Mine Victims Needs Assessment and Assistance Coordination

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A UNICEF feasibility study conducted in early 2001 showed that medical and surgical facilities in Azerbaijan are adequate to meet the immediate needs of mine survivors. In general, physical rehabilitation facilities are also considered suitable; however, the lack of psychosocial support to assist mine survivors with a disability is of particular concern. The study concluded that an integrated and comprehensive assistance program could not be established for the mine victims of Azerbaijan until a needs assessment was completed. In response, Azerbaijan planned and conducted a national survey to assess mine victims’ needs, including prosthetic, social and economic needs, as a first step to developing national mine-victim-assistance priorities and programs. The results of the assessment are discussed in this article.

In January 2001, UNICEF Mine Action Coordinator Tehnaz Dastoor conducted a national mine-action feasibility study in Azerbaijan, which highlighted the need for comprehensive mine-victim assistance. Since then, the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action has been developing mine-victim assistance and implementing MVA-related activities. ANAMA’s strategy involves combining the efforts of national and international organizations in serving disabled people, as well as in developing and implementing a long-term MVA strategy for Azerbaijan. The Countrywide Mine/ UXO Mine Action Assessment Survey project was developed in 2003 and implemented in 2004 to collect the data necessary to address MVA needs in Azerbaijan.

The MVA Assessment Survey’s objectives included establishing an extensive database, developing a well-articulated strategy and creating an effective network of relevant stakeholders in MVA. This survey was an integral part of the overall project entitled “Support to Azerbaijan Mine Action Programme,” which was funded by the European Commission. An MVA working group was established to complete the project planning, design and implementation phases. The working group consisted of representatives of relevant ministries, governmental agencies, and national and international nongovernmental organizations.

The working group thoroughly discussed project-related issues and profited from partner organizations for the implementation phase. These discussions also encouraged ANAMA to conduct a pilot survey in the Fundi district. The results became part of the data of the MVA Assessment Survey. The working group will continue coordinating future activities based on the needs-assessment survey results.

The International Eurasia Press Fund was chosen to administer and lead the survey as this nongovernmental organization had experience gained from conducting two previous surveys in Azerbaijan. Representatives of three other NGOs actively taking part in the MVA working group—Dövəşdil, Şefilə Eler and Bakıbahadır—were also involved in this survey.

The Ministries of Defense and Domestic Affairs supplemented preliminary information on mine/landmine ordnance inventory in addition to data from ANAMA’s Information Management System for Mine Action database. The local branches and local authorities of the Republic Military Communication also provided information on mine/UXO survivors. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population actively facilitated arrangements related to the survey.

IMMSA and an MVA Assessment Add-on

Data on almost 2,300 survivors was extracted from about 70 different source lists. The most comprehensive list was from the ANAMA IMMSA database, although much of the information was already outdated. Unfortunately, media announcements failed to attract participants who could offer additional information about mine/UXO victims.

In addition to information gathered to answer the standard IMMSA form, which is mainly focused on details of each incident and emergency medical care provided, an MVA Assessment Survey questionnaire gathered comprehensive information on the needs of survivors for medical and psychosocial care, physical and vocational rehabilitation, economic assistance and advocacy, as well as for education, training, and sports.

Consequently, the incident details and needs of 1,883 mine survivors were entered into both the standard IMMSA incident casualty report and another relational Microsoft® Access database for the additional comprehensive questionnaire data. This new database consisted of seven tables for medical care, physical rehabilitation, social adaptation, economic assistance, professional rehabilitation, education and sports needs, and additional information, which mainly reflects economic status of the survivors. The data was prepared as tables and charts, which were analyzed and commented on. This Access add-on database is related to the various tables in the IMMSA database and further relations can be added if necessary.

Technical assistance was provided for the MVA Assessment Survey to develop the special Access add-on to IMMSA, ensure accurate data entry, check quality, and extensively review and analyze the data. Together with the information already stored by IMMSA about devices, general survey victim data and impact data from the Landmine Impact Survey, this add-on included multiple references of the newly gathered victim data and identified needs. A special Geographic Information System function was introduced to allow the team to present all the data according to geographic distribution as well as

Capacity Developed

As a result of the project being implemented, 15 people were trained in survey procedures and interviewing techniques, 10 of them gained wide experience in the practical application of this knowledge. Seven people learned the data-entry process, having been introduced to it through IMMSA and Microsoft Access. Shamil Yagizarov, ANAMA Mine Information System Supervisor, developed various themes with IMMSA’s Geographic Information System functions to represent the spatial data. Extensive expertise was attained in multi-criterion data analysis as well by finding patterns, correlations and conclusions from the responses to the different survey questions. Some results of the Countrywide Mine/UXO Victim Needs Assessment Survey are presented below.

