July 2007

International Eurasia Press Fund Works in Azerbaijan

CISR JOURNAL

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation


This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
International Eurasia Press Fund Works in Azerbaijan

Problems with explosive remnants of war in Azerbaijan stem from emplacement of mines by the Soviet Union between 1988 and 1994. Mines were used along Azerbaijan’s expansive border region and military installations. More recently, ERW have been left behind from Azerbaijan’s battles over territorial integrity. The International Eurasia Press Fund has developed a program to address the needs of mine victims in one of the country’s most heavily mined regions. The Mine Victims’ Association of the Terter district is working to rehabilitate victims in numerous ways, providing participants with the skills and information they need to lead productive, independent lives that take full advantage of their individual talents and interests.

The IEPF has been instrumental in the rehabilitation of a mine-plagued Azerbaijan, providing or facilitating countless post-conflict remedies to a war-torn country. In the past, the IEPF has conducted Level One Landmine Survey programs in areas affected by war, a Landmine Impact Survey, and several other mine-action programs. With the financial support of the European Commission, the IEPF conducted the “Mine Victims’ Needs Assessment” project in 2004 to determine the most pressing needs of the Azeri people.

Based on its 2004 survey, the IEPF determined that most mine victims in the country required more post-rehabilitation assistance; medical services were deemed adequate for mine victims, but support following the survey period seemed lacking.

Extent of the Problem

Surveys were conducted in 629 villages and 29 enclosures in 11 war-torn regions of Azerbaijan. More than 74,000 people were interviewed to accurately define hazardous areas, needs of the populace and initial statistics concerning mine victims. Umud Mirzoyev, IEPF Chairman, says the surveys indicated more than half a million people in 643 communities were affected by 970 communities whose population of 70,039 were affected by contamination. Ten percent of all Azeri landmine victims lived in the Terter district, he added.

IEPF Focus Areas

Working with several national and international partners, the IEPF devised a solution to meet the needs of the mine-affected populace and created the Mine Victims’ Association of the Terter district. The IEPF used its extensive experience in demining, mine-risk education and other mine-related projects to form the basis for the MVA. ANAMA had contracted the IEPF and Relief Azerbaijan to conduct mine-clearance operations—the IEPF worked predominantly in the Terter district with a 38-member demining team and cleared 758,947 square meters (0.29 square mile) of land in 2005. The IEPF also conducted 10 MRE sessions in 2005.

Tapping into these efforts and other experiences, the IEPF developed a three-point infrastructure. The organization’s focus areas are:

1. Media and civil-society development
2. Peacekeeping and conflict actions
3. Refugee/internally displaced persons and community development.

Refugee/IDP projects and community development. IEPF efforts in this area have included the analysis of migration problems, resolving refugee/IDP problems and aiming in community-development activities. Working under the direction of the President of Azerbaijan, the IEPF constantly seeks to improve the quality of life for refugees and internally displaced persons, and to provide for their employment and reintegration into society. Evidence of success is seen in the Community Mine Action Team at the IEPF, nearly 40 percent of which is composed of refugees/IDPs.

Genesis of the MVA

In conjunction with the completion of the Mine Victims’ Needs Assessment, the IEPF offered its extensive experience in providing humanitarian aid and demining efforts, IEPF sought to further its humanitarian-development activities. The MVA laid out a three-year strategic plan and outlined goals for the Working and Initiative Groups of the MVA. An Intermediate Report based on the organization’s progress between 15 August and 31 December 2006 was produced and distributed.

The Mine Victims’ Association was established 15 May 2006, and its training and development sessions have been incredibly successful. The Working Group for the MVA provided the professional specialties necessary for seminars and workshops and included legal experts, computer specialists, medical advisors, MRE specialists, accountants, support managers and a project coordinator. Seminars were held for an Initiative Group of 10 landmine survivors selected from the total eligible population of mine victims.

MVA Informational Seminars and Workshops

Intensive training was provided to the Initiative Group in a number of areas, all designed to rehabilitate mine victims, reintegrate them into society and improve standards of living in the region.

Mine victims receiving medical treatments and learning about mine awareness. IEPF has facilitated media roundtables, meetings and conferences. Additionally, it has published several books, brochures and other informational materials to provide objective coverage of the ranges of war on Azerbaijan. Coverage has also been directed at the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Peacekeeping and conflict actions. Peacemaking actions and other projects in this focus area have been directed at protecting human rights in Azerbaijan. The IEPF has spent a large amount of time assisting national and military problems with the goal of remediation. The Level One Landmine Survey, Landmine Impact Survey and Mine Victims’ Needs Assessment all began as projects implemented through this focus area, ultimately growing to larger endeavors. Several international conferences, seminars and roundtables were also organized or attended.

Law and management. Legal advisors from the Working Group educated participants on international documents on human rights, advocacy mechanisms for human rights in Azerbaijan and in the international community, jurisdiction of mine victims and other necessary legal information. Participants were also advised on the organization, establishment and operation of institutions and other management appearances. Group members are currently active in the process of establishing these managerial infrastructures. Close collaboration with officials has allowed MVA participants to receive necessary assistance from social programs.

First-aid training. Regular instruction was given to participants in the application of first-aid techniques, including fractures/dislocations, nursing patients with amputations, bleeding/wounds, frostbite and sunburn types. They also were taught about blood-pressure measurements and providing hypodermic, intramuscular and intravenous injections. Information on general hygiene rules, treatment of diabetic patients and other basic medical procedures was provided. The program’s medical advisor regularly visits mine victims and their families, sometimes sending the more seriously injured to treatment centers in Baku.

