New Approaches and Strategies for MRE in Azerbaijan

Musa Jalalov
Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action

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number of false signals. During clearance operations, local authorities and police help evacuate the inhabitants to ensure their safety. Establishment of the Emergency Response Team has allowed ANAMA to respond more effectively to requests from affected families and local authorities. All those who benefited from the project had been living with explosive devices in their houses or yards for more than 12 years. In one case, a man and his family had left their house after the war and believed they would never be able to come back. This family returned to their village immediately after their house was cleared. The presence of explosive devices in yards has also prevented locals from cultivating their land. House clearance was quite beneficial in terms of socio-economic impact on affected families as well as their psychological rehabilitation after years spent with fear of unexploded ordnance.

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 the immediate return of more than 2,000 displaced families to leave temporarily occupied areas in the Zobjug area. In this capacity, the ANAMA Director allowed the integration of MRE as a new tool for clearance of the Zobjug area. This tool, the FEREX 4.032 DLG, is continuously used for clearance 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 that the safe return of displaced families.

Conclusion

Following the war, hundreds of Azerbaijan families were unable to return home due to landmines in place and UXO contamination 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 where the safe return of displaced families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of machines</th>
<th>Date of deployment</th>
<th>Total operational hours</th>
<th>Total period of exploitation (months/working days)</th>
<th>Area cleared (sq.m)</th>
<th>Total fuel consumption (metric tons)</th>
<th>Missed working days</th>
<th>Exploitation expenses for the machine (AZN)</th>
<th>Fuel cost per sq.m. (cleared) (AZN)</th>
<th>Total cost per sq.m. (cleared) (AZN)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-4-1</td>
<td>2009/04</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>28 / 448</td>
<td>1,746,384</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>77,353</td>
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<td>0.044</td>
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<td>1,500</td>
<td>8 / 128</td>
<td>488,800</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22,542</td>
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<td>0.046</td>
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<td>Bozina-5</td>
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<td>19 / 304</td>
<td>1,035,945</td>
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<td>Van</td>
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<td>384</td>
<td>4 / 64</td>
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<td>5,950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rino</td>
<td>2005/01</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>16 / 256</td>
<td>237,800</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>58,427</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.245</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparative analysis of mechanical-demining machines.
Function of MRE Committees

Another phase or a “core competency” of the ANAMA programme is the establishment of community-based MRE committees in 60 villages and settlements, welcomed by local communities. All activities of these committees are performed by volunteers who do not receive financial support from ANAMA for their generous work. They report monthly to the district MRE coordinator, who are appointed by the heads of district executive authority. ANAMA headquarters, in turn, receives reports on a monthly basis. This structure works and has been accepted by all targeted community representatives. ANAMA provides them with MRE materials when there is a need.

ANAMA is service-oriented. We have established a “hotline” by simply adding the office and mobile phone numbers of the national and regional ANAMA offices to the bottom of posters and billboards erected in, around or close to contaminated areas. The posters have helped people become more informed. People now understand the real danger posed by mines and UXO and actively inform ANAMA deminers about what they encounter.

The role of ANAMA implementing partners—Belief Azerbaijan, the International Eurasia Press Fund or the teams working for ANAMA to execute MRE activities—is large. We have a viable MRE implementing partner capacity that helps various types of educational/promotional tasks become realized. MRE is delivered when the clearance operations first begin or when clearance is complete and the ceremony to hand over the cleared land to its owners is held.

ANAMA Director Nazim Ismaylov has signed a special order regarding the deminers’ own role in MRE. The order requires the field staff members to include MRE in their monthly activities along with their normal duties, particularly when outside conditions (i.e., rain, snow, wet soil) prevent demining operations. The deminers visit farm workers, schoolchildren or civilians in public places and hold MRE discussions and provide them with MRE materials.

The ANAMA MRE team has good relations with national and international organisations such as People to People International, UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society. Close cooperation with PTTI provided funds for our programme which were used to produce promotional materials (pens and stickers) that had safe behaviour messages written on them. The materials are an effective means of communicating the MRE messages during trainings for different categories of populations, especially for children.

As an experienced MRE team, ANAMA organises and implements various types of projects among schoolchildren in contaminated communities. For example, a painting contest project, funded by UNICEF, was very successful in raising students’ interest in mine action. They learned about safe behaviour rules and formed a hatred of mines/UXO of and the war itself. The result of the contest showed that, as in all suffering children, the Azeri kids also want to strive for and live in peace. They do not want to be killed, disgraced or maimed by the menace of war; they want to create and develop friendly relations with the other children of the world.

