

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION**

**January 28-29, 2002**

**User evaluation of needs and services for mine  
and unexploded ordnance survivors**

**1. Introduction**

This short intervention will focus on prosthetics. This, we think, is a critical area for the Standing Committee to spend time on. But of course many of the issues we raise could equally well be applied to other forms of victim assistance, and not just to landmine survivors.

**2. An area for advancement: prostheses**

First, some brief general points on this area. The provision of prostheses to amputees, as many people here know very well, has clear goals which could be summarised as follows:

- by restoring mobility, enhancing individuals' human dignity, and
- enabling them and their families to have a better chance of sustaining themselves and hopefully to escape from poverty
- prostheses have also been described as vital building blocks for creating social rights.

The ICBL's guidelines for care and rehabilitation of survivors say that assistive devices should be 'safe, durable, maintained and repaired locally. Long-term services should be available for adjustments and replacements'.

The question we want to raise is: how do we know the extent to which services in this area are meeting these aspirations?

**3. Problems faced by survivors**

One way, of course, is to ask survivors. Informal discussions by Landmine Action staff with survivors and with staff at prosthetic centres in several countries in recent months and years point to a number of important issues that will be familiar to those who work in the field:

- problems faced by amputees in obtaining a prosthetic limb, or one that fits properly; and
- difficulties in adapting to prostheses and being able to get to clinics for follow-up or regular checks.

Low proportions of women at prosthetic centres have also been identified (which raises questions about socio-economic and cultural factors that might be preventing access for women).

These qualitative impressions are borne out by published studies. For example, Landmine Monitor found that most services are in urban centres, whilst most casualties are in the countryside. And there is also the perennial question of what is the most appropriate technology to use in different mine-affected areas; this debate has been characterised by local disability groups in discussion with Landmine Action as 'local materials versus technology from abroad'.

#### **4. Towards a better understanding of users' views**

Existing tools for evaluating prosthetic provision include survivor surveys, who are asked a range of questions:

- what centres they visited, and the accessibility of centres
- what devices are used (or not used)
- if a device is not used, why
- number of prostheses used
- how long they last/what repairs were needed.

It seems to us there is a gap here: how do we know how *end-users define their needs, or assess the utility of prostheses?* Should we be doing more to understand users' own definitions of, for example, what is the most suitable type of foot, or where services are delivered, and by whom? What is the context in which the prosthesis is being used: what are the environmental, cultural, social and economic circumstances of the person, their family situation, access to health care and so on. Or what else is needed to make this work better for them?

#### **5. Developing alternative measures**

This needn't be about developing yet another tool, but about finding ways to integrate the long-term experiences of users with the evaluation requirements of donors and NGOs.

Our view is that it should be possible to work with war amputees, so that they define their needs and help determine measures of success. A more participatory process should develop indicators of more importance to survivors, to complement the clinical measures – with the aim of helping us to answer practical questions about provision in a way that is more responsive to local concerns. Landmine Action has prepared a project that seeks to do exactly that, and we are keen to discuss this with donors and other interested parties.

#### **6. Recommendations**

We recommend that the Standing Committee and participants:

- incorporate the views of end-users in developing the Committee's future direction or 'road-map' (a process begun, of course, by the 'raising the voices' programme)
- in particular seek ways to incorporate the views of end-users in further discussions in the critical area of prostheses provision
- encourage the provision of prostheses and other assistive devices in mine-affected countries as a basic health service but in ways that are responsive to locally defined needs and concerns.

#### **Landmine Action**

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