

MAG Proposal to Terra Renaissance:

Landmine survey and clearance to facilitate community development in Cambodia



Project Period: April 2020–March 2021 (12 months)

MAG Cambodia
#9AB, Street 446,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
T: +855 (0) 23 215 115

Title of the action:	Landmine survey and clearance to facilitate community development in Cambodia
Location(s) of the action:	Northwest Cambodia
Project Goal:	To contribute to sustained poverty reduction and socio-economic development in landmine affected communities in rural Cambodia, through the release of safe land.
Project objective:	To support mechanical survey and clearance of suspected contaminated areas, in order to maximize community livelihood opportunities
Project Capacity:	One Mechanical Operations Unit
Total cost of the project:	US\$ 6,000
Total duration of the project:	April 2020- March 2021 (12 months)

Overview

Since establishing operations in Cambodia in 1992 following decades of internal and regional conflict, MAG has released over 83 million square meters of land back to impacted communities for the direct benefit of more than 1.9 million women, girls, men and boys. In a country where 80% of the population live in rural areas and are highly vulnerable to economic shocks, the presence of mine contamination continues to impede poverty reduction and development initiatives in mine-affected communities. MAG works in support of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to put land back into safe and productive use, and in support of the Landmine Free 2025 initiative.

The Problem

Despite nearly three decades of work by a range of operators including MAG, the presence of mines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continues to hinder access to safe land for agriculture, natural resources and infrastructure across Cambodia. Although accident rates have fallen drastically from 4,000 per year at the end of the 1990s, in 2019 77 people were injured or killed by mines and other ERW. With nearly 80 per cent of Cambodians living in rural areas, agricultural production, fisheries and forestry represent primary sources of livelihood for 65% of the population¹. Cambodia has undergone a significant economic transition in the past decade, with poverty incidence more than halving between 2007 and 2014; however, with limited social protection mechanisms in place, rural communities in particular remain highly vulnerable to external shocks. It is estimated that a loss of income of \$0.5 per day would push six million Cambodians - 40 per cent of the population – back into poverty². Within this context, the presence of landmine and ERW contamination continues to impede poverty reduction and development initiatives in mine-affected communities.

An estimated 792km² of suspected contaminated land remains to be cleared across 24 provinces of Cambodia; with Battambang and Pailin representing two of the most heavily contaminated provinces. As Cambodia works toward the goal of Landmine Free 2025, increased efficiency through innovation, new technologies and the use of the most appropriate clearance assets and methodologies is vital to ensuring the rapid release of safe land back to communities.

Project Description

The aim of the project is to support the socio-economic development of rural communities by conducting landmine clearance of prioritized areas in Battambang province in the northwest of the country. The project will contribute to the deployment of one Mechanical Operations Unit (MOU), which will conduct technical survey and clearance of areas suspected to be contaminated by landmines.

¹ USAID, Cambodia: Agriculture and Food Security (14 May 2019), <https://www.usaid.gov/cambodia/agriculture-and-food-security>

² World Bank: Country Partnership Framework for Cambodia (1 May 2019)

MAG employs an integrated approach to land release, using a range of tools, techniques and methodologies to ensure maximum efficiency depending on the nature of the threat and the type of minefield being addressed. This project will support the deployment of the DIGGER D-250 mechanical asset; which is a fully-armored remote-controlled machine, operated by a team comprised of two Mechanical Operators and supported by four Deminers, a Team Leader and a Medic. It is equipped with a tiller attachment.

The MOU will deploy to prioritized minefields, where it can quickly and safely release large areas of land back into productive use through tilling the ground, without the need to deploy alternative, more time-consuming manual clearance methodologies. Once the DIGGER machine has fully covered the site, the deminers that are attached to the MOU conduct visual search and sweep the area with detectors to ensure all mines have been destroyed.

The use of the machine substantially increases the efficiency and effectiveness of land release, enabling MAG to return land to communities more quickly than is possible when solely manual demining methods are deployed. An area of forty hectares, which would require two to three years of work with a manual demining team, can be returned to communities in less than six months with the use of the D-250 machine.

Project Outputs and Outcomes

The generous funding support from Terra Renaissance will allow MAG to undertake survey and clearance activities in support of communities in western Cambodia living with the threat of landmines and ERW, through directly contributing to the following outputs:

Outputs

- • Release at least **250,000m² of safe land** through survey and clearance activities conducted by the DIGGER Mechanical Operations Unit.
- • **4,148 direct and indirect beneficiaries** who can safely use the land for livelihood activities
- • Safe destruction of **100% of landmines and other explosive remnants of war** found within tasked areas

Prior to selecting sites for clearance activities, MAG works closely with the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), the provincial Mine Action Planning Units (MAPU) and impacted communities themselves, in order to prioritize areas for clearance using a series of criteria. In doing so, MAG ensures that its activities are fully aligned with national and provincial development planning, and with the needs and priorities of communities. Land cleared under this project will primarily be used for agricultural activities or natural resource gathering; enabling communities to maximize their livelihood opportunities and contributing to long-term socio-economic development. Post-impact evaluations have demonstrated that land cleared by MAG Cambodia is put back into productive use and average of 2-3 months following clearance.

With the support of the Terra Renaissance Foundation, MAG anticipates the following key outcomes:

Outcomes

- ❖ **Reduced risk of injury or death** for communities in Battambang province;
- ❖ **Improved community safety and security:** Improvements to a community's quality of life and a more stable and productive environment through freedom from the fear of landmines;
- ❖ **Support to livelihood activities:** The presence of deadly contamination limits the land available for agricultural use and restricts access to natural resources. By removing these obstacles, MAG will make it possible for the communities to reclaim their land and enhance their livelihoods;
- ❖ **Facilitation of reconstruction and regeneration of the region:** areas cleared by MAG provide safe access, not only to communities, but also to government departments and development agencies, in support of long-term poverty reduction.

Beneficiaries

The 12-month project will directly benefit, **216 vulnerable individuals** living in rural communities; primarily dependent on subsistence agriculture and collection of non-timber forest products as their primary livelihood activities. Communities predominantly live in remote area with poor access and infrastructure, and have therefore very limited access to services and development interventions.

Annex A: The map below shows released and remaining areas of mine contamination in Battambang and Pailin Provinces

