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## Cambodia the Land of Mines

The second country in the world by number of landmines, Cambodia, land of lush forest, ancient temples and deep sorrow, is not still free from a heavy yoke that keep her roped with her past of death. Victim of a tragic inherit from Vietnam war and bloody Pol Pot military regime, Cambodia nowadays has a lot of grounds disseminate of mines and unexploded devices. Grain fields, rice fields, forests are high-risk places especially for peasants and countryside dwellers. Despite they are still far from solution, they are working in two different fronts. First is the land mine clearance, second is rescue of victims. Mine-clearing teams are dealing with the research and clearing of high-risk countryside areas like Battambang province. Field mine-clearing required firmness, attention and cold blood. The first phase requires the use of dogs that, thanks to their weight - lower than men weight - can tread on the fields looking for mines without running the risk of making them blast. The second phase consists in using a metal-detector, even if the action of this instrument is limited because many mines are made of plastic. After identifying a mine, the skilful operators, as CIMAC team, defuse it. In the sanitary front, the Italian Emergency hospital has now become a reference point for the Cambodian population. Doctors and nurses provide assistance to many persons mutilated by the landmines. In the daily hospital activities, the history of a Dolla patient is significant. Following a injury, he lost a leg and, when he returned home, he found his son waiting for him, who had been born during his hospitalization. This reportage wants to tell about this silent tragedy that, since twenty years from the end of Khmer Rouge violence, this country is still suffering.



Second only to Afghanistan for the number of landmines, Cambodia is still paying an high price in terms of deaths and injuries from mine. The rice fields and rural areas are most at risk. Is here, in fact, where is possible find the greatest number of explosive devices.





With the lift flag ceremony begins the daily work of various teams of mine-clearing. The land mine clearance of soils is long and risky. Only a highly skilled staff can work directly in the mined areas.





CMAC is a center of mine-clearing who is working in rural areas of Battambang province. This area of Cambodia, the former headquarters of the Khmer Rouge, is the most heavily mined the entire country.





The teams work in total safety, even if this work is one of the most dangerous. Helmets and protective vests are insufficient without the skill, coolness and courage of the individual operators.





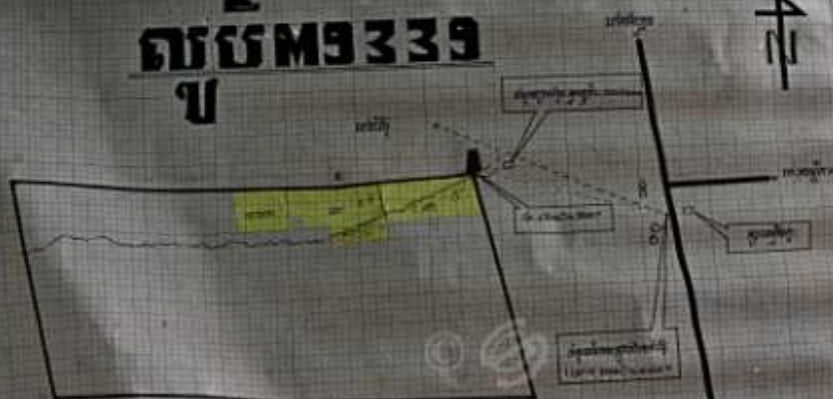
The first phase of work is to scour the land with the dogs. The fine sense of smell and light weight allows them to step and identify the hidden mines without running the risk of them exploding.



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ប្រភេទចំការមិន:

ចំការមិនធំៗ: ១៩៨៧-១៩៨៨.

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The lack of maps of minefields is a major problem in this work. Besides requiring a lot of time, the verification of a land is a very risky operation: each field, each rice field could be mined. When the situation is verified the operators draws the new maps.





The fields not yet cleared are fenced with a red rope. Warning signs indicate the absolute prohibition of treading area





CMAC operators sift through every piece of land which is not within their maps. This work requires frequent rest periods due to high degree of tension and concentration required. Here an operator is taking a break in the shade of a tent.





The second phase of work involves the use of metal detectors. With this instrument is possible check the presence of anti-tank mines.





When they find a mine they check the conditions and decide if defuse or explode it.





Series of plastic anti-personnel mines. The presence of this type of mine can be detected only by dogs. Can not be used a metal detector.





The Italian Emergency hospital has become a landmark for the whole of Cambodia. Named after Ilaria Alpi, this hospital for war victims was the first in the country.





Divided into male and female wards this hospital is completely free of charge and receives all types of patients regardless of their origin or social status.





Many of the victims are children and guys who were injured playing in the meadows by mines.



The majority of patients have orthopedic problems. In fact, this type of mines are not built to kill the people but is designed to maim and to involve, besides the wounded, even relief, in order to steal more people to battle.



