



# AMAP

ALBANIAN MINE ACTION PROGRAMME



Chairman of AMAC at the Tirana Regional Workshop on a Mine Free Southeastern Europe, October 2009



Albanian Delegation at the Tirana Regional Workshop on a Mine Free Southeastern Europe, October 2009



Visit of US DoS representatives at AMAE office.

## Background

The mine/UXO contamination in Northeast Albania emanated from the Kosovo conflict in 1999. It originally included 120 km of border area between Albania and Kosovo and stretched to the Montenegro border in the North, up to 20 km inside Albania. After the Albanian Armed Forces' (AAF) survey in 1999, some 15,250,000 m<sup>2</sup> were identified as contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnances, including cluster munitions. The threat included FYR anti-personnel (AP) mines, anti-tank mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) and it affected 39 villages in the districts of Kukës, Has and



Tropoja. An added complication was that no records of minefields were made available to Albania.

The Republic of Albania ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction on 29 February 2000. By doing so, Albania undertook among others the obligation to destroy all its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines by 2004 and clear all mine contaminated areas in its territory by 2010.

The National Mine Action structures were established since 1999, consisting of the Albanian Mine Action Committee (AMAC) - an inter-ministerial policy-making body and the

Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE) in charge of the execution of the mine action programme.

A broad national strategy including the main mine action components such as mine clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance has been formulated since 2002 by setting the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Mine Action Programme.

The mission of the Albanian Mine Action Programme to free Albania from mines by August 2010, in compliance with the AP Mine Ban Convention obligation has been successfully accomplished in October 2009.



EC Delegation to Albania

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UNDP  
Albania

# The Effect of Mines and UXO Contamination



Sight-impaired victim with family

The mine/UXO contamination covered areas in Kukës Prefecture, northeast of Albania, which is amongst the poorest regions in the country. The main activities are grazing, farming, gathering firewood, and other subsistence livelihoods. Thirty nine villages were originally affected in northeast Albania with about 25,000 people directly affected. The mines problem had an impact on infrastructure development and the environment by becoming an obstacle for the development of eco-tourism in the region.

A serious consequence of the mines contamination was the impact on integrated border management along the Albanian/Kosova border making it difficult a proper patrolling and prevention of trafficking and other crimes. Since the end of the conflict, 13 police officers were wounded by mines and UXO during the execution of their duties. The removal of this threat significantly enhanced the management of the Albanian northeastern border. Even though most people were informed and educated still they were daily posed to the mine threat mainly because of the economic pressure. Since 1999, 210 accidents have oc-



Risk Education Activities

curred, 34 people killed and 238 injured; approximately one third were of the economically active group between 15 and 45 while half of the victims were farming, grazing cattle or going to school at the moment of the acci-



dent. As a result of the mine clearance progress and a good coverage with Mine Risk Education, the last incident recorded with mines and UXO in northeast Albania is in June 2005.

## Albanian Government Response

The Government of Albania established since 1999 the framework for the Albanian Mine Action Programme (AMAP). Policy and strategy was developed by the Albanian Mine Action Committee (AMAC) and executed by the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE). In-kind and material support from the Albanian Government from 1999 until 2009 to the



MEDEVAC support - AAF

mine action and explosive ordnance disposal programmes totals about 2,700,000USD. Since 2005, the Albanian Government through the Ministry of Defense has facilitated the demining operations by providing free of charge explosive materials and helicopter service for medical evacuation in case of demining accidents.

## International Support for AMAP

The Albanian Mine Action Programme (AMAP) has been strongly supported by international donors such as the Governments of Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (DfID), United States and the European Commission, ICRC, UNDP and UNICEF. In particular, UNDP and the International Trust Fund (ITF) in Slovenia have played a crucial role in building the capacities of AMAE and of the National Clearance Capacity, through the provision of adequate technical support and



Swiss expert during a field visit, Kukës

training. Additionally, AMAE has been supported by the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), UNMAS and the Swiss General Staff. Other implementing partners of the Mine Action Programme throughout these years include: the Kukes Regional Authorities, National Health Authorities, DanChurchAid, the Swiss Foundation for Demining, RONCO, HELP, ALB-AID (Former Victims of Mines Association), ICRC, FSD, Handicap International and the Albanian Red Cross.

