

Victim Assistance in Chechnya: then and now

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

Key Developments (LM 2002):

Russian forces continued to use antipersonnel mines in Chechnya. Russia is increasing its participation in international mine action programs. Russian and Chechen forces continued to use antipersonnel mines. UNICEF and the ICRC continued mine risk education and survivor assistance programs in the North Caucasus. In 2001, there were at least 154 civilian casualties caused by landmines, improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance.

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

According to original study:

LM 1999 reports that there were an estimated 600 to 800 landmine casualties in Chechnya as a result of the first war with Russia in 1996. By the outbreak of the war in 1999, there were approximately 3,500 people registered by the Ministry of Public Health in the Chechen Republic as needing artificial limbs. Of those, Chechen Health Ministry officials estimate up to 20 percent were mine victims. According to LM 2000, no Ministry of the Russian government or of the official temporary Chechen administration was able to provide any information on civilian victims of the current war. There have been reports of hundreds of victims in 1999 and 2000. Information on mine victims treated at ICRC hospital in Novi Atagi (Chechnya) is fed into the ICRC War Wound Surgical Database.

According to LM 2002:

There is no comprehensive official data on landmine casualties in Chechnya. However, there were almost daily reports of mine incidents causing casualties in Chechnya in 2001. A representative of Chechnya, when writing about the number of war-wounded people, including landmine survivors, needing artificial limbs stated that in 2001 it was estimated that the numbers had increased to 14,000, adding that there is "no opportunity to receive more accurate information. We just know that the number of victims increases daily."³¹

An analysis of reported incidents indicate that in 2001 there were at least 1,153 new casualties caused by landmine, UXO or IED incidents: 367 were killed and 786 injured.³² Of these new casualties, 137 were civilians (62 killed and 75 injured) including 23 children, 43 were Chechen fighters (26 killed and 17 injured), 963 were from the Russian armed forces, including police and interior ministry (279 killed and 684 injured), and the status of ten casualties was not reported.

In 2001, UNICEF recorded 154 new civilian casualties, of which 21 were killed and 133 injured.³³

According to the head receiving nurse at Hospital Number Nine in Grozny, the hospital records five or six casualties of gunfire or landmines every day.³⁴ NGOs working in hospitals in Chechnya claim that there are between 30 and 50 civilians injured each month in landmine incidents, with the majority of casualties occurring in Grozny.³⁵ In 2001, medical institutions in Chechnya registered 1,020 casualties with gunshot and landmine injuries, as compared to 814 such casualties registered in 2000.³⁶ The ICRC reported treating 240 mine/UXO casualties in the hospitals it supports in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan in 2001.³⁷

Included in the mine incidents in 2001 involving civilians are the following. On 1 June 2001, a pregnant medical student was on her way home from exams when a landmine exploded; she lost both her legs and the baby.³⁸ On 4 August 2001, one 12-year old boy was killed and another injured after disturbing a tripwire on a mine/IED causing it to explode in Grozny School 37, which had been destroyed during military operations.³⁹ On 7 August 2001, a local resident was killed by a mine in forested land in the October area of Grozny. Relatives asked Chechen militia to help remove the corpse. Two militia deminers were clearing the site when another mine exploded, killing one deminer and injuring the other.⁴⁰

Olara Otunnu, the United Nations special representative for children and armed conflict, said in June 2002, "We estimate between 7,000 and 10,000 people have been maimed by landmines [in the course of two Chechen conflicts], and easily more than half of those are children."⁴²

In 2001, UNICEF trained 30 UN and NGO staff on data collection and the local NGO, Voice of the Mountains (VoM) on data management using the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). Five trained representatives of three local NGOs, VoM, Minga, and Let's Save the Generation, currently work on gathering data in the territory of Chechnya and two VoM staff manage the database in Ingushetia. As of July 2002, 750 landmine casualties have been identified, of which 210 are children. Of the total casualties recorded, 7 percent were killed and 93 percent injured, 82 percent are male and 18 percent female, and 32 percent required below-knee amputations while another 19 percent required above-knee amputations.⁴³

