

Good practices in victim assistance implemented by Organizations of Mine/ERW survivors and other People with Disabilities in Latin America

Participants in the Fifth Regional Seminar of Organizations of Mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities.
Bogota, Colombia, July 2019



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

**Good practices in victim assistance implemented
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People with Disabilities in Latin America**

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This publication is the product of an analysis carried out by, and with, organizations of **mine/ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities** from **Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru**. It reflects the knowledge, field experience, expertise and perceptions of these organizations in the framework of the discussions and debates held at the **Fifth Regional Seminar of Organizations of Survivors and other People with Disabilities** (“Fifth Seminar”) **The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)** and the **Latin American Network of Organizations of People with Disabilities and their families (RIADIS)** also participated in the Seminar, which was organized thanks to the support of the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** and **Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs**.

This publication has two main objectives: 1) to **disseminate the needs and barriers** that persist for mine/ERW survivors, other people with disabilities and their families to fully enjoy their rights in Latin America; and, 2) to **share the good practices developed in Latin America with stakeholders at national and international levels**, including with **organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities in other continents**.

Local organizations remain committed to victim assistance and are strengthening their efforts day by day, including by working closer with States and service providers. This commitment is reflected in the creation of the **Latin American Network of Organizations of Mine/ERW Survivors and other People with disabilities**.

We see this publication as our contribution to an **international cooperation** that also **comes from the South, and from civil society**; we hope that it facilitates the dialogue on victim assistance among all those committed to ensuring that survivors and other people with disabilities in all regions of the world enjoy their rights.



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Introduction

In November 2019, the Fourth Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty will be held in Oslo, Norway. States Parties will present the progress and challenges in implementing their obligations under this Convention, including on victim assistance; and in particular, with regards to the commitments adopted in the *Maputo Action Plan*.

It is estimated that in Latin America there have been at least 20,000 mine/ERW casualties in the eight countries represented at the *Fifth Seminar* (although, surprisingly, in several of these countries there are still no official records).¹ While some Latin American countries have completed their clearance obligations (Central America was declared landmine-free in 2010),² there are still many needs and major gaps in victim assistance.

Objectives

1. **To disseminate** good practices and lessons learned from organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities in their contribution to the implementation of victim assistance.
2. **To raise awareness** on the work carried out by these organizations and the good practices they have developed to respond to the challenges they face on a daily basis.
3. **To share the advances and lessons learned** through the process of *Regional Seminars* implemented by HI Colombia, to exchange with other stakeholders who may be interested in supporting or leading similar processes in other regions.

Methodology

A participatory methodology was designed with cross-cutting approaches of empowerment, human rights, gender and intersectional approaches. The focus was on providing local organizations with the tools to analyze their own practices and draw conclusions and recommendations that, coming from the field, have a huge potential to be useful and inspiring for other organizations of survivor and other people with disabilities. The methodology was based on the *Making it Work*³ project, and the main activities included:

1. Review existing documentation on mine/ERW victim assistance, the role of associations, and *Making it Work* methodology and projects.
2. Identify participants through an analysis of organizations that work with mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities, and which have maintained a commitment to fieldwork and advocacy.

¹This calculation is based on information from the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, official sources where these exist, and information provided by the associations that participated in the Fifth Seminar. The number of casualties per country can be found in the project factsheets in the main publication. We are grateful for any updates and data from official sources that the readers may share with us.

²CBL (2010). Central America becomes the first landmine-free region. ICBL. Retrieved on 6/9/2019. <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/news-and-vents/ws/2010/central-america-landmine-free.aspx>

³Methodology developed by HI and partners to carry out a systematic identification and analysis of good practices for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities through a participatory approach and specific criteria. For more information: <https://www.makingit-work-crpd.org> Retrieved on 6/0/2019.

3. Establish criteria to analyze whether a given methodology qualifies as 'good practice'.
4. Dialogue with the local organizations on the basis of a series of questionnaires.
5. Identify recurring topics among the different practices implemented by the organizations.
6. Facilitate presentations, debates and discussions during the *Fifth Seminar*.
7. Analyze all the gathered information.
8. Conduct individual follow-up interview.
9. Circulate the report to participants for review.
10. Publication of the report and dissemination.

