- MAG is currently looking to purchase a Casspir MPV. The aim of the vehicle is to support manual clearance processes by conducting area reduction, threat reduction and site preparation in order to prepare the ground for both road verification and demining activities.

For more information on this or any of MAG's programmes please contact:

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