

**Toward Goal-oriented Collaboration
among INGOs Supporting P&O Services
in Mine-affected Countries**

**Paper presented by the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance Co-Chair
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1: The problem

International attention to the debilitating effects of landmines, the success of the movement to create the Mine Ban Convention, and the Convention's unique (among arms conventions) provision to assist those persons who have already suffered from the banned weapon have brought increased attention to prosthetics and orthotics services in developing countries. Yet, it is likely that this increased attention has not resulted in a significant increase in the amount of resources being channelled to P&O services, nor a significant increase in improvement in the quality of life for the ever-increasing number of landmine survivors who desperately need P&O services as a precondition to their full recovery and reintegration into society.

The lack of change is due in part to governments of mine-affected countries having a host of pressing issues to deal with, among which the needs of people with disability are not a priority. Even when the needs of landmine survivors and persons with disabilities find a place on a list of national priorities, few, if any of these countries, can afford to establish the necessary services without international assistance. But the fault does not lie only with governments. Part of the problem can be traced to a lack of substantial coordination, cooperation and long-term planning among the key international non-governmental organizations that are the main supporters of P&O services in developing countries. Though the immediate effects of their support benefit individual clients of the services, the more important, sustainable results are often unsatisfactory.

It is therefore proposed that a strategy for improving support to P&O services in developing and mine-affected countries be developed. The strategy, which should also provide a rationale for actions to be taken, would serve as a common plan for NGOs for the strengthening of coordination, collaboration and long-term planning. The plan should identify areas where support to the P&O sector can be improved and outline ways to achieve this. It should also identify and acknowledge problems that are beyond the control of INGOs.

2: The nature of prosthetics and orthotics service provision

People who have lost their limbs because of landmine accidents need life-long assistance. A prosthesis, whether made in a low-income country or in the richest country in the world, is bound to wear out and will need frequent repair and eventually, after 2-4 years, will have to be replaced with a new one. Prosthetic fitting must therefore be seen as a continuous, long-term activity and not as a one-off emergency issue.

Furthermore, persons that have undergone amputations because of landmine accidents cannot be treated differently and separately from people who lost their limbs as a result of other war-related injuries or those amputated because of accidents, diseases

or birth defects. Nor can the services for amputees be separated from the services that produce other orthopaedic devices, such as calipers (braces) for persons with polio or spinal cord injuries. Prosthetics and orthotics services use the same staff, machinery and equipment. The two are logically and by economic necessity interlinked and therefore should be planned, developed, and maintained in an integrated way.

To be successful in the long-term, P&O projects need to consider a great number of different aspects, which are both technical, such as manufacturing of prostheses and orthoses, the use of appropriate technologies and the training of staff, as well as managerial, such as the introduction of proper long-term planning, management and financial systems, and collaboration and coordination with other interlocutors in the fields of victim assistance and rehabilitation.

When viewed as a development issue, the main aim of international NGOs should be to support local entities, who are the legitimate, long-term owners of the services, in the establishment and/or development of P&O services that can continue to function the day foreign assistance ends. If the long-term aspect is not kept clearly in mind, and if services do not build on and utilize existing infrastructure from the very first day of a project, there is a great risk that the efforts and the money spent will not generate the desired long-term results.

3: P&O within the MBC Standing Committee on Victim Assistance

Monitoring progress toward implementation of the Mine Ban Convention is the purview of the annual Meeting of States Parties (MSP) to the Treaty and of a set of Standing Committees that meet twice annually between the MSPs. The Standing Committees consist of representatives of States Parties to the Treaty, involved NGOs, UN agencies, and the ICRC. Of the Standing Committees, one is dedicated to Victim Assistance, and therefore focuses on Article 6.3 of the Convention which reads, “Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration of mine victims...”

The Standing Committee on Victim Assistance (SC-VA) has achieved a great deal to date. Most important of these achievements, it is now widely understood within the SC-VA that efforts to provide for the care and rehabilitation of landmine survivors do not and should not occur in isolation but rather are inextricably part of broader efforts related to development, poverty alleviation, national health care delivery, human rights and disability.

While the SC-VA has produced important results, members are also cognizant of the fact that stepped up action is needed to ensure that the humanitarian promises of the MBC are realized. To this aim the Standing Committee undertook a consultative process to identify, according to its membership, key experts in the field, and a sample of landmine survivors, the most critical issues in VA. Four areas of focus emerged:

- Emergency and continuing medical care
- Prosthetics and physical rehabilitation
- Economic reintegration
- National planning of VA programs and activities

With these four thematic areas now clearly in the spotlight, and with the MBC Review Conference of September 2004 drawing close quickly, the SC is now more motivated and more in a position to encourage a depth of thinking, planning, and action that heretofore was not possible. Given that NGOs participate fully and actively in the SC-VA, and that as a group, the SC-VA is mandated to advocate for, monitor and assist in the implementation of the Convention, it seems logical and right that initiatives to make progress in these four thematic areas include clear and strong roles for States Parties, but also clear and strong roles for relevant non-governmental agencies and organizations. The thrust of this process, then, will be to use the SC-VA as the forum under which INGOs involved in the P&O sub-sector will develop a joint strategy and specific plans to rectify problems of the P&O sub-sector that are within their capacity to rectify.

4: Details of the suggested process

Facilitator: Anders Eklund

Participants:

HI- Belgium; HI-France; ICRC; POWER; VVAF; Motivation; National Red Crosses (Norwegian, American, Finnish, British); Mercy Ships; PALM/CIR; WRF; Other P and O producers, yet to be identified

Method and timeline:

Until mid-March 2003, the ICBL WGVA Co-Chairs will invite input from INGOs in the sub-sector on their views on elements for a common plan and commitments by INGOs. In close coordination with the WGVA Co-Chairs, a facilitator -- Mr. Anders Eklund -- will compile input provided with a view to developing a draft common plan and list of commitments. This will be circulated to all relevant actors by 30 April 2003 along with an invitation to a one-day workshop-style meeting in Geneva times to coincide with the next intersessional week. Following this workshop, an update will be provided to the SCVA -- on 13 May 2003 -- on the status of the initiative. On the basis of the outcomes of the workshop and comments at the SCVA meeting, the facilitator will work in close contact with relevant actors to finalize a common plan and commitments with a view to circulating it by 1 September 2003, in time for the 5MSP. This will allow for one year of progress to be noted at the 2004 Review Conference.

Expected outcomes:

- **a common plan and commitments by INGOs (who-what-where-when-how) to change what they can,**
- recommendations for other interlocutors-- donors, ministries of health, social welfare, and disability coordination bodies,
- recommendations for the Standing Committee on VA on what they should expect to hear about in terms of **measurable progress** towards changes to improve P&O services by Sept 2004, and beyond, and
- a list of P&O issues/problem that are beyond INGO control until developing countries' whole social welfare systems are functioning