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Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities in Tajikistan

by **Reykhana Muminova, M.D., Ph.D., Victim Assistance Officer [Tajikistan Mine Action Centre] - [view pdf](#)**

Since 2007, the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan and its partners, has organized a range of activities to increase awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities and to advocate for the country's accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The total number of registered persons with disabilities in Tajikistan is more than 164,000, according to statistics provided by Tajikistan's Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (MLSP) in September 2012.¹ In fact, 1.9 percent of the Tajik population is disabled.²

In 2000, Tajikistan became a State Party to the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMB) and to Protocol V of the *Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects*. Tajikistan is one of 26 APMB States Parties with a significant number of landmine victims. Tajikistan is not yet a State Party to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* or the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*. Tajikistan's accession to the CRPD and the CCM would reinforce support for the legal and socioeconomic situation of PWDs, including mine victims. It would also provide an overarching legal instrument to tie all PWD rights together.

Advocacy in Tajikistan

Tajikistan Mine Action Centre's victim assistance program has an advocacy campaign to promote the rights of PWDs and lobby for legislation and acceptance of the CRPD. Prior to the start of TMAC's victim assistance program, limited awareness surrounded the rights and needs of mine victims and Tajikistan's obligation to assist the



Since 2007, TMAC has been involved in an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of rights of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.
All photos courtesy of the author/TMAC.

victims under the APMBC. As a starting point for accession to the CRPD, in the project "Promotion of the Acceptance and Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," TMAC and the U.N. Development Programme, in cooperation with MLSPP and the Society of Persons with Disabilities "Imkoniyat" (Opportunity), initiated an advocacy campaign focusing on civil society, government representatives, landmine survivors and PWDs at district and national levels. The first round tables in 2007 recommended that Tajikistan join the CRPD and amend the existing law on the social protection of PWDs from 1991 to account for the CRPD provisions.

From 2009 to 2011, in cooperation with MLSPP and the Society of PWDs "Imkoniyat", TMAC organized workshops in regional centers to raise awareness about the rights of landmine survivors and PWDs. Simultaneously, they organized a media campaign to advocate for accession to the CRPD and the CCM.



Since 2007, TMAC has been involved in an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of rights of landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities.

At the end of 2010, a group of landmine survivors started their own advocacy activities and established two public nongovernmental organizations, "Taqdir" (Destiny) and the Society of Landmine Victims. These NGOs were registered with initial support from UNDP and TMAC. In 2012, another NGO, the Tajikistan Centre to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions, was organized and registered. In 2011 and 2012, with donor funding from Australia to the United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and the Department of Foreign and International Affairs Canada, TMAC provided capacity-building support for these public survivor organizations through consultancy, training and equipment provision.

In 2012, following an introductory training session on advocacy for the survivor organizations, the Society of PWDs "Imkoniyat," the Tajikistan Centre to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions, *Taqdir* and the Society of Landmine Victims

organized round tables in the regional centers of Khujand, Gharm, Kurgan-Tube and Khorog between 10 May and 10 June. The overarching aim was information exchange comparing PWD rights guaranteed by national legislation to the rights guaranteed by the CRPD, thus increasing awareness of the need for the CRPD.

Current Legislation

Tajikistan remains the only Central Asian country that has not signed the CRPD. Tajikistan's new law "On Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities" from December 2010 represents significant progress in comparison to the 1991 law of the same title. The 2010 law states that it "shall determine the legal, economic and organizational basis for ensuring the social protection of disabled persons and provide them with equal opportunities of vital activity and integration into society."³ However, for proper implementation, the 2010 law needs additional governmental decrees, and it still falls short of the CRPD's globally recognized standards and enforcement mechanisms.

States that adhere to the CRPD are obliged to guarantee PWDs equal opportunities for social, political, economic and cultural participation in society and eliminate all obstacles and discrimination against them. Under the CRPD, PWDs should receive inclusive education, and work environments should be open, accessible and inclusive. Public spaces should be accessible to PWDs, and they should be provided with attentive medical and psychological care and comprehensive rehabilitation services.

Unifying Policies

Tajikistan is already a state party to more than 60 international conventions. Under these conventions, Tajikistan has obligations regarding children with disabilities, women with disabilities and landmine survivors. Accession to the CRPD will synergize the implementation of national laws and responsibilities under other international conventions. Tajikistan's accession to the CRPD would also

- Bolster the legal and socioeconomic opportunities for PWDs in the country
- Increase attention to the challenges of living with disabilities
- Lead to the creation of special work conditions and improve the employment rate of PWDs, thus also preventing loss of potential and government pension expenses
- Attract donor attention to challenges in the disability sector
- Benefit persons without physical disabilities, including pregnant women or women with small children and persons with functional disabilities

Moving Forward

To improve disability services, the Tajikistan government created the Disability Coordination Council in early 2012. The council included all relevant government ministries, agencies, financial structures, PWD organizations and related NGOs. A national Tajik consultant is working with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs to conduct reviews of the existing laws and legislation and will assist MLSP in drafting a document to define the outcomes of signing and ratifying the CRPD. With the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs' support, Tajikistan will also identify policies and laws that the accession to the CRPD may affect.

According to the five-year "Tajikistan National Mine Action Strategic Plan" approved by the Tajikistan government, the victim assistance program plans to

- Encourage Tajikistan's signature and ratification of the CRPD
- Raise awareness about PWD rights and services available to them
- Provide more information about the content of the CRPD and its benefits

TMAC is currently developing a project and ongoing roundtable discussions involving several ministries and representatives to provide capacity-building support to relevant ministries within the government of Tajikistan for issues related to the CRPD. The TMAC victim assistance program and its partners are committed to promoting human rights and equal opportunities for development and security. 



The advocacy campaign was organized not only at the national level but regionally as well. Participants discuss issues during the advocacy roundtable in the regional center in Kurgan-Tube, Tajikistan, June 2012.

Biographies



Reykhan Muminova, M.D., Ph.D., joined the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre in 2006 as the Victim Assistance Officer. She served at Tajikistan's National Research Institute for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, where she started her research on the quality of life of landmine survivors. She is a 2010 graduate of the Senior Managers' Course in ERW and Mine Action organized by James Madison University's Center for International Stabilization and Recovery.

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Endnotes

1. Author interview with Soima Muhabbatova, 2 November 2012.
2. "World Report on Disability 2011." *World Health Organization*. http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/index.html. Accessed 7 November 2012.
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