

Understanding the context: Victim assistance, the CRPD, and CBR as a tool for implementation

“The Cartagena Action Plan and CBR”

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Standing Committee on Victim Assistance



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Firstly, let me say what a privilege it is that our friends from the WHO chose the parallel programme for victim assistance experts for the Geneva launch of the CBR Guidelines.

As Co-Chairs, this has reaffirmed our belief that it was important to use the parallel programme at the 10MSP as a forum to enhance our understanding on CBR and share experiences with the experts representing States Parties that have reported their responsibility for significant numbers of survivors, with survivors and other persons with disabilities, with representatives of States in a position to assist, with international agencies, and with other actors working in the disability sector.

But why, you may be asking, do we regard it as so important that the concept of Community Based Rehabilitation is better understood by all actors interested in victim assistance in the context of the Mine Ban Convention?

I will take the next few minutes to connect the dots between victim assistance and our interest in CBR before handing the floor to Firoz and Diane to elaborate further on the links including with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Introductory booklet to the CBR Guidelines, entitled Towards Community-based Inclusive Development, outlines the overall objectives which include:

- To promote CBR as a strategy for community-based inclusive development to assist in the mainstreaming of disability in development initiatives, and in particular, to reduce poverty.
- To support stakeholders to meet the basic needs and enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families by facilitating access to the health, education, livelihood and social sectors, and
- To encourage stakeholders to facilitate the empowerment of people with disabilities and their families by promoting their inclusion and participation in development and decision-making processes.

There are direct links between issues outlined in the objectives and language that the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention adopted in Cartagena last year. For example:

- inclusive development
- mainstreaming of disability in development initiatives
- enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families
- empowerment, and
- promoting inclusion and participation

The Final Report of the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World highlighted the concept of inclusive development as an appropriate mechanism to ensure that landmine victims and other persons with disabilities have access to the same opportunities in life — for healthcare, social services, a life-sustaining income, education and participation in the community — as every other sector of a society.

Furthermore, the States Parties reaffirmed their understanding of the place of victim assistance within the broader context of disability, healthcare, social services, rehabilitation, reintegration, employment, development, human rights and gender equality. The States Parties recognise that victim assistance efforts should promote the development of services, infrastructure, and policies to address the rights and needs of all women, girls, boys and men with disabilities, regardless of the cause of the disability.

The Final Report also noted that “since 2005, the States Parties have come to recognise the concept of community-based rehabilitation as an appropriate mechanism in some States Parties to strengthen, and improve access to, services for mine survivors. The States Parties have come to understand CBR to be a strategy ... for enhancing the quality of life of persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors, and poverty reduction and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.”

If we, as States Parties, and particularly those States responsible for significant numbers of survivors, are to achieve the commitment that all States Parties made through the adoption of the Cartagena Action Plan “to provide adequate age- and gender-sensitive assistance to mine victims, through a holistic and integrated approach...with the aim of ensuring their full and effective participation and inclusion in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities” then we need to translate those words into concrete actions on the ground.

The CBR Guidelines are a constructive addition to our toolkit of strategies to achieve the victim assistance-related aims of the Cartagena Action Plan in affected States by improving access to, and availability of, quality services for survivors and other persons with disabilities.

The paper presented by Belgium and Thailand at the Summit to facilitate progress in achieving the aims of the Cartagena Action Plan recommends under Action #31, which relates to accessibility and availability of services, that States may wish to “develop and/or implement, as appropriate, a community based rehabilitation programme in affected communities to promote a holistic approach to assistance and to promote full and effective participation and inclusion of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities.”

I know that some of you are already implementing CBR programmes in your country so together with experts representing UN and other international agencies, and experts with disability, we have a valuable opportunity to share experiences and good practice over the coming days.

Together with my Co-Chair, we encourage you to take full advantage of the opportunities presented this week to enhance our collective knowledge on CBR. But that knowledge should not stay in Geneva. Take what you learn back to your home countries and share it

with your colleagues. Most importantly, use that knowledge to take concrete steps to implement activities that have the potential to ultimately improve the daily life of survivors, other persons with disabilities and their families.