

International cooperation and assistance: Victim Assistance

Afghanistan has taken to heart the integration of Victim Assistance into the broader sector of disability issues and services. So to gain greater clarity regarding the true magnitude of the effort being made to assist states parties' within the Victim/Disability Assistance field, coordination with key government entities is crucial in assessing the total amount of funding, the full scope of the problem and the long term solutions and planning. Tapping into this information from all sources has been a challenge, but one that we are working hard to overcome through the development of coordination mechanisms such as our inter-ministerial taskforce on disability as well as central and regional coordination groups that bring together government, NGO and Persons with Disability Organizations to discuss issues of implementation, reporting, monitoring and gap identification and resource mobilization. But understanding the scale of need and what supports already exists goes both ways. Good donor coordination is essential also, with donors reporting regularly to relevant ministries with regards to their funding aspirations and contributions. Allow governments to play a role in determining need and assisting donors in targeting the priorities of the country.

Only small amounts of funds have come through mine action organizations for VA/disability activities. But these funds can

make a difference when targeted at awareness raising, training, and strengthening coordination mechanisms among the key national stakeholders. These activities are often overlooked by donors who are supporting the larger infrastructures and services of health and education. But without advocacy and awareness, the larger government structures often do not understand their responsibilities and do not request support to the disability sector from their donors.

The AP Mine Ban Convention has served as a catalyst for raising awareness and implementation of activities that serve to develop education, health, employment programmes that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

Afghanistan is concerned with the magnitude of the need and the wide range of services required to meet the needs of persons with disabilities even basic levels. Afghanistan would like to take on the challenges but finds that technical expertise within the disability sector is lacking in almost all areas of government.

Developing comprehensive national plans for specific activities such as inclusive education, higher education access, social and peer support mechanisms is a challenge in Afghanistan. Donors should consider funding long term national programmes that may require 3 to 5 years or more to be fully developed in order to provide the needed services at national levels.

I also request that all donors be vocal in support of disability issues in all their discussions with governments, programme development and insist that the inclusion of disability be standard operating procedure for all projects and support to states parties.