

The principal aim of victim assistance is to enable survivors to enjoy full and effective participation and inclusion in society. Achieving this requires a holistic and integrated approach to victim assistance, rather than a series of separate actions. Victim assistance seeks to remove, or reduce, the barriers that may limit the individual, or the families of those killed or injured, from achieving and maintaining the highest possible level independence and quality of life.

To be able to remove, or reduce, these barriers, **it is necessary to ensure that survivors have access to the various components of victim assistance whenever they are needed throughout the victim's lifetime.** In the view of the ICRC, this is the main challenge to implementing victim assistance generally and the principal challenge in achieving the goals on victim assistance set out in the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

To overcome these challenges it is essential that:

- Victim assistance is mainstreamed into national programmes and services; meaning that all stakeholders address the barriers that victims face and that the necessary laws and policies are adapted.
- When needed, specific programmes for survivors are implemented to improve coverage, effectiveness and efficiency.
- A national disability strategy and plan of action, which also addresses the needs of survivors, is developed and implemented.
- Persons with disabilities, including survivors, are consulted and actively involved in VA processes and decisions.
- Human resources capacity is improved through effective education, training and recruitment.
- Adequate and sustainable funding is available and that the necessary goods and services are affordable.
- Public awareness and understanding are improved as mutual respect and understanding contribute to an inclusive society.

Implementing these activities will of course take a concerted and focussed effort and some States are in the process of doing so. We hope that further work and discussions both here and also in the course of next year's intersessional program will highlight more concretely what is being done in these areas and in what areas that gaps remain.

Thank you.