

Spotlight on New Colleagues

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More Equipment to Clear Mines and UXO in Vietnam

by John Stevens, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement

As part of the U.S. commitment to strengthen its relationship with Vietnam, the Department of State recently provided nearly US\$1 million worth of state-of-the-art equipment to Vietnam to help clear landmines and unexploded ordnance from past conflicts. Since joining the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program in 2000, Vietnam has received more than \$37 million in U.S. assistance for demining, mine-risk education, survivor assistance, an ongoing Landmine Impact Survey and demining equipment. For more details, view the press release at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/78487.htm>.



Photo by John Stevens

Two MAG technicians walk through a forest with a large loop detector.

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Coffeelands Trust Initiative

by Stephen Meyers, Polus Center

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and Dean's Beans have teamed with the Coffeelands Landmine Victims' Trust to support coffee workers injured by landmines living along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border.

Throughout the world, coffee and landmines overlap. From countries as diverse as Ethiopia, the "birthplace of coffee," to Colombia, home of the iconic fictitious character Juan Valdez, landmines impact the lives of coffee workers, their families and their communities. The Coffeelands Landmine Victims' Trust is a vehicle for coffee corporations to give something back to the farmers who sometimes risk their lives to pick the crop to support their families. The Trust identifies individual coffee workers who have survived a landmine or unexploded ordnance accident and supports their physical rehabilitation and economic integration through non-governmental organizations and local service providers active in their regions.

During the conflict between the Sandinistas and Contras in the 1980s, landmines were heavily used. An estimated 135,000 landmines were emplaced in Nicaragua and more than 3,000 in Honduras. Unexploded ordnance from this conflict also litters the two countries. Between 1980 and 2004 there were a reported 724 landmine and UXO casualties, including 68 deaths in Nicaragua. Honduras has no truly comprehensive figures on landmine survivors, but in 1995, Honduran officials estimated that over 200 civilians had been killed in landmine incidents since 1990. It is believed rates are much higher, given that the majority of landmines and accidents are in rural regions where there are few government offices and healthcare facilities to keep records. Thanks to the assistance of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, Honduras was rendered "mine free" in 2004 (see <http://snipurl.com/1d07z> for related press release).

Almost all of the coffee grown in Honduras and Nicaragua comes from the mountainous border region. During a visit by the Polus Center in the summer of 2006 to the department of El Paraíso, the heart of Honduras' coffee region, one small village had seven survivors who had stepped on landmines. All but one were still working their farms, struggling to make ends meet. One survivor had turned to selling lottery tickets on the street because he could no longer find work picking coffee.

Vida Nueva, a prosthetic center in Choluteca, Honduras, has provided artificial limbs to each survivor through a partnership with the Organization of American States. Now, however, *Vida Nueva* is able to use the Green Mountain grant to the Coffeelands Trust to help all seven coffee workers find ways to increase their families' incomes. Two are learning bicycle repair and being supported in opening their own shop in town. The rest have decided to invest in their farms by participating in agricultural training, diversifying their crops and working to increase the quality of their produce.

With the continued efforts of the Coffeelands Landmine Victims' Trust, workers injured by landmines throughout Central America and other coffee-growing regions will soon have better opportunities and livelihoods. As the Trust expands to these areas, these workers will be equipped with the tools and skills they need to make important contributions and improvements to their communities. Learn more about the Trust at www.coffeelands.org.

IEPF Helps Survivors

by Rahman Mammadov, IEPF

Following Azerbaijan's "Level One Survey" (2000) and a mine victims needs assessment completed in 2004, the IEPF, in close collaboration with the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), found that the country's survivors had an urgent need for vocational training, social adaptation, advocacy and medical care. Consequently, with funding from the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA), IEPF began a project to establish and support a mine victims association in the Tartar district of Azerbaijan. Subsequent trainings were conducted in accordance with materials prepared by professionals and experienced

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Photo by Stephen Peregorsky

All seven of these coffee farmers in El Paraíso are landmine survivors.

Landmines Blow! Digs Wells in Cambodia

by Alison Bock, Landmines Blow!

