

**Standing Committee on
Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration**

**Status of implementation of the Convention
in relation to victim assistance**

24 April 2007

As has already been noted, our primary aim as Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration is to support progress in the fulfilment of the commitment that all States Parties made in the *Nairobi Action Plan 2005-2009* to enhance our efforts in regard to the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors.

Support to ensure progress in the establishment of SMART national objectives and plan of action is a continuation of the work started by our predecessors, Nicaragua and Norway in 2005 and Afghanistan and Switzerland in 2006. I will just take a few moments to refresh your memories of this aspect of the work of the Co-Chairs.

The Final Report of the First Review Conference of the Convention noted that the ultimate responsibility of meeting the needs of landmine survivors within a particular state rests with that state, and that no external actor can define for it what can or should be achieved by when and how in meeting the needs of these survivors.

In 2005, under the Co-Chairship of Nicaragua and Norway, a detailed questionnaire was sent to the 24 States Parties that have reported significant numbers of mine survivors as a basis for action to encourage and support these States Parties in understanding what can or should be achieved by December 2009 by and in these States.

Responses to these questionnaires were summarized in a lengthy annex to the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties' *Zagreb Progress Report* and hence have become part of the Convention's permanent record. As a result, there was a much more solid basis for developing a clearer road map regarding what needs to be done between 2005 and the Second Review Conference and how success pertaining to victim assistance could be measured in 2009.

However, the *Zagreb Progress Report* acknowledged that the questionnaire was not an end-product but rather an initial step in a long-term planning and implementation process as it concerns victim assistance.

While the efforts undertaken by several of the relevant States Parties since 2005 have been impressive, the quality of the responses continues to be mixed. Few States Parties have actually responded with objectives that were specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, that is SMART. Some States Parties detailed at length their status but very little was put forward in terms of what the desired status would be in 2009. Other States Parties failed to spell out what is known or not known about their status. Some States Parties did not engage in the effort at all. Another challenge that remains relates to the conclusion drawn at the First Review Conference that "assistance to landmine victims should be viewed as a part of a country's overall public health and social services systems and human rights frameworks." In many instances the preparation of victim assistance objectives do not taken broader national plans into consideration.

Some of the progress that we are aware of since the Seventh Meeting of the States Parties, include the convening of workshops bringing together relevant ministries and other key actors to discuss

victim assistance issues in Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sudan. In Cambodia, a process has started to develop a national plan of action, and in Uganda progress continues on engaging all relevant ministries in the process of developing a comprehensive plan of action. I am sure that we will hear more reports of progress in particular States in the presentations that will follow.

It is a concern that the potential for progress in some States Parties has been hindered by a lack of financial resources. For example, in 2006, Afghanistan and Tajikistan reported significant progress in the development of national plans through a process of consultation and collaboration with relevant ministries and other key actors. To date, neither State Party has been able to secure the resources needed to implement key elements of their plan.

While important advances were made between the 6MSP and the 7MSP, challenges remain which require the priority attention of the States Parties in the period leading to the November 2007 Eighth Meeting of the States Parties:

- As noted in the *Geneva Progress Report*, there is a need to continue efforts to deepen understanding of commitments made in the *Nairobi Action Plan* and the work of the Standing Committee among relevant officials and experts working on disability issues at the national level.
- There is a need to ensure the ongoing involvement by health care, rehabilitation or disability rights experts in the work of the Convention.
- There continues to be a low level of involvement of mine survivors in the development of national plans and States Parties and relevant organizations must do more to ensure that landmine survivors are effectively involved and contribute to all deliberations that affect them.
- Some States Parties lack the capacity and resources to develop and implement objectives and national plans and in some there is limited collaboration between mine action centres and relevant ministries and other key actors in the disability sector, thus creating the potential for inefficient and ineffective use of resources and for duplication in services.

Since 2005, all Co-Chairs have recognized that the best way to assure progress in overcoming these challenges is to work intensively, on a national basis. With assistance from the Implementation Support Unit, a victim assistance specialist has been recruited with funding provided by Switzerland in 2006, and Australia, Austria, Norway and Switzerland in 2007.

In 2007, some level of support continues to be provided to all 24 relevant States Parties in the form of advice each may wish to consider in improving on their efforts in 2006 to establish SMART objectives and a national plan. In addition, the ISU continues to provide *process support* to as many relevant States Parties as possible to advance their inter-ministerial efforts to establish better objectives and develop good plans. *Process support* involves country visits during which one-on-one meetings with officials from relevant ministries take place to raise awareness of the matter and to stimulate inter-ministerial coordination, and outreach to relevant international and other organizations also takes place to ensure that their efforts in support of the State Party in question are not being duplicated but rather are both incorporated into and incorporate mine victim assistance efforts. Mine survivors are also being consulted. In some countries inter-ministerial workshops are planned to bring together all relevant actors to discuss and consolidate improvements on objectives and the development of plans.

The expected outcome of this activity is an improved capacity in the targeted States Parties to move forward in the process of setting their own specific objectives and plans of action with a tangible improvement in the services available to mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

It is noted that some States Parties have made updates and revisions to their initial response to the questionnaire available to this Standing Committee. In keeping with the commitment made under Action #37 of the *Nairobi Action Plan* to “monitor and promote progress in the achievement of victim assistance goals,” the Co-Chairs have prepared a document entitled “Status of the development of SMART victim assistance objectives and national plans.” The document contains information provided by 22 of the 24 relevant States Parties themselves, particularly in advance of the 2005 Sixth Meeting of the States Parties in response to the Victim Assistance questionnaire.¹ Information contained in subsequent updates on progress in the development of *SMARTer* objectives and national plans provided by States Parties is also included.

The Co-Chairs encourage the relevant States Parties to review the information presented in this document and provide updates or clarifications as necessary.

Also in keeping with Action #37 the Co-Chairs thank the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance through its member organization, Standing Tall Australia, for assisting in advancing understanding of various matters concerning victim assistance by producing the report *Victim Assistance in 2006: Overview of the Situation in 24 States Parties*. This is the 3rd annual report in a series to monitor progress in the implementation of the *Nairobi Action Plan* through to 2009. The Co-Chairs also thank the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for funding the production of this very useful report. The report is available on the tables outside this room.

On 12 February 2007 in Vienna, Austria had the pleasure of hosting an event that also served to highlight progress in the achievement of victim assistance goals. A symposium entitled “Assisting Landmine Survivors: A Decade of Efforts” commemorated the 10th anniversary of the AP Mine Ban Convention. It was exactly ten years to the day that a core group of like-minded states met in the Austrian capital to discuss the initial draft text of a Convention to Ban Anti-Personnel Mines. The event featured panel presentations on key aspects of victim assistance and provided the audience with an overview of ten years of hard work and the great challenges that still lie ahead. A report, which will include summaries of the presentations, will be available soon.

In conclusion, I will reiterate one of key lessons learnt by our predecessors, Afghanistan and Switzerland, and one that has also become very apparent to us during our short term as Co-Chairs:

If a meaningful difference is going to be made in enhancing the well-being and guaranteeing the rights of landmine victims, victim assistance must no longer be seen as an abstraction but rather as a concrete set of actions for which specific States Parties hold ultimate responsibility.

¹ Burundi and Chad have not yet provided the Co-Chairs with a response to the questionnaire.