From May 2000 to March 2001, the Human Rights Investigation Bureau of Chechnya conducted field research in the southeastern region of Chechnya, and in Ingushetia. The survey identified nearly 400 landmine casualties.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:

On 20 February 2002, representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of North Ossetia, the directors of the Grozny and Vladikavkaz prosthetic/orthopedic workshops, and representatives of WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, and Handicap International met in Vladikavkaz for the fourth interagency coordination meeting on prosthetic/orthopedic and psychological assistance to war-wounded persons from Chechnya. Agreements in principal were reached on the allocation of approximately 1 million Russian roubles (about US\$31,700) earmarked by the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Development for prosthetic assistance to the war wounded from Chechnya. Initially, the funding will be used for transporting ten Chechen amputees to Vladikavkaz each month until the allocated funds are used up and the Grozny workshop is able to serve the amputees itself. WHO agreed to further extend the prosthetic program in Vladikavkaz to assist about 40 adult casualties of the war.⁶²

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

According to original study:

LM 1999 reports that health care system in Chechnya, which prior to the 1999 conflict with Russia forces was inadequate, has since been in a state of crisis. In Grozny, two thirds of hospitals and clinics were destroyed and insecurity has prevented the provision of assistance by international organizations. According to LM 2000, it is currently reported that the only place where a person who has been wounded by antipersonnel mines can receive assistance is Ingushetia. Emergency medical care is provided at the ICRC hospital in Novi Atagi.

According to LM 2002:

On 16 October 2001, a resident of Soltamuradov, bled to death after stepping on a mine while collecting berries in a forest near his village.⁴¹

Surgical and general health facilities in Chechnya remain devastated because of war damage and a lack of resources and maintenance. When describing Grozny's Hospital Number Nine, a journalist reported that the hospital "has a sign and a gate; otherwise it could be mistaken for more ruins. The five-story main building, once the hospital's pride, is windowless and pockmarked by bullets."⁴⁶ In 2001, there were 55 hospitals, 34 polyclinics, 46 mobile clinics, and 187 mobile clinic points in Chechnya; however, many often function without running water, proper heating, or sewerage systems.⁴⁷ A lack of skilled staff, equipment, and the security situation also hampers the delivery of adequate assistance.⁴⁸ In June 2001, the ICRC held a two-day regional seminar in Moscow on war surgery; among the 30 participants were ten surgeons and traumatologists from six Chechen hospitals and from Ingushetia and Dagestan.⁴⁹

The ICRC regularly provides surgical support, medicines, and medical supplies to improve the quality of care to nine referral hospitals in Chechnya and two other hospitals in Ingushetia and Dagestan. In 2001, 700 war-wounded patients were treated, including 240 mine/UXO casualties.⁵⁰ The ICRC also supports four mobile medical teams and a medical post run by the Russian Red Cross.⁵¹ On 13 March 2002, the ICRC signed an agreement with the Chechen Ministry of Health and the Chechen branch of the Russian Red Cross to assist the health facilities in Chechnya. Assistance will include the repair of facilities, the supply of medicines, and two Russian Red Cross mobile clinics will visit villages that only have a first-aid post once or twice a week.⁵²

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF provide assistance throughout Chechnya. Several other international agencies and NGOs also support the health infrastructure in Chechnya with medicines, hospital supplies, expertise, and training for local staff through hospitals, health posts, and mobile clinics in 11 towns, 42 villages, and in the IDP camps. These organizations include Medecins du Monde, Medecins Sans Frontieres, Handicap International, International Humanitarian Initiative, Hammer Forum, and World Vision International.⁵³

The Russian Center of Disaster Medicine (RCDM) “Zaschita” also provides health services for civilians in the northern Caucasus.⁵⁴

UNICEF and UNHCR work in close cooperation with WHO and ICRC to provide a comprehensive approach to survivor assistance by facilitating services for the physical, psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation of mine survivors.