The criteria used to identify good practices are the following, based on elements of the *Making it Work* methodology:

- 1. The practice contributes to the Latin American Network's Vision of Victim Assistance.**
- 2. Demonstrates people-focused impact** through indicators and testimonies.
- 3. It is replicable**, based on the identification of facilitating factors that may exist in other contexts.
- 4. It includes elements of sustainability**, for example by including training, capacity development involvement of local authorities and adoption of legislation.
- 5. It respects and promotes the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, in particular: Respect for individual autonomy, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, accessibility, and equality between men and women.

Findings: advances and challenges

The situation among the eight countries covered by this study is diverse, but the following are recognized as areas with advances in most countries: the emergency response and immediate follow up to an mine/ERW accident has improved; rehabilitation services have reached more areas (although there are still economic barriers and complex paperwork to access them in some countries); there are more spaces for the participation of mine/ERW survivors in public policy dialogue at local level (but participation in national level dialogue is rare); and, the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by these eight countries provides a legal framework with specific measures to that States have committed to take to ensure people with disabilities, including mine/ERW survivors, enjoy their rights on equal basis with others.

The following are areas with major gaps: identification, localization and monitoring the situation of all victims, including in those that have completed their clearance obligations; systematic follow up at individual level,

disaggregated by disability, sex, and disability prior to the accident; formal adoption by the States and financial and technical support for peer support; quality inclusive education; employment of other economic activities that generate sustainable, decent income; and, participation and inclusion of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities in the design, planification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all process that concern them, at national level. The reduction of international cooperation for victim assistance as part of Mine Action support is also a major challenge. According to ICBL, in 2017 funding for victim assistance represented only 2% of the total funding allocated to Mine Action.⁴

Findings: Main practices of the Latin American organizations of survivors and other people with disabilities

i) The role of organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities

The organizations have the following main activities in common:

- ✓ Represent and mobilize mine/ERW survivors, other victims of conflict, persons with disabilities and their families.
- ✓ Advocate for the practices and policies of service providers and governments to be responsive, inclusive and ensure the implementation of their human rights.
- ✓ Contribute to the empowerment of its members.

While some organizations implement some services directly, especially in contexts where there are no other service providers, the focus of all organizations is on the three points mentioned above. It is clear that the main objective of these organization is not, and should not be, to substitute the State or fulfill its responsibilities, but rather to advocate for the State to fulfill its obligations; to empower and train its members to demand their rights; and to raise awareness among families, service providers, different instances of the State and international cooperation agencies on the rights of mine/ERW survivors, conflict victims, and other persons with disabilities.

ii. Peer Support

Peer support is one of the most widely used methodologies by Latin American associations. Some of them have implemented it without specific training; while others have systematized it, expanded it and shared it with other associations at the regional level. Although peer support can occur naturally between two people, strengthening those who provide this support with training, exchanges and didactic material allows for more systematic support, ensuring that the people who provide peer support have a clear framework, and also that they themselves do not face psychological strain as a result of the support they provide to others. Peer support can be an entry point to provide community-based rehabilitation or work on other sectors, such as livelihoods and health, with the right training and resources to ensure effectiveness.

⁴Intervención de ICBL en la Sesión sobre Asistencia a Víctimas la 17 Reunión de Estados Parte 2018, el 2/11/2018. Consultado el 5 de septiembre de 2019. <http://www.icbl.org/media/2922743/icbl-statement-on-victim-assistance-17msp.pdf>

iii. Personal social support to access rights and services

Latin America organizations identify and locate mine/ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities, informing them of their rights and how to access them, and, in cases when resources are available and there is no other option, financing and even personally going with the survivor to support her in accessing services (requests for medical appointments and prescribed medicines, even surgical interventions that would not otherwise be accessible). This service is carried out by the local organizations since there is still a lack of health promoters or other social workers specifically assigned to carry out such fieldwork.

iv. Organizational capacity development

Organizations have carried out, to varying degrees, processes of organizational capacity development in order to achieve their objectives and be more sustainable. Trainings identified as most useful are 1) Organizational management, such as: legal registration; elaboration of mission, vision, objectives; and funding applications and management; and 2) Technical topics, such as: human rights and monitoring, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, peer to peer support, and the mechanisms to access rights and services for survivors and other persons with disabilities at local, regional and national levels.

