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Mines Advisory Group is dedicated to the work of eradicating landmines and unexploded ordnance to save lives and return land to subsistence farming communities, refugees, displaced people, nomadic groups and the poor worldwide. This is achieved by establishing an indigenous capacity to clear mines and ordnance through expert instruction and continuing on-the-job training and advice. The Group also run Awareness Programmes in mine and ordnance-affected communities to reduce loss of life while the long-term task of clearance is undertaken. Mines Advisory Group campaigns for a ban on the production, trade, use and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines and is a member of the Steering Committee of the International Landmines Campaign.

To make a credit card donation tel: 0800 3165589

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Front Cover: 13 year old Candre Antonia activated a mine outside his home.

Landmines deny communities access to their economic resources. Pasture and arable land, water sources, woodland and essential infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, can be rendered unusable.

For refugees and internally displaced peoples returning to their lands at the end of a conflict, landmines mean that the horror of war never stops, that there can be no resumption of normal life.

Landmines leave populations living in fear, they are a direct cause of poverty and they can make even the most basic efforts at post-conflict reconstruction impossible.

Nearly 100 people die or are maimed by mines every day.
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I have just returned from Iraqi Kurdistan, my first field visit since my appointment, in February this year, as director of MAG. Our work there began in May 1992 and was MAG’s first demining programme. I remember well the difficulties MAG faced at the time, newly established as a charity and with the true extent of the problems caused to civilians by landmines not yet fully recognised by donors. Exacerbating this were the operational and logistical problems of building such a programme. These were extreme in an area where internal and external politics provided a serious threat to the security of the local population and MAG’s national and expatriate staff. It is thanks to the determination of those involved to carry out the philosophy and mandate of the charity that large areas of land have been cleared and thousands of tonnes of mines and unexploded ordnance have been destroyed.

Over the following two years MAG expanded rapidly, starting work in Cambodia, Laos and Angola. Alongside the clearance work, MAG developed community mine awareness programmes, always searching for new and more effective ways to assist those who must live with landmines. Still today, MAG is innovative in its efforts to respond to the needs of mine affected communities. Despite the small number of staff available, MAG continued to play an important and active role in both the UK Working Group on Landmines and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, of which it is on the Steering Committee.

As is often the case with young organisations, the small number of staff, committed as they were to getting the job done, found themselves over-stretched. The speed of MAG’s early growth necessitated changes in the structure of the organisation. A radical change of management, however, compounded existing difficulties and delayed the process of transition that was needed. With a dedicated and committed staff, MAG is now back on track, the proper structures and controls have now been set up and careful planning is the order of the day.

Whilst reading this report of our past achievements and our future plans, please bear in mind that it is only with the financial support of our donors that we are able to continue our work.

Finally, two MAG employees Christopher Howes and Houn Hourt developed in Cambodia on 26 March 1996. MAG continues to work for their release. We would like to dedicate this report to them and their families.

Lou McGrath
Director
Mines Advisory Group
It would be easy to assume that there are less people at risk from landmines today than there were in 1987, when the full horror of Soviet landmine strategy in Afghanistan began to reach the world's media. That assumption would be wrong. In the past decade, despite the lessons of Afghanistan and the many other countries devastated by landmines, we have watched as Bosnia and Croatia made huge tracts of their land uninhabitable and unusable. In Cambodia, both Khmer Rouge and Government troops have continued to use mines. Russia, again, showed itself willing to scatter mines randomly, this time in Chechnya. The Gulf War added unknown casualties and vast areas of contaminated land to the international disgrace that is landmine pollution. The list goes on, from Rwanda to Tajikstan to Sudan and Liberia. We are, on the one hand, claiming to be more aware of our environment than past generations, while on the other we are making enormous areas of our planet an unusable wasteland for future generations.

In October 1992, the Mines Advisory Group joined with five other organisations to launch formally the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). The first International NGO Conference on Landmines was held in London in May the following year, bringing together representatives from 40 non-governmental organisations. Less than 5 years later the ICBL is a coalition of 750 NGOs from 44 countries and literally millions of individual supporters have signed petitions calling for their respective governments to ban the production, sale, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines. This pressure has been the major driving force which leading to the Canadian government calling a treaty-signing conference in Ottawa this December, the so-called fast track to a world wide ban. Many nations will sign this treaty and the possibility of an effective global ban - which will stop the use of anti-personnel mines - will be one step closer.