## Anti- Personnel Mines Stockpile Destruction Project

As part of the obligations deriving from the AP Mine Ban Convention, Albania undertook the destruction of its anti-personnel mines (APM) stockpile. The project was executed by NAMSA and the main project sponsors were Canada and Albania, with additional donations provided by Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The contribution of Albanian Government to the project was the operation of the demilitarization facility and transportation of mines to the disposal facility from estimated 57 military storage locations throughout Albania. On 4 April 2002, Albania destroyed the last of its stockpile of 1,683,860 anti-personnel mines, 2 years ahead of its Convention obligation.

## Planning, Monitoring and Coordination

The National Mine Action Strategy, established since 2002 and revised regularly es-



AMAE Quality Management Operations

tablished the vision, mission, priorities and a National Plan for Mine Action. The revised framework of the national mine action plan is:

- **Vision** – Albania free from mines and unexploded ordnance by 2010.
- **Mission** - Implement a sustainable Mine Action Programme in order to ful-



Donors Field Trip in Kukës Region

ly eliminate the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance in Northeast Albania. AMAE's responsibilities include coordination and monitoring of all mine action activities in the



National Mine Action planning Workshop

country. In this framework and based on the National Mine Action Plan, AMAE plans, prioritizes, develops and co-coordinates the mine action operations. AMAE issues formal accreditation to the mine action implementing agencies, based on written procedures and following an assessment of their practical performance against those procedures. Once operations commence,



AMAE allocates operational tasks, collects, records and disseminates operational reports, verifies finalized operations and issues completion and handover certificates. AMAE with the GICHD support, has established since 2003 the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) through which it can provide information on the remaining threat and progress of clearance operations and inform implementing partners on mine incidents/accidents.

The capacities required to monitor the mine clearance operations have been established with international support, which include Quality Assurance and Quality Control monitors. Quality Assurance confirms that the management practices and operational procedures for demining are safe, effective and efficient, in accordance with the internationally accepted standards, while Quality Control ensures that the product conforms to the standard. The AMAE Regional Office established in Kukës district has directly monitored and coordinated the mine action activities in the field. AMAE operations are currently funded by the European Commission through UNDP Albania.

## Demining Operations and Handover of cleared land to the Community

The demining operations in Albania have started in 1999 and have been conducted by various international demining organizations such as HELP Germany, RONCO, FSD and DCA. Clearance assets used by the various demining organizations throughout these years consisted of manual deminers, demining machines and mine detection dogs. Since 2004 DCA has been the only, active demining operator in the country.

From 1999 to 2009, about 16,608,055 million square meters of cleared land (including additional contaminated areas identified during surveys) have been released through surveys and clearance and handed over to the popula-



tion in Northeast Albania for productive use. As a result, 12,452 anti-personnel mines, 152 anti-tank mines and 4,965 unexploded ordnance have been found and destroyed in these areas.



Manual Demining by DCA

In 2006, a local clearance capacity with 6 manual clearance teams was fully established under management of DanChurchAid through a project funded by the European Commission through UNDP Albania. From 2007 onwards DCA has op-



Handover Ceremony of cleared land

erated with a fully nationalized programme and only one expatriate Programme Manager. The clearance operations have been funded throughout these years mainly by US State Department,

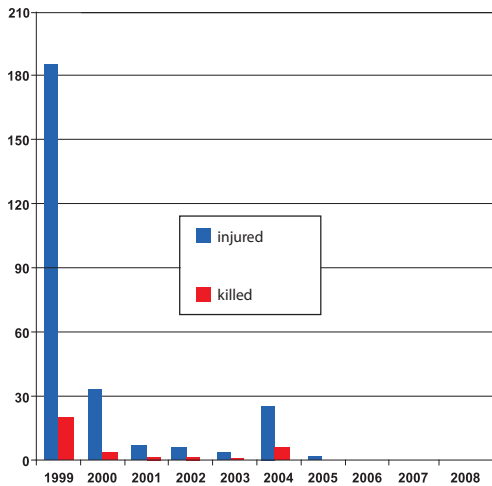


School Children during MRE session

through the International Trust Fund in Slovenia, Germany, European Commission, Denmark, Czech Republic, United Kingdom and Canada.