Last year, the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement awarded Landmines Blow!® a grant for its Project Safe Water to construct 10 wells in six villages in the Mong commune of Srey Snam district in Cambodia. Landmines Blow!'s Project Safe Water raises funds to construct wells and latrines and provides hygiene training to mine-affected communities. The organization also educates civil society about the indiscriminate use of landmines and unexploded ordnance.



Photo by Alison Bock
Landmines Blow!® Water Well. Siem Reap Province, Cambodia.

have been constructed, one of which is seen in the photo, left.

Upon completion of all the wells, 1,763 landmine survivors, refugees, widows, amputees and internally displaced persons will have clean and safe water. Landmines Blow! aims to double that number during 2007 by adding latrines to the original project site and implementing Phase II. This phase of the project includes the construction of wells and latrines in Varin district, where landmines, UXO and health

problems from water-borne diseases are prevalent.

Its NGO partner in Cambodia, *Teuk Sa'at*, broke ground in September 2006 on Phase I of Project Safe Water. The first five wells

Sport is My Friend in Adversity

by Jaime Perales, Organization of American States

The New York City Marathon is the largest marathon in the world. Just thinking about running 26.5 miles (42.6 kilometers) is exhausting, let alone competing in the ambulatory disabled category. "Sport is my friend in adversity," stated Mr. Eduardo Seis, a First Sergeant in the Ecuadorian Army, when he was awarded second place in the ambulatory disabled category during the latest marathon, held in November 2006. Placing second is—especially in this category—no walk in the park.



Photo by Ricardo Corral

Achilles Track Club/OAS athletes.

Mr. Seis is part of a team of athletes formed by the U.S. NGO Achilles Track Club and the Organization of American States.

The team is comprised of athletes who have survived landmine accidents. Two other team members, José Paez and Angel Pulla, also competed in the 2006 New York City Marathon. The team is expected to expand soon with an athlete from Colombia.

The OAS began supporting landmine removal in Ecuador and Peru in 1998 when the two countries signed a treaty ending hostilities. The OAS launched its victim-rehabilitation program two years ago. You can read more about landmine survivors competing in an earlier New York City Marathon in the September 2005 issue of *Safe Passage*: www.state.gov/t/pm/wra/54091.htm#story1.

Sport is increasingly being used as therapy to improve the self-esteem of physically disabled individuals. Many landmine victims in countries such as the Russian Federation and Colombia exercise regularly and compete in running, cycling and swimming races. They are not inhibited by their disabilities; sport becomes a dear friend to these survivors, giving them a reason to thrive.

Cruise for Peace

by Lynn Davison, Roots of Peace

Roots of Peace and Cunard Cruise Lines have partnered to present the first transatlantic "Cruise for Peace," which sets sail April 30, 2007, from New York City to Southampton, England. The cruise is expected to evolve into an annual event. Guests joining the voyage will sail the high seas in sophisticated style on the elegant Queen Mary 2 with the "peace" of mind that a percentage of their fare will help remove landmines. The historic sailing celebrates the 10th anniversary of the founding of Roots of Peace and honors the legacy of the late Princess Diana of Wales, who helped to catapult the issue of landmines to the forefront of the international agenda in 1997.

During the cruise, Roots of Peace will host a "mines to vines" wine tasting with highly acclaimed Napa Valley wineries. Afghanistan's

Ambassador to the United States, Said T. Jawad, his wife, Shamim Jawad, and Ken Rutherford, co-founder of Landmine Survivors Network and professor at Missouri State University, will be among the guests giving special presentations on board.

Cunard will also host a "Cruise for Peace" *bon voyage* luncheon onboard the Queen Mary 2 benefiting Roots of Peace. The luncheon will honor the efforts of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and welcome aboard the new Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as well as highlight the second United Nations World Landmine Awareness Day (April 4). For inquiries on the cruise, e-mail rootsofpeace@youandleisure.com. For more about Roots of Peace, visit www.rootsofpeace.org.