According to Boris Spivak, Head of the Department of Scientific Medical Problems of Orthopedics of the Federal Center of Prosthetic Aid and Rehabilitation of Invalids, among children alone there are currently at least 850 amputees (upper and lower limbs) in Chechnya needing regular prosthetic aid and rehabilitation.⁵⁵

In August 2000, UNICEF commenced its Mine Action Program in the North Caucasus with survivor assistance being one of the main components. The program which focuses on mine-injured children and women from Chechnya includes physical rehabilitation, the fitting of prostheses, psychosocial counseling, and vocational training. The program also established two amputee football clubs for about 120 child mine survivors in Grozny and the IDP camps in Ingushetia. To date UNICEF has not been able to raise sufficient funds to fully implement the program.⁵⁶

The physical rehabilitation component of the program started at the Vladikavkaz Rehabilitation Center in December 2001 when 15 mine-affected children started a two-month cycle of visits for ultrasound diagnostics, massage, physiotherapy treatments, and psychosocial support.⁵⁷

UNICEF transports children and women from Chechnya and the IDP camps to the Vladikavkaz Rehabilitation Center and the Vladikavkaz Prosthetic Center where in addition to receiving orthopedic and assistive devices, there is a psychosocial counselor to assist the patients in coping with their disability. In 2001, 89 children and women were fitted with artificial limbs and received counseling, about 60 received corsets and bandages, and 240 wheelchairs, 1,050 walking sticks, and 510 crutches were also provided.⁵⁸

Handicap International, supported by UNHCR, ECHO, Stichtung Fluchtling, and Refugee International Japan, works in Chechnya to identify the needs of persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors, in physical rehabilitation. In 2001, HI carried out an assessment on the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in Chechnya, interviewing 2,200 people. As no facilities exist in Chechnya, future activities will focus on the development of rehabilitation services. HI also supported the traumatology departments and distributed surgical equipment to five hospitals, and distributed 1,000 walking sticks, 850 crutches, and 250 wheelchairs.⁵⁹ In 2002, it plans to provide training in post-surgical rehabilitation to surgeons and nursing staff from seven hospitals.

In October 2001, the ICRC signed an agreement with the federal Ministry of Labor to provide further training for qualified Chechen staff to work at the prosthetic/orthopedic center in Grozny. Throughout the year, the ICRC provided wheelchairs and crutches to patients with disabilities.⁶⁰ In November, the WHO also held a training course for 14 prosthetic technicians and doctors on manufacturing techniques for different types of prostheses.⁶¹

As of July 2002, the prosthetic/orthopedic workshop in Grozny had not reopened.⁶³

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

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

UNICEF, in cooperation with CARE International, continues to provide psychosocial support to landmine and war traumatized children in the Doverie Center in Vladikavkaz and in a counseling service at an IDP camp in Ingushetia.⁶⁴ UNICEF's Psychosocial Program started in mid 2001 with an assessment of 167 children, including 30 mine survivors and their families, in IDP camps in Ingushetia. Three follow-up workshops have been held for 70 counselors, doctors, lawyers, social workers, and monitors on assisting mine/UXO injured children and their families.⁶⁵

The UNICEF vocational training program provides children with daily four-hour classes in English and computers. Vocational training is also offered at the Sleptsovskaya Vocational Training College in Nazran in computers and accountancy to mine survivors and female heads of households.

UNICEF also provides material assistance to mine survivors when a special need is identified. For example, together with assistance from UNHCR and the World Food Program, assistance in the form of mattresses, bed linen, blankets, and food rations were provided to three children, who were all double amputees as a result of landmine incidents and their families who lived in remote areas of Chechnya.⁶⁶

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

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

The Federal Fund of Obligatory Medical Insurance and a Russian Federation Ministry of Health decree, dated 16 May 2001, ensures medical care for the Chechen population in other republics. In 2001, about 4,000 Chechen received medical care in neighboring regions because it could not be provided in Chechnya.⁶⁷

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

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

No information available.

Endnotes:

³¹ Letter to Landmine Monitor (Tamara Mazaeva) from Ali Asaev, Representative of the Chechen Government in Azerbaijan, Baku, 15 February 2002; see also *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 944.

³² Data collated by Landmine Monitor from media reports, human rights reports, RF MoESDC, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Health.

³³ Emails to Landmine Monitor from Aida Ailarova, National Officer for Mine Action and Enrico Leonardi, Program Coordinator, UNICEF, Vladikavkaz, 29 July 2002.

