Demining in Angola
Funded by Kayak the Kwanza

Demining Report
Cuito Cuanavale
August 2016

Kayak the Kwanza

The first source-to-mouth expedition along Angola's longest river

In June 2016, Alfred Weston and Oscar Scafidi completed the first ever source-to-mouth expedition along the Kwanza River in Angola. They used a 40 year-old foldable wooden kayak that was paddled and carried along the 1,300km journey. In doing so they also aimed to raise USD10,000 to support The HALO Trust with humanitarian mine clearance in Angola. The target was exceeded with more than USD25,000 raised. **www.kayakthekwanza.com**

Executive Summary

In August 2016 The HALO Trust (HALO) in Angola has utilized a $25,000 donation of funding raised by the Kayak the Kwanza expedition in order to support humanitarian demining in Cuito Cuanavale, Angola.

Cuito Cuanavale was the scene of one of the most significant battles fought in Southern Africa during the Cold War era. As a legacy of the fighting the small town has been left surrounded by one of the largest and most lethal minefields in Africa. Indeed, on a visit by HRH Prince Harry in 2013 it was described as "the most mined town in Africa".

This report summarises why humanitarian demining is still necessary in Angola, and how funds raised by the Kayak the Kwanza expedition contributed to the clearance of two minefields in Cuito Cuanavale through the deployment of two manual demining teams.

The report also touches briefly on some of Angola's general economic and development issues, and recent cooperation between HALO and the National Geographic Okavango Wilderness Project with which the Kayak the Kwanza expedition was also involved with.

Summary of Outputs:

- Funded the deployment of 2 demining teams for 1 month (August 2016)
- Cleared 18,520m² of mined ground of high humanitarian priority
- Destroyed 121 anti-personnel mines (AP mines)
- Destroyed 93 anti-tank mines (AT mines)
- Destroyed 2 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) of calibre >20mm
- Benefitted 352 people (91 direct and 261 indirect beneficiaries)


Defunct military vehicles in Cuito Cuanavale are sad reminders of Angola's civil war, and the legacy of landmines and unexploded ordnance which still impact upon the lives of ordinary people.

