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Finally, Safe Demining

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Gasimov taught mine-risk education to schoolchildren in affected areas of Azerbaijan. “I used to go to schools, conducting mine-risk education in order to prevent incidents such as my own,” he remembers.

Gasimov’s commitment to his work in mine action helped him receive the promotion to Team Leader of the Training and Quality Assurance Team at ANAMA, an important component of the mine-action program in Azerbaijan. The TQA Team at ANAMA was created specifically to oversee the clearance operations of the demining companies and to identify and address any problems that arise during the de-mining process.

At part of his training for the TQA Team at ANAMA, Gasimov attended a number of courses in mine action. He provides the following development of the mission situation of his team: “We conduct trainings, work on capacity building, conduct monitoring of contractors at a peer of QA, and also ensure that the land clearance done by the de-mining agencies has been done in accordance with the National and Institutional Mine Action Standards.” He adds, “We make sure that nothing remains and there was no ordnance missed.”

Gasimov recognizes mine clearance is an at times overwhelming undertaking, sometimes marked by unpredicted hazards. “All of my achievements in this field have been on-going process. We work and we learn. Sometimes, we learn [by making] mistakes, but our first goal is to make the land free from mines using the approved standards. Gasimov is happy to dedicate his life’s work to the destruction of devices that are so harmful. “Each destroyed mine and each neutralized piece of ordnance means someone’s rescued life or protected health.”

In spite of the difficulties that accompany working in minefields, Gasimov finds his work at mine stations has been rewarding. He hopes one day all countries, including his own, will be free from the complications inflicted by mines and UXO. The young TQA Team Leader would also like to see the injury and death caused by mines and UXO absent from the world. “Some of our people will try and reach us to see our health and they are injured by landmines,” Gasimov laments. “It is very hard.”

When asked about his suggestions for the mine-action community, Gasimov believes communication is essential to solving the mine problem. “My suggestion is to work closer, to share the experiences with other countries and as work as one force against the problem. We can share lessons, I think we have learned so that others do have to learn from their own, mistakes,” he concludes.

It is Gasimov’s sense of hope, compassion and unity that make him a valuable member of the demining community. He not only contributes, his knowledge and dedication to the field, but he also has taught mine victims that recovery from tragic situations is well within each.

See Endnotes, page 111.
mistaken strategy of removal and reinforcement of the landmines, caused dozens of accidents. Eighty-one of the professionals who had worked in the Division of Safety in Landmine Activation-Explosive Devices for Self-protection Unit were involved in explosions. Most of them were simulated and five died as a result of their wounds. Of the survivors, 41 were injured.