



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

**APMBC States Parties Meeting
28 Nov – 1 Dec 2016, Santiago, Chile**

*Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am honoured and privileged to present the achievements and challenges of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan regarding the Victim Assistance programme, obligatory under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Afghanistan heavily relies on agriculture and manual labour, and hence the hardship that comes with the loss of a limb is devastating. When limbs are torn, the victim's future is as bleak as death. The government, UN, and non-governmental organisations have collectively and independently undertaken tremendous efforts to support, empower and advocate for these mine and ERW victims and other persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled is the champion for persons with disabilities within Afghan government. Some of their recent achievements include amendment of the law for persons with disabilities and barrier-free access for ministry premises. The complete amendment of the Law on the Rights and Benefits of Persons with Disabilities has been initiated to comply with the international human rights obligations, as well as to address problems on its practical implementation. Approximately 90 percent of the amendment process has been complete with comprehensive consultation with relevant ministries and civil society. The Ministry with support of the World Bank also started renovation of the Martyrs and Disability Affairs premises in order to improve accessibility for person with disabilities in line with accessibility guidelines and standards. The renovation is to be completed by the end of this year.

In addition, the National Unity Government of Afghanistan held the first National Conference on Persons with Disabilities in Afghanistan at the Presidential Palace with participation of high level government officials, including Chief Executive, First Lady, various ministers, donors, mine action and civil society organizations, national and international disability related agencies, representatives of all categories of persons with disabilities, along with relevant organisations from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The goal of the conference was to identify government roles and responsibilities toward disability rights. This conference was the first in its kind to address disability rights in such a high level forum to mainstream disability in the agenda of all government agencies.

As a collective effort, the joint advocacy for ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty is in progress to facilitate access to published works for the persons with visual impairments.

ONE short success story of ACAP III or any other VA project under MAPA to illustrate success of VA project or personal story of victim empowered by project.

For example...

NGOs including mine action organizations implement various victim assistance projects such as physical and psychological therapy, economic and social integration, and awareness raising for mine and ERW victims and other persons with disabilities. Farid Ahmad, a 12-year-old boy who lost his leg after stepping on a landmine is one of the beneficiaries of such project. Discrimination and stigma against disability are major challenges persons with disabilities face in Afghanistan. He was bullied in school because of his disability. Farid received physiotherapy treatment under one of our Victim Assistance projects, and its effect is not only physical but psychological. I quote from his interview: "I am sure that after my treatment is completed, I would be able to go back to my school and no one will be making fun of me any further. I will be able to play my favorite games just like other children." The Victim Assistance projects leaves truly empowering impact on individual beneficiaries and their families.

Despite these significant achievements on Victim Assistance in Afghanistan with the support of donor agencies, the victim assistance sector faces critical funding shortfall. The disability and Victim Assistance agencies received the least amount of financial support from the international community. Nevertheless, the sector developed foundation and system of service delivery for mine and ERW victims and other persons with disabilities. The limited financial support endangers these existing capability and potential.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to the generous donors that have supported the victim assistance activities in Afghanistan. The assistance has helped improve the lives of mine and ERW victims and other persons with disabilities.

Thank you.