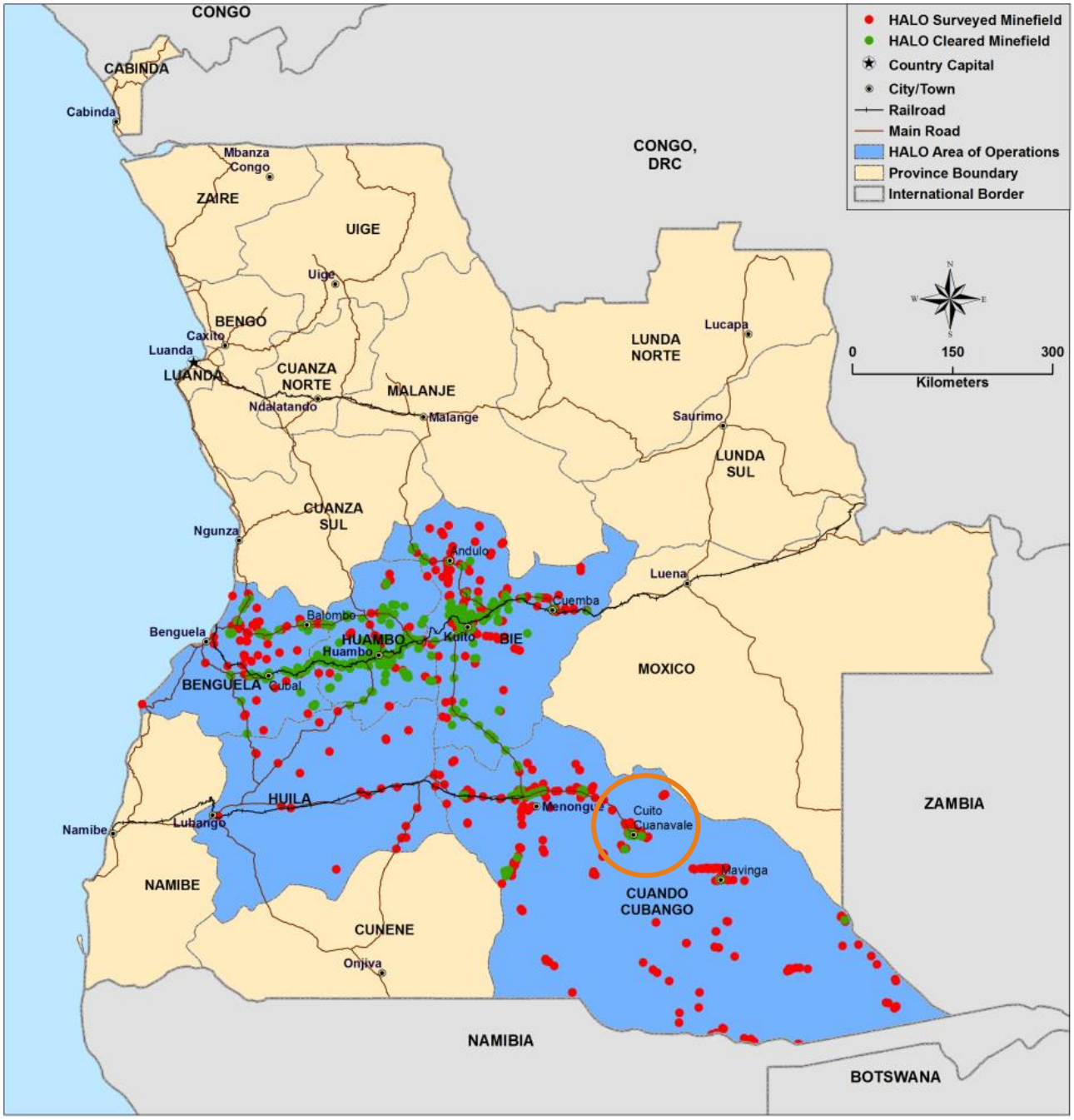
SOUTHERN AFRICA

LOCATION OF ANGOLA IN RELATION TO MAJOR RIVER SYSTEMS

Angola is a country blessed with water resources and some of the region's major rivers flow through its territory, including the Congo and the Zambezi, and the less well known Kwanza (Cuanza) and the Cubango which both have headwaters in the Angolan highlands, but then flow in opposite directions. The Cubango flows southwards to the Okavango Delta, a world heritage site and precious wildlife reserve. The Cuito and the Cuanavale rivers - which also start in the Angolan highlands and join the Cubango above the delta – are currently subject of a major research project funded by National Geographic. As its name indicates, the town of Cuito Cuanavale is located at the confluence of the two rivers. Despite its remote location Cuito Cuanavale is perhaps the most mined town in Africa. With a population of almost 40,000 the town has more mines than people.

ANGOLA

HALO AREA OF OPERATIONS - MINEFIELDS STATUS



HALO has been operating in Angola since 1994 demining in the provinces of Benguela, Huambo, Bié, Huila and Cuando Cubango (Kuando Kubango). Green dots on the map indicate where over 800 minefields have been cleared so far, primarily from around urban areas and along road and rail links. However the red dots show where more than 640 minefields remain in outlying rural areas.

Background

Cuito Cuanavale

There are varying accounts of the Battle for Cuito Cuanavale, which took place in 1988 at the height of the Cold War. What is certain is that the battle was a decisive event in Angola's 27 year civil war. At that time official Angolan sources claimed to have defeated a force of 500 tanks, in the largest battle on African soil since El Alamein. Although the numbers were clearly exaggerated, it is true that the South African tanks encountered an extensive system of defensive mine-belts which stopped the armoured attack dead in its tracks. Failure to capture Cuito Cuanavale highlighted the military stalemate that existed and led to the negotiated withdrawal of South African and Cuban military forces from Angola. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 marking the end of the Cold War.

Military hardware used to fight the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. The proxy cold war battle fought in 1987/88 involved soldiers from Angola, South Africa, Cuba and the Soviet Union. In the aftermath Fidel Castro said *"The history of Africa will be written as before and after Cuito Cuanavale"* - Nelson Mandela was released from jail and Namibia gained independence in 1990.

Sadly Angola's civil war continued until 2002 and significant minefields exist still to this day. The rings of mine-belts at Cuito Cuanavale were laid by Angolan and Cuban forces, supported by Soviet military advisors. They were part of a wide-reaching plan for the defence of the town of Cuito Cuanavale; which was considered strategically important due to its location on the high ground overlooking the

confluence of the Cuito and Cuanavale rivers. The main supply road linking the north and south of the province passes through the town and a single bridge provides the only crossing point over the rivers.

