

Inclusive Development Approach to Victim Assistance / ICBL

There is an increased understanding that an inclusive development approach to victim assistance is important on the part of both affected States and donor States, if we are to achieve the goal of survivors' inclusion in society through their full participation in social, economic and political spheres.

The Co-Chairs recommendations paper on implementing the Cartagena Action Plan makes a specific reference to inclusive development, stating that: "inclusive Development is an appropriate mechanism to ensure that landmine victims and other persons with disabilities have access to the same opportunities in life as every other sector of a society."

"Inclusive development is a process that should lead towards the goal of an inclusive community. It recognizes that diversity is a fact of life and that differences are normal within society. Differences are due to a range of factors, some universal, some cultural and some context specific. Inclusion is about society changing in order to accommodate differences and combat discrimination amongst its members. The aim is equalization of opportunities."¹

Simply said, inclusive development related to disability refers to an approach that makes existing system of services accessible to people with disabilities. But, what about an inclusive development approach to victim assistance?

¹ Guidance Paper for an Inclusive Local Development Policy: Background information, Tools for action at local level, Support material, year unknown, page 43.

It is important to highlight that including victim assistance into a development process does not require the creation of separate system or programs, neither special laws. It does require greater acceptance of diversity and a more flexible way of finding solutions to barriers faced. Most important is to involve victims when planning projects and activities, and to consult them as to what specificities they might require to be included, in order to benefit equally from the outcome of the planned activities.

The development of inclusive policies alone though is not enough for building an inclusive society. It risks becoming just a concept, or a nice policy statement, if not accompanied by clear action plans; disability disaggregated data in assessments, and precisely defined indicators which monitor the impact of activities on landmine victims and their families. These indicators should be accompanied by a relevant budget.

To reach inclusive development, other kinds of actions are also needed; actions that focus on victims and their representative organizations. So, linked with the strategy of including victim assistance in development plans and policies, there is a need to provide parallel support for specific initiatives aimed at empowering and strengthening victims and their representative organizations, together with affirmative – positive – actions. Such an approach is usually described as the twin track approach to inclusive development.

The Co-Chairs Recommendations document to the Cartagena Action Plan makes a special reference to the “twin-track approach” and states while it is essential that victim assistance is integrated into development programmes, it may also be necessary to provide specialised

measures to ensure that mine survivors and other persons with disabilities are empowered to participate on an equal basis with others.”

In essence, the twin track approach proposes, on the one side, an inclusive system of services that is accessible by landmine victims, people with disabilities and everybody else on an equal basis; linked, on the other, with a set of specific initiatives that promote empowerment of the survivors and their representations bodies.

An inclusive system of services, includes mainstream services, support services that ensure access to mainstream services, and special services, as well as initiatives to enhance the empowerment of landmine victims so that they can speak out, be heard and have a voice in decision making processes that affect their lives.

As for clarifying the difference between a mainstream service and special services, let me give you an examples from the employment and education sector:

- A mainstream service in education is a school that is designed to all children in a community, whilst a special educational service is a special school designed and reserved for example for blind children
- A mainstream service in employment is a vocational training centre accessible to all , and a special service is a special vocational training program for adults with disabilities who are not yet welcomed in the mainstream services and who have attended a special school most of the time or no school at all during their childhood..

Due to barriers to accessing mainstream services in all countries around the world, support and special services are necessary to complete systems of services that are not fully inclusive specially for persons with severe impairments, and to ensure liberty of choice to end users as to what service to access.

It is paramount that mainstream, support and special services should be more linked and should not function in an isolated manner, as is the case most of the time.

As for initiatives to enhance the empowerment of landmine victims, this is a very important aspect as we must ensure that the system facilitates the empowerment of landmine victims and people with disabilities. Relevant initiatives include capacity building of survivor and disabled people organizations', as well as initiatives that increase the decision making power of landmine victims, such as governments' mandating that a certain percentage of its representatives have to be persons with disabilities.

To summarize, our vision of an inclusive society is one that facilitates linkages between, on the one side, landmine victims and people with disabilities and on the other side, between all existing services within an inclusive system.

In order to facilitate these linkages, the following four levels of support can be provided:

- Support to landmine victims so that they have the capacity and feel confident to access the mainstream world
- Support to survivors and their representative organizations

- Support for a society that recognizes diversity and the realities faced by landmine victims and people with disabilities through awareness raising and training so that people realize diversity
- Support to mainstream service providers so that they have the knowledge and skills to provide inclusive services, for example through training professionals to develop a new pedagogy in schools, or an architect on how to build accessible houses

The twin track approach with an inclusive system of services on the one hand, and special initiatives as a temporary measure on the other, will facilitate the full participation of landmine victims and people with disabilities and allow for an inclusive society.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak on inclusive development as it pertains to victim assistance.