



STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS 03-07 FEBRUARY 2003:
Standing committee on Victims Assistance and Socio Economic
Reintegration

**STATEMENT OF
THE INTERNATIONAL TRUST FUND FOR DEMINING AND MINE
VICTIMS ASSISTANCE
ON CARE AND REHABILITATION OF LANDMINE SURVIVORS
IN THE REGION OF SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE**

by Eva Veble, Head of Department for International Relations

04 February 2003

Dear Madam Co-chair,

As the tendency is in other countries/regions of the world also the funds received by mine-affected countries in the region of SEE for the assistance to landmine survivors are not sufficient. Moreover, the funds for Mine Victims Assistance programs contributed through the ITF for the mine affected countries in the region of SEE declined from 8 percent of all funds spent for Mine Action by ITF in 1999 to less than 3,5 percent in 2002.

Nevertheless several MVA programs were supported through the ITF in this period:

- First, rehabilitation of landmine survivors at the Institute for Rehabilitation of the Republic of Slovenia, that besides physical rehabilitation, provided also mental, occupational and vocational therapy to the patients. All together 702

landmine survivors from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo (FRY) and Macedonia received treatment. As it is ever more important that the patients are treated in their own country, if the possibility for this exists that is, the rehabilitation in IRRS in the last year was focusing on the patients that could not receive sufficient care in their country. The triage was thus made together with the national experts.

- One very important segment of mine action support that was funded through the ITF and implemented by the Institute for Rehabilitation of Republic of Slovenia was the education of the professionals in the field of rehabilitation, which contributes to the sustainability of the national programs. Through different workshops, seminars and supervision all together 278 experts were trained within the field of rehabilitation, i.e. in physical therapy, occupational therapy, in orthotics and prosthetics, in vocational rehabilitation and in functional electrical stimulation. The professionals trained at the IRRS were from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (FRY), Albania and Macedonia. In 2002 ITF also funded with French and US donations the studies for 6 students in Prosthetic and Orthotic Engineering Program at the Faculty for Health at the University of Ljubljana. The students are from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo (FRY) and Macedonia. In all these countries the people of this profile are acutely missing, the gap which was identified at the ITF initiated “Workshop on Assistance to Landmine Survivors and Victims in South-Eastern Europe: Defining Strategies for Success”. The benefits of program that will educate and train national professionals in the field of rehabilitation will enable a more sustainable system, improved quality and availability of prosthetic services and easier follow-up once the patients have received their new limbs.
- In addition ITF was also funding the rehabilitation of landmine survivors in the rehabilitation centers in BH; as well as supported
- Outreach and socio-economic integration services provided by several NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, namely International Rescue Committee, Landmine Survivors Network, International Children Institute, Handicap International and Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.

The governments that provided the funds for the above mentioned programs were: Austria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia and United States of America.

The declining of the funds available for mine victims assistance programs in the region of SEE, although we all know that the care for landmine survivors is not a one-time application of the prosthetic device, steered ITF and its Board of Advisors into direction of looking into the possibilities of improving the already scarce aid in the region of SEE and possibly defining new venues for regional resourcing, cooperation and coordination in the field of landmine survivor and victim assistance.

ITF thus initiated the organization of the “Workshop on Assistance to Landmine Survivors and Victims in South-Eastern Europe: Defining Strategies for Success” that was held in Slovenia 1,2 July 2002. More than 35 participants attended the workshop from donor community, governments of mine affected countries, rehabilitation institutes, NGOs and IOs. The workshop proceedings can be obtained by all who are interested at the ITF web site at www.itf-fund.si. The main recommendations addressed support for comprehensive assistance to victims with multidimensional therapy provided; coordination of orthopaedic surgeons and therapists in the region; enhancement of training and education for professionals; and improved coordination among all those involved in MVA.

One of the problems that was identified at the workshop was that coordination and overseeing on the government level inside the respective countries of the aid provided to landmine survivors could be improved as: - there are no clear funding priorities set at the government level for MVA programs, and if they are they are poorly communicated to the donors; - there is no good communication between the actors involved in MVA programs (NGOs, rehabilitation centers, responsible ministries, etc.) and there is poor reporting by the donors on the funding provided for MVA programs in respective countries.

The other problem identified was that although all of the countries in the region have some kind of facilities and services for assistance to the landmine survivors , there

was no comprehensive study made to ascertain whether these facilities/services actually comprehensively addressed the needs of the landmine survivors. This is why ITF decided to fund, with the donations of Canada and United States of America the study on Landmine Victims Assistance in the region of SEE, that will be executed by the Landmine monitor. We see the benefit of the study in enabling us, donors, mine affected countries and service providers a clearer picture of the state of victims assistance in the region – which will also enable the identification of the gaps and allocation of the resources to where they are most needed. The countries included in the study will be Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and FRY, including Kosovo.

We believe that regional cooperation and improved national planning could also increase the international funding for MVA programs in the region, especially in the sense that exchange of information between countries can lead to identifying areas where the nations can work together and as such increase efficiency and better use of the limited resources. ITF had similar experience in the field of operational mine action, where it brought together the mine affected countries under the umbrella of South Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council, a purely technical forum that deals with different subjects concerning operational mine action issues in the SEE region.

As most of the Mine Action Centers in the region of SEE have a very limited role in the mine victims assistance realm (the exception before was maybe Kosovo) one of the conclusions of the workshop was to organize a meeting of the Ministries of Health of the region of SEE, to improve coordination and identify possible cooperation on the regional level, exchange knowledge and experience. The meeting would also serve as a good opportunity to encourage exchange of information between specialized doctors and technicians in the region. The meeting is scheduled to be held in April 2003, and will be hosted by the Slovenian Ministry of Health. ITF will be happy to report on the recommendations and conclusions of the meeting at the Standing committee on Victims Assistance in May Intersessional, when also the initial conclusions of the Landmine Monitor Study will be presented by Landmine monitor.

Thank you for your attention.