Clearing the Way in Azerbaijan

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activities within the total reconstruction and development effort, living standards and human development surveys are not capable of rating the severity of the local landmine and UXO impacts. It is their combination with participatory methods that leads to better UXO impacts. It is their combination with participatory assessments that elicit the voice of local communities. 9 And both survey traditions can benefit enormously from participatory assessments that munificently from participatory assessments that release the constraints of “selecting on the dependent variable” (i.e., collecting data on affected communities only). LIS implementations need to reach out to institutions holding data on both affected and non-affected communities more aggressively and earlier, starting in the survey setup phase. And both survey traditions can benefit enormously from participatory assessments that elicit the voice of local communities. 9 The Armenia LIS and human-development surveys, while planned and conducted separately, offer a glimpse of the potentials of mainstreamed mine action when affected communities are looked at through both prisms simultaneously. See Endnotes. Page

Poladov: Clearing the Way in Azerbaijan

The expansion of clearance activities in Azerbaijan has been largely due to the creation of an Emergency Response Team and the implementation of new tools. Thanks to these additions, ANAMA has been able to respond quickly to requests for clearance in residential areas and in the field.

by Samir Poladov [Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action]

ANAMA continuously receives requests from affected communities as well as humanitarian aid organizations for clearance of houses from mines and unexploded ordnance. Due to the absence of a specialized team able to react quickly and eliminate such problems, a limited amount of explosive ordnance disposal tasks were dealt with until late 2005, when a 12-man ANAMA Emergency Response Team was established. The U.S. European Command and ArmorGroup EOD Specialists trained the team. During this training, basic principles of booby-trap and house-clearance operations were covered. Since completion of its training, the ERT has been actively deployed to fire war-affected districts of Azerbaijan to perform house-clearance operations.

Residential Area Clearance
Initially, 95 houses in Yukhari and Ashaghi Kurdamshululli villages of Fizuli region that were requested by Norwegian Refugee Council for further reconstruction activities were cleared of explosive remnants of war. This operation allowed reconstruction of houses for more than 100 local families, who then could live free from the threat of explosive devices. Besides this operation, ANAMA continues to react to a number of requests for the removal of UXO fired during the war and lodged in the basements of houses, in the walls or in the adjacent yards. Normally, clearance of one house takes about three working days. House-clearance operations are very labor-intensive. The majority of UXO is found subsurface, which requires excavation efforts sometimes to the depth of five meters (16.4 feet).

Clearance of residential areas is also complicated by the large amounts of metal contamination that slow progress due to the high
High-priority Clearance

Besides house-clearance operations, ANAMA is currently implementing a de-mining project in support of governmental initiatives to repatriate internally displaced persons. Last year ANAMA signed a contract with the Social Development Fund for IDPs concerning clearance of 19 million square meters (6.05% area) of suspected mined areas in Zohib, Fizuli region. This project is a high priority for the government, as cleared land will be used to construct a huge settlement that will allow more than 2,000 displaced families to leave temporary residences in tent camps and move to Zohib. The duration of clearance for the project is projected to be 19 months.

Since the beginning of the project, 53 deminers, 17 mine-detection dogs and five mechanical demining machines have been involved in operations. This mined area has been identified by Generations for Change and Landmine Impact Survey. Several mine incidents have occurred in the northern part of the area; however, most of the land is classified as a low-threat, suspected anti-tank mined area. In order to ensure operations are conducted in the most efficient manner, ANAMA has conducted a field test of various clearance methods and developed a new system where all three tools are integrated in a most time- and cost-effective manner. The system stipulates 100-percent clearance where demining machines cut lanes (every 10–15 meters [32–50 feet]) with a subsequent quality-assurance check by dogs or magnetic locators in between the lanes (see photo X). The Foerster magnetic locator with four probe attachments, known as the FEREX 4.02 DIL, is continuously used for clearance of Zohib area. This tool continues to show excellent results—daily productivity of the locator can reach 15,000 square meters (13.7 acre). As a result of the employment of a new area-reduction methodology, overall productivity at the Zohib site has reached approximately one million square meters (247 acre) per month. Based on past experience with demining operations in Azerbaijan, ANAMA’s mechanical demining specialists compiled a comparative analysis of the machines’ performance. Table 1 reflects summary results of the analysis undertaken.

Conclusion

Following the war, hundreds of Azerbaijani families were unable to return home due to mine and UXO contaminations in residential areas. New clearance projects from ANAMA, however, have helped make Azerbaijan safer by eliminating the threat of UXO and landmines from affected houses, yards and villages. A combination of technology and human commitment has been necessary for the successful clearance of residential areas as the safe return of displaced families.

Benefits of Integrating MRE into School Curricula

When MRE is integrated into the curriculum of schools, not only does financial support from the government increase for MRE activities, but also the importance of mine-clearance issues among the population rises. Therefore, ANAMA recommends this initiative be considered a priority task for MRE programme implementers in any country.

Currently, 1,520 teachers at 790 schools teach the MRE course in Azerbaijan, reaching 32,500 students. The Ministry of Education pays the expenses for the training, and the heads of district education departments are responsible for supervising the classes. The responsibility of teachers and heads of schools increases and thus the attitude towards MRE changes. For the teachers and community leaders it becomes a humanitarian task, or, rather, a noble duty which they perform in order to help and protect their communities and fellow citizens.

Since integrating MRE into schools, students have become more sensitive to the problem. After being taught MRE, they begin to inform the authorities and their teachers when they find mines, unexploded ordnance and unknown objects and they share where these items were found.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of mechanical-demining machines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of machines</th>
<th>Date of deployment</th>
<th>Total operational hours</th>
<th>Total period of exploitation (working days)</th>
<th>Area cleared (sq.m)</th>
<th>Total fuel consumption (metric tons)</th>
<th>Missed working days</th>
<th>Explosive expenses per sq.m (AZN)</th>
<th>Fuel cost per sq.m (cleaned) (AZN)</th>
<th>Total cost per sq.m (cleaned) (AZN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-4 (1)</td>
<td>09/2004</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>28 / 448</td>
<td>1,746,384</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>77,353</td>
<td>0.0025</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-4 (2)</td>
<td>05/2005</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>8 / 128</td>
<td>488,800</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22,542</td>
<td>0.0033</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-5</td>
<td>06/2005</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>19 / 304</td>
<td>1,035,845</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86,321</td>
<td>0.0055</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vareg-1</td>
<td>05/2004</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>4 / 64</td>
<td>61,500</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5,856</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>09/2005</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>16 / 256</td>
<td>237,800</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>58,427</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A new initiative, approach and precedents are what make up the style of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action’s Mine Risk Education Team. Over the years, the ANAMA MRE Team has become one of the most progressive MRE programs because of its initiatives. For example, the signing of the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education, the UNICEF/Azerbaijan Country Office, Head and the ANAMA Director allowed the integration of MRE into the school curriculums and formed community-based MRE committees in targeted districts that are currently acting as volunteer representatives of ANAMA in front and bordering areas. Integration between different aspects of mine action in Azerbaijan can be seen as another initiative, and this year was no exception. As part of the MRE School Programme, ANAMA conducted 13 successful MRE train-the-trainer programs for 201 teachers at 180 schools, sponsored by UNICEF, the United States European Command and ANAMA. The ANAMA MRE Team together with the Ministry of Education organised and supported the process technically and ANAMA/UNICEF Master Trainers executed the trainings. A unique aspect of the trainings was that they were monitored directly by donor organisations’ MRE experts and thus emphasised a new approach in the implementation of MRE programmes in Azerbaijan.

by Musa Jalalov | Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action |