

November 2006

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Recommended Citation

Aliyev, Aziz; Mamedov, Rauf; Mirzoyev, Umud; and Mamedov, Siyab (2006) "Mine Victims Needs Assessment and Assistance Coordination," *Journal of Mine Action* : Vol. 10 : Iss. 2 , Article 37.
Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol10/iss2/37>

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Mine Victims Needs Assessment and Assistance Coordination

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.

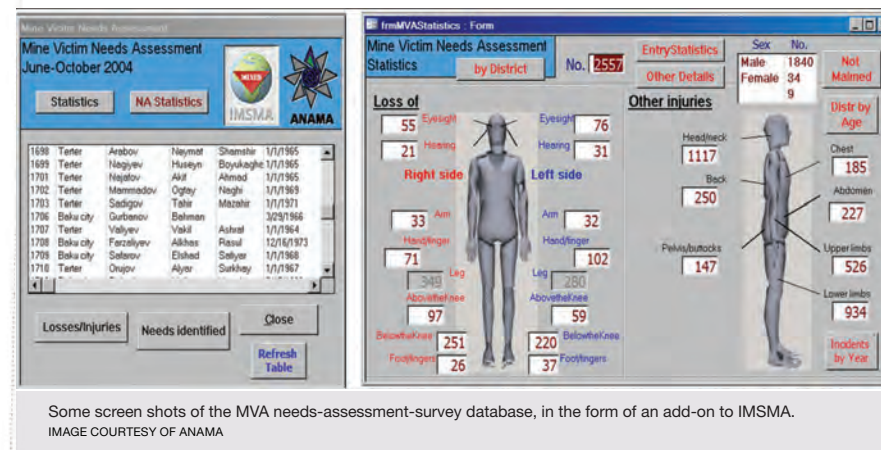
by Aziz Aliyev and Rauf Mamedov [Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action] and Umud Mirzoyev and Siyab Mamedov [International Eurasia Press Fund]

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 assisting 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,"¹ which was funded by the European Commission. An MVA working group was established to complete the project planning, development and fundraising phases. The working group consists of representatives of relevant ministries,



The needs-assessment interview.
PHOTO COURTESY OF IEPF/ANAMA



Some screen shots of the MVA needs-assessment-survey database, in the form of an add-on to IMSMA.
IMAGE COURTESY OF ANAMA

governmental agencies, and national and international nongovernmental organizations.

The working group thoroughly discussed project-related issues and predefined partner organizations for the implementation phase. These discussions also encouraged ANAMA to conduct a pilot survey in the Fizuli district. The results became part of the data of 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—*Dirchelish*, *Shefali Eller* and *Babadagh*—were also involved in this survey.

The Ministries of Defense and Domestic Affairs supplemented preliminary information on mine/unexploded ordnance casualties in addition to data from ANAMA's Information Management System for Mine Action database. The local branches and local authorities of the Republic Military Commissariat 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.

IMSMA 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 IMSMA database, although much of this 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 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.

Consequently, the incident details and needs of 1,883 mine survivors were entered into both the standard IMSMA 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 sport needs, and additional information, which mainly reflects economic status of the survivor. 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 IMSMA 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 IMSMA, ensure accurate data entry, check quality, and extensively review and analyze the data. Together with the information already stored by IMSMA 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 geospatial distribution as well.

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 attained in multi-criterion data analyses 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 1,597 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.

Medical treatment or consultation with specialists was also a predominant need. The need for a neuropathologist was mentioned by 1,552 people. A visit to a traumatologist was requested by 850 people.

While 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 as a result of growing older, such as body growth or shrinkage.

Many interviewees (1,607) answered the question of general health problems, allowing the researchers to record and elaborate on their needs in medical care accordingly. For example, 27 cases had been treated surgically and revealed that they needed the same surgical intervention repeatedly; 632 persons expressed their needs for other specialists. It became clear there is a need for nephrologists (kidney), ophthalmic (eye) surgeons and especially otologists (ear).

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

- 627 legs and 63 feet (620 persons, of which 220 required prosthetic devices)
- 65 arms and 172 hands (213 persons, of which 53 required prosthetic devices)

Needs for prosthetic and assistive devices are outlined in Table 1.

