

#landminefreeSC A Compendium of Activities

The regional campaign to raise awareness of the remaining problem of landmines in the South Caucasus

4-10 April 2019



The campaign
LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS
was supported by the
European Union



Introduction

LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Piyada əleyhinə minalardan azad Cənubi Qafqaz

სამხრეთ კავკასია ქვეითსაწინააღმდეგო ნაღმების გარეშე

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Between the 4th and 10th of April 2019, the LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS campaign took place across the South Caucasus. This was the first time that International Landmine Awareness day had been marked across the region with a common theme and messages.

The main message – “A South Caucasus free of landmines and unexploded ordinance” – echoed across the region in Armenian, Azerbaijani, English, Georgian, and Russian. Across numerous events and through social media, the campaign encouraged governments, opinion formers and citizens to intensify their efforts to clean the South Caucasus of landmines and unexploded ordinance. It took the message of the risks associated with landmines to children, young people and other vulnerable groups, especially those living in areas still infected. It highlighted the impact of landmine incidents on victims and their families. And it endeavoured to celebrate the good work that has been done, and is still being done, by hundreds of dedicated professionals throughout the region, who on a daily basis risk their lives to clear landmines and other unexploded ordinance in order to make the South Caucasus safe for current and future generations.

The campaign was a collaborative work involving local and international NGOs, governments and civil society. Hundreds of opinion formers, and tens of thousands of citizens were reached through activities and through social media communication. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with increased awareness of the issues around this problem.

This compendium is a record of the LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS campaign 2019.

The LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS campaign was delivered by LINKS, in co-operation with the Armenian Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (Yerevan), the Europe-Georgia Institute (Tbilisi), and the Caucasus Policy Analysis Centre (Baku), working with a range of international and local partners. The campaign was supported and funded by the European Union.



Key Campaign Messages

- Thousands have been killed or maimed in the South Caucasus as a result of landmines and other unexploded ordinance in the last thirty years
- Landmines kill and maim indiscriminately; most victims are innocent civilians, including children
- Landmines not only cause human suffering, they also in many circumstances impede economic development
- We must Intensify efforts to clear the South Caucasus of all landmines as soon as possible
- We celebrate the work of those risking their lives to clear landmines in the South Caucasus
- We join the rest of the world in marking UN International Mine awareness day

Engaging in Dialogue with Stakeholders

Between the 4th and 10th of April 2019, a series of conferences and roundtable meetings were held in Tbilisi, Baku and Yerevan where the problem of landmines was discussed with the participation of officials, MPs, diplomats, experts and civil society activists.

On the 4th of April, a roundtable event was held in Yerevan with the participation of Armenian and international officials, diplomats and civil society organisations. In a special message to the meeting, Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, hailed the work on demining and said that the right to human life was a supreme value which should not be sacrificed for political calculations.

A roundtable meeting titled, 'Contextual Challenges to efforts to eliminate the scourge of landmines and unexploded ordinance in the South Caucasus' took place in Baku on the 8th of April. Members of parliament, Government officials, diplomats, representatives of international and local civil society organisations, and experts participated and spoke at the meeting.

Academics, international stakeholders and representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia met at a conference in Tbilisi on the 10th of April, to discuss regional efforts to alleviate the scourge of landmines and unexploded ordinance. Participants discussed the impact of the campaign and its messages in their respective countries, answering the question as to whether coordinated regional approaches can better address some of the shared problems of the South Caucasus. Participants also heard reports about demining processes in conflict regions.

"The government of Georgia supports efforts for a landmine free South Caucasus. Georgia endeavours to work within the spirit of the Ottawa Landmine Ban Convention, despite the fact that it is not yet a signatory. Georgia strives to have excellent relations with its neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan. On many issues a regional approach to tackling some of our common problems offers interesting possibilities."

Lasha Darsalia, Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister



"The campaign LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS is commendable, but it should also be extended to become 'Arms free South Caucasus'."

Arzu Abullayeva, Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Baku

"Every day the conflict creates new victims, and this is a tragic situation for both sides."