But even with a ban observed by all the nations of the world the problem of those landmines already scattered over more than 60 countries needs to be resolved. Some authorities see the global eradication of landmines from farmers' fields, villages, roads and tracks around the world as technically insurmountable at present. They place their hopes in the technology of the future to resolve the crises of today. Few of these experts have ever seen a minefield. Many of them have a vested interest in researching and selling new technology - most importantly, because they do not know the people in these devastated communities, they do not see the solutions.

In fact, the solutions lie in the very communities who suffer most from the impact of landmines - amongst the people whose livelihoods have been taken away by these weapons. By training people from these communities to solve their own problems they are provided with an income, and their incomes help to revive the local economy. The only limitation on this method of clearing mines, the method employed by MAG, is scale - simply, the number of local demining specialists who can be trained. Scale is determined by available funds and, at present, there is not enough money allocated for landmine eradication to match the size of the international problem. This is short-sighted because mine infested countries will continue to struggle to feed themselves, and will remain dependent on international aid, until the bulk of their mined land is cleared. It is also morally outrageous to stand aside and watch death and maiming which we have the power to stop.

Before examining the most effective ways of providing the necessary funds it is worth restating two facts about landmines which are often overlooked.

The military are culpable. Regardless of their reasons for disseminating landmines, there is not a single recorded instance in the past three decades where military forces have successfully cleared minefields following large scale deployment. In fact there are very few cases where such attempts have ever been made and little evidence that military commanders have given any thought to the post-conflict impact of landmines. This does not necessarily mean that individual military forces have used mines illegally, it simply indicates that the problem has been caused by soldiers.

According to the UN, 110 million anti-personnel landmines are currently scattered around the world.
The second consideration relates to profit. Who has profited directly from the sale, and therefore the use, of landmines? The arms trade, those companies involved in the manufacture and sale of weapons. Once again, this should not be seen as a moral statement regarding the sale of arms, merely a statement of fact.

So from where should the international community source the funds to underwrite the clearance of landmines? In the past these moneys have come from budgets designed to assist rehabilitation and development or from emergency aid or refugee funds, and yet this seems illogical as the presence of landmines already places an extra burden on these budgets. I am suggesting that it would be far more relevant to make mine clearance a charge against military budgets and the profits of arms manufacturers – putting into practice the principle that the polluter pays.

Landmines are victim activated, and recognise no cease-fires. Because of this, they endanger innocent men, women and children long after the conflict has ceased or the fighting has moved elsewhere.
The Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) is a humanitarian, non-profit making, non-governmental organisation. MAG is dedicated to reducing the loss of life and limb caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Further to this, MAG works to reduce the economic suffering that these items cause by returning cleared land to affected communities. These communities are predominantly subsistence farmers, refugees and nomadic tribesmen. They have in common their poverty, their non-combatant status, their reliance on the land and their inability to escape from or publicise their deadly predicament.

The nature and extent of the international landmine problem demands action on three fronts:

i. The eradication of those mines already deployed world-wide.

ii. The immediate cessation of landmine use and enforceable legislation to ensure against their use in the future.

iii. Community mine awareness to help people to live more safely with landmines until their lands can be cleared.

MAG is committed to such a threefold approach. Most importantly, MAG believes that the long-term sustainability of such an approach depends upon the creation of an indigenous capacity, within the mine-affected communities, to carry out such work themselves.

History

MAG has its roots amongst aid workers who witnessed the problems that landmines were causing for rural populations in Afghanistan. MAG’s founder, Rae McGrath, established a mine eradication element in a multi-disciplinary rehabilitation programme in Paktia province, Afghanistan in 1988 and, in 1990, took the first UN-funded Afghan mine-clearance teams into Kunar Province. In mid-1990 the Mines Advisory Group was formed in Peshawar, Pakistan, funded by The Norwegian and Swedish Committees for Afghanistan. In 1991 the organisation moved its base to the United Kingdom, became an international NGO and, in conjunction with Human Rights Watch and African Rights, published a series of reports on the mines situation in Cambodia, North Iraq, Northern Somalia and Angola.

The primary role of the organisation is to establish mine survey, marking, clearance and community awareness programmes in order that mine-affected communities can eventually live without fear of death and injury by mines. To date, MAG has set up such programmes in North Iraq, Cambodia, Angola and Laos and is currently looking at the possibility of establishing programmes in Bosnia, Iran, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. MAG also runs Community Mine Awareness Programmes amongst Angolan refugees in Zambia and Zaire.

Mine Eradication and Training Programmes

MAG trains local teams to survey, mark and clear minefields. To ensure sustainability, local staff are trained to match the skills of the initial expatriate trainers. The highest levels of technical expertise, coupled with mandatory protective clothing and equipment, ensure that all MAG staff work as safely as possible.

