SUMMARY OF MAG'S INITIAL PLANS FOR WORK IN BOSNIA HERCEGOVINA

MAG will set up an initial programme in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1998. The programme will be based in Zenica and will work in the surrounding areas.

This programme will integrate:
- Data gathering
- Community awareness
- Landmine clearance
- Explosive ordnance disposal

It will be a humanitarian mine action programme wherein the activities listed above are undertaken by Bosnian nationals to assist poor Bosnian communities.

The programme will assist refugees and internally displaced people who are resettling and trying to rebuild their lives in a landmine and unexploded ordnance contaminated environment.

The programme will also assist static populations living in close proximity to landmines and unexploded ordnance.

MAG hopes that the Zenica programme will serve as a model for donors and the Bosnian Government so as to promote an expansion of humanitarian mine action in the country.

PROJECT FUNDING
MAG's assessment work in Bosnia Herzegovina was funded by The Co-operative Bank.

14 year old Smajic found a bomblet from a cluster bomb when playing in the woods with friends. Not knowing what it was, he banged it against a tree in an effort to open it. His right hand was torn off but the tree shielded his body from the blast.
During 1996, The Co-operative Bank became involved in a campaign, with 46 non-governmental organisations, to ban the use, production, manufacture and transfer of landmines.

The Bank's involvement stems from our strict policy of refusing to finance the sale of arms to oppressive regimes. Landmines are a powerful metaphor for the evil nature of the arms trade because of the horrific and indiscriminate way in which they kill and maim large numbers of civilians and children long after 'a conflict' has ceased.

With the signing of the Ottawa Treaty in December last year, the international community has now taken important steps towards a total ban on the use, manufacture, stockpiling and trade in anti-personnel landmines prompted, in part, by an increase in public awareness of the issue.

Nevertheless, there remain millions of landmines which have been left behind in areas of conflict around the world. These landmines are denying local people, often in rural areas, access to their homes, to their land and, in effect, to their livelihoods.

The problems which confront refugees, returning to farm their land, in Cambodia, Angola and northern Iraq have been well publicised. Now, here in mainland Europe, we have a problem of a similar scale.

The Co-operative Bank were, therefore, pleased to enable the Mines Advisory Group to carry out a preliminary assessment of the nature and scope of the problem in Bosnia Herzegovina.

I hope, once the issue is fully understood, that individuals and organisations will show a similar level of commitment and support to enable the Mines Advisory Group and their partners, to help give back to the people of Bosnia Herzegovina the land which is currently denied them.
The war in Bosnia (1992-95) was arguably the most comprehensively reported conflict of modern times. Less well known is the widespread use of landmines by all parties to the conflict. As a result, the Bosnian countryside is now heavily contaminated with these deadly weapons. Ground fighting during the conflict has also left a legacy of unexploded ordnance (mortars, shells and bombs), buried in the ground or lying on the surface: these may explode when touched, moved or played with.

Over the last two years, refugees have started to return home. They have found devastated villages without electricity, water, food or employment. Prior to their return, many had no idea that they would also find their homes and gardens littered with mines and other lethal debris.

**TECHNICAL CONTEXT**

The regime of President Tito encouraged the growth of military industries, including the production of landmines. The former Yugoslav Federal Republic was one of the most prolific producers of landmines in the world. There were an estimated 6 million mines of all types in Yugoslav National Army (JNA) stocks at the beginning of the conflict. Furthermore, landmines continued to be produced, at various locations, during the war. The types of items deployed create a very different working environment to other mine affected countries.

There are three general factors regarding the deployment of mines in the Bosnian conflict that can increase risks for mine clearance personnel.
i. Almost all the mines deployed during the conflict were from a family of state manufactured landmines that had been developed to have a minimum metal content. They have been designed to make detection difficult and removal hazardous.

ii. In addition, a great array of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have been produced, littering both rural and urban areas - posing a huge threat to life and limb. Anti-personnel mines laid in the vicinity of Sarajevo are reported to have been booby trapped. In the former eastern enclaves of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, local engineers manufactured improvised mines whose production qualities and home-made design may render them unstable and unpredictable. Also, the anti-tank mines deployed have often been modified. Anti-handling devices fitted to such mines may operate on the basis of up to ten different types of electronic switches, responding to heat, light, tilt, sound and other variables.

iii. Another characteristic of the problem in Bosnia is the heavy contamination of residential and urban areas. Throughout the conflict, fighting in built up areas was common, increasing the likelihood of booby-trapping to protect areas or to deny them to the enemy. Not only is it more difficult to clear and destroy mines and UXO in populated areas, but the danger of widespread booby-trapping inside buildings presents an extreme challenge. Sometimes the threat is as simple as a grenade in a jar placed over a door, but in other cases the device may be well hidden and difficult to neutralise or destroy. In one reported case, the loft of a house was full of anti-tank mines wired to detonate if the doors to the house were opened.