## Mine Risk Education (MRE)

• 39 villages were originally affected by mines/unexploded ordnance in northeastern Albania in the districts of Kukes, Has and Tropoja. All the



affected villages were regularly covered with Mine Risk Education. A MRE strategy was established since 2002 with main objectives to prevent mine and UXO incidents in northeast Albania by reaching all targeted groups and also introduce a new curricula for mine/UXO risk education in the Albanian education system. As a result, the number of mine accidents decreased from 152 in 1999 to the last mine accident in June 2005. The overall decline in the number of accidents was representative of the effective mine clearance and MRE activities taking place in the region. Mine Risk Education activities included distribution of MRE materials including leaflets and posters, mobile theatre shows disseminating safety messages through comedies and parodies, school based activities, regular gatherings with the village anti-mine committees etc. These activities were carried out mainly by the Albanian Red Cross and the local NGO ALB\_AID (Former VMA –Kukes) and monitored and coordinated by the Albanian Mine Action Executive. Funding for MRE activities has been mainly provided by the US State Department through ITF and UNICEF Albania and ICRC.

## Victim Assistance (VA)

A broad integrated victim assistance strategy

was adopted in 2003 with the goal of building a sustainable Albanian capability to provide health care assistance, rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of mine/UXO victims. The main objectives are:

- Fitment of prostheses to lower limb amputees and rehabilitation of sight impaired in Albania and upper limb amputees and difficult cases abroad.
- Build a capacity in Northeast Albanian to fit all types of prostheses by 2010.
- Inform mine survivors and the communities on the rights of people with disabilities.
- Economic reintegration of mine victims through vocational training and a micro-financing scheme to establish home-based economies.
- Build a capacity in Northeast Albania to surgically treat trauma and amputee victims and improve the quality of medical, social, and rehabilitative services.

Several initiatives have been taken to achieve these objectives including:

- The Prostheses Workshop established since March 2005 at Kukës Hospital is supported with raw materials and equipments and since 2007 upgraded to produce prostheses for lower limbs.
- A Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PMR-Phase I & II) project started in May 2006 implemented by Handicap International and funded by US DoS, to develop a sus-



Prosthetic Workshop in Kukes Regional Hospital

tainable national response to the PMR needs of mine victims and other people in need.

- ICRC supports the National Prosthetic Orthotic Center (NPOC) in Tirana with raw materials and with monitoring/coaching visits. A specialized technician is back at the NPOC after a 3-years training abroad at ISPO Level II, improving the capacities of the center.
- Equipments and raw materials were supplied to the NPOC with funds provid-



Night of a Thousand Dinners

ed by the EC. Part of these materials was sent to the Prostheses Workshop in Kukes.

- A full set of the physiotherapy equipments was delivered to Kukës Hospital with funding from France and EC and surgical equipments were delivered to Tropoja Hospital funded by EC through UNDP.
- ITF provided in 2004 and in September 2009 medical equipments for Kukes Hospital, funded by US DoS, thus contributing to improve the capacities for the emergency and the ongoing medical care in the Kukes region
- A Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) network was established in Northeast Albania in 2005. The CBR network is comprised of 30 nurses working in the mine affected villages and 2 medical specialists (neurologist and physiotherapist) from Kukës Hospital. Medical kits have been distributed to these nurses in Kukës, Has and Tropoja while 2 physiotherapists and 6 nurses received training abroad, funded by France.
- 130 mine amputees classified as difficult cases have received physical rehabilitation and prostheses in Slovenia since 2001.
- 84 mine victims and their families have been assisted in establishing home based economies in animal husbandry with revolving loans and technical assistance.
- 95 mine/UXO survivors and their family members from Kukës, Has and Tropoja completed vocational training courses, funded by EC and SIDA through UNDP and with funding from US State Department through the ITF.
- The humanitarian event, "Night of a Thousand Dinners" hosted by the US Embassy in October 2007, raised over 19,000USD from individual donors including the Albanian private sector, which were used to assist 10 young children mine survivors for educational activities.

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