Social adaptation. Forty-one people reported a loss of hearing, 10 of whom reported problems for both left and right sides. But only 23 of the 41 expressed their need for hearing-aid equipment, training

Prostheses		Orthopedic Operations		Orthopedic Products	
Below knee	160	Replacement	213	Armchairs	69
Above knee	58	Repeat	198	Wheelchairs	129
Foot	14	Fitting	212	Crutches	355
Below elbow	18	Repair	49	Walking sticks	446
Above elbow	8				
Hand	28				

Table 1: Prosthetic and assistive devices needed.

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 enervation 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 peer-support and 780 expressed a need to belong to an association for the disabled. These results reflect a great desire for such an association to help with 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 also were twofold. A great majority (1,528) 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.

Help with starting a business was noted by 1,428 people who dreamed of running their own businesses and would have appreciated startup loans to make that possible. Raising livestock, plant husbandry² and establishing small enterprises to meet local needs were the main types of businesses

discussed. Land and raw materials, facilities and equipment, startup capital and specific training would be a great help for this category of mine/UXO survivors.

Professional rehabilitation needs. The survey section about professional rehabilitation needs contained more questions than any other single section in the questionnaire;



Dilara Aliyeva, 62, was one of the mine victims interviewed during the survey. She stepped on a mine while grazing animals in a minefield laid by military actors and considered to be cleared. PHOTO COURTESY OF IEPF/ANAMA.

1,862 people answered questions in this section. Of these, 1,324 gave information about their previous professions: 343 persons had a profession that required a higher education; 442 persons had been manual laborers. Of the 1,862 surveyed, only 82 people who had jobs before the incident said they had jobs at the time of the survey.

There were 445 respondents who were currently employed at the time of the survey. The most common professions were drivers (29 respondents), farmers (26), policemen (24) and teachers (20). The rest of the 1,862 respondents were registered as disabled or on pension.

As the interviewees were mainly inhabitants of rural areas, livestock-raising 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 107 considered accounting a good subject to study for a future. Finally, 208 persons expressed a desire to continue their education in universities.

Of those who answered the sport questions (1,837), table games were the most preferred (987) if proper rehabilitative care

was received. Shooting a gun for sport and exercising at the gym were attractive respectively for 297 and 275 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 of the 1,753 respondents who answered

the question, a total of 250 people had officially recognized first-degree disabilities; 973 people were classified as second-degree and 127 people had third-degree disabilities.³ There were also 403 people uncertain of their classification status: 257 people either had not received official recognition of a disability or had not yet been classified; 146 needed to change their classified disability degree⁴ to a higher one—90 from second to first, 53 from third to second and three whose degree change was still undetermined.

A total of 1,257 persons answered the question about pension receipt.⁵ Of them, 231 were first-degree, 882 were second-degree and 110 were third-degree disabilities. Another 34 people were receiving a pension but were not classified with a disability degree.

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

- Baku city: 293 of 382
- Sumgayit city: 51 of 57
- Ganja city: 47 of 54
- Terter district: 148 of 213
- Goranboy district: 105 of 154
- Tovuz district: 61 of 67
- Agstafa district: 64 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,⁶ 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 1,264 people answered the question on their personal income. Income varied from US\$5.40 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 147 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 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, internally displaced person status, or 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) were found in the districts of Terter (168 of the 184 that answered), Goranboy (76 of 85), Agstafa (55 of 67), Gazakh (48 of 78) and Tovuz (49 of 67) and in Baku (230 of 365) and Ganja cities (43 of 50).

Distribution by age. Of a total 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 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.

Average salary	\$100
Minimum consumer basket per person ⁷	\$75
Minimum expenditure per working person ⁸	\$85

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

Civilian mine victims. Of 1,883 mine victims, 1,510 persons were members of the military or were civilians working with the army or militia at the time of their incident.

The most prominent activities for the other 373 civilian casualties at the moment of incident were tending to animals and plants—85 and 73 people, 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 tampering with devices. 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 policemen on law enforcement duty and one was involved in humanitarian mine clearance. Seven people did not classify their activity at the moment of incident.



This mine victim, interviewed during the survey, was a child when his accident happened. PHOTO COURTESY OF IEPF/ANAMA.

Most of the losses and injuries of civilians arose 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, 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



Mine victim receiving economic assistance from ANAMA. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANAMA

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



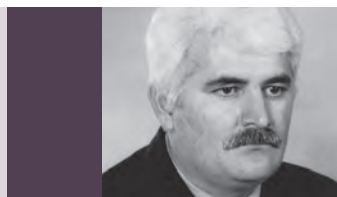
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