As a result of extensive ground fighting, Bosnia also suffers from widespread unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination. Land service ammunition, such as small arms ammunition and artillery, mortars, grenades and rockets can present serious dangers to civilians in the post-conflict environment. In addition, submunitions were also used in Bosnia. As in other regions affected by anti-personnel submunitions, armed yet unexploded bomblets can have lethal consequences for civilians.

Having noted that the region presents an extremely challenging technical environment, it should not be concluded that clearance operations will inevitably have high casualty rates or prove beyond the capacity of well trained mine clearance and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) specialists. With adequate technical reconnaissance, survey work and good systems for information gathering from local people, especially those involved in laying minefields, it will be possible to develop clearance drills and procedures that will enable teams to work as safely and efficiently as has been achieved in other countries.

---

THE PROBLEMS OF LANDMINE USE

Landmines are victim activated – they are inherently indiscriminate, unable to distinguish between soldiers and civilians, adults or children.

Landmines remain even when the conflict has ceased or the fighting has moved elsewhere. In post-conflict societies, landmines continue to kill and maim people who are simply engaging in everyday tasks. Landmines remain lethal for generations and are particularly threatening to the poorest communities. People living in mine contaminated areas are forced to strike a balance between meeting their own economic needs and minimising the physical risk of entering potentially mined land.

Rising poverty often increases the pressure to enter mined areas in search of cultivable land or secondary economic resources. This, of course, often results in death or injury – leading to further impoverishment and economic hardship. Mine injuries, therefore, are often both a product and cause of poverty at a family or community level.
Imagine yourself as a Bosnian refugee arriving back in a community that may not have been your pre-war home, but rather an area that has been designated to you by international agreement. Your country has been divided and the map redrawn. You and your family are suffering from the shocking psychological effects of civil war. Now you and your fellow countrymen are about to try to reconstruct a way of life that previously you took for granted, but which the trauma of civil war has turned into a fairytale. Imagine the fear and mistrust that the experience of unspeakable horrors has brought to you all. How do you begin again? How do you create a future for your children?

Then you discover the reality of the situation in the area that is to be your new home; a reality that you were not fully aware of prior to your repatriation.

The village to which you have been repatriated has been devastated, you are without electricity or clean water, there is no food available and no prospect of employment. Furthermore, you are surrounded by the debris of war. Many houses contain 'booby traps'. The gardens, the verges of roads and the surrounding countryside are littered with landmines and unexploded ordnance. Now you find that everything you need to do to support your family has a risk attached.

Maybe aid in the way of food and fresh water is being supplied. But how often, and more importantly, for how long? This may provide for some immediate needs but it will not provide for your family's future security.

There are now added pressures and fears. You know the area around your house to be mined and your fear for your children's safety pressures you into attempting to clear the area yourself. It is not hard to understand why a parent would come to this decision. At first it is nerve-racking. Daily you hear of more and more people who are being killed and injured, people who felt the same fears and pressures as you. Within a short time you become more confident and feel more skilled at removing and defusing different types of mines and other ordnance. The need to provide for your family becomes ever more urgent, there is little food and members of your family are becoming ill, you need to find money. You hear about people who are making money from collecting scrap metal or clearing areas of land for others. You take the decision to follow their example. It is not long before your family loses its breadwinner.

The above story, of course, is not just about Bosnia. It can and does happen in all countries where mines and unexploded ordnance are a threat. Much is made by governments and politicians of peace processes once they are under-way. Equally, much is made of the plight of refugees and the internally displaced. However, once the signatures of warring parties have been secured, and the refugees are again within their national borders, we forget that, for these people, the remnants of war too often continue to take their toll in lives, limbs and impoverishment. In order for any country to return to normality after war, the international community must address these issues as a matter of priority. Sending refugees back to areas where land is still contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance shows little regard for their future safety. It is both inhuman and unacceptable.

