Armenia

Country Profile

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Armenia

by Joseph Keane | Mine Action Information Center

Armenia has been gaining strength and influence recovering from the 1988 Spitak earthquake, the collapse of the Soviet government, and the economy around, creating positive growth rates from 1995 to 2006. As a member of 35 international organizations, Armenia is moving out of the post-Soviet era and onto the international stage. Part of becoming a modern nation is removing all possible threats to development. Landmines and unexploded ordnance are a threat to every aspect of development in Armenia.

Current Landmine Situation

The majority of Armenia’s landmines and UXO are a result of the Armenian-Asian conflict (1988–1994) over the Nagorno-Karabakh region in southwestern Armenia. Following the ceasefire, the Armenian Army surveyed the border where most landmines were placed and estimated that there were from 50,000 to 80,000 active landmines. Two countries have not signed a peace treaty and Armenia reports security issues to be the reason the country has not signed the Ottawa Convention. 2

In 2005 a Landmine Impact Survey was conducted in Armenia. It did not include areas under the control of Armenia that are currently controlled by Nagorno-Karabakh. The United Nations Development Programme, the European Commission, and the Armenian government financed the LIS. It concluded that there were 52,000 suspected and active landmines, covered a combined 321.7 square kilometers (124.3 square miles), including 20 UXO hotspots. Sixty communities with a total population of 68,737 live close enough to the 102 sites to be directly affected. The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of State and Defense are responsible for clearing the landmines, marking all known military areas with barbed wire and warning signs; however, the LIS found that only 65% of the 60 impacted communities had any blocked off areas. There were five people injured by landmines and UXO in 2005, 23 in 2006, and 17 in 2007.

Armenia has supported the banning of anti-personnel landmines at the annual U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) since 1994. Armenia ratified the CWC in 2002, so it has no active anti-personnel landmines. 3

Other organizations working on mine action in Armenia include the Marshall Foundation in cooperation with the Mine Action Unit of the State and Defense Ministry, and the Inter-Agency Governmental Commission on the Release of Mines and UXO. The International Mine Action Foundation (IMAF) and the Armenian Humanitarian Demining Centre are also involved in mine and unexploded ordnance clearance. 4

Looking Ahead

Armenia has set up a mine-action strategy for 2010–2011, based on “the assumption that the nature of the mine problem requires more effective risk management through continuous assessment of the situation and effective planning and coordination.” The specific goals being accomplished through cooperation with the international organizations listed above include enabling continuous and effective humanitarian-demining operations; establishing improved capacities for mine action; setting up or reactivating a national mine-action system in Armenia; and working in conjunction with local and international research and development centers to create conditions for more effective mine action. 5

Azerbaijan

by Kataline Shane | Mine Action Information Center

F or almost 20 years, Azerbaijan has been engaged in a complex military conflict with its neighbors – Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. A ceasefire was negotiated in 1994, but a peace agreement was never signed. The conflict over the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh region in southwest Azerbaijan continues to pose significant economic, environmental, and security threats to development. 6

The majority of Azerbaijan’s landmines and UXO are a result of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. A ceasefire was negotiated in 1994, but a peace agreement was never signed. The conflict over the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh region in southwest Azerbaijan continues to pose economic, environmental, and security threats to development.

In 2005, Azerbaijan joined the Mine Action Information Center, which introduces the Mine Action Unit of the Ministry of State and Defense in Azerbaijan to the global community of mine action organizations.

The following text highlights some of Azerbaijan’s mine action activities.

The Landmine/UXO Threat

The 2002–2005 Azerbaijan Landmine Impact Survey conducted in accessible areas of the country identified an extensive mine and unexploded ordnance threat. 7

The amount of contaminated land could be anywhere between 350 and 850 million square meters (335 to 320 square miles). 8

In 2006, there were several mine-victim assistance projects implemented in Azerbaijan. 9

Mine Clearance

As the end of April 2007, ANAMA reported that about 479,000 square meters (18.1 square miles) of accessible land had been reduced or cleared of landmines and UXO. The amount of accessible land in Azerbaijan by 2008 is estimated to be about 216,845 explosive items had been destroyed. ANAMA plans to clear an additional 125 million square meters (5.7 square miles) of land in 2008. 10

Looking Ahead

Although the exact number of mine/UXO casualties was not clear, there were believed to be over 3,000 victims.

Mine/victim assistance projects implemented in Azerbaijan were: 11

In 2006, mine/victim education and training were implemented in Azerbaijan by the International Eurasia Foundation. The IEPF plans to establish other branches of the Assistance to Mine Action and demining of the dead and disabled in Azerbaijan. One of the projects being implemented by the IEPF is the Assistance to Mine Action and demining of the dead and disabled in Azerbaijan.

Conclusion

With the presence of such an organized and dedicated mine-action program, the mine and UXO threat in Azerbaijan is slowly disappearing. ANAMA and other organizations are working to make the country safer by ensuring the recovery of survivors and the prevention of new mine and UXO accidents, one project at a time.