

Victim Assistance in Azerbaijan: then and now

Azerbaijan	1	2	3	4	5	6
According to original study		•				
According to LM 2002		•				
According to LM 2003						

Key Developments (LM 2002):

A general survey was carried out in 11 districts and found 50 million square meters of land to be affected by mines and unexploded ordnance; 84 minefields were identified and marked. With UNDP assistance, an Azeri National Strategic Plan for mine action was adopted in October 2001.

Indicator 1: The extent to which information on mine victims' demographics and needs is available.

According to original study:

LM 2000 reports data from the Society of the Invalids of the Karabakh Conflict indicate that there are more than 7,000 invalids of the Karabakh conflict, 70% (4,900) of which are mine victims. Government figures show 5,561 people registered as injured during the Karabakh conflict (78% military, 22% civilian), of which "many" are mine victims. In June 1999, the WHO and PHR coordinated a field testing of their injury surveillance and survey tools in Azerbaijan.

According to LM 2002:

There are no comprehensive official statistics on mine casualties in Azerbaijan. The AzCBL reports that there were at least 25 new mine and UXO casualties in 2001; two people were killed and 23 were injured.³⁴ In 2000, ten mine incidents were reported; four people were killed and six injured.³⁵ According to the survey undertaken by ANAMA and the International Eurasia Press Foundation (IEPF), in the two years before the end of the survey (September 2001), 12 people were killed and 43 injured by landmines and UXO.³⁶

The total number of mine casualties in Azerbaijan is unclear. Official state bodies and ministries do not give information to the public on mine casualties, or the number of people killed or injured during the war with Armenia. However, ANAMA reported a total of 1,222 mine/UXO casualties following the general survey of 11 districts carried out by the IEPF.³⁷ The majority of casualties were aged between 15 and 29.³⁸ The majority of mine casualties are believed to be civilians. According to a UNICEF press release in May 2001, approximately 65 percent of mine casualties are civilians.³⁹ Azerbaijan's response to an Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) questionnaire supports this assertion.⁴⁰

Mine incidents are also reported in the press. On 13 July 2001, a seven-year-old and 12-year-old were injured by a mine explosion in the Juhari Kurdmahmudu village of Fizuli district, and one child later died at the hospital.⁴¹ In November 2001, a shepherd was injured by a mine while herding sheep in Gishlag village in the Agdam district.⁴²

There have also been press reports of mine incidents involving military personnel in 2001. On 5 January 2001, a private was killed by a mine. In July 2001, two officers and a private were injured clearing mines in an area near a former Soviet military base. On 6 November 2001, two soldiers were injured and one was killed by a mine.⁴³

On 3 July 2001, a deminer with Relief Azerbaijan lost two fingers of his right hand as a result of a mine incident.⁴⁴

Indicator 2: The extent to which a national disability coordination mechanism exists and recognizes mine victims.

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

No information available.

Indicator 3: The extent to which programs and services for the medical care and rehabilitation of mine victims are available.

According to original study:

A 1998 UNMAS Assessment Mission reports that health facilities in conflict areas were partially or completely destroyed during the war. Reconstruction of hospitals and clinics has been part of a larger effort to prepare the area for resettlement of IDPs. Military mine victims have access to military hospital facilities. LM 1999 reports that there is an ICRC as well as a government-run orthopedic centre in Baku. Physical and psychosocial rehabilitation services are reported to be almost nonexistent.

According to LM 2002:

Medical and surgical facilities in Azerbaijan are believed to be adequate to treat mine casualties. Medical expenses for mine survivors and other persons with disabilities are covered by the Ministry of Health⁴⁵

In 2001, there were two orthopedic centers in Baku: one supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MOLASP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the government-run Prosthetic and Orthopedic Rehabilitation Center. In 2001, the MOLASP/ICRC Darnagul Prosthetic-Orthotic Center assisted over 632 patients, providing 292 prostheses, 545 orthoses, and more than 137 crutches, walking sticks, and wheelchairs; of fitted-amputees about 46 were mine survivors. In addition to receiving free treatment, transportation and meals for patients coming from the districts were provided. In July 2001, seven Azeri Orthopedic Technologists (Category II) graduated after completing an advanced training course recognized by the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotists (IPSO)⁴⁶

The government-run Prosthetic and Orthopedic Rehabilitation Center assisted around 7,000 people in 2001, free-of-charge, providing physical rehabilitation, prostheses, orthoses, and other assistive devices. Azerbaijan does not produce wheelchairs, so they must be imported. The number of mine survivors assisted at the Center is not available as they are registered more generally in the category of war-disabled.⁴⁷

On 31 December 2001, the Darnagul Prosthetic-Orthotic Center ceased its activities. However, all the machines, equipment, and stock were handed over to MOLASP. ICRC-trained staff were also transferred to other facilities. In 2002, physical rehabilitation services will be decentralized with a new ICRC-supported rehabilitation center opening in Ganja, Azerbaijan's second-largest city, and the upgrading of an existing workshop in Nakhichevan.⁴⁸

Indicator 4: The extent to which programs and services for the social and economic reintegration of mine victims are available

According to original study:

The Department for Social Welfare of the Fizuli region provides financial assistance to the families of landmine victims. Psychosocial rehabilitation services are reported to be almost non-existent.

