

**Victim Assistance in Albania: then and now**

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

**Key Developments (LM 2002):**

On 4 April 2002, Albania completed the destruction of its stockpile of 1,683,860 antipersonnel mines. No mines are being retained for training or development purposes. Albania has identified a total of 85 contaminated areas, totaling 14 million square meters of land. Lack of funding has hampered clearance efforts. During 2001, a total of 302,000 square meters of land was cleared, including 744 antipersonnel mines. There were nine new mine and UXO casualties in 2001, a significant reduction from the previous year. Albania submitted its initial Article 7 Report in April 2002.

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

**According to original study:**

LM 1999 reports that mine victims were rare prior to 1997, but the toll has greatly increased since. A registry of mine incident data is being maintained by the Albania Mine Action Executive (AMAE). LM 2000 reports that as a result of the Kosovo crisis, in northern Albania AMAE had recorded eighty-five mine/UXO incidents, resulting in eighteen dead and 118 injured, by early July 2000.

**According to LM 2002:**

In 2001, nine new mine/UXO casualties were reported by the ICRC. One adult male was killed and three others were injured, and five boys were injured.<sup>76</sup> Most were the result of UXO explosions.<sup>77</sup> This number is a significant reduction from the 35 new casualties reported by ICRC in 2000.<sup>78</sup>

A record of landmine and UXO incidents is maintained by the AMAE in Tirana. However, due to the remoteness of some mine-affected areas, and the fact that some incidents go unreported, the actual number of casualties is expected to be higher.<sup>79</sup> The number of ICRC mine/UXO data collectors also reduced considerably in 2001.<sup>80</sup>

At the Standing Committee meetings in May 2002, the Albanian delegation reported that "since 1999 there were 197 mine accidents in which 211 persons were injured and 25 killed."<sup>81</sup> UNDP reports that mine casualties since 1999 "number almost 200 separate incidents with over 230 casualties representing some 20 percent of all civilian casualties arising from mines and UXO contamination engendered by the Kosovo crisis."<sup>82</sup>

In September 2001, the Team Leader of the German demining group HELP, a Bosnian national, was injured by a PMA-2 mine while monitoring work in the demining area.<sup>83</sup> An AMODATT team leader reported that due to non-marking or removal of markings around sites contaminated by mines/UXO in the 1997 civil disorder, people have access to the sites and tampering with the explosives. As a result, one civilian perished at Ura e Gjadrit in July 2001 and two young boys were seriously injured at Suç, Burrel, in November 2001.<sup>84</sup>

Included in the UNDP program of mine action assistance for 2002 is the evaluation of national capacities for victim assistance and rehabilitation, and the establishment of a mine victim data-collection system. The UNDP has budgeted \$50,000 as a contribution to the World Health Organization for victim assistance in Albania in 2002.<sup>91</sup>

**According to country report to SC-Victim Assistance Feb 2003:**

Since 1999 there have been at least 27 people reported killed and 359 injured in mines and UXO accidents.

**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:**

LM 1999 reports that the public health care system is ill-equipped to meet the medical and rehabilitation needs of mine victims, due to outdated surgical facilities and the lack of rehabilitation facilities. Beginning in 1998, there has been joint collaboration between Albania's Prosthesis Center (located in the Military Hospital) with the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross for provision of prostheses. LM 2000 reports that in Shkoder, HI distributed thousands pairs of shoes, orthopaedic devices, crutches and wheelchairs. Through its 2000 programming, UNICEF will support workshops producing walking aids for mine victims.

**According to LM 2002:**

State facilities provide immediate medical aid and treatment to mine casualties. After the first intervention mine survivors are sent to specialized facilities if needed, such as eye or burns clinics. As in previous years, the Albanian Prosthesis Center in Tirana received no financial support from the State, due to continuing bureaucratic difficulties in the handover of financial responsibility from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defense, which is responsible for the administration of the Center. At the Center, 10 staff cover the whole country's needs for prostheses. The Center works closely with the ICRC and there is an agreement to prioritize mine survivors for treatment.<sup>85</sup>

In January 2002, the government submitted the voluntary Form J in its Article 7 report, giving information on victim assistance. The report stated, "There has been some limited success in the area of Victim Assistance although this has largely centered on the provision of prosthesis to mines victims...."