MAG seeks to focus its clearance resources in areas where the work will benefit the maximum number of people in the greatest need. To do this MAG works in cooperation with local people to develop a qualitative understanding of how they are affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance and how their needs can best be met. The land that is cleared first should be the land most important to the community, not the land where the most mines are to be found.

Disarming a POM Z 2 tripwire mine, Angola.

Hist1
The presence of landmines creates an environment of fear. MAG clearance teams ensure that land returned to the community is 100% clear of mines and ordnance and, in doing so, they have built up relationships of great trust with the local populations. As well as the large-scale projects undertaken by clearance teams, MAG also seeks to respond to emergency requirements in the local area; 'roving teams' often respond to the small-scale presence of mines on important footpaths or near water sources or buildings – sites where immediate, short-term attention produces great benefits.

**Community Mine Awareness**

Although the ultimate solution to the mine problem is the clearance of existing mines and the prevention of further deployment, there is, in the meantime, a vital need to reduce the number of deaths and injuries landmines cause. Mine awareness helps endangered communities to live more safely until the threat of landmines is removed. Community mine awareness aims to do this by educating affected communities in the practical avoidance of mines, ensuring that the work of the clearance teams is understood, that minefield marking is respected, and that information relating to high-risk areas is disseminated effectively. As in the clearance programmes, MAG trains and employs local people to undertake mine awareness work. The Mines Advisory Group recognises the need for varied approaches to community mine awareness so as to address the particular problems and needs of each affected community.

**Campaigning**

Between 2 and 5 million new landmines are put in the ground every year, a number far greater than humanitarian demining agencies are able to eradicate over the same period. To avoid the continuation and escalation of the humanitarian crisis caused by these weapons there is an urgent need to stop further mine-laying. The Mines Advisory Group campaigns for an international ban on the use, manufacture, proliferation and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines.
Cambodia has been socially and economically crippled through the deployment of landmines as a weapon of terror by the forces that have scarred the country's recent history. From the air-dropped mines used by the USA during the Vietnam war, through mine-laying by Vietnamese, Khmer Rouge and recent government troops, many of Cambodia's most fertile lands, which once produced a surplus of rice and fruits, are now contaminated with mines. In a country where 85% of the population is dependent on agriculture or related activities, such a contamination amounts to a destruction of Cambodia's economic base. But the people of Cambodia are fighting back against a weapon that has had a strangle-hold on their country for long enough.

Kou Saihe's leg was torn apart by an anti-personal mine two and a half years ago. Determined to feed his wife and four young children he constantly fishes the river.
The 1993 NGO Forum in Phnom Penh concluded that landmine contamination was the single biggest factor hindering the development of Cambodia. Efforts to map the landmine problem have suggested the significant presence of mines in over half of the country. Mines have been available to and used by all of Cambodia's warring factions. They have been used by civilians to resolve conflicts and to protect property. Mines from previous rounds of fighting have remained uncleared even as new mines were being laid on top of them. A 'culture of landmines' has developed in Cambodia, and these attitudes must be changed if current clearance efforts are to have a long-term impact. This makes the Cambodian campaign to ban landmines vital to the sustainability of the mine-clearance efforts in which many of the Cambodian people are now engaged.

MAG has been working in Cambodia since October 1992. The operation has grown to employ over 250 Cambodian deminers, working with 4 expatriate Technical Advisors. 48 of these Cambodian deminers are themselves mine victims - injured prior to employment with MAG. All had suffered below knee amputations of one leg and were fitted with metal-free prostheses by the International Committee of the Red Cross before being trained by MAG in 1995. MAG has also trained and employed 44 women deminers, most of whom had lost their husbands in mine accidents and were left to raise their families on their own.

With the head office in Phnom Penh, MAG Cambodia operates in 5 provinces. In Battambang and Kompong Thom, demining teams work closely with mine awareness programmes (MAP) and data gathering teams. In Banteay Meancheay, Siem Reap and Pursat, data gathering and mine awareness are run in tandem with other demining NGOs or with the Cambodian Government's Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC).

Mine clearance and unexploded ordnance removal is conducted throughout the week and is prioritised in close co-operation with the local community and other development and relief organisations working in the area. MAG also undertakes special Quick Reaction Tasks. These are responses to urgent local requests and normally refer to UXO removal.

