NGO-Government Collaboration on Victim Assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Statement by Amir Mujanovic, Landmine Survivors Initiatives

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I am talking on behalf of Landmine Survivors Initiatives, an NGO that has been providing support to landmine survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through peer support integrated rights based outreach program over past 15 years.

I would like to highlight some of the examples of the cooperation of government and non governmental organizations in providing VA on the ground that have briefly mentioned by my colleague from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those include:

**National Disability Policy** was definitely the most remarkable achievement in this regard. This was a four year project run by an NGO and respective Social Welfare/Labour ministries with support of all government and non government entities dealing with disability issues that delivered a comprehensive rights based national disability policy document in 2008. It took another two years for entity parliaments and governments to adopt the entity strategies for the rights of PWDs after completion of the national policy document. However, significant progress in implementing the mentioned strategies has not been noted in 2011, since those were not adequately supported through the allocation of budget funds and the adoption of new or review of the existing legislation.

**Council for PWDs** has been also briefly mentioned. The Council is composed of DPOs and state and entity ministries and should serve as advisory instance to the state Ministry for human rights regarding monitoring of the rights of PWDs. Though the Council was established in 2010, there were no activities until project to build capacities of the Council was introduced by Landmine Survivors Initiatives in the end of 2011. The project will enhance capacities of the Council in several thematic areas relevant for the monitoring of rights of PWDs and internal structure of the Council through design of the bylaws and other relevant documents. The project will delivered the first national report on the implementation on the Convention on the rights of PWDs.

**Mental health project** is a state project and the most comprehensive attempt to improve mental health of wider population in a period 2010-2013. It is being run by entity ministries of health in partnership with wide range of other actors including nongovernmental organizations. Persons with disabilities, war trauma survivors and landmine/cluster munitions survivors’ organizations are also target regarding building capacity of those organizations so that they can better serve their members.

Different perspectives of **peer support** have been tackled by many speakers before me. Shy efforts of some rehabilitation centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to establish a system of peer support within center premises has been noted. Based upon experience of providing peer support to almost 3,000 survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can claim that peer support is the most efficient within the integrated approach, combined with economic opportunities and advocacy empowerment of survivors. Given that limb loss is a specific trauma that is often followed with depression and isolation, in many situations is crucial that peer support is provided in homes of survivors until they are empowered enough to enter peers support services that may be established within existing rehabilitation infrastructure.