



Issue 7.3, December 2003

ANAMA Supports Mine Survivor Activities in Azerbaijan

Rauf Mamedov, Mine Victim Support Officer of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), conducted a survey during the week of 11–22 August 2003 on the needs and life conditions of the mine/UXO survivors in the Fizuli district of Azerbaijan based on a methodology that he developed. The study was considered a pilot project for future surveys. The results of Mamedov's pilot project in August will provide ANAMA with additional knowledge of survey and analysis techniques in preparation for another nationwide survey to identify the concerns, needs and locations of mine/UXO survivors envisaged to be undertaken sometime around the end of 2003 or the beginning of 2004.

by Rauf Mamedov, *ANAMA*

Rauf Mamedov's research for his survey lasted 10 days and he interviewed 65 mine/UXO survivors in 27 large and small communities of the Fizuli district. According to the survey, a government-offered disability pension is often the only source of income for the whole family of a disabled person and is obviously not sufficient. The survey also revealed that in addition to material needs, survivors' principal needs are also livestock, agricultural land and the rehabilitation of their houses. Some of the people who lost their limbs and/or were injured were not aware of where and how to get the prosthetic devices. Lack of relevant mine victim (MV) information has been identified as one of the principal reasons for lack of attention to these survivors.

ANAMA recently embarked on the Mine/UXO Survivors' Support, one of the significant elements of the mine action program in Azerbaijan. ANAMA is now undergoing a preparation process to do an extensive MV survey throughout the country. The outcome of this survey will be analyzed and then shared with major MV Awareness (MVA) stakeholders both within and outside of Azerbaijan. The above-mentioned pilot MV survey was, thus, principally aimed to:

- Engage field-test survey methodology
- Gauge ANAMA's ability to undertake this kind of survey in a participatory way
- Get an idea of the cost involved with MVA
- Understand the particular problems being encountered by victims and survivors

Surveyors found it evident during the pilot survey that most of the mine/UXO survivors in Azerbaijan were answering vital questions relevant to their day-to-day anxiety (i.e., their present and future physical, material, emotional and economical needs) for the first time. The outcome of this pilot survey will also become a basis for any future MVA programs.

Organization of the Pilot Survey

The Mine Victim Support Officer of ANAMA, a cardio-physician, led the survey. A physician from the Fizuli district hospital and a driver assisted him. Transportation was provided by ANAMA. The surveyors had the preliminary information about mine survivors of the communities that they visited. However, during the survey, further information on the survivors was collected through personal interviews and other various sources such as interviews of the local executive authorities, hospital authorities, etc.

The MVA Officer has also analyzed the information that ANAMA received from various sources prior to beginning the pilot survey in Fizuli. One of the sources was the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Orthopedic Center in Ganja. The ICRC used to have a center in Baku until recently; it is now under the jurisdiction of Ministry of

Labour and Social Protection. However, the key sources of ANAMA's earlier information on mine/UXO survivors are the Level 1 Survey conducted in 2001 and the Landmine Impact Survey performed in 2003 by the national non-governmental organization (NNGO) International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF), with support from various donors and resource organizations.

Surveyor's Observations

The accessible areas of Fizuli district are heavily affected by war and as a result, the economy is completely devastated. The internally displaced persons (IDPs) are now gradually returning from the camps and other places to their newly rehabilitated places. The living standards in the countryside are considerably lower than in the city, especially for mine/UXO survivors. The meager disability pension is often the only source of income for the whole family of a disabled person; therefore, they face economic hardship. Many disabled persons claimed that assistance in prosthesis mounting provided by the City Orthopedic Centers is not free at all, at least for the civilians.

Except for the critical need of material and medical support, the main needs of the mine/UXO survivors are assistance in the development of stock raising, land for agricultural work and the reconstruction of their housing. Many of survivors are not aware of where and how to get the prosthetic devices. The majority of interviewed people generally welcomed the idea of joining Mine/UXO Survivors Associations, distributing mine awareness and MVA-related information and participating in public awareness programs.

The surveyors have also met with the initiators and leaders of two Associations of Disabled and Mine Survivors. They are already functioning in two villages. The representatives and the members of their groups were informed about the rights of the disabled better than the mine survivors from other areas. They mentioned the low effectiveness of legislation and negligible benefits for invalids. The groups themselves are small, and often people from the neighboring villages are not aware of their existence. During the discussions with local executive authorities, the following land allocation-related information was obtained:

- Regional Executive Committees provide every family with 600 sq m of land as a homestead. Of course, this is not enough to run the household, and during the interviews, everyone was emphasizing the necessity for land assignment.
- Local Executive Committees and some of the refugee communities have their own plots of land of 9–13 hectares, which they can also lease out for disabled people at preferential costs and terms.
- There is not enough land in some of the villages to allocate to mine survivors living in those villages.

Additionally, the survey revealed a necessity for making adjustments to organizational and methodological aspects of this kind of survey. There were some additions and changes made to the questionnaire. For instance, the procedure for interviewing the Chief Executive Authority of a district was made a bit more detailed and circumstantial. The procedure is aimed to involve the Chief Executive Authority's special interest in mine survivors' problems and encourage him to inform the appropriate authorities in case of any accidents. Also, it is important to have his support for any organization to undertake MVA programs.

It was also considered beneficial if some kind of self-managing farm for mine survivors with a large pieces of land (where every mine survivor has his own share) and all conditions required to perform agricultural activities such as water supply, seeds and fertilizers, modern techniques, etc., are put in place by the authority. Even a minimum help such as one or two cows will significantly improve the living conditions of the survivors and their families.

It is highly recommended to involve the survivors in all kind of public awareness programs on MV and Mine Risk Education (MRE) as well. The "Extensive Survey on MV" project is envisaged to cover all 64 non-occupied districts of Azerbaijan. ANAMA is presently seeking financial support of about \$50,000 (U.S.) to undertake this project.

Conclusion

After undertaking this pilot MVA survey in Fizuli, the surveyors found it quite evident that the lack of relevant information about mine/UXO survivors for potential donor and resource agencies is one of the key reasons for their lack of appropriate attention to the need for MVA programs. ANAMA maintains a good working rapport with a wide range of reputed national and international agencies that are involved in MVA. Although ANAMA has only brief experience in MVA activities, it is quite prepared and committed to collecting and sharing the relevant information on the survivors with all possible stakeholders both within and outside of Azerbaijan.

Contact Information

Rauf Mamedov
Mine Victim Assistance Officer
69, Fizuli Street 4th floor
AZ1014 Baku, Azerbaijan
Tel: (99412) 95 79 34
E-mail: rauf@anama.baku.az
Website: www.anama.baku.az