**People living in mine contaminated rural areas are forced to strike a balance between meeting their own economic needs and minimising the physical risk of entering potentially mined areas. Rising poverty often creates increased pressure to enter mined areas in search of cultivable land or secondary economic resources such as wood or rattan. This, of course, often results in death or injury - the latter leading to further impoverishment and economic hardship. Mine injuries, therefore, are often both a result and a cause of poverty at a family or village level.**
Mine Awareness

MAG has five mine awareness teams, a total of 54 mine awareness educators, working in Cambodia. In Battambang, MAG runs a special schools team, as well as village based teams.

Amputees in Cambodia often have low social status and highly restricted employment opportunities. Cultural stereotypes view amputees as a drain on resources, unable to contribute to community life. MAG's training and employment of amputee deminers seeks to challenge these prejudices in a country where as many as 1 in 236 people have lost limbs, many as a result of landmine accidents. To raise awareness of the capabilities of landmine survivors, MAG's amputee relay team recently competed in the 1997 Phnom Penh Marathon.

Village based teams also work in Banteay Meanchey and Kompong Thom Provinces. These teams have been operating for over two years now and are regarded by observers as offering the most comprehensive mine awareness programme in Cambodia. This mine awareness education initiative has resulted in close co-operation between villagers and the MAG demining component. This co-operation facilitates communication of reliable information regarding the location of minefields, thereby assisting MAG in accurately prioritising areas for clearance.

Data Gathering

MAG currently operates three data gathering teams, 12 people in total, assigned to collect information concerning mine and UXO related deaths and injuries in Battambang, Kompong Thom, Banteay Meanchey, Pursat and Siem Reap provinces. This data is now the most reliable and comprehensive information concerning mine accidents in Cambodia and plays an important role in assisting the mine awareness and mine clearance teams to target effectively the most vulnerable communities. The information is disseminated on a monthly basis to over 100 international, governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned about mine injuries in Cambodia.

Mom Sophy lost her leg to a mine in 1992. She now works as a deminer for MAG.
Without a formal declaration of war, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) became one of the most heavily bombed countries of all time. Between 1964 and 1973, the United States of America dropped on Laos the equivalent of one B-52 pay-load of ordnance every eight minutes for nine years. Laos served as a testing ground for a new generation of air-dropped munitions being developed in the United States – cluster-bombs packed with as many as 670 anti-personnel bomblets. Some 10-30% of the munitions dropped failed to explode. In addition to this there is the residue of the land-based conflict – unexploded rockets, mortars and shells from the exchanges between the North Vietnamese and the Royal Lao Army and Hmong irregulars. The result of this prolonged aerial bombardment and ground war is a country in which large areas of land are infested with unexploded and unstable ordnance.
Nearly 25 years after the cessation of hostilities, the debris of this bombardment continues to deny land to, and inflict casualties on, the largely rural population of Laos. Children particularly have suffered as a result of this contamination – the regularly shaped and often colourful ‘bombies’ attract playful but highly dangerous attention. In Xieng Khouang, the most severely affected province, 45% of casualties are under the age of 16.

As well as inflicting death and injury on the country’s people, the presence of UXO forms a significant constraint to both subsistence and development activities in Laos. Recognising this, the Mines Advisory Group has been active in Xieng Khouang Province since April 1994, working in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Lao National UXO Programme, established in early 1996. In mid-1997, MAG plans to expand its work into a second area, Saravane Province in the south of the country, whose eastern regions are heavily infested with unexploded ordnance.

The Programme

In both Xieng Khouang and Saravane, MAG’s approach will integrate community awareness with the technical tasks of UXO detection and destruction. Data Gathering teams survey all affected communities to obtain an understanding of the extent of UXO infestation and its impact in terms of death, injuries, and land denial.

Unearthing a rack of 20lb frag bombs found under a school playing field.

Clearing land of UXOs.

Having identified those communities with the severest and most urgent problems, MAG Community Awareness teams visit each of them for an intensive five day programme involving UXO awareness activities. For example, these might include discussion groups, the distribution of visual materials, and songs and puppet shows for children. The five day programme also involves the identification, after consultation with various sectors of the community, of high-priority and emergency tasks within the village, and further mapping of UXO locations and the identification of munition types.

Only after this interaction with the community does MAG move on to the clearance of UXO by Roving Teams; this process ensures that MAG’s interventions are in keeping with community needs, that emergency tasks are dealt with as a priority, and that the communities themselves understand the intent and limitations of MAG clearance operations. In addition to these clearance tasks, MAG teams also undertake specific, fixed-
site clearance using detector-search techniques at locations assigned by the Lao authorities – usually school sites, or areas earmarked for development or agricultural projects.

