



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND



The Bangkok Symposium on Landmine Victim Assistance: Enhancing a Comprehensive and Sustainable Mine Action

14 - 17 June 2015, Bangkok Thailand

CONCEPT

Background

The Bangkok Symposium on Cooperation and Assistance: Building Synergy towards Effective Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in June 2013 was one of the first efforts to integrate landmine victim assistance in a broader approach. The Meeting underlined the interconnections between the mine action world and disability, the need to focus on sustainability, and the strengthening of partnership for achieving national ownership in mine victims assistance and rehabilitation programme.

The Maputo Action Plan and the Maputo+15 Declaration, adopted at the 3rd Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention last year, strongly emphasises that the goal of landmine victims assistance is to ensure “*the full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society*”. This idea suggests that victim assistance under the Convention is not a one-off efforts but rather a long-term process encompassing many aspects of the lives of those victims. A comprehensive and sustainable landmine victim assistance, therefore, is not only about linking problems of disabled persons caused by landmines to a wider framework regarding the rights and protection of persons with disabilities; it must also take into account various challenges faced by landmine survivors apart from their physical difficulties. This explains why the Maputo Action Plan further mentions health, social welfare, education, employment, development and poverty reduction as equally crucial aspects of States Parties’ obligation to fully assist their landmine victims.

Despite the fact that the ban on landmines is almost universal, challenge about assisting its victims remains pressing as ever. At present, 29 States Parties, including Thailand, are still responsible for the significant numbers of mine victims. Discussion about how to ensure *full, equal and effective participation of mine victims in society* as aspired in Maputo Action Plan will require exploration of linkages and relations between various aspects of landmine victim assistance as well as a method to make this vital task measurable.

With an objective to strengthen victim assistance as well as to continue our tradition of forging cooperation and partnership, Thailand, in its role as a member of the Convention’s Committee on Victim Assistance, in collaboration with the Implementation Support Unit will convene a symposium on landmine victim assistance in Bangkok on 14 - 17 June 2015, followed by a field visit on 17 June 2015. The intended participants for the symposium are landmine-affected States Parties of the Convention, as well as donor states, other interested states, the United Nations and other relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Panelists and participants in the symposium will have a chance to engage and share their own experiences and insights in the discussion on a number of topics of mine victim assistance with a view to further improve and respond to challenges in implementing their national mine assistance and rehabilitation programmes. A field visit will also add on to the discussion by demonstrating comprehensive victim assistance in practice and illustrating the reason why humanitarian demining is an urgent task.

* * * * *

PROGRAMME

Session I: Victim Assistance within the Framework of Maputo Action Plan

The Maputo Action Plan reiterates the States Parties' understanding that "victim assistance should be integrated into broader policies, plans and legal frameworks related to the rights of persons with disabilities". "In this context, and in order to address victim assistance with the same precision and intensity as for other aims of the Convention", commitments contained in the Maputo Action Plan emphasise the importance of States assessing needs, and expressing what change can be expected over the period covered by the action plan and how this change could be made.

The first session will discuss the following questions:

- What efforts have been made to fulfill commitments contained in the victim assistance section of the Maputo Action Plan and what have been the results of these efforts (progress and challenges)?
- How does the Maputo Action Plan's emphasis on precision and measurability relate to efforts on victim assistance in the context of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons?
- How might reports provided in the context of the fulfillment of the Maputo Action Plan commitments help inform the Convention President's Initiative on Reporting?

Session II: Comprehensive Approach to Empowering Landmine Victims

The Maputo Action Plan underlines that victim assistance should be integrated into services and support for disability, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction. The implementation of the Maputo Action Plan also seeks to "tangibly contribute to the full, equal and effective participation of the mine-victims in society".

The second session will examine the following aspects of victim assistance approach:

- What a comprehensive approach to empowering mine victims should entail?

