MAG (Mines Advisory Group)

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MAG, also known as the Mines Advisory Group, whose motto is “saves lives, builds futures,” takes a proactive role in meeting the needs of individuals in mine-affected countries through peacebuilding, community liaison and mine-risk education. With operations located in Angola, Cambodia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Vietnam, MAG has learned to incorporate old and new techniques, resulting inprobosphistic futures for many.

By Rachel Canfield

Community liaison. MAG views mine-risk education as an effective response to the wider problem caused by the presence of remnants of conflict. This distinctive approach encompasses peacebuilding, community liaison, mine-risk education, Mine Action Teams and mine- and explosive-detection dogs, explosive ordnance disposal and technology processes.

Peacebuilding. Many MAG efforts are directed at constructing an environment in which sustained economic and social development can take place. Tactics used to create such an environment are disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Disarmament involves landmine removal and explosive ordnance disposal. MAG attempts to bring organizations and both sides of conflicts together to work toward lasting peace.

Community liaison. In order to create the most effective plan to help a conflict-affected community, MAG employs Community Liaisons that work with all stakeholders to develop a clear understanding of the unique problems faced. Villages, authorities, hospitals, governments and aid agencies are among the partners that assist in this process. Community Liaisons are used to discover how landmines and UXO affect the everyday lives of those in an-risk communities. Through information-gathering and establishing current and potential risk-taking activities, suitable responses can be formulated before, during and after clearances. These estimates are published in the annual report, which is available on the website.

Mine-risk education. MAG was the first organization to introduce the concept of MRE. MAG mine-risk education campaigns are tailored to each community and take into consideration the specific impact of landmines/UXO as well as other details, such as economic resources, cultural differences, existing awareness, age, gender, etc.

MRE can cover information on a variety of issues, including:

- The physical appearance of landmines/UXO
- The environment in which landmines/UXO exist
- Realistic safety precautions and guidelines
- Emergency measures

MRE programs are conducted to initiate discussions that promote ways to stay safe through behavior change.

Mine Action Teams and mine- and explosives-detection dogs. Typically demining teams consist of army platoons that can increase costs and efforts. MAG Mine Action Teams are compact and efficient, each with 15 people who are all trained in at least two of the following skills: demining, EOD, Technical Survey, medical and first aid, management capabilities. Individuals from the local population are trained to work on the MATs, which helps strengthen the national workforce.

In projects that utilize mine- and explosives-detection dogs, clearance rates can be maximized as much as 300 percent. MAG prefers to employ these animals for clearing areas prepared by remote-controlled flail or vegetation-cutting machines, reducing contamination in low-risk areas and assuring quality control after clearance.

Explosive-ordnance disposal. EOD involves locating, identifying, marking, securing and safely removing and destroying dangerous remnants of conflict. This work includes the destruction of stockpiles and caches. In areas that contain a large amount of EOD, MAG frequently works to develop a local capacity to assist in the disposal of dangerous items, training local laborers in support roles. The EOD teams MAG deploys are helped greatly by the response of communities to MRE and Community Liaisons.

Technology. MAG uses a range of multi-faceted technological techniques. These technologies can include metal detectors, large machinery and now improved groundwater. However, no single clearance method works for every setting and situation. Consequently, MAG developed its “toolbox” of different approaches.

MAG uses some machinery, such as the Tempor mini-flail, Minecat, Bozena, sifting machines and advanced metal detectors. While new technologies are constantly being developed, MAG still views manual clearance as the most reliable method.

Recent Operations

Currently, MAG has operations in 11 countries. Below is information on their latest operations in Iraq and Lebanon.

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