



Government of Uganda

Statement by;

Beatrice Kaggya

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Thematic Discussion on Victim Assistance

Progress made in Victim Assistance Objectives
for Uganda 2005-2009

18-22 September 2006
Geneva Switzerland

Contact:

Simbamanyo Building

Plot #2 Lumumba Avenue

P.O. Box 7136

Kampala Uganda

e-mail: disability@mglsd.go.ug www.mglsd.go.ug

Madam President, Distinguished Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Government of Uganda is taking victim assistance seriously and is building infrastructure to respond. I am the focal point on Community Based Services for People with Disability at the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development who has the overreaching mission to create an enabling environment for social protection and social transformation of communities. In this view, the Ministry has to advocate for the protection and promotion of fundamental rights of the poor and vulnerable groups.

Further progress has been made on victim assistance in ensuring that Uganda fulfils its commitment to the Nairobi Action Plan. Uganda has moved well beyond the identified objectives within a Victim Assistance Action Plan. We have developed a vision of an integrated approach for Uganda which utilizes existing frameworks and involves multiple Ministries and disability agencies.

There continues to be efforts made to raise awareness which has resulted in a budget line within the national budget for landmine survivors through the Joint Monitoring Unit.

Objectives within the Victim Assistance Action Plan that have new information include:

Establishing a database on landmine victims utilizing socioeconomic indicators urgently requires funding. This is a priority within the Government as the identification of landmine victims and the monitoring of the reintegration process is required. There is an urgency here as an agreement of Cessation of Hostilities was signed in August. This agreement may lead to the resettlement of over 1 million internally displaced persons, including landmine victims.

Rehabilitation:

Focus is planned through the strengthening of regional orthopedic centers, and the development of outreach and referral to specialized services within the Ministry of Health. Successful community based rehabilitation exists in many parts of the country. Plans are developed to adapt the model to go into the mine affected districts where there is early return.

Social - Economic Reintegration:

Social development and the reintegration process is vital to Uganda, especially in areas where landmine survivors are internally displaced and are now considering return and resettlement. An area of priority is how mine action can assist landmine survivors who are internally displaced to return to their communities, using existing structures. Providing landmine victims with

the right to return is considered of high importance in socio-economic reintegration. The next step is how to convince donors that this action is important for peace building, sustainability and to develop an integrated society in the war affected parts of the country. Plans are in place to protect land rights of victims and affirmative action to provide equal opportunity to successfully return home with their families and their community. Persons with disabilities have a slogan "nothing for us without us" so active participation of landmine victims is essential to the success of this process. There is additional guidance for victim assistance with the launching of the National Disability Policy on 10 July 2006

Landmine Survivor Groups

Needless to say the establishment and strengthening of landmine survivor groups is essential in the whole process. To organize a structure of landmine survivor groups is highly beneficial in mine action Uganda taking the investment made by "Raising of the Voices Programme" to the next level and would assist in establishing and building landmine survivor groups at the district, and camp/village level. The establishment of landmine survivor groups will build confidence and a network that supports each other. The purpose in these actions would be to bring landmine survivors into the fore front as major players within mine action.

Capacity Building:

There has been an increasing focus on building capacity of technical staff in the respective ministries, mine action partners and landmine survivors.

A National Mine Action Steering Committee which includes six key ministries commenced on 16 January this year as the body responsible for policy, direction, resource allocation and approval of action plans.

The Uganda Mine Action Center is being established with a section for victim assistance that is managed by landmine survivors. The Mine Action Center will coordinate and direct victim assistance activities with both the ministries and accredited INGOs.

Actions have been taken for full participation of relevant ministries and other players in the development of an integrated model of victim assistance.

The mine action strategy is integrating into more than just the broader health and social service systems. Victim Assistance in Uganda is linked with the IDP programmes as well as the Disabled Peoples' movement.

The Policy on Disability which was officially launched on 10 July, is a framework that provides for empowerment, participation and human rights based strategies for equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

In August, there was a meeting, of key players in Government, mine action operators and NGOs to develop a Policy on Mine Action. Specific consideration was given to landmine victims within the Mine Action Policy.

The victim assistance programme is carefully following the Draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, agreed upon 28 August. The Convention will be used as a tool to ensure alignment for landmine victims to enjoy their rights and future development after the completion of the Mine Ban Treaty.

During the last six months diligent efforts have been made to advocate for and strengthen attention on mine survivors and other persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group within the vast number of Ugandans living in IDP camps. These actions are in line with the Uganda IDP Policy and the Policy on Disability. Uganda's main strategy is to integrate victim assistance within all major development programs within the various sectors.

Information that will not change is the commitment of Uganda Victim Assistance to focus on;

- ✦ The development of data and monitoring
- ✦ Building capacity at national, district and community levels
- ✦ Building Peace initiatives through victim assistance
- ✦ Ensuring that landmine survivors and people with disabilities are identified as a special vulnerable group who require affirmative action while in the IDP camps and the recovery and return process.
- ✦ Putting landmine survivors in the lead in victim assistance

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government of Uganda, We assure you that the Mine Ban Treaty and the victim assistance component will be followed to their logical conclusions.

For God and My Country

Thank you