Good practices and challenges in: **healthcare system** (mine victims' access to health services and rehabilitation); **education** (access to education for mine victims and mine risk education); **employment** (legal framework and its implementation to guarantee jobs for mine victims, public-private partnership, and the role of civil society, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations); **development and poverty reduction** (partnership and collaboration with civil society and non-governmental organisations in capacity building and rural development project to support mine victims).

- What are measures undertaken to strengthen local capacities and coordination of sub-national entities and local volunteers network in providing services and support for mine victims?

Session III: Bridges between worlds: from a global concept to a template of actions at national levels; looking head to of the next decade

The Meeting will be an opportunity to link victim assistance with broader disability related framework with a view to further help Member States to guarantee the rights and to enhance assistance and rehabilitation programme. The 2014 global conference ***Bridges between Worlds*** highlighted that they are not different worlds. There is only one world. This is a world with physical, attitudinal and other barriers preventing the full participation of women, girls, boys and men living with disability, including landmine survivors, in the sphere of their societies on a basis equal to others. There is strength in pursuing this unity of purpose and working together towards the achievement of common goals, and translating a challenging global concept to a template of action at national level. This effort should look forward to the next 15 years where persons with disability, regardless of the cause, will be part of and contribute to sustainable development.

The third session will discuss the following questions:

- How can bridges be built or enhanced at the national level between the Convention's promise to mine victims and the understanding that this will be fulfilled through efforts carried out in the broader context?
- What are some practical and realistic results that can be expected from building stronger bridges at the national level?
- How can those working to implement the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention collaborate with actors in the world of disability rights to achieve common goals?
- How can bridges be strengthened at the non-governmental level?

Field Visit to Surin Province (optional)

Participants are invited to join an overnight field visit to Surin Province in the northeastern region of Thailand* for a first-hand experience of humanitarian mine action, in particular comprehensive victim assistance and mine clearance. At *Surin Hospital Protheses Centre*, participants will learn how a local hospital assists mine victims and other persons with disabilities, both from Thailand and neighbouring country. While at the *Bua Ched District Minefield*, participants will be guided through a "walking tour" of a minefield in the forest to observe how landmines have been laid several decades ago and why they still pose lethal threats to the local population.** This minefield is an example of the result of the "Land Release" method, combining both technical and non-technical survey of suspected areas leading to a more efficient mine clearance.

* Transportation by shuttle bus will be provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. Interested participants should note that the trip includes long distance travel on both days of the visit.

** Participants will be guided to walk along a safe route which has been technically surveyed and has passed a safety check.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Sunday 14 June 2015

All day
19:00 – 20:30

Participants arrive in Bangkok
Welcoming Reception

Monday 15 June 2015

08:30 Registration
09:30 **Opening Remarks and Keynote Address**
10:15 Coffee Break
10:30 **Session I: Victim Assistance within the Framework of Maputo Action Plan**
13:00 Lunch
14:00 **Session II: Comprehensive Approach to Empowering Landmine Victims**
15:30 Coffee Break
16:00 **Session II (continued)**
17:30 End of Session II
18:30 Dinner

Tuesday 16 June 2015

09:00 **Session III: Bridges between worlds: from a global concept to a template of actions at national levels; *looking head to of the next decade***
11:00 Coffee Break
11:30 **Wrap Up Session**
12:30 Lunch
13:30 **Participants Depart Bangkok for a Field Visit in Surin Province (Optional)**
(440 kilometers from Bangkok, 6 hours by bus)
19:30 Dinner in Surin Town
20:30 Check-in at Hotel

Wednesday 17 June 2015

08:30 **Study Visit at the Surin Hospital Protheses Centre**
09:30 Depart for Bua Ched District
(80 kilometers from Surin Town, 2 hours by shuttle bus)
11:30 **Study Visit at a Minefield in Bua Ched District**
(Lunch provided on site)
13:00 Travel back to Bangkok
(480 Kilometers from Bua Ched District, 7 hours by bus)
20:00 Arrive in Bangkok and Check-in at Hotel

Thursday 18 June 2015

All day

Participants depart Bangkok

* * * * *