

TALKING NOTES ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE UPDATE: 20-24

November 2023

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe as a State Party to the Convention on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban implements the Victim Assistance through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. The Disability Affairs Department in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare coordinates all programmes related to the welfare and rights of persons with disabilities, including mine survivors. This is in fulfilment of the requirement of Action #33 of the Oslo Action Plan which calls for State Parties to ensure that a relevant government entity oversees the integration of Victim Assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks.

Following the launch of the National Disability Policy in 2021, by his Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, the country has taken strides in the implementation of Victim Assistance. Before, land mine survivors were not particularized, they were assisted like any other persons with disabilities, however Zimbabwe has begun to pay particular attention to land mine survivors. To note is the establishment of the National Technical Committee on the implementation of the National Disability Policy which also involve the implementation of Victim Assistance. The technical Committee was established and launched in July 2022 by the then Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Honorable Professor Paul Mavima. The committee comprises of all Government Ministries and representatives from organisations of persons with disabilities. As such, Zimbabwe has managed to appoint disability focal persons in every government Ministry.

The Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare through the Department of Disability Affairs has started to conduct needs assessment of landmine victims. The needs assessment exercise started in Mudzi District where landmine survivors were interviewed, provided with psycho social support and registered for

empowerment projects. The Department is working in partnership with other organisations such as the “Mine Victims Assistance of Zimbabwe”. They are a registered organisation providing social protection services to land mine survivors and they started their programme in 3 Districts, Buhera, Mt Darwin and Nyamapanda. The needs assessment activities being conducted by both the Department of Disability Affairs and Mine Victims Assistance of Zimbabwe will assist in coming up with database of landmine survivors which is very important in provision of social protection services.

The Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare has also started awareness campaigns on victim assistance. In March 2023, the Department of Disability Affairs in partnership with the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting services also recorded a documentary which captures the lived experiences of land mine victims in Mudzi District. In this documentary, the survivors share their stories and also provide information on the kind of assistance they need. This is very essential as interventions will be planned to address specific needs. The documentary will go a long way in raising awareness on disability rights as well as mobilizing resources for the landmine survivors.

Challenges

The absence of a biometric database disaggregated by age, gender and location has compromised quality of service provision specific to landmine victims. It is impossible to come up with needs-based interventions where there is no data. However, Zimbabwe will continue to lobby for resources to conduct a disability survey which will address the issues of statistics as landmine survivors are also included. In the meantime, scaling up of the needs assessment activities will go a long way in providing statistics and information on the living conditions of landmine survivors.

Location of medical facilities remains a hindrance in responding to emergencies and access to medical services particularly for landmine victims. Most landmine infested

areas are located in hard-to-reach remote areas of the country. However, Zimbabwe Mine Action (ZIMAC) and other development partners doing mine clearance are providing transport support to ferry landmine survivors to nearby medical facilities in areas they are working on. Landmine survivors need assistive devices and this is an additional challenge due to lack of funds.

Conclusion

The information from needs assessment activities will proffer needs-based interventions which will then allow the effective implementation of victim assistance. Through the implementation of the National Disability Policy, Zimbabwe remains committed to providing appropriate, affordable and accessible services to mine survivors and their families on an equal basis with others. It is also anticipated that the needs assessment exercise will be expanded to cover all the affected areas in Zimbabwe. The exercise will assist in coming up with national statistics on land mine victims and survivors across the whole nation and their specific needs.