Understanding victim assistance and the challenges and lessons learnt

Victim Assistance Parallel Programme

The Tirana Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South Eastern Europe

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Victim assistance in the context of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

First multilateral disarmament treaty that aimed to assist the victims

- Not clear what needed to be done?
- How this should be done?
- Who was ultimately responsible?
Victim assistance in the context of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

- *Victim assistance* has been defined by the States Parties to include:
  - Understanding the extent of the challenge faced (e.g. data collection)
  - Emergency and ongoing medical care
  - Physical rehabilitation
  - Psychological support and social reintegration
  - Economic reintegration
  - Relevant laws and public policies

Victim assistance: principles

- victim assistance efforts should not exclude any person injured or disabled in another manner
Victim Assistance

26 States Parties have indicated that they are responsible for significant numbers of landmine survivors:

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Angola
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Chad
- Colombia
- Croatia
- DRC
- El Salvador
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Guinea Bissau
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Mozambique
- Nicaragua
- Peru
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Sudan
- Tajikistan
- Thailand
- Uganda
- Yemen

Victim assistance: understandings

- Ultimate responsibility of meeting the rights and needs of survivors within a particular state rests with that state
Victim assistance: understandings

- Victim assistance should be integrated into broader healthcare, rehabilitation, development, disability and human rights contexts

Victim assistance in international humanitarian law

- Victim assistance framework is relevant for victims of all types of weapons and other traumatic injuries
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- New standard by which to measure victim assistance efforts
- More systematic, sustainable and human rights based approach to victim assistance

Challenges

- Access to appropriate healthcare and rehabilitation facilities
- Affordability
- Improving and upgrading facilities
- Opportunities for employment and income generation
- Capacity building and on-going training
- Raising awareness
- Effective social welfare system and legislation
- Sufficient funding
- Coordination of donor support
- Support to local NGOs and agencies
Other challenges

- Translating increased understanding on victim assistance into tangible improvements in the quality of daily life of mine victims on the ground
- Limited capacity within State and non-governmental structures
- Limited or lack of inclusion of survivors and other persons with disabilities
- Lack of long-term sustainability of services
- Limited implementation of policies, plans and laws
- Low priority given to disability issues

Lessons learnt

- Victim assistance provisions of a disarmament convention should not raise concerns about new obligations
Lessons learnt

- Victim assistance must be seen as a set of concrete actions for which specific States hold ultimate responsibility.

Lessons learnt

- Victim assistance is a process that involves a rights based, holistic and integrated approach.
Lessons learnt

- Success in victim assistance means understanding victim assistance in the broader contexts of development
- Part of existing State responsibilities in the areas of healthcare, rehabilitation, social services, education, employment, and human rights

Lessons learnt

- Value of inclusion and the active participation of mine victims and other persons with disabilities in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, plans, and programs
Thank you!

www.apminebanconvention.org