MVA Assessment Survey Results

Medical care. Surgical intervention needs were mentioned in 3,537 cases. Fragment extraction accounted for the greatest number of their interventions (544 cases). Some expressed a need for additional surgery, including 21 operations on residual limbs. Eighteen people emphasized their need for plastic surgery.

The Medical treatment or consultation with specialists was also a predominant need. The need for a neuropathologist was mentioned by 1,552 people. A vast range of traumatology was requested by 850 people.

Whole 802 people required the services of a general surgeon, just over one-seventh of this number—127 persons—actually needed surgical operations due to recent mine/UXO trauma. The rest were suffering from age-specific problems years after the incident, such as mild growth or shrinkage.

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in sign language and lip reading or additional technical means of communication. At the same time, there were many people with other losses and injuries also in need of adaptation due to hearing erosion from mine/UXO trauma.

The same situation occurred with eye-sight adaptation, 132 people reported eye-sight problems resulting from mine-related accidents. Of these, 111 people reported loss of eyesight. Forty-nine mine/UXO survivors totally lost vision in one eye and 20 lost all vision. Social adaptation for this category of disabled people requires specific training and equipment.

The social adaptation section of the questionnaire opened new prospects for related activities. Namely, 708 survivors indicated an interest in providing mine-risk education, 693 would have liked to participate in victim support groups, 625 offered to provide information and 709 were prepared to help victims to get a job or help them to find a job. A total of 739 respondents who wanted to take part in the program, 428 people who dreamed of running an economic enterprise, 300 people who dreamed of running a business, and 127 people who dreamed of running an educational service. The support area identified parts that could be named “support” and parts that could be named “economic development.” Of the 1,264 people who answered the question, 397 of them had no job. The greatest unemployment found among interviewees is shown below.

### Professional rehabilitation needs.

The survey section about professional rehabilitation needs contained more questions than any other single section in the questionnaire; however, there were 445 respondents who were currently employed at the time of the survey. The most common professions were drivers (39 respondents), farmers (26), production workers (22) and sales representatives (14). The rest of the 1,862 respondents were registered as disabled or on pension.

As the interviewees were mainly inhabitants of rural areas, livelihood-ranking and plant husbandry were the prominent professions respondents indicated they would like to do in the future if possible—839 and 570 persons respectively. In industrial professions, a preference of future employment was given to a driving profession (533 persons).

### Education and sports.

In total, 1,787 people answered the education questions. Of the 739 respondents who wanted to take courses, the majority were interested in computer courses (433). Another 199 were eager to learn foreign languages and 370 considered accounting a good subject to study for the future. Finally, 208 persons expressed a desire to continue their education in universities. Of those who answered the sport questions (1,877), table games were the most preferred (807) if proper rehabilitative care was received. Shooting a gun for sport and exercising at the gym were attractive respectively for 287 and 273 persons. Finally, rehabilitation can be considered as a proper rehabilitative care.

### Economic assistance.

This section of the questionnaire consisted of two distinct parts that could be named “support” and “assistance.” The support area identified daily needs for help. The assistance area asked the question: “What would be of help for you to economically restructure into society?”

Answers were twofold. A great majority (1,208) of the 1,819 who answered this section needed money for medical treatment. Many people (941) expressed a similar need for medications. Cars and housing were desired forms of assistance for 916 and 1,081 persons, respectively.

### Distribution by age.

A total of 1,883 interviewees, 1,775 people had information on the incident date and the distribution by age was considered to be applicable only for them. Several years had passed since many of the respondents’ mine incidents. As they aged, they experienced health problems related to the incident as well as additional familial and social pressures to become part of society. In addition, their situations became much harder due to the onset of other diseases.

### Distribution by sex.

Of the 1,883 interviewees, 1,129 were female and 754 were male. The ratio of females to males was 1.51 and was the same as the ratio of females to males among the entire mine-affected population in Azerbaijan. Female respondents were asked if they had any children. Of the 1,129 females, 753 said no and 376 said yes. The number of children and their ages were not asked.

### Distribution by marital status.

A total of 1,883 interviewees, 1,775 people had information on the incident date and the distribution by marital status was considered to be applicable only for them. Several years had passed since many of the respondents’ mine incidents. In general, they experienced health problems related to the incident as well as additional familial and social pressures to become part of society. In addition, their situations became much harder due to the onset of other diseases.