An 'Olifant' tank which took part in a joint South African and UNITA assault to capture Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. This and other attempts failed – the tanks were quite literally stopped dead in their tracks by minefields.

This tank has been visited by Jacob Zuma when head of the ANC in 2008, and by Prince Harry during demining operations with HALO in 2013.

More than twenty years on, these minefields surrounding town are a severe threat to the local people and visitors, and as the population grows are now preventing the natural expansion of the town. Indeed subsistence agriculture has encroached within 25m of some of the mine-lines and in other cases there are footpaths going straight through the minefields.

A female amputee in Cuito Cuanavale.

The nearest hospital is over 100km away in the provincial capital Menongue.

Demining in Angola

Angola is still one of the most mine affected countries in the world, despite that its 27 year long civil war ended in 2002. The Government of Angola has acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (The Ottawa Treaty) and significant progress has been made. But the extent of the problem is such that Angola needs support from the international community if it is to eradicate all known mined areas by 2025, its stated aim.

Angolan Government spending is, for the present, focused on large infrastructure projects, such as road and rail links, and in the cities. Government demining funds are almost entirely spent on these infrastructure projects, with very little remaining for humanitarian mineclearance in rural areas.

Traditionally humanitarian demining funds have been provided through international donors, such as the United States Department of State and the European Union. Unfortunately, many other traditional donors have chosen to move their funding elsewhere, believing that with revenue from oil Angola is now better able to pay its own way. However, given the scale of the mines problem that still exits HALO believes that funding reductions are too much, too soon. The decline in international aid funding is especially harsh on rural communities that have already waited more than 13 years since the end of the war for clearance. **Hence initiatives such as Kayak the Kwanza are much needed for raising attention (to bring international aid donors back to Angola), and as alternate sources of funding so that mine impacted communities do not have to wait a decade more for demining to be done.**

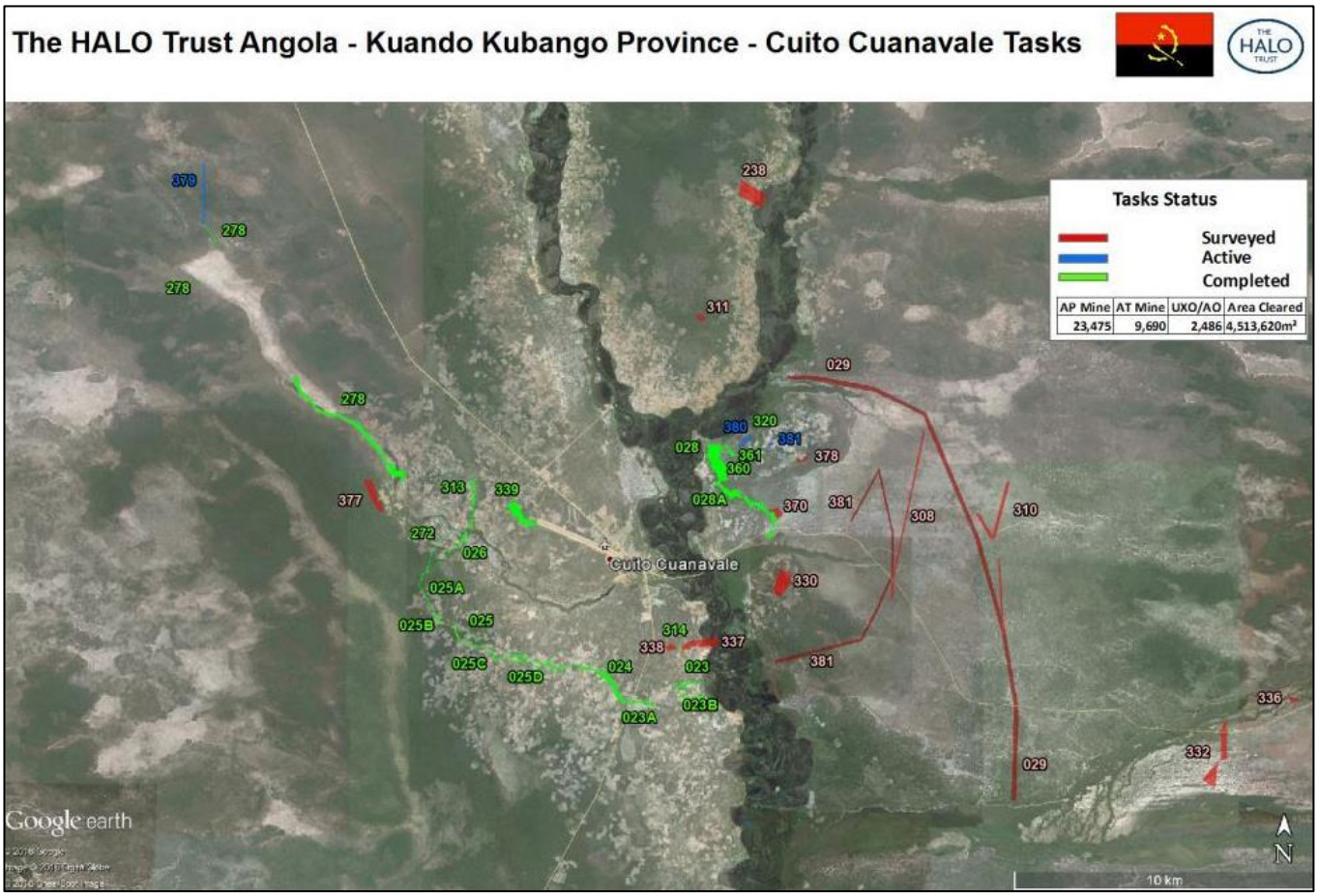
Oscar and Alfy raising awareness for demining at the end of their long journey down the Kwanza river.

