March 2008

Gender in Mine Action: The Tajikistan Experience

Shahrinisso Davlyatova
Tajikistan Mine Action Centre

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
Available at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol12/iss2/11

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.
Tajikistan’s Mine-action Gender Experience
This article discusses the involvement of Tajik women in educating those in their communities about the threats of landmines and unexploded ordnance. It also highlights why there is an increased danger from landmines and unexploded ordnance for women and children.

by Shahrinisso Davlyatova [Tajikistan Mine Action Centre]

Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia with a national structure for its mine-action program. Since its inception in 2005, the program has initiated gender mainstreaming to ensure equal access for women, men, girls and boys in all aspects of mine action. Over the past five years, the mine risk education team of the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre has educated 190 communities in 22 targeted districts about landmines and unexploded ordnance safety awareness. From 2004 to the present period, 50 MRE volunteers disseminated MRE educational information to 180,756 individuals. As a result, the participants have gained a comprehensive knowledge of mines/UXO and the inherent risk they pose.

The TMAC MRE team holds numerous training and discussion sessions with the communities in the 22 targeted districts to ensure that the community members understood that the role of women in disseminating mine/UXO awareness is not only indispensable but also affects the safety of everyone in the community. In most mine-risk education audiences, women clearly outnumbered men, but in Tajikistan only five of the 50 MRE volunteers and trainers were women.

Tajik Women and Landmines
Poor economic conditions following the 1992–1997 civil war led to a high unemployment rate, forcing many families to look abroad for income. To find paid work, a substantial percentage of male-breadwinners from the major agricultural regions in Tajikistan migrated to Russia or Kazakhstan, leaving their families to maintain the family farms. Women and children, consequently, constitute the largest portion of farmers residing in mine-affected areas, and they are responsible for up to 40 percent of the food production in many parts of the country. As a result, women were occupied with peacetime sustenance, household tasks and the rearing of children. In addition, women in Tajikistan are responsible not only for their own livelihoods, but also for most household tasks and the rearing of children.

From 1995 to the present, 43 women were injured—of whom died in mine/UXO accidents. These accidents took place while the women were employed with peace-time sustenance activities such as collecting firewood, water, grass or herbs, or tending animals and farming. With their low income, these women have become one of the most vulnerable segments of society because they must continue to live in highly contaminated areas.

In addition, these rural populations are again experiencing food shortages in Tajikistan. People living in most of the affected regions also suffer from power outages, particularly during the winter. They—especially the women—therefore collect firewood whenever possible and, as a result, enter contaminated areas. The situation is very dangerous in the northern part of the country where the entire border of Tajikistan was mined by Uzbekistan in response to a conflict with Tajik militants during 1999–2000. The MRE team visits the villages and communities near these borders frequently to make sure that safety precautions are taught appropriately.

Each summer, women and children set up traditional summer camps in the mountainous areas close to the contamination of the northern Uzbek-Tajik border. At these camps, they perform animal husbandry and gather wood, grass and herbs to sell. This Tajik custom, also called ailing, encourages inhabitants or farmers in rural areas to use the green hills and mountainous zones of the Tajik landscape as a means to feed their domestic cattle, to collect grass or make hay, and also to reserve food for the winter season when they return to their homes. Most of these camps are organized within 500 to 1,500 meters (547 to 1,640 yards) of the border, in fact, often local children cannot identify the border line.

This young boy found a cluster bomb in the ground close to his village when he was playing with his friends.

In addition, these rural populations are again experiencing food shortages in Tajikistan. People living in most of the affected regions also suffer from power outages, particularly during the winter. They—especially the women—therefore collect firewood whenever possible and, as a result, enter contaminated areas. The situation is very dangerous in the northern part of the country where the entire border of Tajikistan was mined by Uzbekistan in response to a conflict with Tajik militants during 1999–2000. The MRE team visits the villages and communities near these borders frequently to make sure that safety precautions are taught appropriately.

Each summer, women and children set up traditional summer camps in the mountainous areas close to the contamination of the northern Uzbek-Tajik border. At these camps, they perform animal husbandry and gather wood, grass and herbs to sell. This Tajik custom, also called ailing, encourages inhabitants or farmers in rural areas to use the green hills and mountainous zones of the Tajik landscape as a means to feed their domestic cattle, to collect grass or make hay, and also to reserve food for the winter season when they return to their homes. Most of these camps are organized within 500 to 1,500 meters (547 to 1,640 yards) of the border, in fact, often local children cannot identify the border line.

News Brief
U.N. Mine Action Programme Receives the Nansen Refugee Award

Christopher Clark, head of the United Nations Mine Action Programme in southern Lebanon, and his team of 990 deminers received the Nansen Refugee Award of 2008 for their work in removing landmines and unexploded ordnance, including cluster submunitions, from southern Lebanon. Following the war in Lebanon in 2006, Clark and his team immediately began working in villages and on land used for agricultural purposes, clearing approximately 140,000 cluster bombs and allowing farmers in contaminated zones to return. The Nansen Award gives the recipient US$500,000 to donate to a charity of his/her choosing. They used the $100,000 to clear land in southern Lebanon, removing 1,000 bomblets, setting up an olive press, and distributing cows to help farmers recover their dairy businesses and the use of tillable land.

Shahrinisso Davlyatova is the National Mine Risk Education Coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme/Tajikistan Mine Action Centre. Before TMAC, Davlyatova worked with Mercy Corps-Tajikistan as a Health Program Assistant. From 1999 to 2005, Davlyatova focused on women’s and children’s rights with various organizations including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Save the Children UK.

Shahrinisso Davlyatova
Tajikistan Mine Action Centre
5 Mamaevskiy Kurbonov Street
Dushanbe 73402 / Tajikistan
Tel: +992 37 223 51 87
Fax: +992 37 211 56 87
E-mail: shahrinisso.davlyatova@undp.org
Web site: http://www.rewanlight.org