

Report of the Standing Committee on
Victim Assistance, Socio-Economic Reintegration
and Mine Awareness to the Third Meeting of
the States Parties to the Convention

I. Introduction

1. The Standing Committee on Victim Assistance, Socio-Economic Reintegration and Mine Awareness, established in accordance with the decisions and recommendations of the 3-7 May 1999 First Meeting of the States Parties (FMSP) and the 11-15 September 2000 Second Meeting of the States Parties (SMSP), met in Geneva from 4-5 December 2000 and from 7-8 May 2001.
2. At the Second Meeting of the States Parties (SMSP), it was agreed, in accordance with paragraph 28 of the final report of the SMSP, that Japan and Nicaragua would serve as Co-Chairs of the SC, with Canada and Honduras serving as Co-Rapporteurs.
3. In keeping with the intersessional programme's spirit of practical cooperation, inclusivity and collegiality, the meetings of the Standing Committee were open to all interested States and relevant organizations. Over 70 States, including several States not parties to the Convention, were registered as participants in the meetings, along with numerous international and non-governmental organizations, including the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
4. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) provided valuable administrative and organizational support to the Standing Committee, which was greatly appreciated by the Co-Chairs and the meeting participants.

II. Matters reviewed by the Standing Committee

5. The work of the Standing Committee was organized to advance the work undertaken by the Standing Committee in 1999-2000 by assessing the implementation of, and identifying concrete actions related to, providing assistance to victims and delivering mine awareness education. In this context, the Standing Committee covered six thematic areas: (a) raising the voices of landmine survivors; (b) linking resources with needs; (c) implementing lessons learned related to the coordination of victim assistance; (d) guidelines, information dissemination and information management; (e) social and economic reintegration; and, (f) mine awareness.
6. Raising the voices of landmine survivors: The Standing Committee was advised that sharing personal hardships by landmine survivors can help the cause of survivors by reminding experts and diplomats of the human faces behind complex issues. However, it was noted that after one cycle of intersessional work it is time to deepen the practice of inclusion as it pertains to

ensuring that landmine survivors are effectively involved in the expression of their needs and in means developed to meet these needs.

7. The Standing Committee discussed means to raise the voices of landmine victims, including the development of networks of persons with disabilities to assist in the promotion of their rights and interests, the establishment of legislation to protect and enhance the lives of persons with disabilities, and the idea of a leadership training programme to reinforce the participation of landmine survivors in the work of the Standing Committees. In addition, the Standing Committee was reminded of some of the challenges associated with deepening the inclusion of the landmines survivors, including the fact that landmine victims are not typically in positions of power or decision-making, and the reality that there are special challenges faced by persons with communications-related disabilities.

8. Linking resources with needs: The Standing Committee discussed what is known about the level of need that exists regarding provision of assistance for landmine victims. It was highlighted that the mine action community is still dealing with vast approximations when it comes to knowing the numbers of landmine victims. While in some cases fairly comprehensive data exist on the number of new casualties, the limitation of these data is that they do not indicate the existing number of landmine victims or other persons with disabilities. Several indicators were suggested as possible means for more effectively assessing the global need as it pertains to victim assistance.

9. The Standing Committee noted that resources for victim assistance make up only a small percentage of total funding for mine action. It was pointed out that for some donors, given the multiple sources of funds, it can be difficult to accurately denominate resources for victim assistance. In addition, it was highlighted that the existence of multiple sources within donor governments makes it difficult to identify where the principal points of entry are for accessing funds.

10. Implementing lessons learned related to the coordination of victim assistance: The Standing Committee discussed principles that should underlie good coordination, lessons learned from the field for applicability elsewhere and possible models for organizing a mine-affected State's victim assistance efforts. In this regard, the Standing Committee benefited from extremely rich presentations made by individuals from mine-affected countries. It was noted that effective national coordination is required for: the development of national action plans; the coordination of service delivery; the facilitation of policy development; addressing and preventing service gaps; ensuring an equitable distribution of services; facilitating information sharing; developing national capacity; promoting ownership and participation; coordinating research; and, serving as a focal point for relevant internal and external parties.

11. The Standing Committee discussed that a variety of principles should underlie national coordination, including: that work in this sector requires a long-term commitment; that basic needs must be met; that there is a need to simultaneously respond to emergencies while laying the

foundation for longer-term development; that national capacity building at all levels is the foundation of long-term sustainability; that persons with disabilities should be engaged at all levels of decision-making; that coordination is not control; that a variety of approaches are needed to encourage creativity and diversification; that governments in post-conflict situations are often under-resourced; and, that there is a need to promote a spirit of cooperation in post-conflict settings.

