

ICBL Statement on the Impact of Victim Assistance on the Ground  
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Standing Committee on Victim Assistance  
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*A survivor's view on: "Making a Difference on the Ground: Monitoring Progress and Evaluating the Impact of Victim Assistance Efforts"*

Statement by Margaret Arach Orech

Co- Chairs, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Margaret Arach Orech, a survivor from Uganda. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share with you in this plenary session our observation on **"Making a Difference on the Ground: Monitoring Progress and Evaluating the Impact of Victim Assistance Efforts"** in line with the pre-set questions by the Co-Chairs to assess the level of participation by survivors in victim assistance programs.

**1. Are you included in efforts to monitor and report on the impact of victim assistance programmes?**

In response to the various action plans guiding the implementation of victim assistance, a number of states parties with significant number of survivors have made efforts to put in place national plan of actions for Victim Assistance. Whereas the **Cartagena Action Plan # 23** emphasises inclusion and active participation of mine victims and their representative organisations in victim assistance related activities, in particular as regards the national action plan, legal frame-works and policies, implementation mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation, participation of survivors is still on a low scale in some of the states with significant number of survivors.

Planning and implementation of development initiatives are important, but without monitoring and evaluation there's no way to know how far we've progressed. It is the only way to ensure a positive impact is being made. Unlike other pillars of mine action, victim assistance is required for life and monitoring its impact will be a long-term activity.

Organizations that operate at a grassroots level need to be included in the monitoring of evaluation process because they are often the most connected to the survivors. But it is not only the responsibility of NGO's and governments to support VA. The survivors also have a crucial role to play towards their own reintegration. Traditionally, survivors have been viewed as victims and passive recipients. Landmine survivors still need the support from the local and international community, but it is vital that they are involved in all aspects of their economic and social rehabilitation.

In the Ugandan context, Uganda Landmine Survivors Association (ULSA) has been involved at least once to monitor the impact of victim assistance in two districts in the past years. This is not sufficient to gauge the impact of VA in the whole country. However, ULSA has provided response to survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development. This survey monitors the implementation progress of the VA Comprehensive Action Plan in Uganda. We have been reaching survivors in the most remote areas and have offered them their first opportunities to bring a voice to their needs.

Within Uganda, a solid structure for monitoring and evaluating victim assistance efforts has been created. But most assistance that landmine survivors can benefit from is normally focused on projects for persons with disabilities in general. It is from within these resources that survivors are expected to lobby for their share but often with very minimal response as survivors still lack the necessary capacity to access these scarce resources. A collaboration between mine action NGO's, both local and international, has led to the increased monitoring capacity, but without the implementation of projects specifically related to VA for landmine survivors, there aren't many landmine survivor specific projects to monitor.

As we heard from many states yesterday, the implementations of victim assistance projects have been minimal due to problems with access, budget constraints and most probably competing priorities of government. This has led to the postponement of fully implementing the VA Comprehensive Action Plan and thus minimal projects to monitor.

## **2. How can States and non-governmental and international organizations improve their victim assistance efforts to better ensure they translate into a real difference on the ground?**

Coordination, transparency, accountability, resource mobilisation and self-advocacy are crucial for a successful VA program. The local and international actors need to coordinate their efforts and have transparent objectives. Institutions need to be accountable to each other as well as themselves. The survivors need to have a mindset that shifts a self-image of victimization and instead promotes self-advocacy and motivation. Problems arise when these features are not met.

Coordination between VA actors at all levels is necessary for meaningful interventions. Although a certain level of coordination has been attained, a number of sector objectives remain unachieved within some states such as Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, and Uganda among others.

NGOs participation in coordination requires cooperation from government and government need to take real ownership of VA instead of leaving this to INGOs and NGOs. This could also include taking survivors perspective in government statements as well as dedicating resources to and participating in survivor's activities at national level. In Uganda, successful VA has suffered a major setback owing to the exit of key mine actors and a shift in donor priorities. Funding for VA has decreased significantly and yet the need remains just as prominent. These setbacks could be avoided with greater transparency and synchronization of activities within the few organisations on the ground.

## **3. Are the efforts of States and no-governmental and international organizations actually making a difference in the lives of victims and survivors?**

In many states, we see a lot of commitment from the government, but so far, it is difficult to see the actions that result or the impact of their actions on our lives. As I said, most VA is integrated into work for all persons with disability, which is normally a good idea, but we as victims are often not able to access or pay for these services. So we would like to see dedicated funding for victim assistance in order to enable us to take advantage of what has been created for others. One important thing is for the government to help survivors learn about what is available for broader groups of persons with disabilities. Another problem is that most services are in cities, whereas the majority of survivors live in rural areas, sometimes extremely remote. We need the government to provide transport for those people to get the medical treatment, rehabilitation, or job training services they need. We need the government to ensure that these services are free or very inexpensive. We need the government to

ensure these services meet our real needs, are in the right language so survivors can understand, provide high quality prosthetics that will last, and on and on. While NGOs try to improve access for survivors, it is not enough for the governments to rely on them and the funding they receive. We need governments to take responsibility themselves.

Without commitment from governments, both our own and international donors, the impact from the small NGO can only be seen on a small scale.