v. Advocacy

All participating associations carry out advocacy: at **local level**, for authorities to include persons with disabilities in the consultations and planification in different sectors; at departmental level, with other organizations in the area; at national level, for the adoption of national legislation or protocols in a specific sector; at **regional level**, where an increasingly strong link is also being established with RIADIS and in forums related to the rights of people with disabilities; and, at **international level**, through the participation of survivors and other people with disabilities in international conferences both in the framework of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Throughout the discussions and analysis, the following topics emerged as additional elements that need to be addressed for the well-being of survivors and other people with disabilities.

vi. Conflict and armed violence

One of the recurring themes was the situation of violence and conflict that exists in specific areas of some Latin American countries, which prevent the safe transit of organizations of the civil society in general. In some of the countries, there has been violence specifically against human rights activists, which is why associations exercise extreme caution. In other cases, non-State armed groups have control over certain territories; these have been beyond the reach of the organizations and therefore survivors and other persons with disabilities served by the associations in those areas are in a state of isolation. Organizations implement strategies such as establishing safety protocols, keeping permanent dialogue with local authorities to assess risks, avoiding certain areas of greater risk, and identifying safe spaces so that people can communicate by telephone and not be completely isolated.

vii. Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster risk reduction emerged as one of the issues having an impact on Victim Assistance in some countries. In Colombia, some mine/ERW survivors who are also in situation of displacement live in irregular settlements near a river at recurrent risk of overflow. There are no existing measures for people to settle in a safer place nor is there risk reduction plan with inclusive evacuation procedures. In the case of Central America, one of the main risks is that of hurricanes. RIADIS shared the experience of a project concerning the inclusion of people with disabilities and older adults in disaster risk reduction in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. In the case of Guatemala, the *Guatemalan Association of People with Disabilities Manuel Tot* integrates an analysis of the environment in its projects. It guarantees that livelihood projects develop successfully without damaging the environment and implements projects that rescue and promote indigenous knowledge based on the use of endemic medicinal plants, contributing to maintaining a relationship of respect for nature. Such initiatives help not to degrade the environment and not to amplify the magnitude of risks and natural disasters.

viii. Sexual and reproductive health

This topic came up as one the priorities in the second *Regional Seminar* organized by HI Colombia. It is of great importance from different angles: 1) Women and men with disabilities have the right to lead a sexual life, and to have access to all related information and services, as part of their right to comprehensive health. 2) Women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk of sexual violence. 3) Gender-based violence can be a cause of disability. Organizations and health professionals in Colombia have participated in workshops on inclusive sexual and reproductive health organized by HI; the *Foundation Network of Survivors and other People with Disabilities in El Salvador* implement workshops on the topic for women and families of children with disabilities; FEMUCADI in Nicaragua also organizes such workshops, including for indigenous women with disabilities; AHLMYS in Honduras included considerations on sexual and reproductive health in its work for the adoption of a case management protocol for people with medullar injuries.

ix. Advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities as a contributor to reconciliation in countries affected by conflict

Representatives of organizations in four of the eight countries in the *Fifth Seminar* identified that persons from different, and in some cases, opposing backgrounds from an existing or ongoing conflict, had actually met in different instances of advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities in general. Examples were given of demonstrations with the participation of former military forces, former guerrillas and civilians; of coalitions of groups of people with disabilities that had initially formed along ideological lines of confronting groups during a civil war; and, on a different topic, the case of a soccer team formed by men with limb amputations who realized, after some time, that they had been part of opposing armed forces. Yet the sport had created such links that, after the initial shock, they continued playing together. Such cases have a great potential that should be explored in further detail.

The following cross-cutting issues are part of the work of most organizations:

x. **Gender approach**

The associations recognize that a mine/ERW accident affects men and women differently. The majority of mine/ERW victims are men; but when they have an accident, they are more likely to survive than women (43% vs. 29%)⁵. Men who temporarily cease to be the family's main economic provider may feel more vulnerable in their families; while women survivors are at greater risk of being abandoned by their partner. In the case of women with disabilities, most have never sought sexual and reproductive health care; however, they face greater risk of sexual violence.⁶ All the associations that participated in the Seminar recognize this gender perspective and implement certain activities to integrate it in all their work, such as collecting disaggregated data; including women in all stages of the projects; ensuring there are women in leadership positions; and in some cases, creating specific women's groups to facilitate women's empowerment. However, they also recognize that trainings would be useful to include a gender approach at institutional and programmatic level more systematically.

xi. **Intersectional approach**

In Latin America, in addition to gender, the following additional factors of diversity were found: different types of impairments and multiple disabilities; indigenous population and languages; afro-descendance; wide age range; displacement; and survivors who are civilians, armed or police forces, former guerrillas and illegal armed groups, who face specific barriers.