12. Guidelines, information dissemination and information management: The Standing Committee discussed that a comprehensive inventory of tools exists which can contribute to victim assistance information tracking. The Standing Committee received updates on some of these tools.

13. It was noted that the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities provide a great deal of guidance to States Parties and others in that they: (a) highlight the preconditions for equal participation on the part of persons with disabilities; (b) target areas like education and employment for equal participation; and; (c) outline implementation measures. In addition, it was noted that national/state authorities, the UN, non-governmental organizations, disabled persons' organizations and communities all have roles and responsibilities in the implementation of these rules.

14. The Standing Committee discussed the difficulty of implementing the UN Standard Rules in mine-affected countries, especially in those hampered by a lack of technical and financial resources and a shortage of equipment. The Standing Committee recognized that successful and effective implementation of the UN Standard Rules implies a coordinated partnership involving governments, communities, organizations and NGOs. In the context of discussion on the UN Standard Rules, the need was expressed for greater involvement of persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of government policy and planning.

15. Social and Economic Reintegration: The Standing Committee initiated an extremely wide-ranging dialogue on the Convention obligation to provide for the social and economic reintegration of landmine victims. The Standing Committee paid special attention to vocational rehabilitation and psycho-social rehabilitation.

16. With respect to vocational reintegration, it was noted that in post-conflict situations landmine victims suffer from a number of factors, including having been more intensively affected by the conflict, having less access to goods and services, being socially excluded, having less access to employment services and credit. Overcoming these challenges involves vocational rehabilitative policies and programmes taking an individual approach, prioritizing needs and undertaking labour-market assessments to ensure there is a clear link between training and the possible opportunities that exist post-training.

17. With respect to psycho-social rehabilitation, the importance of survivor-to-survivor counselling was presented to the Standing Committee and it was argued that the problems faced

by survivors are not as much physical as they are psychological. In addition, the Standing Committee was reminded of the importance of identifying needs in a participatory manner, providing meaningful economic empowerment and support that will lead to independence, and the need for a holistic approach.

18. Mine Awareness: The Standing Committee received presentations on initiatives related to making advances in mine awareness programming and updates from UNICEF and the Organization of American States on the development of preventive education efforts in mine-affected countries.

19. The Standing Committee discussed how evaluation is a necessary activity in the implementation of good mine actions awareness programmes. It was emphasized that mistakes made in mine awareness programming can have human costs and result in a waste of time and resources. Lessons learned from evaluations that have been conducted include the fact that communities do manage to cope one way or another, that individuals knowingly take risks, that poorly implemented programmes can cause more damage than no programme, and that measuring the impact of programming is difficult but not impossible.

III. Actions related to the development of specific tools and instruments to assist in implementing the Convention

20. The Standing Committee welcomed efforts by the ICBL's Working Group on Victim Assistance to update the "**Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs**" in time for the Third Meeting of the States Parties.

21. The Standing Committee welcomed the guidance provided to States Parties by the ICBL's Working Group on Victim Assistance on how States Parties can use the **Article 7 Reporting Format's "Form J"** to report on actions taken to provide assistance to victims.

22. The Standing Committee noted continued development by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation of the "**Strategic Framework for Victim Assistance**" as a tool to assist in integrating assistance to victims in a broader context of post-conflict reconstruction and development strategies.

23. The Standing Committee took note of actions to enhance and/or disseminate the following victim assistance information tracking tools: (a) The **Rehabilitation Services Database**, which is in-place in four countries with plans to expand it to six more; (b) The **Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA)**, in which will be launched an incident/ accident report in 2001; (c) **The World Health Organization's data collection project**, which is ongoing in Africa; and, (d) The manual, *Measuring Landmine Incidents and Injuries and the Capacity to Provide Care*.

24. The Co-Chairs took action to identify focal points for victim assistance and made a commitment to distribute a **list of focal points** in order to facilitate a more effective dissemination of information.

25. The Co-Chairs distributed an English-language version of a **compilation of guidelines, best practices and methodologies for victim assistance** and made a commitment to produce versions in Spanish and French.