Project Activities

Demining Funded by Kayak the Kwanza

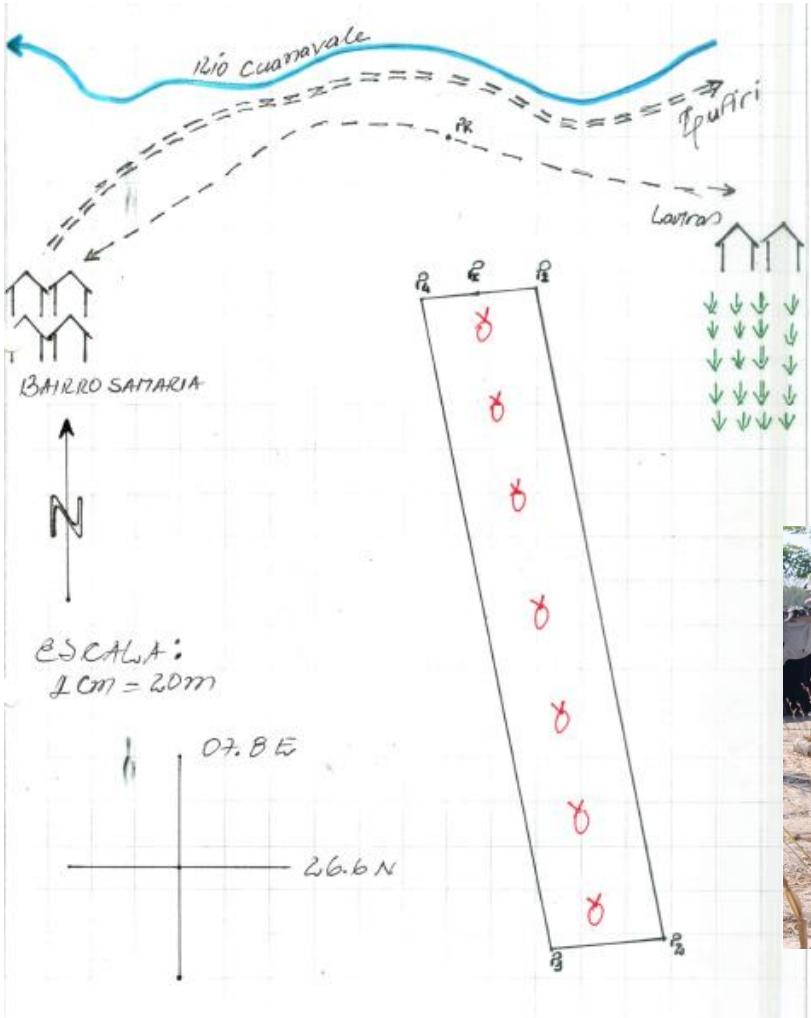
Two demining teams funded by Kayak the Kwanza conducted mine clearance in Cuito Cuanavale during the month of August 2016.

- One section deployed to minefield task number 320 on the eastern side of the river.
- One section deployed to minefield task number 379 on the western side of the river.



