

Convention on Cluster Munitions

Intersessional Meeting

VICTIM ASSISTANCE – NEW PUBLICATION

Statement by Australia

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Last week at the intersessional meeting of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Australia was honoured to launch the publication entitled *Assisting Landmine and other ERW Survivors in the Context of Disarmament, Disability and Development*.

The aim of the publication is to facilitate progress in efforts to improve the quality of life of survivors, the families of those killed or injured, and other persons with disabilities, through the integration of victim assistance into broader frameworks.

The rationale for producing this publication was, and remains, to promote coherence, closer cooperation, and efficiency in collective efforts to implement relevant instruments of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The publication has the potential to do so by enhancing understanding of “victim assistance” in the context of disarmament, disability and development, including by making the strategic approach on victim assistance adopted by the States Parties to the disarmament Conventions more widely known.

The launch of the publication was particularly timely with the release of the World Report on Disability three weeks ago and its powerful messages on the need to increase our efforts to improve the quality of life for all people with a disability.

Today, we have three different disarmament instruments, AP Mine Ban Convention, Protocol V to the CCW, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, with a uniform approach as concerns assisting victims and survivors of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

This publication is intended to act as a resource and a guide to implementing this approach within all Conventions and we welcome this opportunity to commend the publication to State Parties and the broader cluster munition community.

By enhancing understanding, it is hoped that the publication will assist States in applying the strategic approach, and strengthen understanding and links between actors working in the field on issues such as disability, inclusive development, human rights, and mine action.

The publication is presented in four parts. Some of the information may already be well known to those within the disarmament community. However, it is likely to be unknown to many actors working on other relevant issues, including those working at the national level. Common understanding of the issue is central to the integration of victim assistance into broader frameworks.

Part I provides the introduction and background including the development of efforts to assist the victims in the context of instruments of international humanitarian law, including the AP Mine Ban Convention, Protocol V to the CCW, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Part II, a framework for action, brings together the terminology and principles and understandings that reinforce the framework for action. Coherence between the three relevant disarmament instruments is discussed, together with the scope for coherence with the CRPD.

Part III, enhancing efforts to assist victims and survivors, covers five key issues.

- the process of developing a strategic approach to assist victims and survivors and the 13 steps of this strategic approach.
- strategies that have the potential to enhance victim assistance efforts; inclusive development, community based rehabilitation, and inclusive education.
- the potential and recommendations for coherence between the CRPD and the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Protocol V to the CCW, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- the main stakeholders in victim assistance.
- the current status of international cooperation and assistance as it relates to victim assistance.

Part IV presents conclusions and recommendations. While it is evident that there are limitations, there are also great opportunities. As shown throughout the publication, there is a relationship between “victim assistance” in disarmament instruments and disability and development and opportunities to strengthen these relationships.

The inclusion of provisions to assist the victims in disarmament conventions, has given hope to survivors that something will be done to improve their lives. It is clear that a determined and sustained effort is needed to ensure that these instruments deliver on their promise to victims and survivors.

Affected states must have the political will and appropriate capacities to adequately address the rights and needs of victims. States in a position to assist should ensure that the resources they provide are building appropriate and sustainable capacities in affected States.

The progressive realisation of the aim of assisting the victims in the context of disarmament could be enhanced through strengthening partnership and coherence including within broader disability and development efforts.

Recalling the fundamental principle of inclusion, survivors are central to efforts. Progress could be enhanced if they are further empowered to actively participate in the broader frameworks of disability and development at the national, regional and international level to ensure that their rights and needs are part of the agenda.

We must increase our collective efforts. Whether we work on disarmament, disability, or development we must ensure coherence in our efforts to ensure sustainability and maximise the impact on the ground to promote the full inclusion and effective participation of all persons with disabilities, including victims in the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities.

Australia was pleased to support this publication and it is our sincere hope that it will make a positive contribution to improving the coherence and cooperation of our victim assistance efforts.

Finally, we would like to extend our appreciation to the Implementation Support Unit

of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention for their hard work in preparing this publication.

Copies of this publication are available outside this room, as well as through the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention website. The publication is being translated into French and Spanish to expand the scope of its usefulness.