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Get Involved

Walk 10km through Diana's London, cycle across Death Valley and challenge yourself on a fight for survival to raise funds for MAG.

Turn to the back page to find out more.

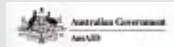


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A MAG technician places a detonator next to an M42 submunition

Restoring Livelihoods

Story by Heena Hasan and Ali Shuaib

Photograph by Sean Sutton

“I couldn’t watch the trees dying and do nothing when I know my family, and other families, rely on them to live.” Before the recent war, Ahmed Zain Awada worked in an orchard on the outskirts of the town of Al Samayah. He supervised a team of labourers who regularly tended the ground and watered the trees, ensuring that each harvest was as plentiful as the last. They all relied on this work for their livelihoods.

Following the ceasefire in August last year, he returned to the orchard and found that it had been at the centre of two cluster bomb strikes. One hundred and twenty five of the trees were irreparably damaged at a cost of US\$5,000. Additionally, US\$20,000 worth of harvest was also lost as the second season had been missed, due to the conflict.

Ahmed waited ten days for help, but after hearing that people were collecting submunitions themselves he started clearing the unexploded items himself, despite the danger. He stockpiled more than 250 submunitions, which the Lebanese Armed Forces then destroyed. However, he realised there were many more items and contacted MAG, who were clearing an area nearby.

When the MAG teams arrived at the orchard he helped them by identifying know dangerous areas, thanks to his knowledge of the terrain. He also assured MAG that he wouldn’t try to remove any more items himself.

As the teams cleared more of the orchard, Ahmed would immediately water the trees - he was concerned that they might die in the heat. Eventually MAG cleared more than 90,000 sq/m, removing and destroying 391 sub-munitions.

Since then Ahmed has been continuing to tend his crop. He now has a team working with him again and feels positive about about next year’s harvest: “I am very happy with MAG’s work. If they hadn’t come here I would have had no choice but to risk my life and continue to clear the orchard myself.”

MAG’s Emergency Response Success in Lebanon (August-November 2006)

Area cleared	195,061 m/sq
Mines Removed	2
Items of UXO removed	143
Cluster bombs removed	10,979
No of cleared ‘Dangerous Areas’	139

Kheun Sokhon is a locality deminer for MAG in Cambodia



Hope and

Story and photograph by Ye

Kheun Sokhon lives in the village of Ou Chheu Krom. Between 1979 and 1998 the area was a battlefield, heavily mined by the Khmer Rouge, Vietnamese troops and the soldiers of the Cambodian government. Kheun's life has been a struggle, not only because, like the other villagers, she lives surrounded by the daily threat, but because she's an amputee having lost her right leg when she stepped on a landmine four years ago while working as a casual labourer in Thailand.

“Being disabled makes things difficult, sometimes I feel just like an animal,” she said, describing her life in the village. She has a young child and, until recently, struggled to get any kind of employment. But now she works as a locality deminer for MAG. She was delighted to have this opportunity, but understandably afraid at the thought of clearing mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Her fears disappeared however over the course of her training. She was also very happy that when training was complete she passed all the tests with a very high score. Because she couldn't read or write, she listened to the trainer very carefully and tried hard to remember what she had learned. Coming second overall in a group of nearly fifty deminers, many of whom had been to school, was a remarkable achievement.

Sokhon has now joined a team clearing her village. “I'm very happy that I'm working with MAG as a deminer. I was selected even though I'm an amputee

Safety

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and can't read or write. With this job, I can earn money and support my child and elderly parents. I want my child to get higher education, to finish grade 10 or 12 and become a grocery seller in the future."

Sokhon thanked MAG for her job as a locality deminer - an innovation developed by MAG that provides training to local people, giving them the skills to

clear mines from their communities and use the salaries to support their families. Sokhon hopes that her salary, along with the income from her brothers and from the corn her parents produce, will enable them to one day buy a small piece of land that they can live on themselves - at the moment they live on land rented from somebody else. Sokhon's final comments reflect her hope for the community and for the safety of her own child: "I hope that after MAG has cleared this area, the people will have a better and safer road to their houses, and that my child will walk safely here without fear of danger."



Motivation

MAG would like to introduce you to the work of Motivation, an international disability and development charity that works in low income countries to enhance the quality of life for people with mobility disabilities. Motivation's activities are perhaps best characterised by the design and provision of low-cost mobility products, namely wheelchairs, tricycles and artificial limbs.

As well as providing these products, Motivation works with locally based organisations to create programmes that impact on disabled people's physical, economic and social situation, ensuring that people with disabilities can participate fully in society. These include

capacity building, products and services, economic empowerment, and rights - including peer group training.