The satellite image above is of the town of Cuito Cuanavale bisected by the two rivers from which it takes its name. There is a 2.5km runway at the centre of the town. The surrounding patchwork of agricultural fields is interspersed with an extensive series of mine-belts. The status of those minefields or tasks is indicated by the coloured polygons.

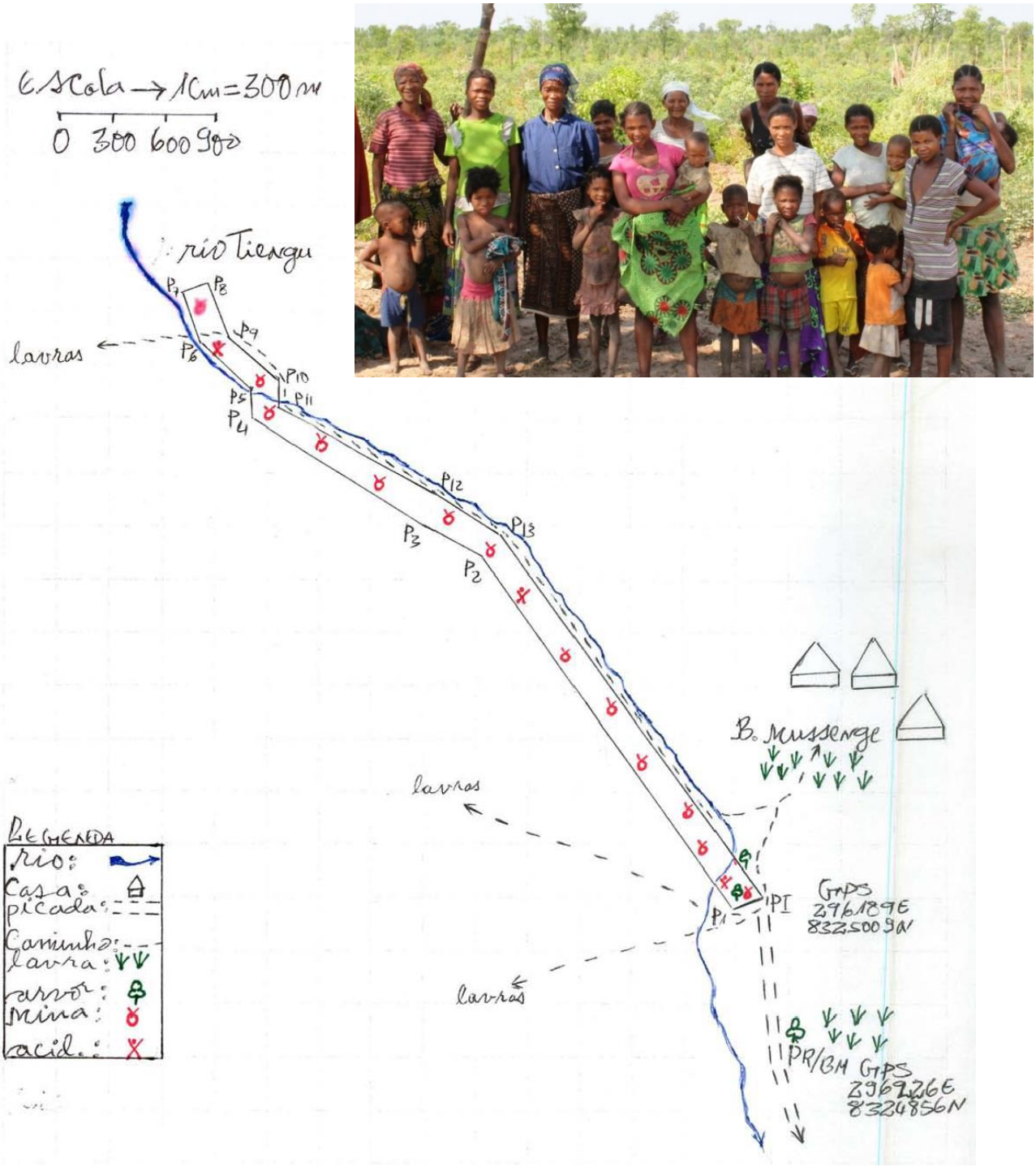
Minefield HKK320 – Sambimbi village



Minefield HKK320 is barrier minefield south of the river Cuanavale which was laid directly between ' Bairro Samaria' and a smaller outlining village known as Aldeia Sambimbi. The picture inset is of a HALO minefield supervisor beside a woman from the village carrying the nose cone of an RBK500 cluster bomb which she uses to grind maize meal in.