³⁴ Sharon LaFraniere, "Grozny Experiences Peace in Name Only Despite Russian Assurance of Safety, Chechen Capital Lives Under Siege," *Washington Post*, 25 June 2001.

³⁵ Information from various unofficial sources sent to Landmine Monitor (HIB) by Catherine Naughton, Program Manager, Handicap International North Caucasus, 30 July 2002.

³⁶ WHO, "Health Action – in the North Caucasus," *Newsletter on Emergency Preparedness and Response*, April/May 2002, p. 7.

³⁷ ICRC Special Report, Mine Action 2001, Geneva, July 2002, p. 35.

³⁸ Sharon LaFraniere, "Grozny Experiences Peace in Name Only," *Washington Post*, 25 June 2001.

³⁹ "Confrontation in Chechnya: The chronicle of violence," information from the "Memorial" human rights center in Nazran.

- ⁴⁰ “Confrontation in Chechnya: The chronicle of violence,” information from the “Memorial” human rights center in Nazran.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² “U.N. envoy says Chechen kids run landmine gauntlet,” *Reuters* (Moscow), 24 June 2002.
- ⁴³ Emails to Landmine Monitor from Aida Ailarova, National Officer for Mine Action and Enrico Leonardi, Program Coordinator, UNICEF, Vladikavkaz, 29 July 2002.
- ⁴⁴ For full details on the survey and other casualty data see *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, pp. 944-946.
- ⁴⁵ Information in this section focuses on civilian mine casualties as Russian military mine casualties receive medical care in military hospitals and subsequent rehabilitation.
- ⁴⁶ Sharon LaFraniere, “Grozny Experiences Peace in Name Only,” *Washington Post*, 25 June 2001.
- ⁴⁷ WHO, “Health Action in the North Caucasus,” Newsletter, April/May 2002, p. 7.
- ⁴⁸ WHO, “ICRC Assessments in Ingushetia and Chechnya,” “Health Action in the North Caucasus”, Newsletter, October/November 2001, p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ WHO, “Health Action in the North Caucasus,” Newsletter, April/May 2002, p. 7.
- ⁵⁰ ICRC Special Report, Mine Action 2001, Geneva, July 2002, p. 35.
- ⁵¹ ICRC Fact and Figures, Emergency Action of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for the North Caucasus and the South of Russia, December 2001, p. 3.
- ⁵² ICRC News, “Medical aid stepped up in Chechen Republic,” 21 March 2002.
- ⁵³ UN OCHA website; see also *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 907.
- ⁵⁴ See *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, pp. 946-947.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with Boris Spivak at the Federal Center of Prosthetic Aid and Rehabilitation of Invalids, July 6, 2001.
- ⁵⁶ ICBL Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs, accessed at www.landminevap.org.
- ⁵⁷ Email from Aida Ailarova, UNICEF, 29 July 2002.
- ⁵⁸ Email from Aida Ailarova, UNICEF, 29 July 2002; see also WHO, “Health Action in the North Caucasus,” Newsletter, February/March 2002, p. 10.
- ⁵⁹ Email to Landmine Monitor from Catherine Naughton, Program Manager, Handicap International North Caucasus, 29 July 2002.
- ⁶⁰ ICRC Special Report, Mine Action 2001, Geneva, July 2002, p. 35.
- ⁶¹ WHO, “Health Action in the North Caucasus,” Newsletter, December 2001, p. 6.
- ⁶² WHO, “Health Action in the North Caucasus,” Newsletter, February/March 2002, p. 10.
- ⁶³ Email from Catherine Naughton, Handicap International North Caucasus, 29 July 2002.
- ⁶⁴ UN OCHA, Humanitarian Action in the North Caucasus information bulletin, 1-16 June 2002.
- ⁶⁵ Email from Aida Ailarova, UNICEF, 29 July 2002.
- ⁶⁶ UNICEF Northern Caucasus Situation Report: 9 June-1 July 2001.
- ⁶⁷ WHO, “Health Action in the North Caucasus,” Newsletter, April/May 2002, p. 7.