Small-business development. Initiative Group members participated in extensive training on themes directly associated with developing small businesses. They learned about financing, marketing, opportunity analysis, advertising and other business practices. Participants also had the option of submitting business plans to Working Group staff members for advice and evaluation; all business ideas were specific to the Terter district. The business plans dealt mostly with grain growing, cattle breeding, poultry raising, beekeeping and carpet weaving. Further collaboration will help to bring these business plans to fruition.

Mine-risk education. General information on the landmine/UXO problem in Azerbaijan was also a component of the MVA education. Participants were informed about the threat to the populace from landmines and the physical, psychological, and economic effects of the mine problem. Members of the Initiative Group expressed interest in mine-risk education activities that were focused on safety around mined areas, which taught officials how to inform about a mine threat and how to conduct MRE activities. Participants also joined Working Group leaders in carrying out MRE sessions in villages of the Terter district—Aghkand, Danchikhal, Jamilly, Seydilmli, Shikdarakh and other villages all received MRE as part of this process.

Computer seminars. Initiative Group members also received training on the operation and use of personal computers, beginning
Further Collaboration

As an offshoot of their initial training sessions, participants in the Mine Victims’ Association process began collaborating with journalists, doctors, local politicians and representatives of national denuming organizations. Group members expressed a desire to improve and expand the initiative among mine victims to provide necessary assistance on a regular basis. Plans were solidified for the future activities of the MVA, including activities in several Tertar district villages.

In November 2006, members of the national and international media were invited to the Teter region to become acquainted with the work of the IEFP and the Azerbaijani National Agency for Mine Action. Meetings with orthopedic representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross were held in December 2006 to better understand the needs of mine victims in the Teter region. The dialogue resulted in the recognition of a need for regional specialists in orthopedics since the nearest facility, in Baku, is too distant for many mine victims. In meetings with local politicians, leaders and executive members, mine victims participated in direct dialogue with the authorities responsible for addressing the problem in the Teter district and across Azerbaijan. Authorities noted concerns surrounding the destruction of property, provision of social and medical assistance and other issues related to problems facing mine victims.

A meeting between ANAMA and members of the MVA was held in November 2006 to discuss the successes of the association to date. The sustainability of the MVA was one of the most pressing issues, including the broader goal of assisting mine victims throughout Azerbaijan.

Mine-victim Entrepreneurs

Many of the participants in the MVA seminars have started or furthered their own businesses in the Teter district based on information and support provided in the workshops. Three participants—Nizami Bayramy, Khalil Hazanov and Mohammed Shimos—are currently involved with seedling activities and one—Nuru Goulevar—serves as a beekeeper. Most of the mine-victim entrepreneurs manage four to five times their annual pensions from their salaries.

Despite their injuries, these mine victims are actively contributing to their local economies—and they are a part of a larger trend toward increased personal independence with viral assistance programs. Beyond providing valuable services, these entrepreneurs are integrating into society and serving as models for other mine victims.

Long-term Goals and Enduring Challenges

Umud Miryzoyev is proud of the accomplishments of the Mine Victims’ Association in the Teter district of Azerbaijan, but much remains to be accomplished in assisting mine victims and their families integrate fully into society. Miryzoyev says the MVA will help establish more agricultural units in accordance with mine victims’ business plans, conduct vocational courses for victims and their family members, and provide new job placements to further improve socioeconomic status. All of these undertakings will be accompanied “to support the mine victims as they settle their most important problems,” he adds.4

Plans are already underway to improve the repair process on prosthesis appliances, Miryzoyev says. “Mine victims have to leave for Baku or Ganja cities, and, of course, they have some difficulties in doing it,” he says.5

The IEFP is currently preparing information on how easy repairs can be made without the need for extensive travel. But all problems have not been easy to solve.

Miryzoyev notes that providing assistance to mine victims who must be treated and rehabilitated abroad is incredibly difficult. The MVA also faces difficulty in implementing the prepared business plans for seminar participants. ‘Great support is needed to improve the mine victims’ socioeconomic state, to establish their farm units, to realize individual business plans and to assign social aid to mine victims in poor living conditions,’ he says.6

There is also the problem of addressing the needs of mine victims in other regions of the country. Regional branch offices will soon begin to tackle complex vocational, medical, juridical and social problems in other areas of Azerbaijan. The IEFP is looking to expand further to give greater attention to other villages as branch offices of the Azerbaijan Mine Victims’ Association are prepared in Aghstafa, Baku and Fusuli.

See Endnotes, Page

As the 10-year deadline for fulfilling Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention is rapidly approaching for the first States that ratified or acceded to the Convention, each State Party faces the requirement that all known anti-personnel mines be destroyed. The author examines the progress and challenges that remain in Southeast Europe regarding Article 5 implementation.

by Kerry Brinkert | Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining |

The Expectations and Challenges Ottawa Presents

The journey referred to involves addressing both external and internal expectations. While state parties either accede to the Convention or choose to participate in a voluntary manner, externally, other states expect that state to fulfill the obligations it has freely accepted. In addition, internally, a state’s population will or should expect the state to do what is obliged of it to end the suffering and casualties caused by AP mines. In few other instances are the internal and external expectations as high and the challenges as great as they are in Southeast Europe (SEE)6.

The expectations in SEE are high because the states of this region have in recent memory experienced the devastation of armed conflict in which anti-personnel mines have been used and have remained as a deadly legacy. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina remarked in December 1997, all parties to war in that country supported the Ottawa Convention “because we experienced what the use of AP mines means and we know that we should do everything not to allow this to happen again.”7

The challenges, however, are great, not only due to the magnitude of the problems, but also because fulfilling state responsibilities has been complicated in SEE. For instance, every state in the region has recently been in some form of transition in terms of the establishment or re-establishment of state structures or in terms of transition

Implementing the Ottawa Convention in Southeast Europe: Meeting Expectations in a Challenging Environment