Lou McGrath Director MAG
A tragic example of the dangers of repatriating people into mined areas is provided by the Karamuratovic family. This case study also highlights a particular problem with fragmentation mines - the capability of these mines to claim multiple victims, often destroying a number of family members in a single mine accident.

The Karamuratovic family are Muslim refugees from Sokolac. In 1996, the government gave them a Serb house in the village of Olovskaluke. They did not know that the area was heavily contaminated with mines. The first victim was uncle Kasim, who was blinded by a mine while digging in the garden in May 1996. They subsequently found three more mines in the vegetable patch. In March 1997, their next door neighbour tripped a bounding fragmentation mine which killed her and the mother of the children photographed. Daughters Nihada and Mmrsada were both wounded by fragmentation but Sabahudian, the son, was unhurt.

Such testimonies are important evidence of the terrible consequences that will result from the repatriation of large numbers of people into areas that are heavily contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance. Such contamination will impose a serious cost on the lives and limbs of the returning populations, as well as strangling the economic prospects of the communities these people will be desperately seeking to re-establish.
Young victim of an unexploded ordnance (UXO) accident. In the Autumn of 1996 he picked up a grenade just outside his flat which exploded, blowing off his arm.
ABOVE: Boris Kusleb lost his leg picking cherries near the Jewish cemetery, Sarajevo. His friend found and picked up a rifle grenade which then exploded, blowing off both of his legs and destroying Boris’ left leg. The place where they were playing was approximately 200m from Boris’ home.
Extent of the Problem

Recent statistics indicate that there are between 50 and 80 landmine victims each month in Bosnia. When refugees start to return to the country in larger numbers this accident rate is likely to increase.

It is clear that extensive mine laying during the recent conflict has left Bosnia with an acute landmine crisis. However, it is impossible to accurately ascertain the number of landmines that remain scattered across the country. In addition, there is also a huge problem with unexploded ordnance (UXO), improvised explosive devices and booby traps.

The minefield maps which currently exist trace the former front-lines, running through the geographic, economic and social centre of Bosnia. In both the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, there are communities living in conditions of acute stress as a result of landmine contamination. The risk areas are not confined to the more remote rural regions, but penetrate even the capital city. In the former front-line Sarajevan neighbourhoods of Grbavica and Dobrinja, unpaved areas are potential minefields. Mine contamination in Bosnia reaches into the very heart of the nation.

Repatriation

Major investment in housing and infrastructure is required to support the hundreds of thousands of people who are currently being resettled. Furthermore, the majority of these returnees are destined for areas on the former confrontation lines; often the most heavily mined locations in Bosnia. There are currently no coordinated demining programmes linked to the resettlement programme.

Recent statistics indicate that there are between 50 and 80 landmine victims each month in Bosnia. When refugees start to return to the country in larger numbers this accident rate is likely to increase.

One of the priority aims for humanitarian mine action in Bosnia Herzegovina must be to support the repatriation process. There is little doubt that the pace of repatriation is set to far outstrip the progress of mine clearance in the region. However, well focused humanitarian mine action to assist these populations could have a huge impact on their ability to rebuild their lives in safety.

The UNHCR Bosnia and Herzegovina Working Document on Repatriation and Return [March 1997, page 21], states that: "the presence of up to 6 million landmines [...] is a formidable constraint to both repatriation and return, as well as housing rehabilitation. [...] mine contamination of agricultural land and forests will also delay the economic revitalisation of rural areas."

In Zenica canton, where MAG plans to establish a programme in 1998, recent returnees are already living in mine and UXO contaminated environments. They often have no alternative other than to clear ordnance from their homes themselves. Further returnees will face the same dilemmas. Throughout the canton, the authorities have identified hundreds of families waiting to return to contaminated villages. In addition, many areas that were thought to be mine-free have subsequently proved dangerous.

It is clearly unacceptable to repatriate people into environments infested with mines and unexploded ordnance. Such situations are indicative of a failure of the international community fully to digest the lessons that should have been learned from the numerous other mine contaminated communities where these problems have occurred.

UNHCR has appealed for international donors to: "give very high priority to mine clearance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in priority areas for repatriation and return"

So far, the response to this UNHCR appeal has been completely inadequate.
In a known mined area, Naila collects bullet casings to sell as scrap. She receives 2 DMs per kilo.
The Relationship Between Mines and Resettlement

In Makljenovac village, in the Zone of Separation between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, the rehabilitation of some 200 houses has been completed. In areas such as this, rehabilitation is important to promote ethnically mixed resettlement. Yet in Makljenovac alone, there are an estimated 986 (UN MAC records) reported mined areas scattered around houses, fields, forests and schools.

