



MAKING KAENGGNALOUAN VILLAGE SAFER THROUGH RAPID EOD RESPONSE

KHAMMOUANE, LAO PDR

TURNING SUPPORT INTO SAFER COMMUNITIES

With the support of Restoration Laos, one of MAG's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams is responding daily to dangerous unexploded ordnance across Khammouane Province. To date, this support has enabled MAG to complete



722 EOD tasks and safely destroy 1,051 UXO items in Boualapha

Each task is different, but all share the same goal: to reduce risk for families going about their everyday lives. One example of this work can be seen in Kaenggnalouan village, a Bru ethnic community located along the Xebangfai River in Boualapha District.

The village is home to 57 families living in 47 houses, most of whom rely on farming, fishing, and collecting forest products. These daily activities often take people into areas where unexploded ordnance remains from the Second Indochina War.

The EOD team funded by Restoration Laos with Mr. Michael Ambler

In January and February 2026, the team funded by Restoration Laos has completed 26 EOD tasks in Kaenggnalouan village alone, safely destroying 54 UXO items and reducing immediate risks for the community.

A HIGH-RISK FIND NEAR DAILY VILLAGE ACTIVITIES

On 17 February 2026, MAG's EOD team responded to a report of an unexploded cluster munition close to the village. The task involved destroying 15 BLU-3/B submunitions that remained inside two dispenser tubes, with ten submunitions in one tube and five in the other.

The items were located on a hillside about 15 metres from the village's main road and close to the Xebangfai River, an area used daily for transport and fishing. The items had been reported only days earlier by a village leader to MAG's Community Liaison team and were prioritised due to the immediate risk. The demolition was carried out safely after the road was temporarily closed and villagers in the vicinity were asked to move to a safe distance.

All UXO reports in Kaengnalouan are first assessed by MAG's Community Liaison (CL) team before tasks are assigned to EOD teams. Reflecting on her work, Community Liaison Officer, Ms. Vannida said:

“WHAT MOTIVATES ME MOST IS WHEN VILLAGERS TELL ME THEY FEEL SAFER WHEN WE ARE AROUND, AND THAT OUR PRESENCE ENCOURAGES THEM TO REPORT DANGEROUS ITEMS.”



The speed of MAG's response in Kaengnalouan was not unusual. Just one day earlier, the team destroyed a BLU-26 submunition found five metres from the village school, reported by a woman clearing land to plant cassava. Due to its proximity to areas where children gather daily, the item was treated as urgent and safely destroyed within 24 hours.

LEADING THE RESPONSE

The operation was led by Mr. Somma, EOD Team Leader, who is from Langkhang village and has worked with MAG for a total of ten years.

“While clearance work makes the land safe for communities to use for farming and building houses without fear of accidents, our EOD response focuses on removing the immediate dangers posed to local communities by UXO items,” he explained.

After the task was completed, Mr. Somma reflected on its impact: “The 15 bombs that we destroyed safely today may be only 15 out of

the estimated eighty million left from the war, but these 15 can never harm or kill innocent villagers. Knowing this makes us truly proud of our work.”



DAILY LIFE CONTINUES

As the EOD team prepared for the demolition, life in Kaengnalouan continued as normal. Villagers travelled in and out of the village, young men transported timber for house construction, cattle grazed nearby, and people headed to the forest to collect food.

Among them were Ms. Xai (17), Ms. Phong (16), and Ms. Bounmee (19), who were on their way to collect bamboo when MAG staff briefly stopped them while the road was secured.



“Today, the weather is good, so we wanted to go collect the bamboo to make our food,” said Ms. Bounmee, 19. “We have seen bombs many times in the forest of our village when we collect foods such as bamboo and mushrooms. The explosion was loud and scary, but we are happy that more bombs are gone. Thank you for making it safe for us.”

LIVING WITH UXO, PROTECTING CHILDREN

Village leaders explained that unexploded ordnance is frequently found in and around Kaengnalouan, sometimes during construction or daily activities near the home.

Mr. Boualai, 72, Village Chief, shared a recent incident that highlighted the ongoing risks for children in the village.

“When I went fishing, I saw five children on the riverbank trying to break an aluminium tube they had found on the shore. I immediately

recognized it as a bomb container, the same type that was destroyed today.” The item was reported, and MAG returned the following day to destroy it safely.

“ONLY THEN DID I LEARN THAT THERE WERE SEVEN BOMBLETS INSIDE THAT TUBE. I WAS TERRIFIED THINKING ABOUT WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THOSE CHILDREN IF I HADN'T BEEN THERE.”

He added that a large aircraft bomb remains underwater in the river and has already been reported to the national operator, who has conducted a survey and plans to remove it when weather conditions improve.



Site and safety briefing for Mr Michael Ambler ahead of demolition

LOOKING AHEAD

Village leaders highlighted MAG's fast response and consistent follow-up when UXO is reported.

As Mr. Boualai, Village Chief, explained,



"THEIR PAINT FROM WHEN THE COMMUNITY LIAISON TEAMS THAT ASSESS THE SITES IS STILL FRESH WHEN THEY COME BACK TO DESTROY IT."

For the community, this visible return builds confidence and reinforces the importance of reporting dangerous items.

He concluded with a message shared by many families in Kaengnalouan: "Thank you to Restoration Laos for supporting this work to make our village safer. If possible, we would like the entire village area to be cleared, because it is very risky when people dig for construction, make fires, or let children play."

Village leaders have already submitted a clearance request through district authorities. Until that is approved, the continued support of Restoration Laos will allow MAG to maintain its rapid response capacity over the coming year, ensuring that reports are assessed quickly, immediate threats are removed, and communities like Kaengnalouan can live with greater safety and confidence.