



Press Release

United States Provides Almost \$57 Million in Assistance to Azerbaijani Internally Displaced Persons Between 1998 and 2006

Since 1998, the nearly \$57 million United States Agency for International Development–funded, Mercy Corps-administered Azerbaijan Humanitarian Assistance Program (AHAP) has targeted 500 communities and benefited over 2 million people in 23 regions throughout Azerbaijan (Central and Southern area, Baku and Sumgayit, and Nakhchivan). Within the framework of AHAP, 1,488 separate community-led projects have addressed the social-economic and health problems of these communities through shelter, community development, health & nutrition, information, economic opportunities, and integrated community development programs.

Results include the training of over 1,000 health professionals now providing higher quality health care in 234 rehabilitated clinics, the creation of 45,518 businesses and 9,068 jobs, and the disbursement of 41,013 group and individual economic development loans to community members. By responding to the need for humanitarian assistance in Azerbaijan, AHAP was designed to reduce human suffering by improving the living conditions, health, nutrition, and income opportunities for those displaced and adversely affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Since 2000, AHAP has transitioned from the provision of humanitarian assistance to long-term development programming. While continuing to address the essential needs of the vulnerable population, AHAP sought to help lay the foundation for a democratic and prosperous free-market economy. Thus, AHAP refocused on strengthening the civil-society sector and building community capacity to address self-defined needs, emphasizing the integration of economic opportunities, community development, health and social investment fund program activities. A major outcome of these efforts was that over 400 community members, who were part of the AHAP community mobilization initiatives, were elected to Municipal Councils in the elections of December 2004.

While the AHAP program will draw to a close on January 13, these important issues will continue to be addressed through a number of USAID initiatives, including the recently announced \$15.5 million Strengthening Azerbaijan Civil Society Project and \$11.5 million Community Development Activity in Azerbaijan, which will build upon many activities and approaches initiated under AHAP.

Mercy Corps managed the AHAP umbrella, while programs were implemented by 13 international non-governmental organizations (ACDI/VOCA, ADRA, American Red

Cross, CARE, CHF, Children's Aid Direct, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Pathfinder, Relief International, Save the Children, UMCOR, and World Vision) through 34 subgrants.