The RBK-500 cluster bomb is a thin cased base ejection model, designed to dispense a payload of sub-munitions over a target area. Various types of bomblet can be carried as the payload, the most common (and typical for Angola) being PTAB-2.5 (anti-tank x 100), AO-2.5 RTM (high explosive / fragmentation x 108) and ZAB-2.5 (incendiary x 117). After the bomb is dropped from the aircraft, the nose cone gets jettisoned, after which a small low explosive ejection charge blows the tail off the bomb and ejects the sub-munitions. The front of the bomb, without the nose cone, is flat with two large hooks used to secure the nose cone in flight.

Minefield HKK379 – Mussengue village



Minefield HKK379 is an extension of a larger minefield HKK278 which runs parallel to the main road northwest of the main town. The sketch map shows the proximity of the nearest village 'Bairro Mussengue'. The picture inset is of Khoikhoi women and children who live in the village.

Demining was carried out by two manual clearance teams and overseen by a site supervisor. Each team consisted of eight deminers and a section commander (9 staff). The deminers were equipped with standard metal detectors calibrated to find mines down to a depth of 13cm (as stipulated by Angola's national mine action standards).


A team of deminers (left) and a deminer with metal detector (right)

Outputs – Mine clearance

- Cleared 18,520m² of mined ground (to be used for agriculture, pasture and firewood collection)
- Destroyed 121 anti-personnel mines (AP mines)
- Destroyed 93 anti-tank mines (AT mines)
- Destroyed 2 items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) of calibre >20mm

Mine clearance Outputs by Task:

Minefield Task	Area Cleared (m²)	AP mines #	AT mines #	UXO / AO #	SAA (bullets) #
Cuito Cuanavale, HKK320	6,066	30	31	0	0
Cuito Cuanavale, HKK379	12,454	91	62	2	0
Total	**18,520**	**121**	**93**	**2**	**0**

An exposed anti-tank mine and demolition from minefield HKK379

Beneficiaries

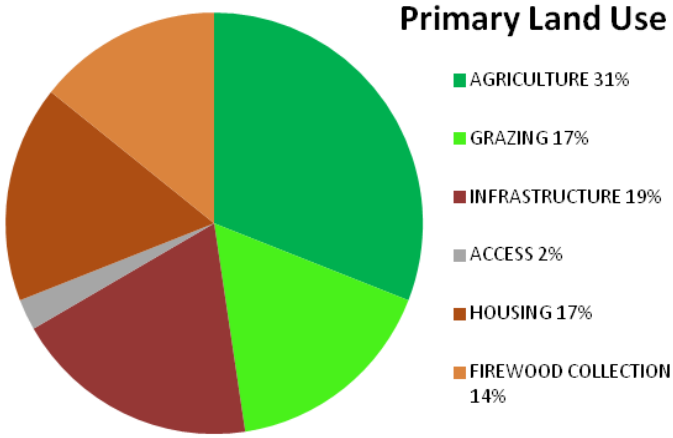
- Benefitted 352 people (91 direct and 261 indirect beneficiaries)

Beneficiaries by Task:

Minefield Task	Direct Beneficiaries	Indirect Beneficiaries
Cuito Cuanavale, HKK320	21	21
Cuito Cuanavale, HKK379	70	240
Total	**91**	**261**

Direct beneficiaries of humanitarian mine clearance are as those people who will use cleared land (post clearance) for a productive and/or frequent and/or sustainable activity.

Indirect beneficiaries of humanitarian are those people who may use the land (post clearance), for example the people of the nearest village.



Soil conditions in Kuando Kubango province are generally dry and sandy, and so pressure for better land close to the rivers is high. This is certainly the case for the area immediately surrounding Cuito Cuanavale which is dominated by the two rivers and is used intensively for agriculture.

The most recent study of post-clearance land use on HALO demined land demonstrated that 100% of land cleared is used by the intended beneficiaries, on average within three months following clearance. Land-use is often as simple as safe firewood collection and access to water.

