



STATUS OF VICTIM ASSISTANCE IN UGANDA

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BY

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INTRODUCTION



Uganda ratified the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention on 25 February 1999. It entered into force for Uganda on 1 August 1999.

Since 2012, Uganda has been and continues to implement an inclusive approach of ensuring that all Persons with Disabilities and their caregivers, including the landmine victims and are given the same range services just like other Ugandans, keeping in mind their peculiar needs and their rights

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The Focal Point Person for victim assistance was appointed in 2018, by the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and has been compiling victim assistance reports.

A National Comprehensive Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020/2024 was developed through an inclusive consultative methodology in all the regions of the country and landmine survivors were particularly consulted. Its launch in August 2020 was sponsored by the ISU.

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The Government of Uganda Developed the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020. The Act provides for respect and promotion of fundamental and human rights and freedoms of the Persons with Disabilities including the landmine survivors. The regulations to the Act are at the solicitor general's office for clearance.

The Act clearly talks about non-discrimination in the provision of education, health services, non-discrimination in the provision of employment, accessibility to buildings and other services that are provided on a commercial basis, among others. The Act goes further to demonstrate that contravention of the any of the provisions is punishable. The National Policy on Disability that has been revised also aligns with the Act to protect the rights of Persons with Disabilities including the landmine survivors.

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There is no centralized database that captures information on the persons killed or injured by landmines at the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development. However, the ministry has completed the development of the disability Management Information System (MIS).

The MIS will capture information on the numbers and causes of the different categories of disability as stated by the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020, although it is going to start with the beneficiaries of the National Special Grant which is an economic empowerment program for all Persons with Disabilities.

In addition, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities is developing another MIS to capture information on the electoral committees of Persons with Disabilities. It will also capture all members of the councils representing Persons with Disabilities up to the lower local governments and cases of violation of the rights of Persons with Disabilities

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In Uganda, we do not have many casualties as a result of mines by mines often. However, when this happens in very rare circumstances, then they are health centres where the victims are given first aid, starting at the village or parish level with health Centre II.

Medical emergency care system is available but sometimes challenged by inadequate ambulances in addition to other emergencies medical equipment which delays timely delivery of victims to hospitals and few medical facilities coupled with low medical attention.

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The referral mechanisms are in place. For example, in relation to social-economic services, the Community Development Officers are present at the sub-county level for consultation and guidance on the available government programs for social-economic empowerment and their accessibility.

In the same way, medical and educational referrals are available, although with challenges associated with inadequacies of ambulances, medication equipment, timeliness, and high costs associated with them.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has embarked on an exercise to map all disability service providers so as to have a directory of the services to guide the referral mechanism. This is expected to be completed before December 2022.

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Action 28



The rehabilitation services are in place including physiotherapy and occupational therapy as well as psychosocial support services. There are however challenges in providing comprehensive medical care and surgeries due to insufficient medical facilities and equipment, high costs, and accessibility due to distance which many mine survivors cannot afford the transport cost.

However, His Excellency the President of Uganda during celebrations to mark the International Day for Persons with Disabilities 2021, directed the Ministry of Health to re-equip orthopedic workshops across the country so as to increase the provision of assistive devices at low or no cost. This was re-emphasized in the global commitments to disability 2022 by the Government of Uganda.

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Action 28 continued



In addition, a National Assistive Technology Committee comprising Ministries of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Education, Health and a number of other disability service providers was set up in 2021, with the purpose of ensuring that an essential assistive devices list is developed and always referred to whenever there is need for provision and acquisition of the assistive devices. The committee is chaired by the Ministry of Health and co-chaired by the Ministry of Gender.

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All the economic empowerment programs put in place by government are inclusive of all Persons with Disabilities. The capacity building as well as physical, social, cultural, political, and attitudinal and communication actions and programs are done with the disability lens. Uganda, for example, has a political representation of Persons with Disabilities at all levels of administration from the community level to national level as well as at the parliamentary level.

In addition, in the global commitment to disability 2022, Uganda pledged to increase the capacity of Persons with Disabilities through their organizations and individually, so as to empower them to demand for services and their rights. This has already started and so far 450 Persons with Disabilities have been trained on the National Special Grant and the Persons with Disabilities Act. This took place in May 2022 at the regional level in the Eastern, Western, Northern, and Central.

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Action 29 continued



The National Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities is one of the economic empowerment programmes that was put in place in the Financial Year(FY) 2019/2020, this has been increased to 10 billion Shs in the FY 2022/2023. So far, since its inception, 1,152 groups of Persons with Disabilities with 4,700 males and 4,576 females have benefited from the grant and the total amount given out is 5,695,911,000 billion Ugandan shillings. Of all these beneficiaries, an estimated 250 people were landmine survivors.

The community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Programme is another Government intervention being implemented in Uganda. Others include: the Senior Citizens Grant for Empowerment Programme, and the parish development model program, among others.

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The Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda oversees response to humanitarian risks and emergencies and is responsible for risk management and mitigation as well offering medical and other emergencies that happen in the country. However, this done in partnership with other ministries, departments, and agencies.

In the commitments to disability 2022, Uganda through the Office of the Prime Minister pledged to conduct a needs assessment for Persons with Disabilities including landmine victims in situations of emergencies and to develop a disability inclusive disaster reduction policy so as to domesticate the Sendai framework by 2024

The government further pledged to integrate the disaster-specific performance indicators in the annual performance framework for local governments by 2024

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In order to achieve an inclusive service provision approach for all Ugandans comprising Persons with Disabilities and their caregivers, the National guidelines for the development of laws, policies, regulations, and action plans dictate the involvement of different stakeholders at the development and implementation level.

The National Disability Coordination Committee draws membership from ministries of health, education, public service, the national union of persons with disabilities and the national council for persons with disabilities, the ministry of justice and constitutional affairs among others. This enables mainstreaming disability issues in different plans and programmes of different Departments, Ministries and Agencies.

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Action 41 continued



Uganda as a signatory to the convention always pays attention to her obligations through an inclusive approach. However, this is implemented with all the other legal and policy frameworks put in place for the empowerment of all persons with disabilities that includes landmine victims.

The funds are always put in place to implement Uganda's obligations, and this is done through the execution of the different programmes and activities such as awareness creation and advocacy in addition to the different economic empowerment programmes in place.

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Action 41 continued



As government, whenever there are undertakings on legal and policy development programs or activities being executed, the needs of men and women, boys and girls are always brought to the forefront. For example, during the development of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020 and the revision of, the National Policy on Disability, consultations with women and girls with disabilities, as well as men and women were carried out. This is also a requirement by Parliament and the cabinet. Representatives of landmine survivors are always consulted whenever strategies, laws, and policies are being developed or implemented.

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Challenges



- Insufficient data on the actual number of landmine survivors which has made planning and implementation of activities peculiar to landmine survivors difficult
- Insufficient rehabilitation services arising out of inadequate equipment for the provision of these services such as prosthetics
- Inability to have an office in charge of the APMBC in the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) which has made reporting difficult

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Proposed actions to overcome the challenges



- To engage with the Uganda Bureau of statistics to analyze the available data on disability so as to come up with the number of landmine survivors (this can be done with some funding).
- There is a deliberate effort to re-quip the orthopedic workshops in regional referral hospitals so as to improve the rehabilitation services
- The Ministry of Defence is in consultations with the UPDF to establish an office in charge of the APMBC implementation and reporting

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