Sahib Aliyev, Azerbaijani MP

'Landmines have a negative impact on both the environment and sustainable development.'

Ambassador Sombi Sharp, UN co-ordinator Yerevan



"Over 35,000 people live under daily risk in mine contaminated areas in Armenia. It is our duty to guarantee their right to a safe and secure life."

Anna Hakobyan, Wife of Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan



"[the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty] is the first international treaty that not only bans a particular weapon, but also asks that governments assist survivors."

Nima Dadbin, ICRC Yerevan



"The European Union urges countries that have not yet done so to accede to the Ottawa Convention that works towards an ambitious objective of having a mine-free world by 2025."

Ambassador Kestutis Jancauskas, Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan



Outreach and Awareness Raising

As the LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS campaign sought to highlight the scourge of landmines and unexploded ordnance on civilian populations, a number of public events were organised across the region.

Among the activities held, on the 4th of April, participants from the LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS roundtable meeting joined a public street action event on Yerevan's Northern Avenue. Children expressed their feelings on International Mine Awareness day through positive messages painted on the ground, whilst demining experts from the Armenian Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE) explained the demining process to passers by.

Events held on the 5th of April included a mine-awareness event in Tbilisi, held at a school where most of the pupils are from displaced communities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Experts from the Georgian demining agency DELTA explained to students the hazard of landmines.

In Sukhum/Sukhumi on the 6th of April, the HALO Trust organised an awareness raising event, making children and young people aware of the hazards of landmines and UXOs.

Another event on the 6th of April was a mine-hazard event held in the village of Paravakar and in other parts of Tavush district. In the Tavush district, 14,170 residents live in nine villages close to a mine-infected area. The CHDE-organised event brought together young people from across the region to bring attention to the scourge of landmines and unexploded ordnance facing Armenia's civilian population.

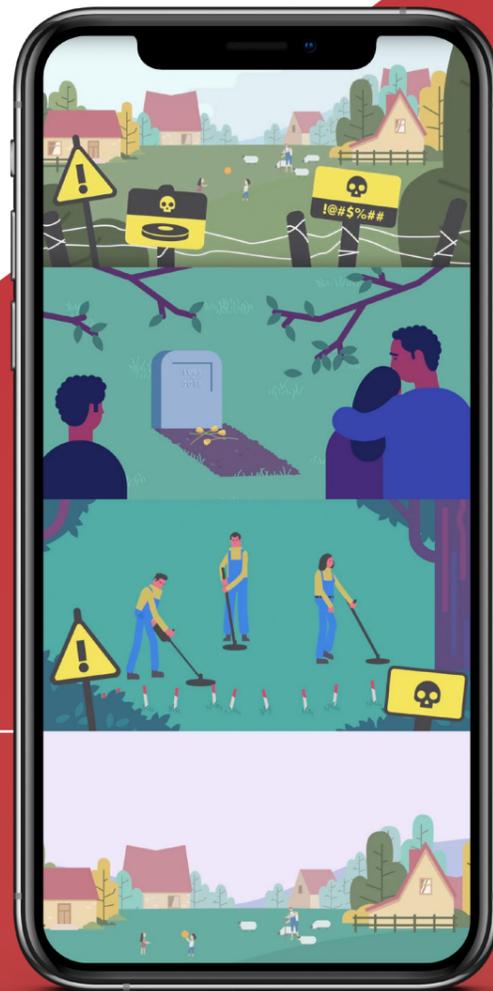


Reaching Out Through Social Media

The campaign connected with nearly half a million individuals on Facebook, from the South Caucasus and around the world. To attract as much attention as possible, the campaign sought to present the LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS's key campaign messages in visually interesting ways. Two videos were produced specially for the campaign with translations made in Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian. They aired on a number of national and regional TV stations, and were seen by tens of thousands through Facebook.

Videos

Two videos were commissioned for the campaign, which garnered over **72,000** views during the six days of the campaign:



The first video was a cartoon explaining the extent of the scourge of landmines and unexploded ordinance in the South Caucasus, and how the region would benefit from the elimination of the problem.

