

ICBL statement on progress towards the Second Review Conference

By Landmine Monitor (Handicap International-Belgium)

In the run-up to the First Review Conference, governments and the ICBL worked together intensively to create the Nairobi Action Plan. All States Parties accepted that they are primarily responsible for the survivors in their countries and committed to improve survivors' lives through 11 concrete actions.

Today, 25 States Parties have indicated that they hold responsibility for significant numbers of survivors. They agreed to identify the scope of the victim assistance challenge, create SMART objectives, produce plans to achieve these objectives by 2009, and to report regularly on progress. As we look at measuring success towards the Second Review Conference these objectives should be important indicators of progress. This currently is the accepted norm for all countries to guide their victim assistance activities.

The VA25 process have undoubtedly raised awareness of the importance of victim assistance, focussed efforts at the national level and increased the level of information available. We continue to see that reporting on the creation of plans and strategies is greater than ever. But reporting on the real achievements under these plans is not on par. Even if not everything has been achieved, states should explain why no progress could be made, and what will be done to address the need.

The ICBL has also looked at the recently presented indicators and would be happy to continue to work with the co-chairs to refine them so that the indicators become a tool for all of us to measure progress.

Progress becomes visible when put into context: when reporting on annual plans and progress made year by year, it needs to be clarified if these reports on activities are part of the plan or outside of it. If no plans exist or progress is not monitored, how do you know the effect your efforts?

Above all, we should recall that real progress can only be measured in terms of the difference these mechanisms make to the lives of real people.

For the ICBL progress equals impact. We encourage States Parties to report progress as it happens on the ground. States' reporting can become part of the constraint because they often report on capacity or the situation in their country without linking it to the needs of survivors and whether the plans ultimately meet the needs.

Mine Ban Treaty meetings and Article 7 reporting give states the opportunity to provide regular updates on the concrete achievements for survivors in comparison with the situation since the First Review Conference. Meeting after meeting, reporting is disconnected from what states said they were going to do. We hear about initiatives in victim assistance but no indication is given whether there was any greater benefit for survivors over time. We want states to say "in 2005 we needed to do this, now we have done that and this is how it made a difference."

By the Second Review Conference it, for example, should be clear:

- Whether states have made better assessments of the needs of survivors than in 2005;

- Whether states are able to capture casualties better than in 2005;
- Whether coordination mechanisms have improved access to services and effective use of resources;
- Whether states have more trained staff in affected areas than in 2005;
- Whether states' national contributions have increased since 2005 or NGOs are still doing the bulk of the work.

Three years into the Nairobi Action Plan, states are still not able to estimate how many people have been assisted and how. Or even if there has been an increase or decrease in people benefiting from services.

We encourage States Parties to make the balance, to do what they have committed to and to see what progress has actually been made between 2005 and 2009. We understand that victim assistance will have to continue long after 2009, but this is not the time to move the goalposts yet. States are starting to set their deadlines from 2008 to 2011; this might give the impression that there is little progress to be reported on today.

We will also measure the balance. The Mine Ban Treaty has a unique civil society monitoring mechanism that draws information from all sources publicly available. We responded to the call made by previous co-chairs for victim assistance, challenging "civil society to further improve its monitoring on states' efforts..."

Therefore, Landmine Monitor adopted a new approach to reporting victim assistance in 2007. We report systematically on who is responsible for victim assistance, provide annual updates on what kind of strategies guide, coordinate and evaluate actions, who is involved, and what the cross-cutting issues are. But we also report on annual progress on plans and, to extent possible, how many people benefited and how these efforts respond to the needs within that country context.

In 2008, Landmine Monitor has sent letters to all relevant government bodies to obtain concrete and updated information for 2007-2008 about the states' response to the Nairobi Action Plan. The four main topics were: victim assistance strategies, progress and challenges last year, budgeting, and relevant cross-cutting issues. Ten states sent official responses and six provided unofficial ones. Within these answers, states found it difficult to formulate complete responses. It is a poor indicator that after ten years of Mine Ban Treaty, several states were unable to say if they have a strategic framework, who was responsible and which other organizations were involved. Many were also unable to report how the strategy had been used and what had been achieved in the past year.

States, DPOs, survivors and other civil society partners, please activate your networks to report on progress. We know that progress has been made. We all want to see success at the Second Review Conference and be able to continue to improve our planning for the future. It is not 2009 yet, but the time to act is now.