In response to this landmine problem, the local militia had been asked to carry out basic mine-clearance around the houses. The safety of communal fields, ditches, agricultural land, paths and woodland, however, remains uncertain. Mine signs, strips of marking tape, spots painted on trees, old firing positions and trenches punctuate the immediate landscape of the village. It is doubtful that the area is clear of mines. How then could resettlement even be considered?

Unfortunately, the decision of many asylum countries to withdraw support from Bosnian refugees now that the fighting has stopped, means that many are left with little option but to return to unsafe and devastated communities. These people often fled before the war reached them and have no experience of living in a landmine infested environment.

It is, therefore, crucial that humanitarian mine clearance is directly linked to every rehabilitation project. The results of not doing so will be horrific once people start to return in greater numbers.

The dangers of leaving people to establish livelihoods in areas where only minimal clearance has been undertaken is clearly demonstrated by the following case study:

A Bosnian Croat man returned to his home in the Zone of Separation. Being an ex-soldier, the man undertook to demine an area near his home for agricultural use. Afterwards, he ploughed the field using a tractor. The second time he ploughed the field he ran over an anti-tank mine, which tore the tractor apart and killed him. The land immediately around his home had been cleared by self-employed local deminers – undertaking the work without structured procedures or quality assurance mechanisms – but there was no safe land for him to farm.

To date, local deminers working on an ad hoc basis, have collaborated with aid agencies on housing rehabilitation projects. However, it is of no value to the community to rehabilitate houses and promote the return of populations into areas where there is a serious shortage of safe land. Donors should not be promoting such casual and ultimately unsafe practices to facilitate the vital processes of repatriation.

The UNHCR Working Document on Repatriation and Return [March 1997, page 20] states that an increased rate of repatriation from abroad: “will lead to a deterioration in what has already been described as an unbearable economic climate.”

Without employment, people will be under pressure to extend land use and seek out secondary economic resources. Of the 60 mine victims from Zenica Canton in 1996, for whom the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) knew the activity at the time of their accident, 39 were engaged in economic tasks - herding, collecting food, working in the fields. Furthermore, some 46% of the mine victims knew that they were in a potentially mined area at the time of their accident.

It is already clear then that economic pressures drive people into more dangerous activities and that repatriating people into situations where land has not been cleared, and where unemployment is extremely high, places them under huge economic strain. These forces combine to impose a culture of risk taking.
themselves as 'twins'. In January 1997, their brother Ramiz was returning home with his horse when he too triggered a mine. The horse died within a minute but, miraculously, Ramiz was unhurt. In May 1997, a neighbour, Nedim Berkic, tripped a bounding fragmentation mine 250 yards from the sisters' house. He died an hour and a half later.

The Dulic family voiced concerns that the 'Chetniks' across the river may come back and plant more mines around their house. Strangely, the Dulics know the people who laid the mines — they had grown up and been to school together.

This touches on some of the powerful themes of the Bosnian conflict: neighbours killed neighbours. It also reflects much of the landmine problem that this war has bequeathed to the populations of Bosnia Herzegovina. The Dulic's land was occupied for just a few days, yet when they returned it was an environment of fear — full of unfamiliar dangers.

Many of the people who fled their homes during the conflict are only now starting to return. For these groups, landmines will present a terrible barrier to the restoration of normal life and an ongoing threat of death or mutilation. Landmines will deny returning refugees the use of their lands and fields, they will deny economic resources and they will prevent reconstruction. On their return, many of these people will come to look upon their once familiar lands with fear and despair.
MAG'S Response

Mines Advisory Group (MAG) will commence humanitarian mine action in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1998. MAG's approach to landmine and UXO contamination seeks to address the real needs and aspirations of mine-affected communities. Furthermore, MAG is committed to the development of a national capacity to manage and implement this approach to the problem.

MAG's work in Bosnia will be conducted in co-operation with the United Nations Mine Action Centre (UNMAC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to ensure that the problem is addressed in a co-ordinated manner. Through a well targeted humanitarian mine action programme, MAG hopes to create an environment in which people can reconstruct their lives without danger from the debris of war. This work will promote local economic growth and help to support a more stable society: vital steps to securing long-term peace in the region.

