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Workshop on Assistance to Landmine Survivors and Victims in South-Eastern Europe

Slovenia
1-2 July 2002

Executive Summary

The “Workshop on Assistance to Landmine Survivors and Victims in South-Eastern Europe: Defining Strategies for Success” held in Ig, Slovenia July 1-2, 2002 was a unique forum to address the existing gaps in services and possible solutions for filling these gaps for mine victims assistance (MVA) in the region. This workshop was initiated by the International Trust Fund (ITF) Board of Advisors, who determined there was a need to bring donors together with those working for MVA.

The ITF hosted the event, which was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. James Madison University’s Mine Action Information Center (MAIC) assisted ITF in planning the workshop and was responsible for facilitating the sessions and compiling written proceedings of the workshop. Thirty six participants represented donors, government agencies, international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in support of MVA.

The goal of the workshop was “to identify possible strategies and venues for regional resourcing, cooperation and coordination in the field of landmine survivor and victim assistance.” The goal of the workshop was achieved by presentations that included country status reports, perspectives on gaps in services and regional approaches, and NGO and donor perspectives on MVA. The workshop included extensive discussion among the participants on how to meet MVA needs and coordinate efforts more effectively.

At the beginning of the workshop, His Excellency Hugh Mortimer, British Ambassador and Chairman of the ITF Board of Advisors, stated that he did not think there was lack of funding for humanitarian demining but instead it was a problem of directing money for MVA. The speakers acknowledged progress in the field of MVA assistance but noted that there is still a great need to provide ongoing, comprehensive care for victims and survivors. Prosthetic and orthotic care, rehabilitation, reintegration and other forms of MVA are long-term, rather than one-shot forms of care. Speakers also urged regional coordination, better communication, and government support to enhance MVA.

The participants worked in two groups to further discuss the issues and formulate recommendations. The groups presented their recommendations and the participants then worked to organize the recommendations as one document to represent the deliberations from the workshop. The final recommendations addressed support for comprehensive assistance to victims with multidimensional therapy provided, such as physical, psychological and occupational as well as other forms of care; a comprehensive prosthetic center; coordination of orthopedic surgeons and therapists; enhancement of training and education for professionals; and improved coordination among all those involved in MVA. They also addressed the characteristics of the victims assisted and the care they receive and made suggestions for providing long-term assistance to victims.

The challenge now is to use the workshop recommendations to improve the resources available and services provided to landmine survivors and victims. This will involve the efforts of all stakeholders: donors, government officials and agencies, IOs, NGOs, health professionals, victims and survivors and their advocates.