



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Standing Committee on
Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Reintegration

UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Presented

By

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The people of Afghanistan continue to feel the daily impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war within their communities. In 2006, there were approximately 63 new victims each month. Although this is a marked reduction of casualties from just five years ago and great progress has been made within the clearance and mine risk education sectors, the continued injury and death of Afghan citizens results in the continued loss of income and livelihood, the loss opportunities and security for individuals and their families, along with the inevitable increase of disabled persons and the required services for their health and wellbeing.

Victim Assistance in Afghanistan is complex, cross cutting, and set against an environment of high unemployment, challenged health care services, cultural stigma and limited educational opportunities. The Government of Afghanistan, despite these challenges is committed to creating an equal society with equal access to all available public services and to the provision of the best assistance to persons with disability, including those disabled by landmines and explosive remnants of war. It is with this in mind that the Government of Afghanistan has strived for the integration of survivor programmes within the broader context of disability and disability services in order to create inclusive policies and programmes that ensure the rights and dignity of all people with disability.

The first national victim assistance workshop held in Kabul by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded with the presentation of a draft national plan of action for mine survivors and other persons with disability. This action plan, now known as the Kabul Report, proposes a framework for the implementation of disability services throughout the country and is actively supported within key ministries. Although resources have been limited from outside of Afghanistan, progress has been made within the key ministries and among the implementing partners for disability services and policy development.

Activities to raise awareness and to educate relevant stakeholders, including ministries, government personnel, aid agencies and donors, about the issues of disability is an ongoing process to ensure the objectives of the Kabul Report are not only understood, but owned by those responsible for the policy development, implementation and oversight of public and private sector services.

Key ministries were identified during the Victim Assistance Workshop and have been making progress towards the goals of inclusion and enhanced service provision for people with disability. Examples of this progress include the following:

The Ministry of Public Health made a landmark decision in 2006 to bring forward the timeline for implementation and inclusion of disability services within their Basic Package of Health Services. National implementing partners of this essential programme will begin to provide disability services and strengthen the referral network to orthopedic services. A disability taskforce within the MoPH was also established this past year to provide the necessary technical support for the implementation of these new services, including the development of training materials and manuals. This task force is strong and has taken an active role to develop national guidelines and disability policy.

Additionally, the MoPH has established a Disability Unit to take on the challenges of ensuring the highest possible quality of disability services, giving support to Community Based Rehabilitation and establishing a national CBR network, and providing the necessary supports to public health and safety campaigns, including mine risk education for the prevention of new disability. The MoPH will also support a mental health unit that

will work closely with the disability unit to ensure the psychological welfare of all Afghans, including persons with disability.

The Ministry of Education is also taking strong steps in support of persons with disability, in particular children. An inclusive education unit has been established and activities already take place in many regions. New pilot project activities are set to begin this month to refine the models of implementation and assess training needs. The MoE is supporting the production of Braille textbooks and the further development of the Afghan National Sign Language for the Deaf. Additionally, the MoE is working to ensure teachers and children continue to remain aware of the risks and dangers of mines and ERW as children make up fifty percent of the mine/ERW casualties in Afghanistan. Mine Risk Education and disability awareness will be included in future textbooks, teacher training activities and educational materials utilized throughout the country.

The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled has included all relevant Kabul Report objectives within its benchmark activities in support of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. This MoLSAMD is committed to establishing a national policy for disability and the required legislation. Additionally employment policy has been drafted that ensures the rights of persons with disability to be included within both vocational training and employment support opportunities. The MoLSAMD is also establishing a national disability support unit within the ministry to provide the technical capacity to monitor disability activities and gather and disseminate practical and technical information on disability. The ministry is supporting a national network of disability resource centers that are being built throughout the country to educate, provide social services and supports to disabled persons organizations. The unit will also provide the technical supports for continued disability policy development, legislative actions and advocacy to ensure the rights of landmine survivors and all persons with disability are upheld. The disability unit within the MoLSAMD will also provide leadership for an inter-ministerial task force on disability to ensure cooperation and coordination of the national plan of action for disability.

The Government of Afghanistan also has active support from disability sector NGOs and UN partners. These organizations coordinate their activities with the government and provide critical assistance through service provision, technical supports, research, and human rights advocacy. The UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan has been instrumental in bringing government actors together with the ICRC, disabled persons organizations and the national and international NGOs for the development of the Kabul Report plan of action for disability.

There is still much to be done in Afghanistan to ensure the rights and dignity of all people with disability. Emergency medical care is lacking. Physical access to public spaces including mosques, schools and government buildings is restricted. Social stigma prohibits most people with disability from fully exercising their rights and minimizes their inclusion in almost all economic and social opportunities. The Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound (SMART) objectives developed through our national consultation are continually reviewed to ensure relevant ways to move forward within the cross cutting fields of disability.

Long after the last landmine is cleared, our Landmine Survivors will remain. Afghanistan is seeking to build the institutions and infrastructures to ensure the objectives of the Kabul Report are met and the socio-economic reintegration of landmine survivors and all people with disability is a reality in the near future. This vital work takes time and commitment.

The Government of Afghanistan is committed. We have mapped a way forward for the mainstreaming disability through integrated approaches, inclusive attitudes, coordination of implementing partners, and institutional development to ensure landmine survivors and all persons with disability are provided with the needed supports to be fully integrated and take their rightful place in Afghan society. So in closing, we remind our international partners and donors that their commitment is also required for the Afghan people and its Government to achieve their goals and guarantee the rights and dignity of landmine survivors and all persons with disability throughout our country.