

CCM THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Work Plan 2024-2025

Enhancing implementation of Actions 31-37 of the Lausanne Action Plan

Panamá (and TBC)

Background/Context for the Work Plan:

Article 2 of the CCM defines cluster munition victims: “Cluster munitions victims” means all persons who have been killed or suffered physical or psychological injury, economic loss, social marginalization substantial impairment of the realization of their rights caused by the use of Cluster munitions. They include those persons directly impacted by cluster munitions as well as their affected families and communities.

As stated in Article 5, paragraph 1 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), “Each State Party with respect to cluster munition victims in areas under its jurisdiction or control shall, in accordance with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law, adequately provide age- and gender-sensitive assistance, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, as well as provide for their social and economic inclusion. Each State Party shall make every effort to collect reliable relevant data with respect to cluster munition victims.”. To implement this on a national level, States Parties develop National Action Plans and design Focal Points within their governments.

Qualifying text from the Preamble also states:

Recognising the need to provide age- and gender-sensitive assistance to cluster munition victims and to address the special needs of vulnerable groups,

Bearing in mind the CRPD which, inter alia, requires that States Parties to that Convention undertake to ensure and promote the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability,

Mindful of the need to coordinate adequately efforts undertaken in various fora to address the rights and needs of victims of various types of weapons, and resolved to avoid discrimination among victims of various types of weapons,

The Lausanne Action Plan (LAP) adopted in 2021 guides States Parties in the effective implementation of the Convention and elaborates priorities, actions to be undertaken and expected results for the period of 2021 - 2026. In its Actions 31 to 37, the LAP focuses on disaggregated data collection, ensuring alignment with the CRPD and SDGs, developing national action plans and focal points, providing medical care, improving the socio-economic inclusion of victims and strengthening their inclusion and meaningful participation as well as supporting training of victim assistance professionals.

Previous iterations of this workplan have drawn from the [Guidance on an Integrated Approach on Victim Assistance](#), developed in 2016. Nevertheless, since its publication, the LAP as well as New International Mine Action Standards (IMAS 13.10) were developed in 2021, also focusing on Victim Assistance which require the Guidelines to not only be updated but also revised in light especially of the new Victim Assistance IMAS and current challenges.

Objectives

As of November 2024, twelve States Parties reported to have obligations under Article 5: Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Croatia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Mauritania, Montenegro, South Sudan and Somalia.

According to information provided by State parties, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon and Mauritania reported new victims last year. In the case of Montenegro, it has not submitted an annual or initial update on this thematic area.

Nevertheless, as hinted above, the Victim Assistance thematic across regimes is likely to face important challenges in the years ahead. According to the latest UN SG Protection of Civilians Report, a staggering rise in civilian casualties from various types of weapons, —from 300,000 to 3 million people in Ukraine alone—, suffering from temporary or permanent disabilities, that in line with the CCM qualifying text and for States parties to the CRPD commitments (only Lebanon and South Sudan have yet to ratify) of integrated and non-discriminatory assistance, VA would entail an unprecedented scale up of physical and psychosocial medical support and rehabilitation, both to survivors and their affected families and communities. Especially when considering that addressing the consequences of cluster munitions is not just about preventing their use but also about managing their short- and long-term effects, which remain uncertain and wide-reaching.

A broader discussion is likely needed across regimes and possibly under the coordination of the CRPD to ensure consistent implementation across all relevant disarmament regimes.

As a contribution to this overarching dialogue and the specific need to revise the “Guidance on an integrated approach on Victim Assistance” document, it would be useful to approach the 12 State parties with Victim Assistance obligations in more detail on the following:

(a) What obstacles prevent States from developing national disability action plans and national action plans on victim assistance?

(b) How can states enhance their efforts with respect to the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on gender, age and disability?

(c) What can States do to better understand the different roles and responsibilities of national authorities in supporting victim assistance?

