

Kathleen Maes and Tuncharareth
NEW VERSION!

ICBL Statement Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-economic Reintegration

Thank you for giving ICBL this opportunity to speak and to comment on the efforts made to assist mine survivors, their families and communities this year.

The ICBL slogan for this meeting is 'from words to reality'. I saw this slogan in action when I was at the first national victim assistance workshop in Afghanistan a short while back. There, motivated, capable people – survivors, national and international practitioners and government representatives – worked hard to make objectives SMART-er and to define concrete activities matching the needs of survivors and other people with disabilities in a sustainable way. Similar activities are being undertaken in other countries.

We can draw important lessons from these initiatives: a lot can be achieved when there is communication, collaboration and coordination. It also shows clearly that increased national ownership, interministerial cooperation, responsibility and accountability are key to nationally managed, sustainable survivor assistance.

On the one hand, this progress makes ICBL hopeful that we will emerge out of the paper paradise my survivor colleagues found they were living in.

But on the other hand, we recorded 7,328 new casualties in 2005. More than 5,000 of these recorded casualties – and probably another 10,000 unrecorded casualties - joined the ranks of up to 500,000 survivors worldwide. Unfortunately, their situation stayed largely the same:

- Services are still too far from the mine-affected areas
- Services are still too expensive
- Assistance is still too one-sidedly focussed on medical care
- Psychosocial support is still stigmatized
- Socio-economic reintegration still does not meet market demand
- Disability legislation is still not implemented

As a result, mine survivors and persons with disabilities remain among the poorest of the poor in 2006.

Many articles of this Treaty have deadlines, which are heavily debated this week. As survivors often have life-long needs, survivor assistance cannot have such a deadline. But now, two years after the Nairobi Summit, the deadline to turn words into action is NOW.

We encourage all states, not only the VA-24, to exercise the necessary political will to make this transition. Act now despite financial and human resource capacity challenges. ICBL does recognize that capacities in many mine affected countries need to be reinforced, but we would urge you not underestimate your abilities.

Do not let the Nairobi Action Plan become just 'another piece of paper' because survivors, their needs, expectations and capacities do not only exist on paper either.

But my colleague Reth will explain this in a more practical exercise.

I would like to begin by asking all the delegates to close your eyes and imagine your life with one leg or even without legs. Would you accept what your country has to offer if you stepped on a mine? I will give you a few seconds to think.

SILENCE (10 seconds)

How would you change your country so you could have a life of dignity as a mine survivor? Zeljko from Bosnia and Herzegovina reminds us that we don't want charity, we want your awareness that we were once like you. We ask that you imagine yourself as us.

We, landmine survivors and friends, asked ourselves the same question from a different perspective. A man and woman with unlimited resources, told us, "We will give you all the money you need for survivor assistance, if you can tell us what you will do in your country right now. What would you answer?"

Some of our answers were:

"The gift of 1% of the world's income could eliminate world poverty so we were told recently. It is true poverty is the basic cause of many of the problems of survivors.

- So, I would build up the capacity of villages to give direct services in education, in health and to ensure the people without houses, water and food security are helped. I would then hope richer villages help other villages.
- Another said, "I would also build personal strength and confidence of survivors through training and awareness raising."
- Another said, "For me, economic reintegration is a priority. I will create two strands:
 1. Self-employment opportunities for survivors. I will persuade bank managers to give loans to survivors and we will prove that investing in survivors is investing in the economy.
 2. Stimulating employers to give jobs to survivors by giving employers incentives, small tax breaks, bonuses.
- Others said, "I will eliminate all physical barriers and completely renew our transport system and access to it.
- I will build a quality rehabilitation center, train local staff and have an investment fund for raw materials and transport for survivors.
- I will promote coordination and capacity development of disabled persons organizations to present unified front.
- I would begin to convert some of the money spent on creating new weapons of war to eliminating poverty, including that of survivors.
- I would ensure the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities is incorporated into national law and that government officials, police, service providers and survivors are trained to implement it. There would be independent monitoring, which would include persons with disabilities."

We realize poverty does not only mean a lack of financial means, but also includes a lack of social freedom, justice, participation and equal opportunities. Money is essential to ensuring the inclusion of survivors. However more than money is required: increasing government goodwill, depoliticizing victim assistance, changing ideas of communities, and changing structures that perpetuate the exclusion of survivors.

If the survivors have enough food and have capacity to rebuild their own lives and participate in society they will contribute to building a community of peace and compassion and this is what the world needs.

Statement by Norway on Victim Assistance. 7 MSP. Mine Ban Convention.

Madam President,

Norway strongly welcomes the recent adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Ad Hoc Committee to the UN General Assembly. Norway participated actively in the negotiations and now stands ready to implement this important new legal instrument. This new Convention complements and reinforces the victim assistance aspects of the Mine Ban Convention. We commend the work of the many NGOs who pushed hard to make the Convention a reality.

Today we would like to highlight Article 6 of the Convention on “Women with Disabilities”. Article 6.1 states that: “States Parties recognise that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and in this regard shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Article 6.2 continues “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present Convention”.

As most landmine survivors and victims live in countries in conflict or countries recently having achieved peace, we see both the Disability Rights Convention and the Mine Ban Convention in connection with the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. We expect mine action to integrate a gender perspective in addition to mine action specifically targeted at women and girls. All mine action activities supported by Norway, including victim assistance, must be in compliance with Security Council resolution 1325.

We also welcome the initiative by Landmine Survivors’ Network regarding a study on Prosthetics and Orthotics services in low income settings. Programme and project guides will be made with the endorsement of ISPO and the participation of 34 other NGOs.

Finally, we would like to commend the present co-chairs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance, with the assistance of the ISU, for their efforts and wide range of activities, as reflected in the Geneva Progress Report. We look forward to continue working on victim assistance with the incoming co-chairs, other States Parties and the many NGOs who have been and still are crucial in the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention.

Thank you.