One of the most difficult tasks for MAG's Community Awareness Programmes in Laos is to overcome the familiarity that comes from 25 years of living amongst so much unexploded ordnance and military debris. Laotians regularly incorporate this debris into their daily lives and such incorporation can make it difficult to highlight the fact that many of these items simply should not be touched.

Sustainability & The Future

MAG's current workforce of over 160 Lao and 7 expatriates is set to increase with the addition of up to 90 Lao staff. However, during 1998, the number of MAG expatriate staff in the Xieng Khouang programme should be reduced as the operation becomes entirely Lao managed and implemented. In Saravane, the same goal of effective indigenisation should be reached in 1999.

As the NGO with the longest experience of UXO eradication in Laos, and with its reputation for having pioneered such work in the worst affected province, Xieng Khouang, Mines Advisory Group is well placed to continue its assistance to the Lao people for some years to come.
From 1980 to 1988 the Iran-Iraq War raged across the Kurdish area of north Iraq. The front lines of this prolonged conflict ebbed and flowed throughout the Kurdish region leaving a widespread legacy of landmines and unexploded ordnance. For a population that has endured years of conflict and bitter persecution at the hands of the Baghdad regime, this legacy ensures that their lands remain an environment of fear. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the Iraqi armed forces destroyed the records of those minefields they had catalogued. With the war over, the mines were to remain as a plague upon the Kurdish people.
IRAQI KURDISTAN

In 1991, seven officials of Valsella, the Italian landmine manufacturing company, were convicted for illegally selling $180 million worth of munitions to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. This sale included some 9 million anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines, and was facilitated by a UK company.

Rauf Mohammad Kareem
Born 1959
It was the 28th of March and we had recently returned to our village. We didn't know that there were mines in the area. We went to collect wood from the area around the village in order to make fires for cooking and bread making. All of a sudden a mine exploded under my foot and I was wounded. It destroyed my heel and toes and my foot was chopped off.

Up to now we have had four people killed and ten people handicapped in mine accidents. One of those handicapped is my daughter Sabria who was hurt in March 1996 and her foot was cut off.

The local context

Although there are estimated to be between 5 and 10 million landmines in North Iraq, MAG is currently the only agency engaged in mine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal and mine awareness education in the region. The area is controlled by two rival Kurdish factions, neither of which has the capacity to carry out mine clearance or explosive ordnance disposal.

Furthermore, Kurdistan does not have nation status under international law and the region lacks the local administrative infrastructure necessary to co-ordinate or plan a long-term strategic response to the landmine problem.

Hospital statistics show that between January 1991 and the end of 1996, there have been 2,381 deaths and 4,324 injuries reported amongst civilians as a result of mine or explosive ordnance accidents. However, these figures do not represent the true scale of the problem. Many people injured in mine accidents are killed instantly or do not survive long enough to reach a hospital due to the long distances and lack of adequate transport and first aid.

The nature and scale of mine contamination in North Iraq, the political limbo in which the region exists and the lack of mine eradication resources in the area combine to ensure that Kurdistan will suffer long-term and manifold problems as a result of widespread landmine use.

Victim and family.
The Programme

The Mines Advisory Group has been working in North Iraq – more often known as Iraqi Kurdistan – since mid 1992. Employing more than 500 staff, MAG is the only source of mine information in the region and has, to date, recorded over 2,200 minefields. All major technical operations are preceded by an Advance Team. The role of the Advance Team, which includes technical, community development and mine awareness advisors, is to work with local people to determine the nature and impact of the local mine and UXO problem. In partnership with the local community, MAG is able to develop a “safer village strategy” which addresses the individual community’s needs. For example, such a strategy may include the creation of large mined area maps in public places; the nomination of villagers to take care of demarcation signs and to warn visitors of dangers in the area; building walls or fences to stop livestock entering mined areas; digging trenches to prevent movement of mines downhill into populated areas, and so on. The work of the Advance Team is followed up by Demarcation Teams, for minefield marking, and Miscellaneous Teams, who address small but urgent tasks. According to prioritisation requirements, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Teams and Demining Teams are then deployed.

The use of the Advance Teams enables MAG to co-ordinate its resources and to utilise them to benefit those people most in need. This process is essential when addressing such a vast mines problem with limited mine eradication resources.

MAG has conducted mine awareness programmes in 3,423 villages and 989 schools and institutions initiating a child-to-child mine awareness programme and running public education campaigns using all available media, including a radio soap-opera.

