



ICRC

Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions Geneva, 2-4 September 2019

International Committee of the Red Cross Statement on Victim Assistance

Victim assistance is a central component of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and its goal of reducing the unacceptable suffering that these weapons cause. Assistance to victims of cluster munitions is needed to enable survivors to enjoy full and effective participation and inclusion in society. In order to achieve this aim, the Dubrovnik Action Plan has called for an integrated and inclusive approach to victim assistance to be taken. In the view of the ICRC, victim assistance must be guided by humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality, human rights principles of inherent dignity, equality and non-discrimination, as well as principles of diversity, accountability and transparency.

Today, all 11 States Parties with cluster munition victims provide some form of assistance. Most have established a national action plan and nominated a national focal point. These are welcome achievements. The ICRC wishes to stress the importance of integrating victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to the rights of persons with disabilities, and we welcome that six States Parties (Afghanistan, Albania, Montenegro, Iraq, Lebanon and Chad) have reported that their victim assistance efforts are integrated into the broader disability sector.

The ICRC undertakes specific initiatives to address the needs of cluster munition victims through its Physical Rehabilitation Programme, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Between 1979 and 2019, the Programme supported 233 projects in 53 countries and one territory, nearly 2 million people with disabilities benefited from physical rehabilitation services, and 1.8 million assistive devices were distributed. Currently, with thanks to the generous contributions of donor states, the ICRC's Physical Rehabilitation Programme supports up to 144 projects (physical rehabilitation centres, component factories, training institutions and local organizations) in 30 contexts. Polypropylene technology developed by the ICRC is used by several organizations involved in physical rehabilitation, particularly in lower-income countries. Today, the Programme also supports people with disabilities to participate fully in society, through for example microeconomic assistance, educational and vocational training, and sport initiatives.

Much more needs to be done before we can claim that the Convention's promises to victims are achieved. It is essential to acknowledge the lifelong needs of cluster munition survivors and their families. Consequently, victim assistance is a long-term commitment that requires continued resources and political will from States Parties with cluster munition victims and those in a position to provide assistance, as well as the Convention community as a whole.

Thank you.