

MAG- Statement on Clearance

The progress made in addressing cluster munition remnants over the past decade has been remarkable. Millions of square metres of land have been released, communities have regained access to safe land, and States Parties have moved steadily towards fulfilling their Article 4 obligations.

However, this progress rests on much more than technical assets. It rests on skilled national personnel. Reliable information. Community trust. Strong national authorities, good relationships and partnerships. These foundations take years to build. And they can be undermined very quickly when funding declines.

MAG therefore welcomes the emphasis on accurate baselines, evidence-based planning, national information-management systems and sustainable capacity in the Vientiane Capital Action Plan. These are essential not only for meeting clearance obligations, but also for ensuring that progress can be sustained beyond completion.

Across Southeast Asia, MAG has seen how high-quality survey and data-driven prioritisation can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of clearance. When contamination is accurately identified, limited resources can be directed to areas where they will achieve the greatest humanitarian and development impact. Equally important, resources are not wasted clearing land where there is little or no evidence of contamination.

Experience from Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia demonstrates that there is no single approach to survey and clearance. Methodologies must be adapted to the nature of contamination, and the specific context and implemented through national systems.

In **Vietnam**, MAG's approach to survey is defined by strict provincial integration and collaborative frameworks, especially in target areas like Quang Tri. MAG, NPA, Peactrees Vietnam and local authorities collaborated closely together. Importantly, this partnership was built on trust and a willingness to test, share and learn from operational evidence. Successive clearance data from MAG informed refinement of NPA's CMRS methodology along with institutionalised coordination with local authorities. This resulted in a reduced clearance rate from 143% to 18% over a 10 year period, through consistent and constructive feedback loops and learning, a huge improvement in efficiency.

Unlike Laos and Vietnam, which deal overwhelmingly with unexploded submunitions, **Cambodia** is heavily contaminated by legacy landmine fields. MAG therefore balances its CMRS application with traditional Landmine Technical Surveys. We focus on

collaboration with partners, for example like APOPO. Together we test and deploy Technical Survey Dogs (TSDs) to accelerate the detection of submunitions inside complex terrain.

As the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world, **Lao PDR** requires MAG to deploy on a massive macro-scale. We utilize a highly systematic, box-by-box technical surveys across entire districts (such as Xieng Khouang). Because contamination is often vast and continuous rather than isolated, MAG's CMRS teams focus continuous, grid-based search grids to delineate multi-hectare polygons for large-scale national development projects.

Whether addressing large areas affected by unexploded submunitions such as in Lao PDR or more complex mixed contamination environments like in Cambodia, success depends on close coordination between national authorities, operators, local government and affected communities.

MAG has also seen how continuous learning and collaboration between operators can improve efficiency over time. Sharing evidence, refining methodologies, and strengthening coordination mechanisms have helped reduce unnecessary clearance and ensure that efforts are focused where they are most needed.

As States Parties work towards their Article 4 commitments, sustaining national capacity must remain a priority. Clearance outcomes are strongest and most sustainable when national authorities lead prioritisation, information management, and coordination processes, with international partners supporting national objectives and systems.

At the same time, urgent and sustained support for the clearance of cluster munition remnants and other explosive ordnance is needed as persistent funding gaps continue to threaten progress and delay the release of land for productive use.

To achieve the aims of the Convention, the international community must maintain its commitment to long-term, nationally led survey and clearance efforts that are efficient, evidence-based, and responsive to the priorities of affected communities. Predictable and adequate resources are essential not only to meet Article 4 obligations, but also to restore livelihoods, support sustainable development, and enable affected communities to live free from the threat of cluster munition remnants.