Community Mine Awareness – Child to Child Programmes

School Teams spend around one week in a school, working with a large group of children, to establish a child-to-child programme. These children then present mine awareness information to other students in the school. Having done this, the children split up into smaller groups and, accompanied by a Field Officer to ensure they are giving out the correct information, they present the mine awareness message to students in other schools in the area. The materials, games and activities the Field Officers and children have developed have been hugely successful!

Sustainability

MAG expects to eradicate all major concentrations of explosive ordnance in the region and to mark all the known minefields within the next few years. However, landmines will continue to present a serious threat to civilians, and an obstacle to post-conflict redevelopment in the region, for generations to come. MAG is working in North Iraq to train the staff to a level at which they can eventually form their own, discrete organisation. MAG has reduced the number of expatriate staff in North Iraq from 18 to 9, each of whom works with a local counterpart. This approach has meant that MAG is well placed for both future expansion, as it has skilled local staff at senior levels, and for future indigenisation if the political environment allows. In either event, MAG has established a foundation of local skills and understanding upon which a long term solution to the mine problem in North Iraq can be built.
LEFT: Christia Neloy triggered a mine fleeing her village when attacked by enemy soldiers.

ABOVE: Clearing a more direct path to the river.

RIGHT: Disarming an MA175 anti-personnel mine placed on top of a TMS7 anti-tank mine.
After 30 years of civil war, Angola is finally on the difficult road to peace. The struggle for liberation from Portuguese colonial rule, during the 1960s, developed into one of Africa’s longest running civil wars. It was a civil war in which the USA, apartheid South Africa, Cuba and the Soviet Union exploited the indigenous struggle and, between them, facilitated the steady flow of arms into Angola. The 10 to 15 million landmines still littering the country are a product of this involvement and will ensure that even with peace the horrors of war will visit themselves on the beleaguered Angolan population for many years to come.
Angola has not been involved in the manufacture of landmines. All of the millions of mines deployed during the civil war were supplied by foreign manufacturers, governments, and arms dealers.

Angola suffers from the extensive deployment of landmines during the last three decades of fighting. Mines were used in vast numbers as the warring parties sought to hold territory, with so much land lost and reclaimed during the conflict many areas were repeatedly mined by different parties resulting in huge concentrations of landmines around most major settlements. As well as defensive landmine use, mines were also used to terrorise and intimidate the civilian population. Booby-trapping of mines and ordnance was also widespread making current clearance efforts particularly hazardous.

The problem is worsened in Angola by the pitifully scarce resources available for the victims of landmine accidents and by the large numbers of internally displaced people and refugees seeking to return to lands abandoned during the fighting.

MAG’s initial involvement in Angola was a mine awareness poster campaign in co-operation with UNHCR during 1992. In 1993 MAG conducted an assessment of the impact of mines on civilians and humanitarian aid assistance. In early 1994 MAG established an operational base in Luena, Moxico province. Luena was chosen because its population is swollen by refugees from the heavily mined surrounding countryside. The outskirts of the town are also mined, meaning that access to agricultural land, fuel and water is greatly reduced and the population forced into a reliance on food aid. Despite the Angolan government’s temporary embargo on NGOs in early 1995, MAG trained over 130 staff to survey and clear mined areas that year.

MAG is a key player in the Angolan NGO campaign to ban landmines. In February 1997, the Angolan Campaign sent delegates to the 4th International NGO Conference, held in Mozambique, where they forged campaigning links across the Southern African states.

The Programme

In early 1996 movement outside Luena became possible and, in order to assist people displaced by the civil war to return to their villages, MAG developed a new concept called the Mine Action...
Team (MAT). Mine Action Teams group together mine awareness officers with surveyors, minefield-markers and deminers. Their objective is to survey suspected areas and, with the involvement of the local community, develop local solutions and priorities. Mine Action Teams provide mine awareness tailored to the needs of different groups within the community, and clear small areas such as paths and water-sources. These teams also mark out larger areas to be cleared at a later stage by a full demining team. In order to increase Angolan input in the development of the MAT concept MAG has recently hired an experienced Angolan to manage the work of all Mine Action Teams throughout Moxico. There are currently four Mine Action Teams and several more teams are planned for 1997 to meet the increased demand resulting from the demobilisation of UNITA and MPLA troops and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee repatriation from camps in Zambia and Zaire.

As well as MATs the Mines Advisory Group currently has 5 mine clearance teams carrying out work on large minefields around Luena.

