

Status of the Convention in relation to victim assistance

Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration (Peru and Turkey)

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The ultimate goal of victim assistance is to improve the quality of daily life of mine victims and ensure their full and effective participation and inclusion in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities.

The principles and understandings on victim assistance adopted at the 2009 Cartagena Summit guide the work of this Standing Committee.

As Co-Chairs, our aim is to build on the work of all previous Co-Chairs to facilitate progress in applying these principles and understandings at the national level.

The focus of our work is with the States Parties that have reported responsibility for significant numbers of mine survivors.

In Cartagena, we reaffirmed understandings that were adopted at the 2004 First Review Conference, including that:

- victim assistance efforts should not exclude any person injured or disabled in another manner;
- victim assistance should be part of public health, rehabilitation, social services and human rights frameworks;
- victim assistance efforts should be integrated into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to disability, health, education, employment, development and poverty reduction;
- victim assistance should be available, affordable, accessible and sustainable; and, that
- victim assistance is a human rights issue. A rights-based not charity-based approach is essential.

We also reaffirmed the principles of national ownership, equality, non-discrimination, full inclusion and participation, an integrated and comprehensive approach, a gender perspective, transparency, efficiency and accountability in all victim assistance efforts.

In 2004, the States Parties adopted a definition of a "landmine victim" that includes individuals, families and communities.

Most of the focus of victim assistance efforts has been on the individual directly involved in a landmine accident.

Focusing efforts on addressing the rights and needs of the individual is important and has the potential for greater impact on improving their daily lives.

However, the States Parties have come to understand that the impact on the family of those killed or injured should also be taken into account in victim assistance efforts, particularly in areas such as psychological support, economic inclusion, and support for the education of children.

In Cartagena, we also updated our understanding of what victim assistance is. It is a process involving a holistic and integrated approach rather than a series of separate actions.

Each component of the process – emergency and continuing medical care, physical rehabilitation, psychological and psychosocial support, and social and economic inclusion – are of equal importance. And each component requires specific objectives to ensure high quality standards, and availability and accessibility of services.

Victim assistance is not a stand-alone activity but requires the coordination of and collaboration between a wide range of actors including several government ministries and agencies as well as non-state entities.

While progress has been made in relevant States Parties, to varying degrees, in applying the understandings on victim assistance several challenges remain, including:

- services not meeting the needs in terms of both quantity and quality;
- limited or lack of accessibility to services and opportunities in rural areas;
- weak capacity to develop, implement and monitor objectives, national plans, and legislation in a transparent manner;
- inadequate resources to build government capacity to provide services; and,
- inadequate long-term international cooperation and assistance in both the provision of financial resources and technical support and in linking of resources to identified needs.

Of particular concern is the persistent challenge of translating increased understanding on victim assistance at the international level into tangible improvements in the quality of daily life of mine victims in affected communities.

The Cartagena Action Plan has the potential to facilitate measurable progress in overcoming this and other challenges.

Through the Cartagena Action Plan, the States Parties resolve to provide adequate age- and gender-sensitive assistance to mine victims, through a holistic and integrated approach in accordance with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law.

The Cartagena Action Plan includes 14 actions to address issues of inclusion, coordination, data collection, legislation and policies, planning, monitoring and evaluation, the involvement of relevant experts, capacity building, accessibility including to appropriate services, good practice, awareness raising, resource mobilisation, inclusive development, and, regional and bilateral cooperation.

The 2004 Nairobi Action Plan facilitated the development of a strategic framework to enhance victim assistance efforts in the period 2005-2009.

To ensure these efforts continue, our predecessors, Belgium and Thailand, developed specific recommendations on implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan to promote progress in achieving the victim assistance aims in the period 2010 to 2014.

These recommendations include specific actions that relevant States Parties and other stakeholders may wish to undertake to facilitate measurable progress in each of the victim assistance-related actions within the Cartagena Action Plan.

We thank Belgium and Thailand for this initiative and through our work at the national level with States Parties reporting a responsibility for significant numbers of survivors we know that this document is being disseminated and used.

To conclude, we have achieved a lot. For instance, years of work in this Convention has ensured that a coherent approach now exists in other related instruments, namely the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the CCW.

However, much remains to be done. The principles and understandings and actions adopted in Cartagena provide a strategic road map to guide our victim assistance efforts.

All actors have a role to play in addressing the rights and needs of mine victims and other persons with disabilities.

Nevertheless, real and sustainable progress rests with those States Parties reporting responsibility for significant numbers of survivors articulating in their own voices their challenges and plans to overcome them.

National ownership is fundamental to sustainability and sustainability of services is crucial to improving the quality of daily life of mine victims and other persons with disabilities.

National ownership means relevant authorities having the will, the resources, and the capacity to develop and implement plans, to coordinate activities, and to provide services.

As Co-Chairs we will continue our efforts with relevant States Parties to facilitate progress in achieving the aim of the full and effective participation and inclusion of mine victims and other persons with disabilities in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities.