

Victim Assistance – Statement by Australia

- Survivor assistance is a major focus of Australia's Mine Action Strategy launched in 2006. Consistent with the Nairobi Action Plan, survivor rehabilitation and reintegration through an integrated approach is a major focus of our work. Priority is given to the integration of landmine and ERW survivor services into existing healthcare, social services and policy frameworks, which improves efficiency, impact and sustainability. Funding to survivor assistance, totaled A\$8.5 million over the last year.
- Australia has provided survivor assistance support to a number of the 24 States Parties which have reported responsibility for significant numbers of mine victims, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola and Uganda. We also provide broader support to the health sector in partner countries (notably Afghanistan and Cambodia).
- Other support included \$105,000 to support the work of the Implementation Support Unit's Victim Assistance Expert in 2007, and funding for the publication of the latest edition of the Landmine Victim Assistance Overview Report
- Australia has also developed a Landmine Survivor Assistance Program for Cambodia, with funding of approximately A\$1.2 million annually. It integrates Australia's survivor assistance activities under a single umbrella. It will provide funding to NGOs delivering survivor assistance, help strengthen Cambodian Red Cross capacity, and strengthen the Cambodian Government's capacity to develop and implement a National Action Plan for Survivor Assistance, as we heard earlier from the Cambodian delegation.

Disability Policy

- While Australia does not have a specific policy on disability for its aid program, Australia recognises the merits of addressing disability in development programs, consistent with the rights articulated in the Disability Convention, to which Australia is an original signatory. Under AusAID's health policy released in August 2006, assistance for disability will be considered in bilateral country programs if it is prioritised by individual partner governments. Disability assistance has already been integrated into the Australian aid program through programs such as humanitarian assistance (including mine action), international health programs, and volunteer schemes.

Australia, in partnership with Australian NGOs, is currently supporting three integrated mine action projects targeting survivors in Cambodia. I will now hand over to my fellow delegate from Austcare, to provide a brief introduction to one of these programs.

Your Royal Highness,

Austcare would like to add our congratulations on your appointment as President, and to acknowledge the significant achievements of Jordan as a mine affected country.

As an Australian NGO, Austcare also acknowledges the significant commitment of the Australian Government and the Australian people to achieving a mine free world. Austcare congratulates the Australian Government on its decision to include NGOs as part of their MSP delegation, and commends the Government's willingness to share information and promote discussion with NGOs on humanitarian and disarmament issues.

Mine Action is an important component of Austcare's human security strategy.

Austcare has conducted mine action activities in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Mozambique, and along the Thai-Burma border. Currently, our largest single project is in a remote area of Banteay Meanchey Province in north-west Cambodia. This is an integrated mine action project in which Austcare is partnering with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, the provincial government, local communities and a number of national NGOs. This project builds on our successes in integrated mine action and targets poor communities close to the heavily mined K5 belt. The overall goal of this integrated project is to contribute to poverty reduction and enhance sustainable livelihoods by 2010.

The project has six complementary components: 1) capacity development of two commune councils; 2) establishment of food security through 18 school feeding programs; 3) planned mine clearance and land allocation, working with local communities and the local Mine Action Planning Unit; 4) improved access to assured water supplies through better harvesting techniques; 5) enhanced agricultural production through farmer field school training and improved cropping; and 6) improved self reliance for mine survivors and other people with disabilities in Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey provinces.

Most relevant to this plenary session, I will comment briefly on the survivor assistance component of the project.

We have recently completed an initial needs assessment of landmine survivors and people with disabilities focusing on the areas of health, rehabilitation, training and discrimination in the two provinces. The assessment concluded that between January 2005 and December 2006, 369 mine casualties were reported and there was a severe lack in the provision of basic services for landmine survivors and people with disabilities.

Considerable work is required to redress the vulnerability of landmine survivors in these provinces. Austcare is currently working with national NGOs and survivor groups to identify participants in a pilot project to address the psychosocial and physical rehabilitation needs of the survivors. This pilot project aims to facilitate access to physical rehabilitation services, vocational training, and will facilitate linkages with other service providers. Pending the results of this pilot, Austcare is planning to establish 16 self-help groups for the disabled including landmine survivors in the targeted villages.

In addition to this integrated mine action project in Cambodia, Austcare continues to sponsor a team in the National Volleyball League Disabled (CNVLD) – the Anlong Veang Lions. This activity has a positive impact in promoting the health and physical rehabilitation for landmine survivors and people with disabilities, as well as enhancing self-esteem and public awareness.

In Kabul Province in Afghanistan, Austcare is also working with mine survivors and other people with disabilities to help build their capacity to enable them to reintegrate into society. This project includes life skills and literacy courses, vocational training, community awareness raising for the rights of people with disabilities, micro credit support, and job placement.

Austcare supports the recommendations on victim assistance in the Dead Sea Progress Report, and ICBL's call for more to be done in the area of survivor assistance. Austcare encourages donors to enhance their support for sustainable recovery and livelihood programs in mine affected areas.