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FOCUS
Victim & Survivor Assistance

Landmine Survivors Network Victim Assistance Programs

Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) assists victims through the support of other landmine survivors. A number of programs and networks are available for coping and reintegrating survivors and their families back into their communities.

by Whitney Toller, MAIC

In 1995, two American landmine survivors, Jerry White and Ken Rutherford, founded LSN. Their passion and that of LSN is to “empower individuals, families and communities affected by landmines to recover from trauma.”

The organization conducts programs in which landmine survivors assist other survivors with the resources and support they need. LSN has supported a number of other mine-affected countries, including El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, and Mozambique.

Sitting Volleyball Teams

One area of a victim’s rehabilitation process can include having a partner on a sports team. Sitting volleyball is one such opportunity available for survivors. How the sport can help those who have been able to strengthen themselves physically, boost their self-esteem and become part of a team. LSN has supported a number of sitting volleyball teams in Bosnia and Herzegovina with equipment and funds to participate in international competitions.

Peer Support Networks

Since landmine survivors have personal experiences dealing with the emotions and hardships that accompany landmine losses, the Amputee Peer Support Networks have been established at the LSN victim assistance level. The LSN Peer Support Network has been established to arrange for amputee survivors to meet with other amputees through hospital and home visits. Peer support networks provide psychosocial and social support for victims and their families in order to cope with limb loss.

Trauma Recovery Research

When people become victims of landmines, they are faced with an abrupt and often painful change in their lives. Amputees and victims are able to cope with the trauma this change presents through normal coping processes. Others, however, may have more difficulty adjusting. The LSN peer support teams offer assistance to other landmine victims primarily by referring them to other experts. Since victims do not all respond and recover from trauma in the same manner, though, LSN engages in a Trauma Recovery Research Project in order to determine what factors and coping strategies will work best for victims in different societies. Through this research, they are able to understand and adapt each peer support program to better fit the needs of its victim's caregivers.

Psychologists from the Trauma Recovery Research Project study the factors involved in individuals’ responses to trauma in order to develop more appropriate coping measures. The research is conducted in two phases: 1) a qualitative study based on open-ended interviews with landmine victims, survivors, family members and service providers, and 2) a quantitative study designed from categories and findings from the qualitative study.

The qualitative study conducted during the first phase of the research department involved over 8500 landmine survivors and amputees. These variables are investigated to determine if they have any significance to landmine survivors’ recovery or if any other critical factors are involved. Landmine victims and amputees are asked a series of open-ended interview questions by the trained LSN staff. Respondents are encouraged to describe events surrounding the incident, the loss of their limb as well as how they cope with the stress, trauma, and their recov-


### Raising the Voices

LSN, in cooperation with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), has developed a leadership training program called Raising the Voices. This program has been designed to incorporate survivors into the Mine Ban Treaty process specifically to ensure their effective involvement in the expression of their needs and means developed to meet these needs.**

Raising the Voices trains survivors to effectively represent themselves and other persons with disabilities in front of experts, diplomats and decision-makers. Participants of the program attend meetings of the International Work Program of the Mine Ban Convention in Geneva, Switzerland and of the ICBL Standing Committee on Victim Assistance.

**Surviving Limb Loss**

Pamphlets

LSN has developed a website and produced a pamphlet called Surviving Limb Loss that is useful to any amputee. Rehabilitation professionals, with the input of amputees in seven different countries, created a series of guides covering several different topics:

- Amputation Surgery
- Pain After Amputation
- Wrapping Your Residual Limb
- Infection Prevention
- Emotions After Limb Loss
- Prosthetics
- Physical Rehabilitation
- Getting Back to Work
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Information for Families

Each guide is filled with positive messages and practical advice for amputees. The pamphlets are available in four languages (English, Bosnian, Portuguese and Spanish) and are accessible through the Surviving Limb Loss website at [http://www.survivinglimbloss.org](http://www.survivinglimbloss.org).

### Rehabilitation Database

The Rehabilitation Database links landmine survivors to the rehabilitation services and education they need in order to assist them with their disabilities. Developed with the help of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the database continually tracks the needs and situations of landmine victims. The Rehabilitation Database contains a number of links for information in the six mine-affected countries of El Salvador, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Mozambique. These links include:

- A country profile giving background information on the country and general statistics
- A landmine profile and a background of landmine use
- An update on the current situation
- A list of mine action work performed in the country
- A rehabilitation profile that provides information on in-country rehabilitation and care services available for victims
- A link to other references and websites
- A text report that gathers all of the information for each country and presents it in a text-only format

Along with these links, the rehabilitation database includes a service directory. This directory provides contact information for local and international programs and funding partners as well as a list of program details, specifying the type of programs each organization handles and who is eligible for their services. The Rehabilitation Database can be accessed online at [http://www.landdatabase.org](http://www.landdatabase.org).

### Conclusion

LSN conducts a number of valuable programs to connect landmine survivors to other survivors. Each program provides a unique opportunity for victims to cope and reintegrate themselves into their community. In the future, LSN plans to expand its network by establishing a Peer Support Network in Vietnam in 2003 as well as continually updating the country and victim databases.

### References


### Contact Information

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