26. The Standing Committee took note of actions to widely distribute the United Nations **Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education** and the translation of these guidelines into eight languages.

III. Actions taken or in process to assist in the implementation of the Convention

27. The Standing Committee warmly welcomed the initiative of the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN), on behalf of the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance, to work towards greater involvement of landmine survivors in matters that affect them, including the need to deepen involvement in the development and implementation of mine-action programmes. In particular, the Standing Committee provided its strong encouragement to LSN in its work to coordinate the “Raising the Voices of Landmine Survivors” initiative, which involves a training programme designed to develop a core group of “survivor advocates” who could participate actively in Standing Committee meetings and provide leadership in their communities.

28. The Standing Committee took note of the efforts of Handicap International and others to plan a Regional Workshop on Victim Assistance in South East Asia, which will take place in Thailand on 6-8 November 2001. The workshop’s main objectives are to provide those active in the region with the opportunity to study and discuss the local situation and victim assistance issues and to exchange views on the methods used to meet the challenges defined in country action plans.

29. The Standing Committee took note of the actions of the GICHD and the United Nations Mine Action Service in their efforts to proceed with a study on the relationship between mine action programmes and victim assistance.

30. The Standing Committee took note of the actions of the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance to gather information about relevant activities, issues and concerns in the area of psycho-social rehabilitation, including the establishment of a listserv and the convening of a meeting for interested parties, which took place in Washington, D.C, on 29 March 2001.

31. The Standing Committee took note of the actions of the GICHD to undertake a study to improve field-based media/communication tools and strategies for mine awareness education through field survey, research and analysis.

32. The Standing Committee took note of the actions of Radda Barnen to organize a mine awareness seminar in Aden in early 2001.

V. Recommendations made by the Standing Committee

33. It was recommended that efforts be undertaken to deepen the inclusion of landmine survivors by ensuring that survivors are effectively involved in the expression of their needs and in means developed to meet these needs. In this context, it was recommended that the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance continue with its “raising the voices of landmine survivors” initiative and expand it, focusing on different regions.

34. It was recommended that with a wealth of existing tools to track victim assistance information, efforts should be made to use and enhance these tools rather than developing any new tools.

35. With respect to undertaking efforts to provide social and economic assistance to landmine survivors, it was recommended that those involved in relevant initiatives consider how barriers to access for persons with disabilities could be addressed.

36. In providing vocational rehabilitation services to landmine survivors, it was recommended that States and relevant organizations work towards reducing vulnerability and promoting self-reliance. In addition, in designing and implementing initiatives, it was recommended that relevant actors consider adequate access to social protection and social security mechanisms, including occupational retraining, and the creation of opportunities for social dialogue and equal access to employment.

37. It was recommended that States Parties and relevant organizations share information and experiences and have an open and continuous dialogue on existing peer-support initiatives, programme successes and shortcomings, and relevant programme documentation. In this context, it was recommended that interested parties provide information to the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance in its role as a voluntary focal point on this matter.

38. It was recommended that relevant parties make use of the United Nations Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education in planning and delivering mine awareness programming.

39. It was recommended that relevant parties consider the importance of evaluating mine awareness programmes in programme planning and delivery.

40. It was recommended that the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) take into account the location and characteristics of communities which are at risk, and analyse that information in the light of those communities’ environmental, cultural and socio-economic situation.

41. It was recommended that consideration should be given to dedicating more time during Standing Committee meetings to discuss mine awareness. In addition, it was recommended that the topic of mine awareness be placed within the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance and Related Technologies.

42. With a view to reinforcing the point that the Standing Committees are all about identifying practical means to assist in implementing the Convention, it was recommended that all Standing Committee participants give consideration to converting the wealth of information, advice and suggestions provided to the Standing Committee into concrete actions.

VI. Reference to supporting documents

43. The Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs can be accessed and downloaded at: <http://www.landminevap.org>.

44. The Rehabilitation Services Database can be accessed at: <http://www.lsndatabase.org/>.

45. The manual, *Measuring Landmine Incidents and Injuries and the Capacity to Provide Care*, can be accessed and downloaded at:
http://www.phrusa.org/publications/measure_landmine.html.

46. The United Nations Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education can be accessed and downloaded at:
<http://www.unicef.org/landguide/guidelines.htm>.

47. Information on the GICHD Landmine Awareness Education Media & Messages Study can be accessed at: http://gichd.ch/docs/sutides/mine_awareness_media.htm.