During 2001, the Albanian Prosthesis Center fitted 59 mine survivors (45 men, five women, and nine children) with artificial limbs. The ICRC is the only international organization providing raw materials for the production of artificial limbs at the Center. In April 2001, the ICRC funded the training in Italy of seven Albanian Prosthesis Center staff as prosthesis technicians and then in June-July 2001 they funded a second training in Slovenia. The ICRC also provided leather for the production of orthopedic shoes for mine victims.<sup>87</sup>

On 28 November 2000, a two-year agreement was signed between the Albanian Mine Action Center and the ITF to collaborate on demining and mine victim assistance. In 2001, the ITF allocated approximately \$100,000 for victim assistance programs in Albania, which included support for the rehabilitation for 39 Albanian victims at the Slovenian Rehabilitation Institute.<sup>88</sup> In 2002, 25 mine victims will receive assistance.<sup>89</sup>

**According to country report to SC-Victim Assistance Feb 2003:**

The Government of Albania and its implementing partners in victim assistance, regard the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of these victims a high priority. Despite acute funding shortages, we have with our partners and benefactors including the US State Department, the ICRC, the International Trust Fund of Slovenia, the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation and the Tirana Orthopaedic Centre, treated and fitted with prostheses 209 victims so far. The Tirana Orthopaedic Centre was rehabilitated and some technicians trained, while limited assistance to reintegrate victims and distribution of food and non-food items took place as well.

The challenges for this year and the future are now the treatment of the remaining victims, improving Albanian capacities to deal with mine and UXO victims, as well as the reintegration of the victims into society.

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

**According to original study:**

LM 2000 reports that from April 1999 until the end of the year, Handicap International had an operation in Durres to provide psychological support to the victims of war for the Kosovar refugees. A one-year pension is

available to people injured in the performance of their duties, such as border policeman or soldiers marking minefields, and approximately \$80 per month (equivalent to monthly salary in the public sector) to disabled people, including mine victims. In its 2000 programming, UNICEF will promote the Mine Victims' Association and the social reintegration of mine victims.

**According to LM 2002:**

There is currently very limited capability for support to families of victims, counselling or retraining of victims.”<sup>86</sup>

To assist with the economic reintegration of mine survivors, the ICRC supported the “Shoemaker” project initiated by the Albanian Red Cross. In the project, 12 survivors from the northern districts of Has and Kukes were taught how to make shoes over a period of eight months. The training started on 2 April and lasted until November 2001.<sup>90</sup> Included in the UNDP program of mine action assistance for 2002 is the evaluation of national capacities for victim assistance and rehabilitation.

**According to country report to SC-Victim Assistance Feb 2003:**

The challenges for this year and the future are now the treatment of the remaining victims, improving Albanian capacities to deal with mine and UXO victims, as well as the reintegration of the victims into society.

**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:**

There is no disability provision specific to mine survivors, but they are entitled to the same rights as all disabled people in Albania, which includes a monthly payment of approximately US\$80 (equivalent to a monthly salary in the public sector). In addition, a one-year pension is available to people injured in the performance of their duties, such as border policeman or soldiers marking minefields. There is no statutory obligation to provide prostheses to amputees.<sup>92</sup>

**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:**

<sup>76</sup> Statistics compiled by ICRC in collaboration with Arben Braha, Director, AMAE, in January 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Arben Braha, Director, AMAE, Tirana, 10 January 2002.

<sup>78</sup> ICRC Fact Sheet, “Detailed Statistics on Mine/UXO Incidents in Albania,” 7 February 2001. The US State Department reported 31 mine casualties in 2000. US Department of State, “To Walk the Earth in Safety,” November 2001, p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> “Albania: Dealing with the legacy of mines,” *ICRC News*, 01/26, 5 July 2001.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Paul-Henri Morard, Head of Delegation, ICRC Albania, Slovenia, 2 July 2002.

<sup>81</sup> “Albania Mine Action Program,” presented at Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies, Geneva, 28 May 2002.

<sup>82</sup> “Mine Action in Albania,” Government of Albania and UNDP, reference ALB/02/001 (undated), p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> “AMAE report,” September 2001.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Capt. Emanuele Andreottola, Team Leader - Task Area 1, AMODATT (NATO) Office, Tirana, 22 March 2002, and “Post Operational Report,” Ammunition Management Ordnance Disposal Advisory Training Team (AMODATT), Phase 5, 2 October 2000-24 September 2001.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Harun Iljazi, Head of Orthopedics Center, Tirana, 12 February 2002.

<sup>87</sup> “Mine Action Year 2001,” ICRC Albania Fact Sheet.

<sup>88</sup> Annual Report 2001, International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance, p. 18.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Arben Braha, Director, AMAE, Tirana, 10 March 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Article 7 Report, Form J, 3 April 2002.

<sup>90</sup> "Mine Action Year 2001," ICRC Albania Fact Sheet.

<sup>91</sup> "Assistance to the National Mine Action Programme in Albania," UNDP, undated.

<sup>92</sup> See *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 602.