Beneficiaries of mine clearance in Cuito Cuanavale

A local man gathers in his cassava crop (left)

Children catching fish from the river (right)

The area northwest of the town encompassing minefield HKK379 is where the local government has relocated some nomadic Khoikhoi people (also known as San or Bushmen). Khoikhoi communities throughout southern Angola have in the past experienced social exclusion, discrimination and economic exploitation. Hence the local government in Cuito Cuanavale has encouraged them to use land for agriculture and to build a more permanent settlement closer to the amenities of the main town.

Khoisan women from Bairro Mussenge walk to tend their agricultural fields

There are about 85,000 Khoikhoi San/Bushmen alive today, teetering on the cusp of cultural extinction, mostly in the remoter reaches of the Kalahari Desert - in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.
They are among the most intensively studied aboriginal people on Earth as they are one of our last connections with a hunter-gatherer existence, a way of life that was a human universal before man domesticated animals or grew crops. Starting in the 1950s, Khoikhoi communities switched to farming as a result of government-mandated modernization programmes as well as the increased risks of a hunting and gathering lifestyle in the face of technological development.

Additional Information

Mine Ban Treaty

In 2002, the Government of Angola acceded to the global Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, otherwise known as the Mine Ban Treaty or 'Ottawa Treaty'. 162 States Parties are now signatories to the treaty which bans the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. In addition, States Parties to the treaty have agree that they will, under Article 5, destroy all known emplaced anti-personnel mines over a time period of 10 years.

In 2012, the Angolan Government, through the national demining authority CNIDAH, submitted an Extension Request on the expected deadline. The minefields situation in Angola is considered to be significantly larger and more complex than in most other mine affected countries and the States Parties agreed that Angola's request to extend its clearance deadline was valid.

In 2014, States Parties met in Mozambique in Maputo. The choice of country was significant because Mozambique, a once heavily mined country, later announced completion of demining (in November 2015). The occasion was made more historic when States Parties formulated the 'Maputo +15 Declaration' declaring their aspirations to "meet the goals of the treaty to the fullest possible extent by 2025".

By signing the Maputo +15 Declaration Angola has undertaken to remove all known minefields by 2025.

His Excellency General Santana André Pitra Petroff, President of CNIDAH, signing the Maputo +15 Declaration