The high levels of local knowledge regarding the types of landmines used during the conflict should provide a good pool of personnel that MAG can draw upon. It is partly because of the extent of local knowledge that the Bosnian authorities have shown some suspicion as to what international mine action agencies can bring to the problem. However, humanitarian mine action in any context is very different to military minefield breaching, or commercial demining operations. In addition to the removal of mines and ordnance, principles of humanitarian prioritisation, accurate survey, demarcation, mapping and information collation all have to be included in the training programme. Beyond developing a sustainable, indigenised mine clearance capacity, MAG will seek to foster the ethos of people-centred humanitarian mine action within the country.

If the relationship between expatriate expertise and extensive local knowledge can be managed with sufficient cultural sensitivity, a high quality, indigenous, humanitarian mine action capacity will be built up quickly.

Zenica Canton

Zenica canton, in central Bosnia, has been identified by MAG for the first phase of humanitarian mine action. Considered the second most severely affected region in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Zenica canton contains some 2,424 recorded minefields, an estimated 28,000 anti-personnel mines and over 2,000 anti-tank mines. UNMAC statistics for Zenica-Doboj canton indicate that this area has one of the highest accident rates in the country, with 120 accidents recorded between January 1996 and October 1997.

There are currently no humanitarian mine action programmes being undertaken in the canton. Indeed, there are only two specialist NGOs involved in this sector, in the entire country. Realising that the landmine and UXO problem is enormous and that the situation will worsen as refugees return to the canton, local authorities warmly support the establishment of a MAG programme in the region.

Stockpiles of UXO are also of significant concern. Such stockpiles will inevitably increase as 'self-clearance' is undertaken by returnees. MAG teams will ensure the safe destruction of these stockpiles.

Humanitarian Mine Action

The extensive landmine problem in Bosnia Herzegovina has elicited various responses to the task of mine clearance from a range of different agencies. However, whilst there has been extensive use of commercial mine clearance companies, virtually no humanitarian mine action has been undertaken. Humanitarian mine action — integrating technical mine survey, demarcation, clearance, socio-economic impact and individual accident data gathering, together with mine awareness — responds to the needs and aspirations of poor mine-affected communities. In Bosnia, the mine clearance undertaken to date has focused on the facilitation of infrastructural rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. Little has been done in direct response to the priorities of ordinary people: for communities with landmines in their homes, gardens, paths and fields.

The Prioritisation of Clearance Tasks

MAG works in co-operation with local people to develop qualitative understandings of how they are affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), and
Dangerous games... Children playing in a contaminated environment.
MAT in Angola.
Left: Making safe an anti-personnel mine.
Right: Data gathering; village community explaining their perception of the problem. Mangoes represent UXO's and the stones represent mined areas.

or 'explosive ordinance disposal' technicians and mine awareness personnel. These teams do not engage in large-scale clearance tasks, but focus on marking-off dangerous areas and clearing small sites which are of greatest importance to local people. The participation of the local community in this work is vital – the team and the community work together to make the mined environment safer. The whole community is engaged in the process of identifying suspected areas, prioritising clearance and marking, and suggesting target audiences for, and the content of, mines awareness activities. Team members are specially trained to facilitate such participation by local people.

By spending time identifying the most pressing needs of the local population, MATs ensure the most effective initial deployment of resources to tackle the immediate problems presented by mines and unexploded ordnance.

In Cambodia, MAG operates Limited Clearance Teams or LCTs. Whilst these teams are not multi-disciplinary like the MATs, they are able to quickly respond to the large numbers of small scale tasks, identified as priorities by the local community. MAG has found that the use of MATs and LCTs has enhanced community confidence in the process of reporting unexploded ordnance (UXO). For the community, reporting items without seeing their reports translated into effective action can easily undermine the reporting process. Such problems are a particularly likely in situations where mine awareness programmes are run without reference to clearance operations. The confidence MAG has generated in communities where MATs and LCTs operate has resulted in a significant increase in the amounts of unexploded ordnance reported.

Experience shows that the level of engagement of the local community in finding solutions to the problems of landmines and unexploded ordnance is closely linked to the availability and effectiveness of practical external action to alleviate the problem.

**Mine Action in Bosnia**

With the establishment of a training centre, MAG will begin the process of building teams of highly skilled mine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and community awareness personnel.

