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Survey Helps ANAMA Realize New MVA Projects

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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 in charge of implementing the tools, which we think can be of great help in countries that also have mines/UXO-contamination problems. 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—Relief Azerbaijan, the International Eurasia Press Fund or the teams working for ANAMA to execute MRE activities—is large. We have a stable MRE implementing partner capacity that helps various types of educational/promotional tasks become realised. 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 PTPI 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 training 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 and of the war itself. The result of the contest showed that, as in all suffering children, the Azeri kids also want to strive for 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. See Endnotes, Page

ANAMA Director Nazim Ismaylov is currently the Manager of the MRE Department for ANAMA. He is the author of textbooks/materials for children and teachers as well as several articles. He has volunteered for several international organisations 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.

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Survey Helps ANAMA Realize New MVA Projects

Winners of the Painting Contest received prizes.

Mamedov: 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.

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 realised 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, economic and educational assistance, physical and professional rehabilitation, psychosocial support, suitable sports and other. 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 Geranboy 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 sanatorium treatment. The project with the NGO Shehri Elit (“Healing Hands” in English) on “Organization of Sanatorium Treatment” for 120 mine survivors, was successfully completed recently in the Masalakan settlement (one of the suburbs of Baku), in a boarding house subject 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 mission of the survivors expresses their gratitude for 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, economic 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 10 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.

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

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Revision of disability degrees. In August 2006, two projects started at once, the Revision of Disability Degrees and Integration of Mine Survivors into Society through Vocational Rehabilitation in Ganja Regional Resource Centre. The European Commission sponsored both projects with additional support from the United Nations Development Programme. The project Revision of Disability Degrees is being conducted by two NGOs, Dschel Khalil (“Revival” in English) and Protection of Human Rights.

1,483 mine survivors interviewed during the Needs Assessment Survey in 2004, 400 persons expressed the need for a review of their disability status. It is crucial for many of them because:

• In many cases, disability pension is a substantial part of family income.
• Official recognition of disability opens doors to other opportunities in social care.
• Submission of documents to respective commissions is a time-consuming and complicated issue for disabled and needy people.

As a country in transition, the population of Azerbaijan is experiencing some adjustments in social life that are not always positive. The Needs Assessment Survey reflected that some people with disability status have some unresolved social issues largely due to the current level of family income and lack of social services, including peer support systems. Some of the issues expressed included lack of documentation at the time of injury and bias against disabled people on the part of government employees providing care. Consequently, ANAMA decided to provide a solution to these problems, to find and eliminate reasons for social tension and discontent among mine survivors. As a result of the Revision of Disability Degrees, the following will be achieved:

1. Strengthening mine survivors’ social protection
2. Growth of real income of families over their lifetime
3. Acquisition of knowledge on mine survivors’ rights and opportunities through the network
4. Increased care by society toward the problems of disabled people and opportunities for the disabled to be integrated into society
5. Participation of mine survivors in mine-risk education delivery and training
6. Acquisition of real knowledge about implications of current legislation and recommendations developed.

Vocational rehabilitation in Ganja. The project called “Integration of Mine Survivors into Society through Vocational Rehabilitation in Ganja Regional Resource Centre” is implemented by the NGO Org (“Fire” in English) from Ganja city. In this project, mine survivors will learn new professions. The ultimate goal of the project is to integrate mine survivors into society through vocational rehabilitation and facilitate income-generation for their families. With this goal in mind, 20–25 mine victims—either disabled people or their family members—are trained in carpet weaving and tailoring over a period of four months.

Successful trainees are provided equipment and materials for self-employment and self-sufficiency. The materials are purchased with funds received for carpets and clothes the trainees have made and sold during special events arranged for donors and other interested parties.

Individual Assistance

In addition to carrying out projects, ANAMA also provides individual help to especially disadvantaged mine survivors. At the given stage of national agency activity, this help may include sponsoring surgical treatment of survivors and provision of wheelchairs to them.

There is work on new MVA projects in such fields as providing ophthalmologic care to all identified mine survivors in the country who need it (about 433 people), providing microcredit loans, creating collective farms and other agricultural opportunities, etc. Besides these, ANAMA, in collaboration with foreign partners, made it possible to share experiences obtained in this field. These experiences include visits of professionals working in the sphere of MVA as well as mine survivors themselves visiting other countries and receiving some treatment there. The main purpose is to increase knowledge of MVA specialists and to increase access for intercommunication of mine survivors.

An example of individual MVA can be seen in the case of assistance to mine survivor Mr. Elman Aliyev. With the assistance of the government of Slovenia and support from the Consulate of the Republic of Slovenia in Azerbaijan, Mr. Aliyev, a landmine survivor from Azerbaijan, will undergo rehabilitation treatment at the Institute for Rehabilitation, Republic of Slovenia.

Thanks to the financial support of ANAMA, Mr. Rashad Velizher, who suffered an injury from an anti-tank mine, had two operations—above-the-elbow amputation and extraction of a fragment from his right eye.) Mr. Velizher will receive a prosthesis and complete rehabilitation treatment through support of International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance and IR-RS. Sponsors for the initiative are a number of local and international organisations in Azerbaijan.

Conclusion

Researching and recording the needs of mine and UXO survivors has helped ANAMA to plan, implement and coordinate several new projects in the field of mine victim assistance. By giving the Azeri survivors a voice, ANAMA has been able to provide more focused victim assistance in areas such as medical treatment, economic support and socioeconomic rehabilitation, achieving very positive results for almost five years. As always, ANAMA staff is ready to share their experience with any colleagues interested.

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