A large mine awareness programme supports the MATs and carries out mine awareness in and around Luena. The Luena mine awareness programme has three components:

i. The Children's Team - work with school children and other children in the area.

ii. The Displaced Team - work with displaced people in areas of return or re-location.

iii. The Information Team - carry out data collection and evaluation, radio broadcasts and run an Information Point where minefield data and mine awareness materials are available throughout every day.

The emphasis is on using local information to promote awareness and identify MAG priorities.

MAG will continue to expand its programmes in Angola in 1997. MAG plans to start using dogs in the Angolan programme. These dogs, trained in the minefields of Afghanistan to sniff out mines, can greatly increase the speed of marking mined areas. This will allow for quicker minefield clearance and, as a result, the earlier resumption of agricultural activity for a population in desperate need of cultivable land.
For the hundreds of thousands of Angolans displaced to Zambia and Zaire during the Angolan conflict, landmines present a terrible barrier to the restoration of normal life in their own country. Mines deny these people access to their villages and deny the productivity of the fields upon which such villages depend. After all the blood that has flowed since Angola’s liberation struggle, mines ensure that many Angolans are still alienated from their own land.

In anticipation of the dangers of repatriating refugees to Angola, Mines Advisory Group, in 1995, started mine awareness programmes in refugee camps in Zambia and Zaire. Both of these programmes have been implemented with the support of UNHCR. In Zaire, 15 field officers have been trained and are presently working in three camps in the Kisenge area where more than 36,000 registered refugees are living. In Zambia, MAG has been running community mine awareness programmes in two refugee settlements – Meheba, with around 26,000 residents and Mayukwayukwa, with around 4,000 residents. MAG has also worked in the border area between Angola and Zambia where there are estimated to be 80-100,000 spontaneously settled refugees.

There are indications that many of the refugees along the border areas will be returning to some of the most heavily mined regions of Angola. Such regions are very remote, beyond the reach of MAG’s mine awareness and clearance teams. It was, therefore, crucial to their safety that these people received Mine Awareness education prior to their departure.

Fourteen year old Smajic Mensur found a cluster bomb in the woods. Not knowing what it was he tried to open it by banging it against a tree, although his hand was blown off the rest of his body was shielded by the tree.

**BOSNIA**

Between 1992 and 1995 the war in Bosnia raged between conflicting forces thrown up by the collapse of Yugoslavia. As a result of the rapidly shifting front lines and widespread mine-laying by all of the warring factions, the Bosnian countryside is now heavily contaminated with landmines. Over the last year refugees have started to return home, albeit in small numbers. Many of them have returned to devastated villages and found themselves without electricity, water, food or employment. Most of them had no idea that upon their return they would find their homes and gardens littered with mines. Current statistics indicate that there are 50-80 landmine victims each month in Bosnia. When refugees start to return to the country in greater numbers this accident rate will be vastly increased.
MAG Assessment

The Mines Advisory Group has recently conducted a survey of landmine contamination in Bosnia. MAG is convinced that work in the country would satisfy the organisation's mandate of assisting impoverished communities to address the problem of landmines. The need for such assistance is desperate; at the present time there is limited humanitarian mine clearance being conducted in the country. Little money is going into humanitarian mine clearance, the majority of donor funding is currently going into infrastructural clearance.

MAG has had the approval of the Bosnian government to start an integrated Mine Action Programme in the country and is now seeking funds for the implementation of this programme. There is also an obvious need for humanitarian mine clearance in Croatia and MAG will examine the potential for future involvement there.

Testimony

In 1992 Serbian irregular soldiers (Chetniks) crossed the river 200 yards from sisters Fahrija and Mirsada Dulic's house. The sisters fled in panic. A few days later the Bosnian Government army pushed back the Serbs, allowing the sisters to return and retrieve essential belongings. Mirsada stood on a mine and when Fahrija came to help she stood on one too. They both lost their right feet and had to have identical amputations. They now have identical prostheses and talk of each other as 'twins'. In January this year their brother Ramiz was returning home with his horse and triggered a mine. The horse died within a minute but miraculously Ramiz was unhurt. In May this year Nedim Berkic tripped a bounding fragmentation mine 250 yards from the sisters' house. He died an hour and a half later. The Dulic family all voiced concerns that the Chetniks across the river may come back and plant more mines around their house. The extraordinary thing is that they all know the people who laid the mines – they grew up and went to school together.

