

# WORLD WITHOUT MINES

CONGO



Photos: AFRILAM

People across the country are learning how to recognise explosive ordnances and avoid accidents.

## AID FOR AREAS WHERE NO ONE ELSE CAN REACH

Land mine clearance in a country like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a demanding task. World Without Mines has been working with AFRILAM since 2012. Its director Tabin Lissendra recounts the highs and lows of recent months.

*World Without Mines: How did AFRILAM come into being and when did you become involved with it?*

Tabin Lissendra: AFRILAM traces its roots back to an initiative started by former employees of Handicap International. They knew that the land mine clearance project carried out by this organisation would end in 2009. They had gained experience in demining over many years and wanted to continue with this important work. That's why they founded AFRILAM in spring 2008. I've been involved from the start and drafted the original documents, like the statutes and the organisational

chart. Katrin Atkins has been by our side throughout the entire process. She's the „mother of AFRILAM“.

*What makes AFRILAM so special?*

AFRILAM is able to successfully clear mines in remote areas and in tough circumstances where other organisations and commercial land mine clearance companies have failed.

*What are the biggest challenges you encounter in your work?*

The situation in eastern Congo is very unstable. There are constant clashes be-



Tabin Lissendra,  
Director of AFRILAM



On route to the next site

tween the Congolese army and armed rebels or rebel groups. These conflicts are forcing many people to flee. The armed groups often deploy improvised explosive devices, and our employees need additional training in order to defuse them. A further difficulty is the poor condition of the roads, which impedes access to very remote villages and puts our vehicles under significant strain. We have to repair them constantly.

*In 2023, World Without Mines provided funding so that two minesweepers could undergo further training. How did they benefit from this?*

Two of our employees were able to gain the EOD3 qualification from the interna-

tionally recognised CPADD training centre in Benin thanks to World Without Mines' support. That corresponds to the highest level as per the international standards for land mine clearance set by IMAS and authorises the employees to lead clearance campaigns and eliminate large explosive devices on location. AFRILAM is the only national demining organisation in the DRC that could send its employees abroad to receive high-level technical training. We and the national authority, the Congolese Mine Action Center (CCLAM), are very grateful for both organisations' expertise.

*What has made you particularly happy recently?*

I am very pleased that we could successfully start work in Tanganyika. It was difficult to bring personnel and materials from Goma in the North Kivu province to Kalemie in the Tanganyika province. It's impossible to use the roads in many areas. That's why the team had to keep switching to boats on the way there. It took our employees seven days of travelling under arduous conditions until they reached their destination.

I'm also particularly proud that our team has been officially certified. That was a critical moment for us because the team would not receive any clearance jobs without certification and this would lead to delays. To prepare, team members took courses to refresh their knowledge in accordance with IMAS standards and AFRILAM guidelines. After this training, the national anti-mine authority sent two inspectors to Kalemie and our team passed the certification successfully. Now, nothing stands in the way of carrying out the project in Tanganyika, which has been generously supported by World Without Mines.

#### KATRIN ATKINS (STAUFFER)

„I can remember my first encounter with AFRILAM as if it were only yesterday. A 'small' team went from village to village and school to school to warn people of the dangers of unexploded mines and teach them how to behave safely – and all of that for free. I wanted to support this initiative as part of my previous role as a regional mine clearance coordinator for the UN. That's how I became the 'mother of AFRILAM' and World Without Mines very quickly helped to give shape to an organisation which today is in no way inferior to international land mine clearance companies and has also never lost its drive and dedication to the matter at hand.“



Part of the AFRILAM team with Katrin Atkins



Photos: UXO Lao

The clearance teams at UXO Lao also reach the remote areas along the former Ho Chi Minh Trail.

## LONG-STANDING PARTNERSHIP PUT ON HOLD

**There is no other country in the world that has been hit by as many cluster bombs as Laos. World Without Mines has been working in the highly contaminated Khammouane province since 2008 to clear cluster ammunition and raise awareness among the population. This collaborative project has now been suspended.**

Our policy states that we finance and regularly check manageable projects. Unfortunately, careful checks conducted by World Without Mines and other sponsors on our long-standing partner organisation UXO Lao have placed it under suspicion of embezzlement. An international financial audit has been commissioned in coordination with TetraTec, and we are still waiting on the report from KPMG. According to statements from well-informed network partners on site, positive changes have been made at UXO Lao under its new director. Despite this, World Without Mines has decided to temporarily suspend this partnership after 15 years of working together. A definite decision will be made once the report is available.

We are proud of the results that have been achieved during the partnership. From 2008 to 2023, the teams we financed have made over 10 million square metres of land safe and have defused approximately

13,400 explosive devices. Some 57,000 people have directly benefited from this and can once again get around safely. More than 230,000 people know about the risks of unexploded ordnances thanks to the provision of information. World Without Mines would like to thank UXO Lao for the many years of good work and our donors for their loyal support.

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### A WILL CAN SAVE LIVES

More and more people would like to have a positive impact in the world even after they die – for example by supporting a charitable organisation. World Without Mines helps people in areas with land mines to live without fear. Would you like to make a contribution so that children can go to school safely again and families can farm their fields?

Our Co-Managing Director, Vanda Mathis, is here to answer any of your questions on wills and testaments.

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Anna Mazarura presenting her maize field, which she planted after mine clearance.



Photo: The HALO Trust

## FINALLY ENOUGH TO EAT

**For almost four decades, Anna Mazarura from Musanzikwa had been living in constant fear of falling victim to a land mine. After the team from World Without Mines cleared the mines in her area, she can till her land safely once more.**

**Please support our work in countries like Zimbabwe by donating today.**

**Thank you!**

Anna lives in the Rushinga District in northern Zimbabwe in one of the most dense mine belts in the world. Her everyday life was shaped by the constant threat of mines. She could only stand and watch as family members, friends and neighbours fell victim to them. Due to the danger of mines, the villagers could no longer use their land safely. Like many others in Zimbabwe, Anna and her family make a living through subsistence farming. „As a family who live off the land, we are dependent on what we can cultivate. Without the ability to farm, I can hardly feed my family. Having unrestricted access to the land was once just a dream,” recalls Anna Mazarura.

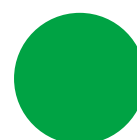
But, not least thanks to World Without Mines, this dream has come true. A team from The HALO Trust financed by World

Without Mines has demined an area of 9,684 square metres around the village. „After the land here in Musanzikwa had been dug up and cleared, all members of the community, me included, were still sceptical. It took a few meetings until the village elder could convince us to cultivate the land again. We were still frightened! But with time, we were able to plant grain and cotton, which really thrive in dry areas like Rushinga. We were even able to plant maize, our ‚cash cow‘, once more. I can now prepare three meals a day for my family – something I could not do ten years ago. With the income I earn from selling maize, sorghum and peanuts, I can pay the school fees for my first child and buy the school materials,” says Anna happily.

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**WELT OHNE MINEN  
WORLD WITHOUT MINES  
MONDE SANS MINES**