(d) How can cooperation and assistance and sharing of good practices help ensure the establishment of sustainable and integrated victim assistance frameworks?

(e) What mechanisms/actions can help strengthen involvement, inclusion and meaningful participation of victims in policy and decision-making processes on issues that concern them?

(f) How can States strengthen their efforts to provide mental health and psychosocial support for victims?

(g) Regarding the four State parties which have reported on new victims it would be of interest to identify profile of new victims, whether civilians or clearance personnel, gender and activity when injured or killed to better understand the risk factors. All appear to have been injured from cluster munition remnants.

To do so, the coordinators will undertake the following actions:

- Ensure attention on the topic of Victim Assistance, especially on the Integrated Approach
- Give special attention/create awareness on the psychosocial impacts of the use of cluster munitions. This would be of enhanced relevance in cases of new use.
- Gather information on best practices of an Integrated Approach on Victim Assistance including the responses from 12 affected states on the questions raised above.
- Facilitate increased exchange of information on resources and good practices among key actors.
- Increase coordination, possibilities for exchanges and enhance synergies with other Victim Assistance coordinators and experts in the Ottawa Convention, CCW Protocol V and the CRPD, including how to address a broadened definition of “victim” in today's environment
- Enhance linkages within the CCM with other relevant facilitators such as the Gender Focal Points and the working group on international cooperation and assistance. Including having Victim Assistance as a theme in addition to clearance and Risk Education in a dialogue on international coop and assistance.
- Support the president of the 13th Meeting of States Parties in preparation of, and during the 13MSP.

Activities

As co-coordinators on Victim Assistance, Panamá and TBC will focus their work on the following:

- At the outset, organize meetings with relevant stakeholders to gather information on the concept of Victim Assistance and current challenges.
- Prepare a working document on the current challenges to an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance as originally envisaged in 2016.
- Reaching out to States Parties with current obligations under Art. 5 as well as other relevant stakeholders and seeking their views on the draft working document and questions above.
- Organization of a dialogue on Victim Assistance on the insurmountable challenge to provide adequate support in today's environment using an integrated approach, given Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, etc.
- Supporting and assisting the Presidency in preparation of and during the 13MSP
- Supporting other activities in the framework of the 13MSP

Expected output by 13MSP

- An updated guidance document on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance for States Parties
- States Parties are aware of the tools and resources at their disposal
- Synergies have been enhanced within the Convention and with VA actions in other similar Conventions
- Assistance has been provided to the Presidency and Coordination Committee of the 13MSP

Budget, Strategy Implementers and potential implementing partners

- Limited costs to be expected
- As co-coordinators on Victim Assistance, Panamá and TBC will be the strategy implementers
- Potential Implementing Partners include the CCM Implementation Support Unit, the Presidency of 13MSP, the other coordinators in the CCM Coordination Committee, Victim Assistance coordinators in other similar conventions, CCM States Parties and Signatories with relevant obligations, Survivors and their representative organizations, civil society and international NGOs, relevant UN entities at country level, including UNRCOs, WHIO, UNICEF, OHCHR, etc. and
- Donor/Partner States

Timeline

- Fourth quarter 2024:
 - Meeting with ISU and Presidency to discuss priorities
 - Meeting with relevant stakeholders to assess outline and get technical support
 - Creation of in country stakeholder groups
- First quarter 2025
 - Prepare first draft of the working document
 - Circulate the first draft to relevant stakeholders for their consideration
 - Dialogue on Victim Assistance
- Second quarter 2025
 - Meet with relevant stakeholders and seek views on first draft, virtually as necessary for in country stakeholder groups
 - Depending on the comments received, prepare a revised version of the draft and continue informal consultations with relevant stakeholders
 - Organize side event/intersessional activity on victim assistance. This can include a meeting among VA coordinators of other conventions to have informal exchanges or consultations with affected States Parties
- Third quarter 2025
 - Present the updated working document on the challenges to the current “Guidance on an Integrated Approach to Victim Assistance document.