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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 Telnaz 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 Victim Needs 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 phase and to identify partners who could offer additional information about mine/UXO victims.

In addition to information gathered to answer the standard IMSMA 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.

Unfortunately, media announcements failed to attract the mass media; however, much of the information gathered was used to develop a database, although much of the information was already outdated. Moreover, media announcements failed to attract participants who could offer additional information about mine/UXO victims.

Physical rehabilitation needs: limbs. Total prosthetic needs were as follows:

- 1,083 limbs were needed, of which 220 required prosthetic devices
- 65 arms and 172 hands (213 persons, of which 53 required prosthetic devices)

MVA Assessment Survey Results
Medical care. Surgical intervention needs were met in 1,397 cases. Fragment extraction accounted for the greatest number of these interventions (544 cases). Some expressed a need for additional surgery, including 21 operations on residual limbs. Eighteen people emphasized their need for plastic surgery.

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 IMSMA and Microsoft Access. Shamil Yagizarov, ANAMA Mine Information System Supervisor, developed various themes with IMSMA’s Geographic Information System function to represent the spatial data. Extensive expertise was arranged in multi-criteria data analysis as well as in 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.
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 entanglement from mine/UXO trauma.

Due to the widespread losses of vision and hearing, the adaptation process was complex and required a multidisciplinary approach. The social adaptation area for this group of disabled people required specific training and equipment.

Table 1: Prosthetic and assistive devices needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prostheses</th>
<th>Orthotic Operations</th>
<th>Orthopedic Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below knee</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above knee</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elbow below</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above elbow</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Average salary and minimum cost of living (per-month estimates in U.S. dollars).

| Average salary | $100 |
| Minimum consumer basket per person | $75 |
| Minimum expenditure per working person | $85 |

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 private rooms and 708 made a need to belong to an association for the disabled. These results reflect a great desire for such an association to help improve social adaptation issues, and they should be kept in mind while developing mine-victim-related projects.

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 reintegrate into society?”

Answers were twofold. A great majority (1,233) of the 1,883 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.

Help with starting a business was needed by 1,428 people who dreamed of running their own businesses and would have appreciated startup loans to make that possible.

Raising livestock, plant husbandry, and establishing small enterprises to meet local needs were the main types of businesses that could be named “support” and “assistance.” 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 793 respondents who wanted to take courses, the majority were interested in computer courses (433). Another 119 were eager to learn foreign languages and 107 considered accounting a good subject for a future career. 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 (907) if proper rehabilitative care was received. Shooting a gun for sport and exercising at the gym were attractive responses for 207 and 277 persons. Finally, there were some who, with the proper rehabilitative care, would have liked to participate in the Paralympic Games.

Degree of disability. The survey found that 1,753 respondents who answered the question, a total of 250 people had officially recognized first-degree disabilities; 973 were classified as second-degree and 127 people as third-degree disabilities. There were also 1,043 people uncertain of their classification status: 257 people either had not received a classification or it had not yet been classified. 166 needed to change their classified disability degree to a higher one—90 from second to first, 53 from third to second and those whose disabilities were still undetermined.

A total of 1,257 persons answered the question about pension receipts. Of them, 231 were first-degree, 882 were second-degree and 110 were third-degree disabilities. Another 546 people were receiving a pension but were not classified with a disability degree.

Unemployment. Of the 3,883 people who answered this question, 1,397 of them had no jobs. The greatest unemployment found among interviewees is shown below:

- Baku city: 293 of 882
- Sumgayat city: 51 of 57
- Ganja city: 67 of 54
- Tartar district: 148 of 213
- Goygol district: 105 of 354
- Tovuz district: 61 of 67
- Agjabed district: 34 of 84
- Gazakh district: 55 of 87

In analyzing the unemployed mine/UXO survivors, the researchers found 206 were of the first degree, 780 of the second degree and 99 of the third degree of disability; 312 people with no job had no disability degree.

Monthly Personal Income

According to the Azerbaijan Free Trade Unions Confederation,4 per-month earning and minimum cost of living estimates by experts at the time of the survey were as shown in Table 2. A total of 1,246 people answered the question on their personal income. Income varied from US$45 to $250 per month, and 90 percent of interviewees earned a much lower-than-average salary.

Eighty-five people had an income in the range noted and only 48 people had a higher monthly income. A total of 98 people had an income less than the minimum salary mandated by law ($20 per month at the time of the survey).

Monthly family income. In 1,605 cases of the 1,883 surveyed, the respondents provided answers on the question of family income.

It appeared that 167 families had an income less than the minimum salary mandated by law. Monthly family income exceeded $200 in only six cases; an amount at the higher end of income distribution.

In many cases the disability pension of the mine victim was a big portion of a limited family income. Since the unemployment rate was very high, the other sources of income were the pensions of other family members and, in some cases, additional allowances provided for children, elderly disabled persons and other reasons.

The highest incidence of families with an income not exceeding 300,000 Azerbaijani manats per month (at the time of the survey US$60) was found in the districts of Tovuz (108 of the 184 that answered), Sumgayat (76 of 85), Agjabed (57 of 67), Ganja (188 of 78) and Tovuz (61 of 67) and in Baku (205 of 305) and Ganja cities (43 of 50).

Distribution by age. Of a total 1,388 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 other complications due to other illnesses and the economic difficulties of life as IDPs. In addition, their situations became much harder due to the onset of other diseases.
Most of the losses and injuries of civilians arose due to negligence and carelessness. Civilians involved in non-military activities accounted for 103 or 143 cases with loss of an arm or hand, eyeglass 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 civilian casualties resulted from treating explosive ordinances 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, the level of medical care 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.

See Endnotes, page 111

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. Marziali Udayasangama (University of Geneva)

The Tamil people moved from the southern part of India to Sri Lanka around the 16th century, and they struggled with the kingdom of Sri Lanka on and off throughout history. Since 1983, a Sri Lankan separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, has fought with the central government of Sri Lanka for a separate homeland for minority Sri Lankan Tamils. The decades of conflict have resulted in the destruction of large areas of fertile agricultural lands, commercial areas, residential areas, roads and water resources. Last, as people tried to return to the areas they encountered landmines and many became disabled.

Mine Ban Convention

The Sri Lankan government has not signed the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention. Both the government and Tamil Tigers formally committed to a ceasefire in 2002, but there has been a sharp increase in violence since President Mahinda Rajapakse came to power in November 2005. Government security forces are currently engaged in a limited operation in Trincomalee to reopen the Mandaraicut area that was closed by the Tamil Tigers. It provides water to over 15,000 families and approximately 30,000 acres of paddy lands in the Seruwila, Muttur and Ekalampton areas in the Trincomalee district. According to government sources, the Mantara area was heavily mined by LTTE forces in an attempt to slow Army progress. According to the Landmine Monitor Report for Sri Lanka, there still are 700,000 anti-personnel mines in the ground.

Mine Clearance

Mine-clearance activities have expanded greatly since the February 2002 ceasefire. The HALO Trust, Tamil Rehabilitation Organization’s Humanitarian Demining Unit, Mines Advisory Group, Norwegian People’s Aid, Fondation Suisse de Déminage, the Sri Lankan Army and BONCOS Consulting Corporation are engaged in demining work in Sri Lanka.

Currently there are three main approaches to humanitarian mine clearance in Sri Lanka:

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 MVS-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 (1,100 square yards) per hour for heavy soil. The Bozena 6 clears around 2,500 square meters (3,000 square yards) per hour for light soil and 500 square meters (620 square yards) per hour in heavy soil.3