

## Regional Victim Assistance Project for Southeast Asia

The current phase of the Southeast Asia Regional Victim Assistance Project is now approximately at the half-way point: time to review what has been achieved, to inform you of what is being done, and to outline plans for the remaining future.

Before doing this, however, I'll briefly review the original vision of the Project.

The Project was conceived as an attempt to assist local actors to determine their priorities for victim assistance. The Southeast Asian region was selected for this because the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of States Parties in Bangkok in September 2003 would provide a logical opportunity to present the results.

In mid-2001 a series of national workshops was held in the four countries concerned in the Project – Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam – followed by a regional conference on victim assistance in Bangkok in November of that year. The regional conference concluded with agreement on following objectives:

- Establishing a living regional network highlighting best practices, facilitating contacts, collecting information, and producing and updating a directory of service providers from governments, NGOs and IOs.
- Helping national actors to collaborate on developing and prioritizing national portfolios of programs for victim assistance in each country.
- Presenting the results of this ongoing process to future intersessional and States Parties meetings in order to enlist further technical and financial support for victim assistance.

This brings me to the point where I can make a brief review of progress over the last six months, that is to say, since the Project began its implementation phase in July 2002.

The Regional Conference in Bangkok identified the need for national actors to collaborate on the development of national plans for victim assistance. In order to do this, some coordinating mechanism is obviously needed in each country. In Cambodia, we were fortunate in that the Disability Action Council already exists. Beginning in 2003 the DAC has strengthened its capacity to deal with mine victim activities through the appointment of a Coordinator for Victim Assistance.

Arrangements are in train for a similar position in Laos, attached to the Lao National Committee for Disabled Persons, but working closely with the Lao Disabled People's Association, or LDPA.

A great deal of work has been done to strengthen the LDPA as the vehicle by which the needs of PWD in Laos can be assessed, planned for and met, culminating in the publication of the LDPA's 5-Year Strategic Plan last year. I

would like to offer my personal congratulations to those members of the LDPA Executive who are here today on their achievement.

One of the core tasks identified in Bangkok is to develop national implementation plans for victim assistance. Shortly after this meeting in Geneva, the DAC will hold a meeting in Phnom Penh of those who were involved in the Cambodian National Workshop or as Cambodian representatives at the regional conference. This meeting will discuss a survey of victim assistance in Cambodia, with consideration to the critical issues in VA identified by the WGVA/UNMAS consultative process on priorities. The survey will result in a first draft of a national implementation plan for victim assistance in Cambodia, presenting a broad overview of current activities and challenges. The draft will be refined, through a process of continuing mutual consultation among actors, to provide a guide for donors to the priorities for victim assistance in Cambodia.

This same blueprint will be available elsewhere, although what happens in each country will depend on the wishes of the actors involved.

The Bangkok Regional Conference also stressed the importance of establishing networks within the region, highlighting best practices, facilitating useful contacts, and improving the dissemination of information. The project is implementing activities identified during the national workshops and regional conference held during the first phase of the project, as well as others which have subsequently arisen:

- *Strengthening data collection in Thailand and Cambodia:* Arrangements are under way for cooperation between TMAC and CMVIS (the Cambodian Mine Victim Incident Survey) on data collection activities.
- *Strengthening institutional ties between Cambodia and Laos:* A delegation from Laos's National Committee for Disabled People will visit Cambodia.
- *Establishing trust fund structures in Cambodia:* The Disability Action Council has established a link with UNDP which will allow it to access the UNDP trust fund for victim support purposes.
- *Strengthening integrated victim assistance in Thailand:* The results of an exercise for providing integrated mine victim assistance at sub-district and provincial level, including mine risk awareness education, pre-hospital and hospital care, and socio-economic reintegration, were presented in Bangkok in October.
- *Developing exchanges for training in orthopedic surgery in Vietnam:* We have offered financial support for a visit to Vietnam by the Australian Royal College of Surgeons to investigate extending the College's existing program of training for orthopedic surgeons.

In the coming months I will be working to ensure that these initiatives are carried on to a successful conclusion at the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of State Parties in Bangkok. I look forward to reporting to you again here in May, and to seeing many of you in the field in Southeast Asia.

Finally, I would like make a point which has been made many times already but which needs to be made again: a plan of action is only words on paper unless it is funded. In Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, we look to donors for their support. I therefore ask the donors to come together with the national coordination bodies to discuss plans and needs. Perhaps, as was suggested yesterday, there is a place for regular coordination meetings along the lines of those held for development coordination. Perhaps some other mechanism is needed. I put myself at your service to facilitate contacts to this end, either here in Geneva or later in Phnom Penh.

Thank you.