### Distribution by income.

The highest incidence of families with an income not exceeding 6,000,000 Azerbaijani manats per month (at the time of the survey) were found in the districts of Tovuz (49% of the 184 that answered), Sharqiy (76% of 85), and Goygol (56% of 25) at the moment of incident were tending to animals and plants—85 and 73 persons, respectively. Forty-three people were doing household chores and 32 people were playing or engaging in recreational activities when the incident occurred. Only three people stated that they were tending with domestic animals. Eighteen people were collecting firewood or water, 13 were traveling and two people were hunting. Ninety people did not reveal the circumstances in which they were injured by mines or UXO. Six people were psychotic on law enforcement duty and one was involved in humanitarian mine clearance. Seven people did not classify their activity at the moment of incident.

### Distribution by disability.

A total of 1,883 interviewees, 1,775 people had information on the incident date and the distribution by disability was considered to be applicable only for them. Several years had passed since many of the respondents’ mine incidents. As they aged, they experienced health problems related to the incident as well as additional familial and social pressures to become part of society. In addition, their situations became much harder due to the onset of other diseases.

### Distribution by education.

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Most of the losses and injuries of civilians arise due to negligence and carelessness. Civilians involved in non-military activities accounted for 103 of 143 cases with loss of an arm or hand, eyesight or hearing and 43 of the 192 cases of lower limb amputations. In some cases, civilians were tampering with explosive devices and in other cases they were crossing into restricted areas. It can be concluded that in a number of cases civilian casualties resulted from treating explosive ordnances carelessly.

Recommendations

The main recommendations derived from the survey are as follows:

• Further coordination of mine-victim-assistance activities. Activities of various governmental and nongovernmental entities should continue their joint efforts within the MVA working group, ensuring constant efforts toward sensitizing society to the problems of mine victims and persons with disabilities in general.

• Development of MVA projects and identification of implementing agencies. For projects developed using the needs-assessment-survey data, the emphasis should be on projects empowering the community, e.g., through establishment of associations for mine/UXO victims.

• Establishment of a charitable fund for MVA. Acting within the Azerbaijani legislative framework, a charity should be established to attract money from national and international organizations and individuals to fund various MVA projects.

• Monitoring of the level of mine/UXO victim assistance. For each victim, if the level of medical and physical rehabilitation measures, together with the degree of social reintegration and professional rehabilitation, should be evaluated over the course of a year using various methods. Articles about MVA should be published in international and national journals, newspapers and magazines whenever possible to continue educating the public on mine victims in Azerbaijan.

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Uzmi Mирзояров was graduated from the M.Gorki Institute of Literature in Moscow. From 1980 to 1993, he led the department at the Literature and Art newspaper in Baku. He is one of the founders and Chairman of the International Eurasia Press Fund based in Azerbaijan. He has coordinated mine-related projects implemented by the NGO since 2000.

Umud Mирзояров graduated from Baku State University. From 1973 to 1993 he worked as a journalist in the political district and from 1994 to 1995 he worked for the local administration. From 1995 to 1997 he ran the Information Centre at the State News Agency. He has worked in the IEPF since 2003 and supervised field activities during various surveys.

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Effects of Landmines on Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, statistics show people between the ages of 20 and 45 are the most likely to be injured by landmines. When they are disabled, they become a burden to the country’s economy, requiring assistance instead of contributing to the country’s growth. This article discusses how landmines affect Sri Lanka and the efforts being undertaken to lessen their impact.

by K.T. Manjula Udayanga Hemapala | University of Genova

1. Manual clearance—an effective but slow process.

2. Manual clearance with support of mine-detecting dogs—a good method but very difficult in some areas, because the dogs can become confused if they smell explosives coming from several sources at once.

3. Mechanical clearance—the fastest method, but less effective. The speed of manual demining is approximately 25 square meters (30 square yards) per hour. Using explosives-detecting dogs is also a rather difficult process because the effectiveness of the dogs depends entirely on their level of training and the skill of their handlers. Also, all EDDs are brought from foreign countries and are not used to the Sri Lankan climate, so they tire quickly. Mechanical mine clearance is the fastest method employed in Sri Lanka. The MTV-4 Mini Flat System has an average speed around 2,000 square meters (2,400 square yards) per hour for light soil and 1,000 square meters (1,000 square yards) per hour for heavy soil. The Bozena 4 clear areas around 8,000 square meters (3,000 square yards) per hour for light soil and 800 square meters (620 square yards) per hour in heavy soil.