Infographics

A number of the campaign's key messages were presented as infographics, which could be reacted on and shared on social media platforms. At all times and in all regions, the hashtag **#landminefreeSC** was included in social media outreach – despite the campaign being presented in five different languages, this highlighted the campaign's emphasis on building regional cooperation and confidence.



The second video was a specially commissioned choreographed mime, titled, 'Solidarity with the victims of landmines'. It was performed by young people from the Tbilisi Street Theatre in Georgia.



Getting the Message Across

The campaign and its events and messages attracted the attention of the mainstream media in the South Caucasus, including national and local TV channels, as well as many websites.

The campaign media partner, **commons**space.eu provided daily coverage to the campaign activities.



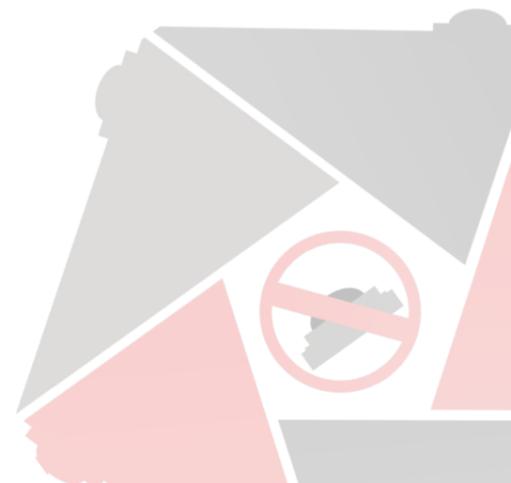
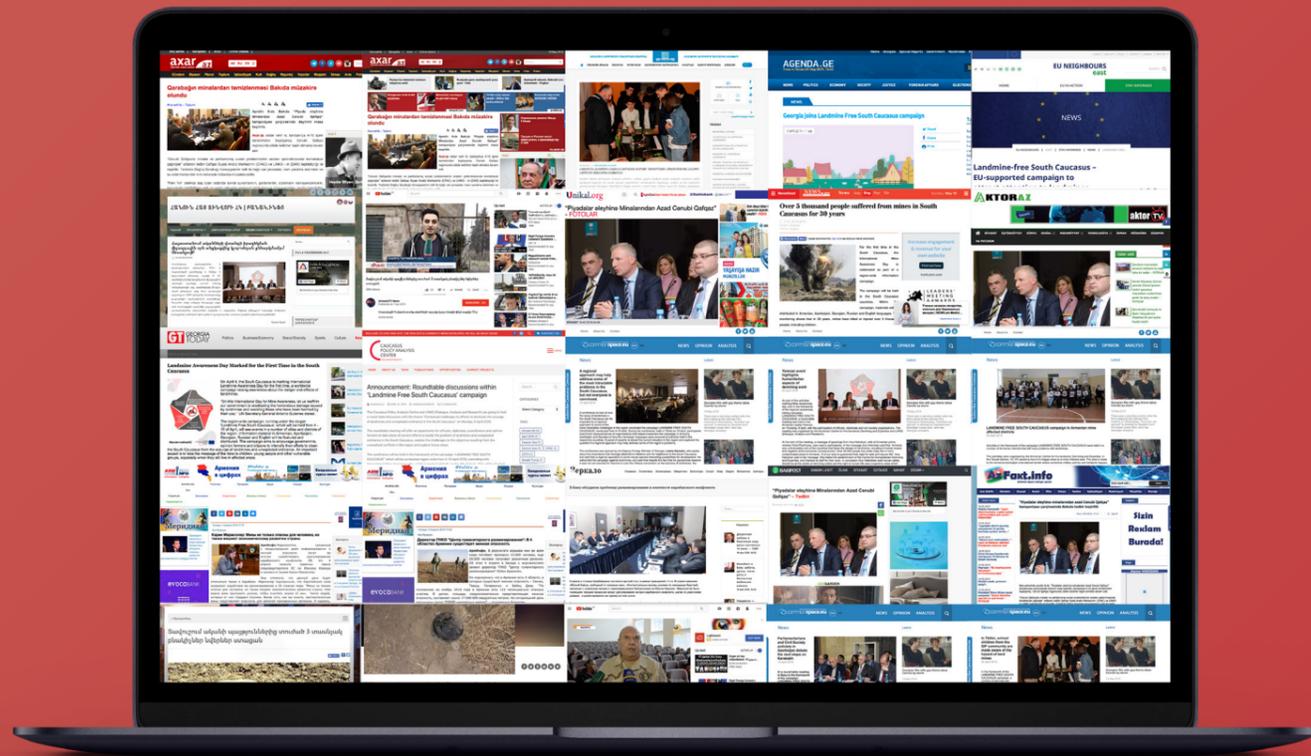
In order to maintain the momentum for a landmine free South Caucasus, a quarterly electronic newsletter – ‘**South Caucasus Landmine Observer**’ – has been launched. The newsletter provides space for those working for the eradication of landmines in the South Caucasus to share information, discuss challenges and report successes.