The lessons learned in Angola and Cambodia are reflected in the structure of the teams that MAG plans to initially use in Bosnia. In the first year of operations, MAG will field two Demining Teams and one EOD Team – for the destruction of unexploded ordnance. In addition to these teams, MAG will field a Demarcation Team for the rapid marking of suspected areas.

The Demining and EOD Teams will contain technical and community awareness staff supported by medics and drivers. They will be deployed in small, multi-disciplinary teams able to assess and address the most pressing problems, as determined by the affected communities themselves.

When areas are marked by the Demarcation Team, MAG will commit to returning to clear the area within an agreed time-frame. In this way, community expectations are not raised above what it is possible for MAG to achieve.

By fielding smaller teams, capable of building a close relationship with the target community, MAG will be able to identify the most effective responses to the problems faced. This clear focus on the real needs of mine-affected populations should always be at the heart of humanitarian mine action.
how their needs can best be met. The land
that is cleared first should be the land most
important to the community, not neces­sarily the land where the most mines are
to be found. In this light, the progress and
quality of a mine clearance operation can­
not be judged by the numbers of mines
and items of ordnance destroyed—a more
qualitative understanding of the benefits
provided to the community is required.

Priority areas for humanitarian demini­ing are generally agricultural land, land
for resettlement and reconstruction, access
paths to water sources, land for building
schools or other important community
resources. MAG clearance teams search
100% of the land prioritised for clearance.
Humanitarian mine action works to clear
land as thoroughly as possible for safe use
by populations in the greatest need.

Developing Local Capacity
Everywhere it works, MAG produces
highly trained teams and operations man­
gers. MAG’s commitment to developing
a local capacity ensures that its efforts and
resources contribute to a sustainable solu­
tion to the landmine problem. The devel­
opment of local capacity is a vital way of
minimising the dependency of mine­
affected communities on external aid, as
well as bringing skills and wages into dis­
rupted local economies.

Community Mine Awareness
Although the ultimate solution to landmine
contamination is clearance, there is, in the
meantime, a vital need to reduce the num­ber of deaths and injuries caused by land­
mines. ‘Mine awareness’ helps endangered
communities to live more safely until the
threat of landmines is removed. MAG’s
awareness programmes aim to do this by
working with affected communities to help
them to reduce the risks to which they are
exposed. Also, it ensures that the work of
the clearance teams is understood, that
minefield demarcation is respected, and
that information relating to high-risk areas
is disseminated effectively. As in its mine
clearance work, MAG trains and employs
local people to implement mine awareness
programmes. Mines Advisory Group recog­
nises the need for varied and participative
approaches to community mine awareness
so as to address the particular problems and
needs of each affected community.

Local activities towards a mine free world
As co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize
winning International Campaign to Ban
Landmines, MAG has been actively
involved in efforts to achieve a mine-free
world. Within its programmes, MAG aims
to support local education and awareness
raising initiatives that seek to ensure the
prohibition of production, stockpiling,
transfer and use of all anti-personnel
mines. MAG also supports measures call­
ing for increased resources for mine and
UXO clearance, as well as for landmine
survivor assistance programmes.

Learning from past experience
The structure of MAG’s operations in
Bosnia Herzegovina will draw upon the
lessons that MAG has learned from over 6
years experience of implementing humani­tarian mine action programmes overseas.
For example, in both Angola and Cambo­
dia, MAG has started utilising small teams
that can respond rapidly to the immedi­
ate needs of landmine and UXO affected
populations.

In Angola, MAG operates Mine Action
Teams, or MATs. A Mine Action Team is
an integrated team—combining diminers
The implementation of MAG's programme is dependant upon the will of the international community to see lasting safety, security and peace for the people of Bosnia Herzegovina. Financial support for humanitarian mine action is urgently needed. Furthermore, the problem demands financial support over a sufficient period of time to make a difference to the large numbers of people afflicted. The capacity for humanitarian mine action to play a serious part in the reconstruction of local economies and the stabilisation of local populations should not be underestimated. Landmine contamination poisons the very roots of post-conflict societies, it renders the most basic efforts at reconstruction and rehabilitation impossible. After your families and communities have been torn apart by war, little can be more disheartening than to find a peace in which you cannot trust the ground beneath your feet. Humanitarian mine action addresses the grass-roots needs of post-conflict communities – it returns safe land in which people can have confidence and upon which they can build a future.