According to LM 2002:

Thirty-five NGOs are working with persons with disabilities in Azerbaijan. However, there are no programs focusing on mine survivors. AzCBL has plans to implement a special program to assist mine survivors.⁴⁹ UNICEF continues to seek funding of US\$350,000 for a two-year survivor assistance program in Azerbaijan. The program would assist existing psychological rehabilitation centers, provide vocational training to mine and other war-wounded persons, and assist in the domestic production of wheelchairs and prosthetic devices. UNICEF already works with a network of 15 specialists providing psychological rehabilitation to mine and other war-wounded people in Azerbaijan.⁵⁰

Indicator 5: The extent to which mine victims are protected and supported by effective laws and policies.

According to original study:

Lm 2000 reports that since April of 1997, Azerbaijan has had a law for the protection and rehabilitation of disabled.

According to LM 2002:

In April 1997, the Parliament of Azerbaijan adopted the Law of Prevention of Disability, Rehabilitation of Persons with Disability and their Social Protection. This Law applies to all persons with disabilities in Azerbaijan, including mine survivors.⁵¹

Following the Presidential Decree of 26 December 2001, some of the entitlements (free public utilities such as gas, electricity, water, and sewerage, free telephone installation and use, free use of transportation within the city and beyond, and the right to free medicine) were due to be replaced by a monthly payment of 90,000 Manats (approximately US\$18)⁵² Those disabled during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, some of whom are mine survivors, have been particularly badly affected as a result.

Indicator 6: The extent to which there is a disability community advocacy network.

According to original study:

LM 1999 mentions the Society of the Invalids of the Karabakh Conflict.

According to LM 2002:

Prior to the issuance of the decree, there were hunger strikes by some of the disabled, a number of public attempted suicides, and violent clashes with the police, mostly involving members of the Karabakh War Invalids' Society.⁵³

Endnotes:

³⁴ Information on 16 casualties (2 killed and 14 injured) was collected during the IEPF survey which ended in September 2001. Four incidents resulting in 9 injuries were reported by UNICEF mine awareness teams in October and November.

³⁵ Information bulletin of AzCBL, N 7-12, 2000.

³⁶ See www.anama.baku.az:8101/pages/_1-1%20anama.dwt (accessed 21 July 2002).

³⁷ ANAMA's summary bulletin for 2001.

³⁸ See www.anama.baku.az:8101/pages/_1-3-Scope.htm (accessed 21 July 2002).

³⁹ Joint press conference of the US Embassy in Azerbaijan and UNICEF Baku, 17 May 2001.

⁴⁰ Response to OSCE Questionnaire on Anti-Personnel Landmines, 13 December 2001.

⁴¹ *Zerkalo*, 18 July 2001; *Echo*, 18 July 2001.

⁴² *Sharg*, 24 November 2001.

⁴³ *Express*, 9 January 2001; *Comsomolskaya Pravda – Baku*, 18 July 2001; *Echo*, 7 July 2001.

⁴⁴ *Zerkalo*, 18 July 2001; *Echo*, 18 July 2001.

⁴⁵ Interviews with Shahnaz Hashimova, Deputy Chair, Department of Prevention of the Ministry of Health, and Col. Ramiz Melikov, Chair, Press Services of the Ministry of Defense, 17 December 2001.

⁴⁶ Interview with Shalala Ahmedova, ICRC Baku, 17 January 2002; ICRC Physical Rehabilitation Programmes Annual Report 2001, accessed at www.icrc.org; and ICRC Baku Information bulletin, January-November 2001.

⁴⁷ Interview with Shamsaddin Hudaverdiyev, Prosthetic and Orthopedic Rehabilitation Center, Baku, 17 January 2002.

⁴⁸ ICRC Special Report, Mine Action 2001, ICRC, Geneva, July 2002, p. 31; ICRC Monthly Bulletin, Azerbaijan – December 2001, January 2002, accessed at www.icrc.org.

⁴⁹ See *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 859.

⁵⁰ "Assistance for Mine Victims in Azerbaijan," ICBL Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs, accessed at www.landminevap.org.

⁵¹ See *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 860.

⁵² *Halg* (daily national newspaper), 27 December 2001.

⁵³ See accounts in newspapers, *Sharg*, 525, *Azadlig*, and *Yeni Musavat*, 20 February 2001.