Application of these new promotional strategies has been successful for the MRE program. The number of mine/UXO incidents/accidents has decreased and the citizens of Azerbaijan have become more sensitive to landmines and the danger they present.

Musa Jalalov is currently the Manager of the MRE Department for ANAMA, he is the author of textbook/booklets for children and teachers as well as several articles. He has volunteered for several international organizations and has participated in many seminars and workshops. In 1983 he began working as an English and German teacher until he was promoted to the position of school director. He graduated from the university in Baku.

Musa Jalalov
MRE Department Manager
Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action
(+994) 12 497 44 27
Tel: +994 12 497 44 27
Fax: +994 12 497 44 27
E-mail: mjalalo@anama.baku.az
Web site: http://www.anama.baku.az

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Manager of the MRE Department for ANAMA, the author of textbooks/booklets for children and teachers as well as several articles. He has volunteered for several international organizations and has participated in many seminars and workshops. He is a native English and German teacher and has worked in several schools. He has been working as an English and German teacher until he was promoted to the position of school director. He graduated from the university in Baku.

Survey Helps ANAMA Realize New MVA Projects

Following a Mine Survivors Needs Assessment Survey in 2004, the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action and several nongovernmental organizations are working closely to bring victim assistance to mine and unexploded ordnance survivors throughout Azerbaijan. Since 2005, victim assistance in Azerbaijan has included five needs-based projects, as well as individual assistance provided to survivors, such as treatment sponsorship and wheelchair provision.

by Dr. Rauf Mamedov | Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action

The new ANAMA database was created as a result of the Mine Survivors Needs Assessment Survey in 2004 and serves as a reliable and useful source of information on mine/UXO survivors’ needs. It has proven itself with a number of successful pilot projects, which are now being realized and put into practice under the leadership of ANAMA.

Under the project, researchers have interviewed 1,883 mine survivors living in 65 areas of Azerbaijan about their needs. A special questionnaire form, created by ANAMA specialists, reflects various needs of victims in the following areas: medical care, educational, economic and educational assistance, physical and professional rehabilitation, psychosocial support, suitable sports and others. Using the newly created database helped ANAMA recognize the particular needs of survivors; therefore, it has become easier to plan and realize new projects.

Recent VA Projects in Azerbaijan

Organization of summer camps. One of the first projects in the field of mine-victim assistance was the project “Organization of Summer Camps” for injured children and children from mine-victims’ families. This project started in 2005 in cooperation with UNICEF, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the United States organization Right to Play. One hundred twenty children from war-affected and borderline districts spent their rest and leisure time over a two-month summer break at a boarding school in the Ganja district. The children enjoyed relaxation and fun activities while staying at the school.

At the beginning of 2006, four more projects began. National NGOs, which are active participants of the ANAMA MVA Working Group and given grants by ANAMA through the bidding process, were responsible for implementing all projects.

Organization of sanitation treatment. The project with the NGO Shefali Eller (“Healing Hands” in English) on “Organization of Sanitation Treatment” for 120 mine survivors, was successfully completed recently in the Masalxan settlement (one of the suburbs of Baku), in a boarding house subunit to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

This MVA project, sponsored by the European Commission, is actually the first project ANAMA has implemented in cooperation with local NGOs. Mine survivors are delivered from their residences to a boarding house where they rest and receive medical care, mostly physical-therapy treatment, and then are brought back to their residences. The majority of survivors express their gratitude to the organization of such services; they also emphasize the usefulness of the treatments and their hope that they will continue to receive this and other services. In light of this positive response, ANAMA intends to continue implementation of such projects in the future.

Establishment of Mine Victims Association. The NGO International Eurasia Press Fund initiated the project to establish the Mine Victims Association in the Terter district, which is still ongoing. The U.S. Department of State’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement is sponsoring this project for a period of three months.

The project’s goal is to mobilize internal resources of the community through the establishment of the Mine Victims Association to meet survivors’ needs in medical care, physical and psychological rehabilitation, education, social and vocational adaptation, economical assistance and financial support. The sustainability of this project will strengthen the community’s capability to solve problems they face and improve civil society. The skeleton of the organization consists of 15 mine survivors (in total, there are about 2,500 mine survivors in the Terter district). The goal of the project is to expand the activities of the association to a national level.