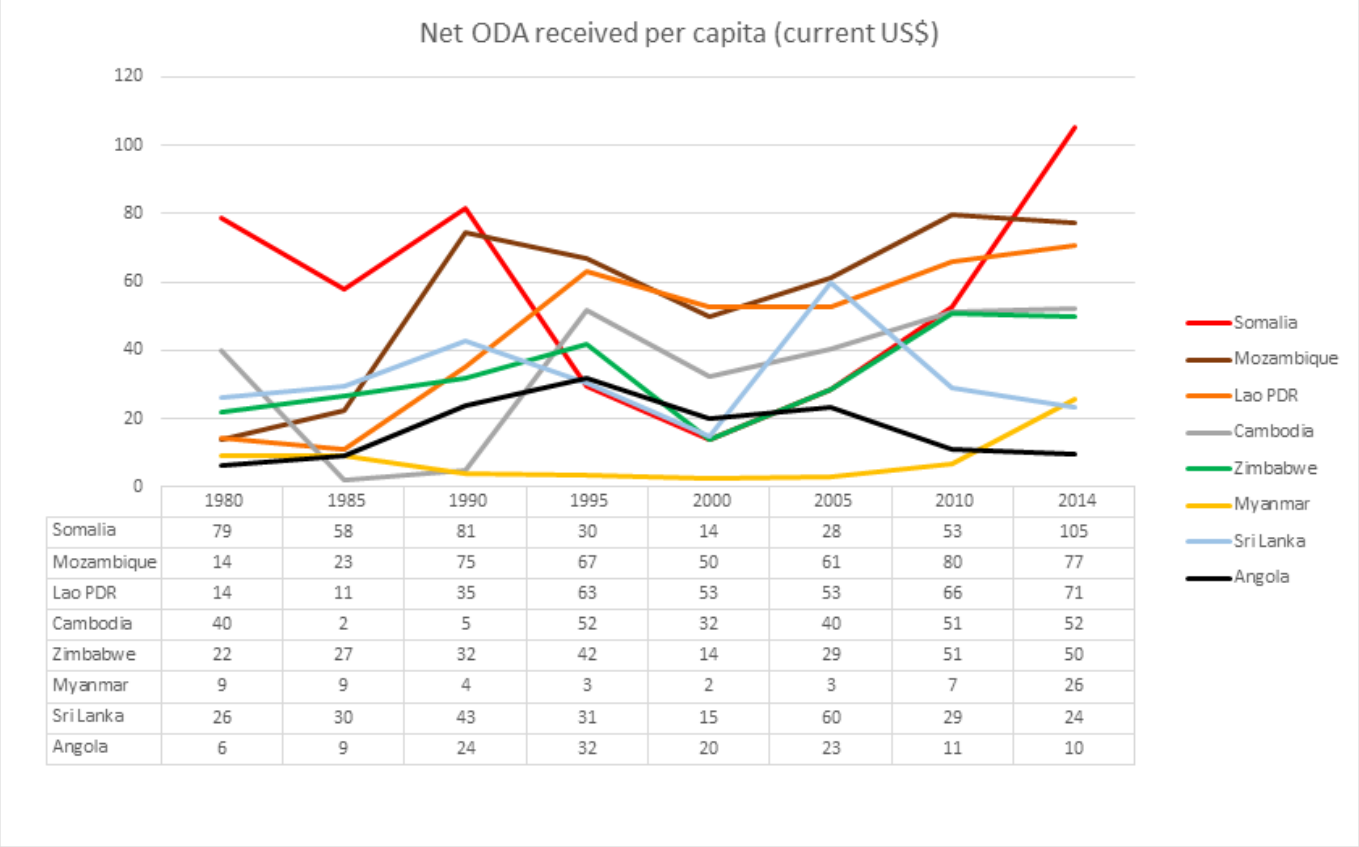
Economy

During the last decade oil and mineral extraction have made Angola one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Angola produces over two million barrels of oil a day with much of the revenue being used to rebuild infrastructure damaged during the war.

State revenues are however overly dependent on oil, and with the recent fall in oil price there has been an inevitable drop in government spending. A shortage of foreign exchange is exacerbating the problem with the knock on effect of rising inflation, which reached 39% in August 2016.

Because of oil many people perceive Angola as a 'wealthy country', but there is a significant disparity between rich and poor. Hence Angola's 'Gini Coefficient', a global measure of inequality, remains at a high of 42.7, identifying it as one of the most unequal countries in the world. Angola is also listed amongst the "least developed" countries in the world according to the United Nations ODA listings (countries receiving official development assistance).

Angola has committed to diversifying its economy, for which demining is a precursor.



	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Somalia	79	58	81	30	14	28	53	105
Mozambique	14	23	75	67	50	61	80	77
Lao PDR	14	11	35	63	53	53	66	71
Cambodia	40	2	5	52	32	40	51	52
Zimbabwe	22	27	32	42	14	29	51	50
Myanmar	9	9	4	3	2	3	7	26
Sri Lanka	26	30	43	31	15	60	29	24
Angola	6	9	24	32	20	23	11	10

Graph comparing official development assistance received by Angola and some other mine affected countries.

Support to Other Projects

HALO endeavours to support other projects in Angola, like kayak the Kwanza, by providing minefield and route information in order to keep people and equipment safe from harm. A recent example is the National Geographic Okavango Wilderness project which HALO has been supporting since 2014, and which the Kayak the Kwanza project was also involved with during the journey down the Kwanza river.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

National Geographic describe the highland, wetland areas of Central East Angola as a forgotten land of incredible ecological significance, with important source headwaters of the great Okavango, Cuando, Zambezi, Congo and Kwanza river systems. "*To have such a close proximity of source waters from great river systems such as these is extremely unique, and warrants the highest protection support and interest from the world. These wilderness areas are disappearing at a rapid rate worldwide, and there is a need to act in order to preserve them. A key to forming long-term solutions for these areas is to learn about their accessibility, map and ground-proof roads, settlements and ecologically significant areas, learn about the local people, their culture, their wants and their needs, and use this information and use this information to build development, conservation and tourism strategies for the future.*"

National Geographic Okavango Wilderness Project - Nat Geo scientists and HALO staff at the source of the Cuito River. Transport and logistics provided by HALO.

"Rain, thunderstorms, fog and sunshine alternate every day and sometimes a few times a day over the south-eastern highlands of Angola during the rainy season. The sandy soil absorbs the rainwater like a sponge and slowly releases it into an intricate network of streams and lakes that is the source of many river systems"

www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/okavango/

www.intotheokavango.org

www.instagram.com/intotheokavango/