MAG first met Motivation in Cambodia in the early 1990s where they were working on the issue of landmine clearance and the mobility of survivors. MAG and Motivation are planning to work together to help improve the mobility and wheelchair skills of landmine survivors in both Cambodia and Northern Iraq.

If you would like to find out more about Motivation's work to improve the lives of people with mobility disabilities, contact Rosie Sapak on 01275 464012, or sapak@motivation.org.uk. Alternatively visit their website www.motivation.org.uk.



Understanding the Needs

Story by Mark Naftalin

File photo by Sean Sutton

By understanding the needs of communities affected by landmines and the other remnants of conflict, MAG is able to identify, prioritise and plan their clearance activities. To do this MAG uses Community Liaison teams who are skilled in mapping, data collection and delivering Mine Risk Education.

The teams in Angola often deploy to rural areas far from the programme's operations base, camping for up to twenty-one days in villages and communities. As Antonio Saoulo, a 56-year old former refugee now residing in Bairro Luzi, central Moxico, says: "Once we'd resettled, MAG helped us to understand the safe and dangerous areas in our village and provided us with education to keep our families safe."

Thanks to these extended periods in the interior of the province throughout 2006, the teams were able to reach almost 26,000 children, former refugees and members of local communities in eastern Angola. By using a broad

range of techniques including GPS mapping, door-to-door spot reporting of contamination, village meetings and detailed analysis of conflict areas, MAG is able to prioritise the best technical response, which will benefit the maximum number of people. Landon Shroder, Community Liaison Manager says, "By working with affected communities and analyzing the nature of the conflict we can develop the most integrated clearance plans and help these people live their lives in a risk-free environment."

The results of this beneficiary-focused approach have been dramatic; with close to 50,000 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and more than 150 landmines being removed and destroyed from areas that directly affect the way communities live. It's hardly surprising that villagers such as Antonio welcome MAG's continued presence in the area: "We would like to thank MAG for removing the mines around our village. We've now made our homes here and live in peace with our children."

In Phan Op village, MAG's Salaam Amin and his team make a very large bomb safe - using a very small explosion. The bomb case remains intact, and his team then hands it back to the villager on whose land the bomb was found.

The following day, the roving team returns to find three villagers waiting for them. Word has spread that MAG gives back the scrap metal after removing the explosives, and the waiting villagers are eager to report the presence of large bombs on their land. After they have been made safe by MAG they will be able to sell the bomb cases for almost US\$60.

Sixty dollars is a lot of money in Phan Op. The village is in Boulapha district (Khammouane province) - one of the poorest districts in the country. Its residents have very little of value, but there is one resource widely available to them: scrap metal left over from the war.

An estimated 80 per cent of villagers in the district (including children) undertake scrap metal collection with potentially lethal results. They may find harmless scrap metal - or they may find unexploded ordnance (UXO) that injures or kills them.

Such activities are becoming the highest cause of UXO-related injuries in Laos. But whilst the danger level is high, the temptation is great. Collectors are usually paid between US\$16 - US\$23 for large bomb casings, in an area where most people are subsistence farmers with little or no cash income.

MAG is working in the district to remove UXO, but removing the threat in the conventional way - by destroying items completely - would have a severe impact on people's livelihoods in an area where the trade in scrap metal forms a major part of the economy. Therefore in Boulapha, MAG uses what's known as a 'low order technique', which destroys all the explosive material whilst preserving the bomb casing. The cases can then be given back to the villagers, who can safely sell the scrap metal. Another MAG field manager working in the district highlighted how important this approach is. He said: "Once the villagers understand we are destroying dangerous items in a manner that results in scrap being left over, they are more willing to report UXO." The long-term effect of this can only serve to save more lives.



Blow It Up - and Give It Back

Story by Tom Morgan



**Spirit of Diana
Sponsored Walk
Saturday 28 April 2007**

Celebrate the life and work of Diana, Princess of Wales, by taking part in this 10km sponsored walk through London and help raise funds to continue her vital work.

**Death Valley Challenge 2
4 - 11 November 2007**

Take part in MAG's second Death Valley Challenge and cycle 263 miles across one of the most extreme environments on earth, before entering the lights of Las Vegas to celebrate. This really is the trip of a lifetime!

**Operation Minefield:
Dangerzone Survival
2 & 3 June 2007**

Teams of 2 or 4 physically & mentally fit men and women are needed for this test of endurance with the Royal Marine Reserves. See if you are tough enough to survive the pressures of a conflict danger zone.

For more information about any of the above events, contact Harriett on 0161 236 4311 or email events@mag.org.uk



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