ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance

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The ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance

L andmine Survivors Network (LSN) currently chairs the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance. It is in this capacity, working to-gether with over 20 humanitarian and development non-governmental organizations (NGOs), my ICBL colleagues and I welcome this opportunity to discuss Article 6 which contains States Parties responsibility to provide “care and rehabilitation, and social and eco-nomic reinTEGRATION of mine victims.” In February 1998, the ICBL set four main goals:

1) To press the international community to com-mit up to $3 billion over the next 10 years to sup-port comprehensive victim assistance. (Note: the working group developed a matrix that outlines the baseline costs for comprehensive assistance; average estimated cost per survivor in mine-affected countries is roughly $9,800).

2) To support a wide range of assistance activi-ties from acute care and physical reha bitilation to psychological support, vocational training and em-ployment opportunities.

3) To promote sharing of infor-mation and assistance strategies among members to create the best possible rehabilitation outcomes for mine victims. (In the spirit of the Ottawa Process, ICBL continues to work closely and collaboratively with all major players on victim as-sistance).

4) To promote and involve mine victims and landmine-infected communities in the planning and implemen-tation of mine assistance programs. (This follows the U.N. Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. “Nothing about us, without us,” as the saying goes in the disability rights movement).

To advance its goals, the ICBL Working Group has developed a set of programmatic guidelines to help promote meaningful victim assistance. Today, the ICBL is pleased to introduce the newly published ICBL Guidelines for the Care and Rehabilitation of Survivors. We also ask all governments to adhere to these guidelines. They were developed in broad consulta-tion with international organizations and local NGOs to help diverse actors, including donors and program implementers, design and fund the most effective assistance programs.

Many ICBL members have been active in mined countries for decades, working to rehabilitate the in-jured. In fact, NGOs have been the primary imple-mentors in the field, providing physical rehabilitation and other support such as training and small enter-prise. The ICBL welcomes the invitation to join con-sultations on the proposed Strategic Framework for Victim Assistance. The question now is how do we all work together in the continuing spirit of the Ot-tawa Process? The ICBL will nominate key represen-tatives to work in equal partnership with all States Parties, international organizations such as the ICRC, and U.N. agencies such as UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

Let us be clear that a public health care approach is an important perspective and framework, but not the only approach to victim assistance. As we have heard before, no-one size model fits all countries. We must be flexible and creative to meet the urgent needs of persons with disabilities. We can also try to define mine victims in several different ways, but one obvi-ous starting point is to look into the eyes of survi-vors and their families struggling to overcome per-sonal trauma. They need our help. Yes, there are many hurting people to help in the world, but it is hap-pening that many victims were created by landmine injuries and to help rehabilitate mine-injured indi-viduals and communities. Let us be very concrete and not forget this fact.

At this conference, LSN will share with others the new Landmines and Survivors Assistance Guide, which they have developed. The guide includes case studies, video clips and other tools to help governments, donors, NGOs and affected communities plan and carry out victim assistance programs. This guide is also intended to build the knowledge and skills needed to support effective assistance programs in mine-affected countries.

State Responsibility for Survivor Assistance

In his most recent report on the landmine cri-sis, the U.N. Secretary General said that a proper re-sponse to the landmine crisis includes the “rehabili-tation of landmine victims and their return to in-terdependent activities and economic integration; capac-ity building and sustainability; legislation and pub-lic awareness; access and data collection.” We have applauded the Mozambican government’s im-portant initiative to address States Parties responsibility to and to identify gaps, resources and funding needs. All States Parties are in a position to help. To make any strategic framework a reality for victims will require States Parties to contribute resources to NGO implementers, to track these contributions transparently and to monitor progress.

The Mine Ban Treaty needs legs, hands and eyes, concrete assistance that makes a difference in the lives of families held hostage to landmines. In the end it’s about action, not just committees, work, declarations and data collection. We must guard against any inter-pretation of data collection as the same thing as real victim assistance. The ICBL Guidelines are clear on this point. The goal of all information-gathering must be to help governments make timely, informed and life saving decisions.

The ICBL looks forward to working in partner-ship and full collaboration with governments during the coming months to prepare and participate in in-ter-session meetings. The ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance stands ready to receive an important focal point for NGOs’ input and collaboration. We will be an active partner and important resource to ensure compliance with Article 6 of the Mine Ban Treaty. At this conference, LSN will present its new Landmines and Survivors Assistance Guide, which they have developed. The guide includes case studies, video clips and other tools to help governments, donors, NGOs and affected communities plan and carry out victim assistance programs. This guide is also intended to build the knowledge and skills needed to support effective assistance programs in mine-affected countries.

As my colleague and ICBL ambassador Tam Cobb of the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance

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A homemade prosthesis of wood and rubber, made by a victim in an effort to resume a productive life. (Photo: Cambodia)

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A homemade prosthesis of wood and rubber, made by a victim in an effort to resume a productive life. (Photo: Cambodia)

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As my colleague and ICBL ambassador Tam Cobb from Cambodia reminds us: a fake leg is great, but it doesn’t put food on the table.