Prostheses for Pachyderm Landmine Survivors

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In which the RASR can foster regional cooperation on priority issues, five action items were identified. Suggestions included:

- Sharing of information and best practices
- Infrastructure.
- Improving maintenance of facilities and physical security and stockpile management.
- Work with SEESAC to maintain an up-to-date database of national points of contact.
- Reinvigorate the South Eastern Europe Regional Implementation Plan

The actions identified were:

- Organizing a regional summit on this issue
- Establishing an informal Group of Ministers and Chiefs of Defense in the region, considering how they could be consolidated to be more appropriate.
- Regular high-level conferences of Defense Ministers and Chiefs of Defense

Looking to the Future

Regional workshops are one aspect of the RASR Initiative, which will develop various coordination mechanisms for governments in the region. The workshops will be held periodically to develop a dialogue among relevant government officials so they can share information, advice and lessons learned, as well as coordinate efforts where and when appropriate. Another RASR workshop is planned for fall 2009.

For more information and announcements, visit http://www.turantum.org

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Therdchai Jivacate of Thailand’s Prostheses Foundation, was given a new leg and an opportunity to move past the trauma of her injury. Mosha’s right forelimb was severed in a landmine blast two years ago along the Thai-Burmese border when she was only seven months old. Unlike Motsala, who was fitted temporarily with a sawn-off barrel cast before being fitted with a permanent prosthesis, Mosha was fitted using the CIR Casting System, providing her with a properly fitted prosthesis in a very short period of time. Mosha was fitted with her prosthesis at the Elephant Hospital of the Thai Elephant Conservation Center.

The CIR system replaces traditional plaster-of-Paris bandages with a specially treated fabric casting bag filled with polyurethane beads. By placing the casting bag around the residual limb, a negative mold is formed once vacuum suction is applied. The mold can then be removed and used to create a final prosthesis quickly and easily. The technique was developed with funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation Research for the CIR’s Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on improved technology access for landmine survivors. The fabrication method was taught during World Health Organization-sponsored technology transfer workshops at the Sandhorn National Rehabilitation Center in Bangkok, Thailand, in March 2007. After attending the workshops, Dr. Therdchai Jivacate, the Secretary-General of the Thailand’s Prostheses Foundation and recipient of the 2008 Ramon Magsaysay Award,1 applied a modified version of the system to Mosha.2

For the 2004 Landmine Action Report,3 in Burma and Thailand it is not uncommon for both domestic and wild animals—including buffalo, dogs, wild pigs, and tigers—to fall victim to landmines. Reports indicate that landmines along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border have killed at least 26 elephants, and up to 90 have been killed or injured along the Thailand-Burma (Myanmar) border.

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Mosha enjoys a walk with her new prosthesis and Dr. Therdchai Jivacate of Thailand’s Prostheses Foundation, however one young elephant is now able to walk again and more may be able to do so soon. Though the staff of the Friends of the Asian Elephant Hospital in Thailand use the CIR Casting System to create a prosthesis for Mosha.

This sheet of the Prosthetics Program at the Thailand’s Prostheses Foundation in Bangkok is a prototype of a prostheses design for a young elephant. Mosha’s forelimb was amputated in a landmine blast in 2005, and a mold was taken at the Elephant Hospital of the Thai Elephant Conservation Center.

Though the staff of the Friends of the Asian Elephant Hospital in Thailand has treated nine survivors, many more die each year. Thanks to the CIR Casting System developed by Dr. Yongchak Wua’s team at the Center for International Rehabilitation,4 however one young elephant is now able to walk again and more may be able to do so soon.

Motsala, the 15-year-old elephant from the Thai Elephant Conservation Center that helped to raise funds for the Friends of the Asian Elephant Hospital in Thailand, was fitted with a prosthesis after losing his leg in 1997. Motsala’s 31-month-old Thai elephant, Published by JMC Scholarly Commons, 2009

The CIR Casting System has been used for several years to create high-quality, low-cost prostheses for human landmine survivors and other people with below-knee amputation.

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by Kathryn Jackson | Center for International Rehabilitation

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