



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION**

**Meeting Report
January 28-29, 2002**

I. Introduction

Pursuant to the decisions of the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, the meeting of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration (SCVA) was convened by its Co-Chairs, Ms. Gracibel Bu-Figueroa of Honduras and Ms. Mélanie Régimbal of Canada, with the support of its Co-Rapporteurs, Mr. Thomas Wagner of France and Ms. Fulvia Benevides Cotes of Colombia. The meeting was held in Geneva with the generous support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The Co-Chairs expressed their gratitude for this support. A total of 246 State representatives and 133 representatives of international and non-governmental organizations participated in the day and half session.

The Co-Chairs opened the meeting by expressing that the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration has made significant progress in achieving its mandate to identify practical means to assist States Parties in meeting their obligations under Article 6.3 of the Convention by assisting in the care and rehabilitation of landmine survivors.

II. South East Asia Regional Workshop on Victim Assistance:

Mr. Pascal Torres of Handicap International along with Mr. Ouk Sisovann of the Disability Action Center in Cambodia and Ms. Vanno of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand reported on the success of a series of recent regional workshops. Following these regional workshops the South East Asia Regional Conference on Victim Assistance entitled “Moving Forward Together” was held in Bangkok, November 6-8, 2001. The conference was organized under the tutelage of Handicap International in cooperation with the government of Thailand and with the support of Norway and Germany. It gathered 200 participants, including delegations from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam, selected from their national workshops, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and various embassies in Bangkok.

The Conference placed technical actors at the center and presented the opportunity and framework that would facilitate their exchanges of views and sharing of knowledge and expertise in victim assistance. Cambodia reported on the results of its national workshop, which focused on the following four principles:

- States are responsible for providing mine victim assistance to the mine affected communities;
- Survivors and their communities must be an integral part of all policy planning and services for mine victim assistance;
- Local capacity should be promoted and built;
- Comprehensive national plan should be developed, implemented, monitor and evaluated.

Building on the individual results the South Asia Conference, it was concluded that for victim assistance programs to be successful four key elements must be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of mine victim assistance initiatives: participation; a “bottom up” approach; good coordination; and, a holistic approach.

Committee meeting participants expressed a desire to see similar regional exercises (in Africa in particular) that would take into consideration various unique regional characteristic and needs.

III. Update on the Raising the Voices of Landmine Survivors Initiative:

Pursuant to the Third Meeting of the States Parties' President's Action Program, the Standing Committee received a report on the expansion to the African continent of the Landmine Survivors Network's "Raising the Voices of Landmine Survivors" initiative. The participation of landmine survivors demonstrated again the importance of their close involvement in the process. The Standing Committee welcomed eight participants from French and English speaking African nations.

IV. Measuring the progress in implementing the Convention:

In order to ensure that the work of the Standing Committee remains relevant, a consultative process was launched with a view to: articulating a concise and understandable set of critical issues in the field of victim assistance; identifying concrete progress that can be made by 2004 and beyond; and, most pertinently, identifying the Standing Committee's particular niche in contributing to progress.

Mr. Martin Barber of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) explained that the outcome of this consultative process should support the Standing Committee's assessment of its future directions by providing a menu of options for making meaningful future contributions. UNMAS was asked to coordinate the consultative process as it has no vested interest in any aspect of victim assistance and impartiality will be key to the success of the consultative process. It was explained that the consultative process would cover the following four core areas, with the first three areas providing the necessary context to the fourth area – which is the ultimate purpose of this exercise:

- Critical issues related to the Convention obligation to assist in the care and rehabilitation of landmine survivors;
- Targets for addressing various critical issues (i.e., What is that the victim assistance community would consider beneficial to strive toward over time?);
- Actions that could be taken to proceed toward these targets; and,
- Particular contributions that the Standing Committee could consider undertaking.

Ms. Sheree Bailey of Landmine Monitor presented a global overview of progress in mine victim assistance and concerns pertaining to the lack of available information to measure progress in the implementation of Article 6.3. Ms. Bailey noted that Landmine Monitor highlights the problems of accessibility of mine survivors to medical and rehabilitation services and has indicated that only 10-15 percent of total mine action funding is allocated to victim assistance programs. To address these concerns Landmine Monitor, with the support of the Co-Chairs, undertook to prepare a questionnaire that would assist affected States in better presenting information on their victim assistance capacities and needs.

Ms. Eva Sandborg presented the results of a global survey conducted by the World Health Organization's Disability and Rehabilitation Team, based on the four UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, linked to health based on answer from governments.