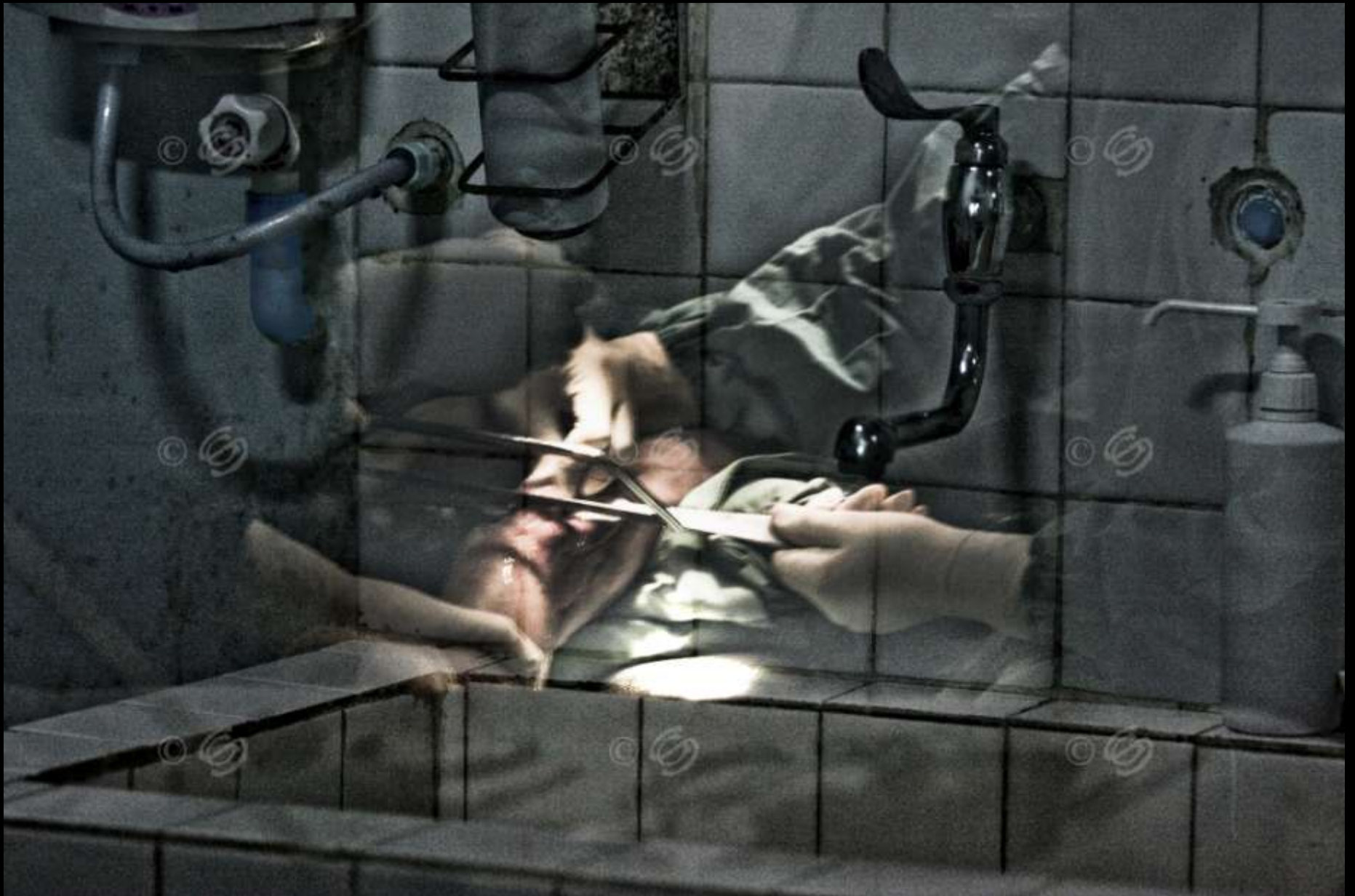


The extreme poverty of this people and the lack of free public hospitals involving the intervention on patients with different diseases.  
Here, a French team carried out an operation for an ear on a child came from a distant cambodian province.



**In addition to the physical damage that these weapons bring to the population, a huge social problem is open when to whole families lack of employment and income due to inability to work by those who are injured by mines.**





The amputation of a leg of an peasant often means cutting off the only source of income of a family. The social damage caused by landmines is scary.



In the operating theatre the doctors of Emergency hospital are trying to save the leg of a woman.





In an operating theatre doctors are starting to perform a surgery to a guy just arrived in hospital urgently.



Often patients who come to this hospital come from villages hundreds of kilometers away. The distance, the lack of money are often due to a delay of relief: many patients arrived in hospital after days or weeks after the accident.





In the operating theatre doctors are trying to remove a piece of mine from the leg of this patient.



Lina, a volunteer italian doctors, is trying to save the leg of a girl came to the hospital after a week after the accident.





In the intensive care unit this person has just woken up after an operation.



**Paradoxically, anti-personnel mines do not discrimination: they kill everybody. Many of the bombs still buried in the land of Cambodia are made by Italy. Here, the boys are watching the window in male ward like a hope for a real change.**





**Doctor Lina** controls the x-ray of a boy operated a few days ago.



Despite all, many patients have preserved the Cambodian spirit of cheerful and lively.





Mr. Dolla, 24 years old, had a leg amputated due to a shootout that has been victim.



Deborah, head nurse of the hospital, controls the x-ray of Mr. Dolla to check the progress of post-operative phase.





In the x-ray is clearly visible one of the bullets that struck the young Mr. Dolla. Another hand shot was fatal to his leg.



The patient Dolla was discharged. During his stay in the hospital in a village two hours from Battambang his son was born. This guy after more than a month has never had a chance to see him.





This guy after amputation  
is waiting for a prosthesis.



Sunday is visiting day.  
Some families of a patients are  
entertain in the hallway waiting for  
to enter into the recovery room.





Mr. Dolla is waiting for nurse fill out documents for his discharged. Soon he will know his child born during his confinement in hospital.



In a small company that supports the work of the hospital are built artificial limbs maimed patients.





Finally, with his wife and son in their home in a small village in Battambang province.



**During the waiting for a prosthesis is necessary a period of rehabilitation on crutches.**

**Although with difficulty the hope that this country will be able to recover itself and to continue its journey in an area safe and free from the threat of landmines.**