PTPI Teams with HALO Trust in Sri Lanka

by Stephanie Sonderegger, Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa)

Ravaged by civil war for nearly 20 years, Sri Lanka has since been inching toward an era of peace under the Norwegian-mediated ceasefire of 2002. That year, People to People International, an organization founded by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to advance the cause of peace, joined the Department of State's Public-Private Partnership Program for Mine Action and met another partner, the HALO Trust. HALO suggested PTPI might want to work in Sri Lanka. Shortly thereafter, the late president's granddaughter, PTPI President and CEO Mary Eisenhower, visited the war-torn land. Struck by the beauty of a landscape left vacant by the threat of landmines, Eisenhower immediately decided Sri Lanka would be the beneficiary of PTPI's efforts.



All photos by PTPI
People to People to People International (PTPI) president and CEO Mary Eisenhower observes the demining process in Sri Lanka with the native Sri Lankan members of The HALO Trust demining team funded by PTPI. The HALO Trust aims not only to clear the area of landmines but also to create jobs for those living in the area.

Both the Sri Lankan Army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam admitted to planting hundreds of thousands of landmines, most of which were scattered across the northern and eastern regions, where much of the fighting occurred. As people forced from their homes during the years of violence returned to reclaim what was left of their lives, things would only be made more difficult by the risks posed by landmines.

In 2004, PTPI joined forces with HALO, funding a year's worth of demining in the Jaffna peninsula, one of the most heavily populated areas in the northeastern region of Sri Lanka. HALO surveyed the land to establish priority zones, taking into account such criteria as "the number and status of beneficiaries, the predicted number of returnees to an area, land use before and after clearance, the risk of accident if land is not cleared, and the effect which clearance and HALO's presence in a specific place will have on the local economy and the wider community," as Tom Dibb of HALO Trust wrote in the final report documenting the progress in Jaffna. Many of the mines laid by the SLA are considered to be "minimal metal," according to Dibb, making them difficult to detect. However, careful surveillance of the land along with records the SLA retained documenting the locations of mines allowed PTPI and HALO to excavate 9,292 square meters (10,018 square feet) of land during their first year of partnership.



One of the most disheartening implications of resettling mine-affected Jaffna was the difficulty children faced. Before demining began, many schools witnessed a serious decline in enrollment due to injuries on and near school property. A foremost goal of the 2004–2005 project was to reinstate safe access to education. For example, in Alaveddi, two years before the official ceasefire, a girl lost her eye while playing on school grounds due to an accident with a landmine.

Enrollment fell to approximately 150 students from nearly 500 in 1992, largely due to the risk posed by landmines. In 2005, PTPI not only successfully cleared the land surrounding three schools—the school in Alaveddi, Manthikai Mavil Vaikkal School and Maduvil Kamalasanani School—but, after they were wiped away by the 2004 tsunami, PTPI rebuilt them as well, with contributions made to its Tsunami Relief Fund. As a result, hundreds of students have returned to school.

In 2005, almost 180,000 people had returned to mine-affected areas, including the Jaffna province. The 2004–2005 PTPI–HALO partnership destroyed 590 anti-personnel mines and five pieces of unexploded ordnance. HALO estimated that 3,000–5,000 people benefited from the project's accomplishments. Not only are returning residents able to confidently send their children to school, but access to fertile land was also restored. Farmers may till their fields and allow their livestock to graze freely without fearing they or their livestock might lose a limb or even their lives. Though much has been accomplished in the years following the ceasefire between the LTTE and the SLA, much remains to be done. Therefore, People to People International once again provided funding for a demining team in Sri Lanka in 2006. The project commenced on August 1, 2006, and is ongoing. PTPI plans to continue working with HALO, possibly supporting projects in Cambodia in 2007.

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staff. Everyone, including the mine victims themselves, welcomed this initiative to help the survivors become self-sufficient. Participants were selected for appropriate trainings from among the surveyed mine victims.

The mine victims were grouped in accordance with their degree of disability, social state, scope of interest, abilities and principal needs. One hundred eighty survivors expressed a desire to start and run a small business. About 80 mine victims wished to become involved with mine-risk education services. About 27 mine victims in severe health were evaluated and sent for treatment to the specialized medical center for the disabled within the Medical Rehabilitation Program implemented by the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action. For more details, see the *JMA* article: <http://snipurl.com/mamedov>.



Photo by IEPEANAMA
This mine victim, interviewed during the survey, was a child when his accident happened.