



ICRC

**International Committee of the Red Cross
Statement on Victim Assistance
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Meeting of States Parties
Vienna, Austria, 19 December 2017**

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Thank you, Mr. President, and greetings, honorable representatives and colleagues –

My name is Jess Markt and I am the ICRC's first Disability Sport and Inclusion Advisor.

The ICRC supports people with physical disabilities worldwide, including in countries affected by anti-personnel mines. This is part of the institution's mission to ensure humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and its health strategy, which seeks to ensure that those affected by conflict have access to basic health care that meets universally recognized standards.

One of the challenges regularly cited in the Convention's work on victim assistance is the need to increase the availability and accessibility of rehabilitation services. A commitment to take steps to improve this is reflected in Action 15 of the Maputo Action Plan.

I would like to take a few minutes to highlight the ICRC's activities in this area. We continually endeavor to increase the availability of and accessibility to appropriate comprehensive rehabilitation services, economic inclusion opportunities and social protection measures for all mine victims.

The ICRC physical rehabilitation program supports government structures, NGOs, and other local organisations to advance the delivery of physical rehabilitation services. This includes prostheses and other necessary mobility aids, along with the physiotherapy services needed to effectively utilize them. ICRC- operated and ICRC-supported rehabilitation centres are open to all people with physical disabilities. Our engagement with local partners enables us to deliver high quality, equitably available physical rehabilitation services that are sustainable over the long term. In 2016, 129 ICRC-run and supported projects served 398,409 people. These figures include nearly 6,000 prostheses and 740 orthoses given to survivors of mines and explosive remnants of war, and the more than 10,000 mine and ERW victims who received physiotherapy services.

As well as providing these services ICRC strives to help people with physical disabilities – including those directly affected by anti-personnel mines – to play a full part in society. The ICRC views the social and economic aspects of inclusion as a natural and necessary continuation of physical rehabilitation and a fundamental right for those living with physical disabilities.

In recent years, the ICRC physical rehabilitation program has amplified its efforts to promote social and economic inclusion of people with physical disabilities. These efforts have included the provision of vocational training, helping the establishment of small businesses through microfinance initiatives, and promoting and organizing adaptive sport programmes.

Sport in particular has proven to be a remarkable lever for organically developing peer support networks, building confidence and motivation among participants, and breaking down societal barriers to full social inclusion for people with physical disabilities. Even though our disability sport programmes are rather young, we have already heard countless stories of personal transformation as a result of participation. From Afghanistan to South Sudan, from Cambodia to the State of Palestine these programmes are having a positive impact on people's lives. As a large-scale example, the ICRC has led the establishment and growth of a wheelchair basketball league in Afghanistan over the last six years that now includes over 500 players, over 120 of which are women, and all of which have physical disabilities.

By enabling participation in these activities, the self-perception of persons with physical disabilities and, indeed, the views of society toward them, can be influenced to change. Creating economic and educational opportunities, empowers persons with disabilities to prove their professional skills and acumen. Delivering sport opportunities creates visibility into the talents of persons with disabilities in broader society and, in the cases of those who have reached the international stage, positions them as not only exemplary athletes, but as heroes in their countries.

The ICRC will continue to work in these areas and in close partnership with States Parties, local organisations and other NGOs to see sustainable sport and inclusion opportunities created and supported for all people with physical disabilities, including victims of mines and explosive remnants of war.