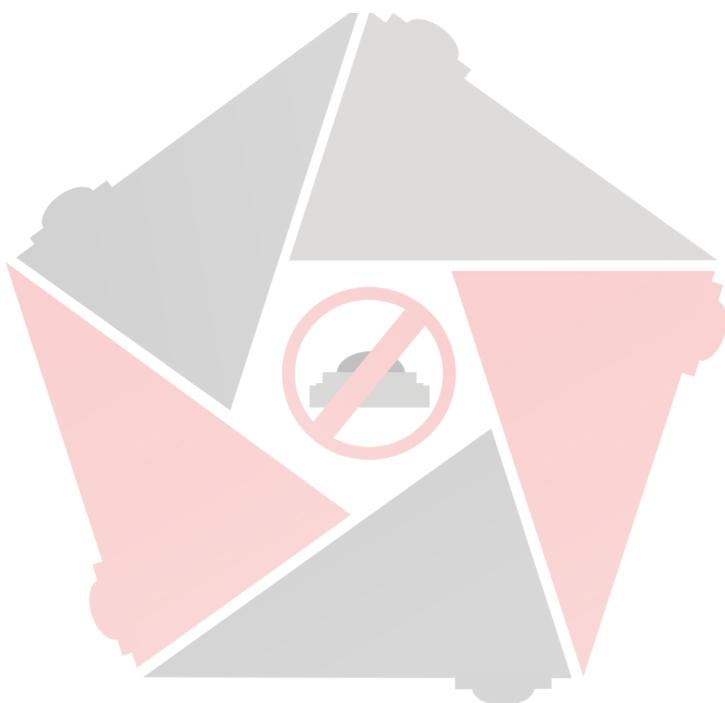
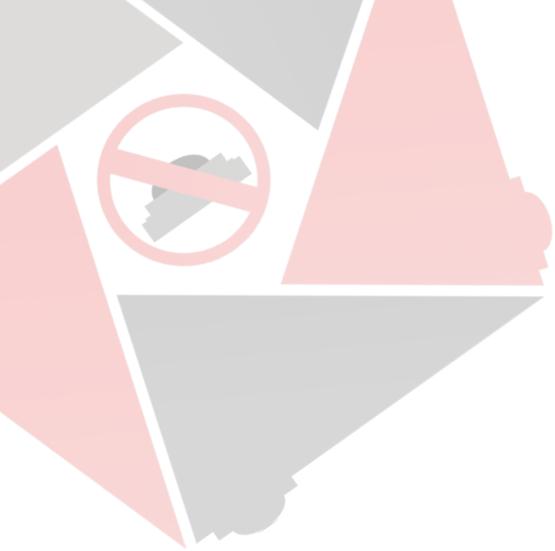
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office@links-europe.eu

For further information about the campaign LANDMINES FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS, please contact:

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