IRAN

The most obvious and vicious legacy of the eight year Iran-Iraq war are the 16 million landmines scattered across the border line, covering thousands of hectares of arable and pasture land. In April 1997, MAG visited Iran to make an initial assessment of the needs for mine clearance and mine awareness activities in border areas of the country. Our representative visited refugee camps on both the Afghan and Iraqi borders and discussed options for future work in the country with the Iranian government. Negotiations continue, and we expect to reach a decision in the summer of 1997.

MAG has been invited to look into the possibility of establishing mine clearance and community mine awareness programmes in Sri Lanka, Vietnam, El Salvador, Somaliland and Western Sahara.
The International Campaign

The Mines Advisory Group believes that it is only through the implementation of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines that an expansion of the existing problem can be avoided. MAG will continue to work to ensure that those communities affected by landmines are given a strong voice in political debate and that their needs provide the basis for international legislation.

The Mines Advisory Group is a founder member of the International Campaign to ban the manufacture, transfer, use and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. The campaign has grown rapidly and includes over 800 non-governmental organisations in 50 countries. MAG is on the management committee of the UK Working Group on Landmines – a coalition of 49 UK NGOs dedicated to the abolition of anti-personnel mines. MAG’s Parliamentary Office continues to provide briefings and updates for parliamentarians of all parties. MAG co-hosted, with UNICEF, a number of meetings at the House of Commons which received cross-party support. Throughout the last year, MAG has organised for parliamentarians to visit mine-affected communities. Through such activities MAG works to promote understanding amongst political parties of the needs of mine victims and of the implications of landmine production and use.

Lord Deedes visited MAG’s programmes in Angola and the Rt. Hon. Dr. David Clark MP witnessed the impact of landmine use in Cambodia. Working in partnership with UNICEF, MAG has continued to maintain a high profile at all major party conferences. Baroness Chalker addressed a meeting at the Conservative Party conference. At the Labour Party conference MAG was supported by the Co-operative Bank.

International Legislation: The UN Inhumane Weapons Convention & The Ottawa Process

In May 1996 the UN Inhumane Weapons Convention, a set of protocols developed to protect civilians from the effects of indiscriminate weapons, was finally amended by the international community. It was the conclusion of a diplomatic process in which political cynicism and the arms industry overrode the needs of impoverished, rural communities. The measures adopted provide no safeguard against the escalation of mine-contamination worldwide and, far from stigmatising this category of weapons, they implicitly promote the use of new and equally insidious devices.

Governments are, however, becoming increasingly aware of the misery that landmines inflict. The failure of the UN Inhumane Weapons Convention adequately to address this problem prompted Canada to invite all states to Ottawa in October 1996. The “Ottawa Declaration” was signed by participating states, committing them to “ensure the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines...” Fifty-eight states now support a total ban. Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, and Switzerland form a core group seeking to make the Ottawa Process work.

MAG is proud to have been involved in the formation of campaigning groups in Angola and Cambodia.

British Government’s statement on landmines 21 May, 1997

The Mines Advisory Group warmly welcomes the new British Government’s commitment to a ban on the production, import, export and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. One of the most significant aspects of this new policy is the acceptance that certain air-dropped submunitions, which can be triggered by people as well as by vehicles, should be classified as anti-personnel mines and subject to the same strictures. Equally encouraging is the fact that the misleading and irresponsible promotion of ‘smart mines’ as a solution to the landmine problem has been utterly abandoned. MAG also welcomes the commitment to increased demining efforts.

However, MAG is concerned by the government’s failure to implement an immediate ban on the use of anti-personnel mines. The moratorium on landmine use indicates a failure to accept that the military utility of landmines is far outweighed by the death and injury that these weapons cause to civilians. Whilst MAG is pleased with the assurance of a future ban, we will continue to campaign for an immediate unilateral ban and to monitor the implementation of the Government’s stated policy.

An NOP poll, commissioned by some members of the UK Working Group, provides an encouraging impression of the impact of this campaign on public opinion; it shows 90% of the British Public in support of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines.

The Rt. Hon. Clare Short MP, with Clare Crawford, visiting MAG’s Cambodia Programme in November 1996.
MAG would like to thank the following companies who have sponsored the production, printing and distribution of this report:

Codan (UK)  
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Farnham, GU9 7PT  

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Compiled and edited by Sean Sutton-MAG & Richard Moyes-MAG.  
Designed by Richard Boxall Design Associates  
Printed by Yale Press Limited, London.

MAG would like to thank the donors whose funding has made this work possible:

Anti-Landmin Stichting  
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... and the many companies and individual donors whose contributions and support have been vital to the continuance of our work.
A long walk home, Kuito, Angola