



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

**Presentation by
Mr. Baryayebwa Herbert
Commissioner Disability and Elderly
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development**

**Geneva
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Co-Chairs
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on Uganda's efforts to address its obligations to mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

We are in the process of preparing our report on the status of victim assistance for presentation at the Second Review Conference so I will only briefly highlight what we consider to be some of the significant progress in applying the conclusions on victim assistance adopted at the First Review Conference.

The National Policy on Disability provides a broad framework to guide different stakeholders in the implementation of programmes for persons with disabilities including landmine survivors. Guidelines to implement the National Policy have been developed. These spell out the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the implementation of programmes.

The ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2008 will also enhance our efforts in the disability sector.

The first national workshop on mine victim assistance was held in August 2007. The outcome of that workshop was the Comprehensive Plan on Victim Assistance for the period 2008-2012. The plan is based on the framework for victim assistance developed by this Standing Committee and includes objectives from the plans of all relevant ministries.

The plan takes a right based approach to address the rights and needs of all persons with disabilities, including mine survivors, and takes into account the principles of inclusion, empowerment, victim assistance as a development issue and multi-sectoral collaboration.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development as the lead agency in disability issues is working closely with the office of the Prime Minister, Ministries of Health, Education and Sports and disabled persons organisations in the implementation of the plan through the Mine Action Victim Assistance Project, with support from UNDP.

Uganda takes seriously the slogan “*Nothing About us without us*”. Landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities are involved in planning processes at all levels of local government within the framework of the decentralization policy through to the Parliament. The principle of bottom-up planning is emphasized and priorities are set right from village levels.

There are currently over 156,000 persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, participating in the decision making processes at various levels of Government. This is to ensure that their concerns and needs are addressed at those levels.

Although progress has been realized in a number of areas, it is important to note that Uganda faces many challenges in efforts to address the rights and needs of persons with disabilities, including mine survivors. These challenges include:

- Inadequate resources to generate comprehensive data on landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.
- Inadequate resources to provide vocational skills training to enable landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities to live an independent life.
- Inadequate resources to provide assistance to mine survivors and other persons with disabilities in all mine/ERW affected districts of Uganda.
- Reintegration of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities is still a problem due to negative attitudes towards them by community leaders.
- Long distances to physical rehabilitation services limit access to landmine survivors.
- Some service providers including CSOs have limited understanding on disability issues.

Proposed interventions to address these challenges in the period 2010 to 2014 include:

- Review the Comprehensive Plan on Victim Assistance to address the changing needs of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen collaboration with development partners for increased funding to the Mine Action Victim Assistance Project.
- Develop a training manual on victim assistance.

- Build the capacity of service providers to effectively implement programmes for landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.
- Establish a functional, efficient and comprehensive landmine surveillance system.
- Establish a data base on landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities
- Strengthen vocational training for landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen the referral mechanisms for landmine survivors to improve access to physical rehabilitation.
- Expand community based rehabilitation to landmine/ERW affected districts.
- Involvement of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities in decision making processes at all levels of Local government.

To conclude, I would like to extend gratitude and appreciation to the governments of Austria, Australia and Ireland for extending financial support to implement the Mine Action Victim Assistance Project through UNDP.

I would like to urge other donor community to support our efforts to enhance the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan on Victim Assistance so as to meet the obligation of addressing the rights and needs of all mine and other ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Thank you for your attention.