



MAG Proposal to Terra Renaissance

Landmine survey and clearance to facilitate community development in Cambodia



Project period: April 2021-March 2022 (12 months)
MAG Cambodia

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Title:	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 2021-March 2022 (12 months)

Overview

Since establishing operations in Cambodia in 1992, MAG has released over 95 million square meters of land back to the mine-impacted communities and destroyed more than 350,000 of dangerous items for the direct benefit of more than 1.9 million women, girls, boys and men. 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 work 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 clearance activities, 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. According to the recent data from the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), although accident rates have fallen drastically from 4,000 per year at the end of the 1990s, in 2020, 69 people were injured or killed by mines and other ERW across the country.

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 poverty¹. Within this context, communities in western Cambodia struggling to stay above the poverty line often live and work in hazardous areas and undertake high-risk activities through economic necessity, and to compensate for limited livelihood options. The global economic downturn triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Cambodia's economy and it is predicted to slow the country's ability to recover and to boost economic growth in the coming years. Income losses remain widespread and have had a major impact on the livelihoods of the vulnerable communities. Rather than living in the city or other countries, thousands of workers and migrants have been forced to return to their home provinces/country and will rely mainly on their agricultural lands to earn a living.

Battambang remains the most mine-affected province in Cambodia, as well as one of the poorest, with an estimated 130km² of land contaminated by landmines and around 40% of the primarily rural population living on less than \$1 per day. The majority of those benefitting from MAG's clearance operations are dependent on subsistence agriculture (the cultivation of rice, cassava, beans, maize, mango, cashew, corn and pepper) and collection of non-timber forest products as their primary livelihood activities. Communities live predominantly in remote areas with poor infrastructure, and have therefore very limited access to services. Restricted availability of agricultural land due to the presence of mine and ERW contamination further impedes poverty reduction and development initiatives.

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

Project Description

This project will support the socio-economic development of the rural communities by conducting landmine clearance of prioritized areas in Battambang province in the northwest Cambodia. 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.

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 technical survey and clearance activities in support of the communities in western Cambodia living with the threat of landmines and ERW, through directly contributing to the following outputs:

Outputs

- Released at least **380,000m² of safe land** through survey and clearance activities conducted by the Mechanical Operations Unit – DIGGER250.
- **2,850 direct and indirect beneficiaries** who can safely use the land for livelihood activities
- **100% safely removed and destroyed the 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 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 the clearance.

With the support of the Terra Renaissance, MAG Cambodia anticipates the following key 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

This project will directly benefit **95 vulnerable individuals** living in rural communities, primarily dependent on subsistence agriculture and collection of non-timber forest products as their primary livelihood activities. Communities predominately live in remote area with poor access and infrastructure, and have therefore very limited access to services and development interventions. A further 2,755 beneficiaries will be reached indirectly.

Your Impact



Dei Chamkar Lok Sam Rath minefield is located in Ou Tatiek village, Samlout district within Battambang province

With support from Terra Renaissance in 2019, MAG was able to deploy Mechanical Support Unit, to Dei Chamkar Lok Sam Rath minefield to support a Mine Detection Dog team to clear 261,807m² of land and remove deadly items. After the land was made safe, the community immediately started using it for agriculture, meaning they could expand and diversify crops.

Sayrin (pictured above) is one of the 49 beneficiaries who will be able to increase her crops in the village, she spoke to a member of the MAG team about how the situation was before being able to expand her available land.

“I have a total land of 80,000 square meters, but I could use only a small part to grow rice to support my family we knew the land was unsafe, but we have no choice as we need to feed our family.”

Thanks to the MAG team, Sayrin will be able to use an additional 30,000m² of her land for corn, mangos, cashews, rice, turmeric and pumpkin. Next year, she expects to earn \$250 from her farming and hopes to increase this even more in the coming years. Sayrin mentioned that she was able to sell her five hectares of land with \$15,000 price allowing her to buy a new car for her family.



“I am so happy and excited to be able to get the safe land back without paying anything that I have never ever expected. More than that, MAG staff are friendly and good morality. I am so thankful to MAG and your supporters in sharing this charity work to me as well as other people in communities.”

The whole community surrounding the minefield also benefitted from risk education, provided by MAG, which support at-risk groups to help recognize, avoid and report dangerous items.