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New Approaches and Strategies for MRE in Azerbaijan

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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 an agreement with the Social Development Fund for Azerbaijan to support a reintegration project in Fizuli region. The project is a high priority for the government, as cleared land will be used for the settlement of those who benefited from the project.

The system stipulates 100-percent clearance where mining machines cut lanes (every 10–15 meters [32–50 feet]) with a subsequent quality-assurance check by dogs or magnetic locators in between the lanes (see photo X). The Fourier magnetic locator with four probe attachments, known as the FEREX 4′032 DLG, is continuously used for clearance of Zobjug area. This tool continues to show excellent results—daily productivity of the locator can reach 15,000 square meters (3.7 acres). As a result of the employment of a new area-reduction methodology, overall productivity at the Zobjug site has reached approximately one million square meters (247 acres) per month.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of mechanical-demining machines.

Models of machines & Date of deployment | Total operational hours | Total period of exploitation (months/working days) | Area cleared (sq.m) | Total fuel consumption (metric tons) | Missed working days | Exploitation expenses for the machine (AZN) |
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bozena-4 (1)</td>
<td>09/2004</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>28 / 448</td>
<td>1,746,384</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>8 / 128</td>
<td>488,800</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>52,442</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bozena-5</td>
<td>06/2005</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>19 / 304</td>
<td>1,035,845</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>09/2005</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>4 / 64</td>
<td>61,500</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>09/2005</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>16 / 256</td>
<td>237,800</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Following the war, hundreds of Azeri families were unable to return home due to mine and UXO contaminations 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 and the safe return of displaced families.

To enhance the program, the ANAMA MRE Team has become one of the most progressive MRE teams in the region. Since integrating MRE into schools, students have become more sensitive to the mine-clearance issues among the population rises. Therefore, ANAMA recommends this initiative be considered a priority for MRE program implementers in any country.

Currently, 1,520 teachers at 790 schools teach the MRE course in Azerbaijan, reaching 32,500 students. The Ministry of Education pays the expenses for the training, and the heads of district education departments are responsible for supervising the classes. The responsibility of teachers and heads of schools increases and the threat towards MRE changes. For the teachers and community leaders it becomes a humanitarian task, or, rather, a noble duty which they perform in order to help and protect their communities and fellow citizens.

Since integrating MRE into schools, students have become more sensitive to the problem. After being taught MRE, they begin to inform the authorities and their teachers when they find mines, unexploded ordnance and unknown objects and they share where these items were found.

Benefits of Integrating MRE into School Curricula

When MRE is integrated into the curriculum of schools, not only does financial support from the government increase for MRE activities, but also the importance of mine-clearance issues among the population rises. Therefore, ANAMA recommends this initiative be considered a priority for MRE program implementers in any country.
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 and are considered an effective way to deliver MRE. ANAMA has also established a hotline for the public to report suspected landmines and UXO areas.

Coordinators, who are appointed by the heads of district executive authorities, ANAMA provides them with MRE materials when there is a need. ANAMA as usual sets a hotline by simply adding an 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 danger posed by mines and UXO and actively inform ANAMA of the existence of mines/UXO.

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 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 Dr. Rauf Mamedov 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 regular 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 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 student interest in mine action. They learned about safe behaviour rules and formed a hatred of mines/UXO and the war itself. The result of the contest showed that, as in all suffering children, the Azerbaijani kids also want to strive for peace 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.

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 Health and Physical Education of Azerbaijan 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.

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, economic and educational assistance, physical and professional rehabilitation, psychosocial support, suitable sports and other activities. Using the newly created database helped ANAMA recognize the particular needs of survivors; therefore, it has become easier to plan and realize new projects.

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