The study reveals that rehabilitation is provided in majority of countries, but in a basic traditional form as regards services and professional personnel available in practice. One obvious factor is that nurses predominate at all levels, in both medical care and rehabilitation. Another factor is that medical care is not fully provided everywhere: specialized doctors are not available in many countries at local or district level. Thus, persons with disabilities may need to travel great distances from their homes to consult specialized medical staff. The study also indicated that many countries do provide rehabilitation programmes, but there is a great gap between these services and the percentage of the population receiving it. The quality aspect of medical care, of rehabilitation programmes and of services cannot be stressed enough.

V. Critical issues and advancements in medical care:

Theo Verhoeff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) outlined the various challenges in implementing effective medical care programs in zones of armed conflict, based on the ICRC's experience in Afghanistan. Lessons from this experience included:

- That the epidemic of landmine injuries is exacerbated during the return of refugees or displaced populations.
- That the epidemic of landmine injuries creates a challenge for the entire health system. Good management of mine injured and of war casualties depends on the adequate functioning of the health system chain. From first aid in district clinics, to evacuation / transport of the patient, to surgery, to physical rehabilitation and fitting with orthopedic appliances. All this, so that the patient has a chance on the final rehabilitation goal: socio-economic reintegration.
- That the delivery of physical rehabilitation services provides an opportunity for socio-economic reintegration: The six ICRC orthopedic workshops in Afghanistan employ mostly disabled Afghan personnel. A 13-year investment in continued training of national staff has been particularly important.

Suggestions based on lessons learned included that the coordination of humanitarian assistance to the war victims and people of Afghanistan can only be accomplished in situ, i.e. in the country, amongst all the humanitarian actors present, and, that a long-term view and a long-term commitment are required for donors, agencies and of authorities.

Author Liz Hobbs presented her new and innovative manual "Life after Injury" to the Standing Committee. As a result of researching community-based rehabilitation projects across the world and running a training program for rehabilitation workers in a military hospital in Ethiopia, Ms. Hobbs and her co-author spent 7 years writing a resource manual for those who wish to help injured people. The philosophies that underpin the book are: that rehabilitation is most successful if it is holistic and community based with national support; a rehabilitation manual needs to have comprehensive information to be useful; the book must teach people how to solve problems, not simply give blanket solutions; and, it is essential that injured and disabled people, community members must be empowered in each stage of rehabilitation.

VI. Critical issues and advancements in psychological and social rehabilitation:

Dr. Willerman of the Landmine Survivor Network and Mr. Sebastien Kasak of Medico International, demonstrated that it is necessary to incorporate psycho-social issues into the planning and implementation of trauma treatments for landmine survivors and for people with disabilities. When treating a landmine survivor, a psycho-social approach means first of all to acknowledge that providing direct victims with a prosthesis or a wheelchair is simply not enough. Addressing physical issues only and ignoring the rest has proven to be a mistake and has impaired the rehabilitation of mine survivors. A psycho-social approach to rehabilitation of survivors obliges health care providers to concern themselves with individual human beings and their respective realities. This approach takes into consideration individuals' emotions and their individually formed physical condition, and the surrounding socio-cultural context, which includes specific economic, cultural and political conditions. The need for a holistic approach to treatment for mine survivors should never be compromised.

VII. Critical issues and advancements in physical rehabilitation:

Rosy Cave of the Landmine Action UK illustrated the need for further research in the quality of prosthetics assistance given by Western sponsored organizations to developing mine-affected nations. Donors and Western organizations are often criticized for not providing appropriate technologies and services suitable for the cultural realities of the mine affected states. The only way to remedy this situation is to better understand the problem and to identify the solutions in the affected countries themselves. Prosthetic services should be available for all needing them. Prosthetic services should be developed locally. Education and training for professionals is critical to the sustainability of programs.

Ms. Becky Jordan presented a collaborative paper illustrating that the good reliable prosthetic services are a precondition for mine survivors' rehabilitation. Both presenters suggested that the issue of prosthetics is a critical area of victim assistance and one that the Standing Committee should focus on. It is one aspect of mine victim assistance that, if the Committee devoted the appropriate time to it, could be properly addressed and significantly improve prosthetic services in mine affected communities.

VIII. Human rights and disability:

Ms. Socorro Roviroso of Mexico presented the ongoing efforts being undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. It was emphasized that understanding and linking mine victim assistance issues to human rights and disability issues is fundamental to advancing the rights of landmine survivors. Mr. Phillip Chabasse of Handicap International informed the Standing Committee of the various national and international legal instruments and mechanisms currently in place promoting disability and human rights issues. Handicap International also presented the idea of launching a similar work on the development of the rights for landmine survivors in the framework of the Convention. Participants encouraged these efforts and expressed the view that the rights of landmine survivors should be addressed in that context.