In addition, a large number of mine/ERW victims had low incomes even before the accident, and their socioeconomic situation, as well as that of the family, is only degraded by the need to cover medical expenses and the consequent loss of income.

xii. **Link between Victim Assistance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Links have been established between associations of mine/ERW survivors and organizations of other persons with disabilities. Some organizations that were initially of mine/ERW survivors now include persons with impairments from other causes, as in the case of El Salvador; in the case of Guatemala, the association includes persons with impairments resulting from the conflict, and persons with impairments from other causes. In all countries, some relationship has been established between the survivor organizations and other civil society stakeholders working on disability and human rights, including National Disability Commissions or Councils. It is important to note that, at the national level, the work being done in the framework of the rights of persons with disabilities by the government has not specifically identified, located, addressed or monitored mine/REG survivors, as in the case of Guatemala and Honduras. Therefore, while linking victim assistance to broader disability, development and human rights frameworks is important, the effectiveness of this approach can only be proven through specific monitoring of the inclusion and situation of mine/REG survivors in such initiatives.

⁵Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines. Gender and landmines, from concept to practice. Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines. Geneva: 2008

⁶ UNFPA (2018). *Jóvenes con Discapacidad: Estudio sobre cómo poner fin a la violencia de género y hacer realidad la salud y los derechos sexuales y reproductivos*. Nueva York: UNFPA. Consultado el 5/9/2019. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_Global_Study_on_Disability_Report_SP.pdf

xiii. South-South Cooperation

The Regional Seminars organized by HI Colombia aim to promote the empowerment of organizations of survivors and other people with disabilities and the exchange of good practices among the organizations working on VA on a daily basis. This South-South cooperation is being strengthened by local organizations, which regularly exchange knowledge, provide practical support to each other, and with international funding, have been able to organize regional trainings on specific topics of their interest. Although the associations that have participated in these Seminars have Spanish language in common, and to a certain extent, a common culture, the contexts between different countries and even within each country have their specificities. It is important not to over-simplify the analysis or oversee the diversity of rural, semi-rural peri-urban and urban contexts; areas in peace vs. areas controlled by non-state armed actors and areas controlled by gangs; victims of indigenous and afro-descendant populations; civilian victims, victims who were former combatants, and victims of security forces; etc.)

From the above analysis, these are the main facilitating factors and obstacles identified by organizations:

Facilitating factors

- The **commitment and hard work of persons with disabilities** to achieve equal enjoyment of rights.
- The participation of **women with disabilities** at all levels of organizations of persons with disabilities, as well as **persons with diverse characteristics**, which allows their priorities to be included.
- The **interest of some institutions** to include survivors and other persons with disabilities in their work.
- **Peer support** methodology, especially when organized with regular and systematic trainings.
- **Awareness** of families, communities and some institutions on the rights of mine/ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities.
- Support for **the organizations' capacity development**, which has contributed to making the associations to expand activities and be more sustainable.
- Collaboration between **associations of mine/ERW survivors and associations and Networks of Persons with Disabilities**.
- **Ratification** of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the eight countries represented in the Seminar.
- **International technical and financial cooperation**.

Obstacles

- **Lack of resources** for organizations to carry out their work. There is none or little support from the States and most survivors and people with disabilities carry out their work on a voluntary basis, mobilizing their own and their families' resources.
- **Earmarked international funding for Victim Assistance has decreased.**
- In several of the countries represented at the Seminar, associations state that **there are still unidentified mine/REG survivors**, and lack of mechanism to locate them and assess their situation.
- In most of the States represented at the Seminar, associations **are unaware of the existence of a Victim Assistance Action Plan** or other mechanism to assess progress with measurable indicators.
- **Lack of accessibility** due to legal, attitudinal, physical, communication and information barriers.
- **Although some States have made effort, institutional programs and policies have not been sufficient** to respond to the diverse needs of all survivors and other people with disabilities, particularly in **rural and remote areas**.
- Difficulties continue to be reported in accessing **comprehensive rehabilitation** programs and technical aids such as orthoses, prostheses, hearing aids, ocular prostheses, etc. The **livelihoods sector continues being a priority for most**, yet there are very few opportunities to access sources of work that generate a decent income. The difficulty is greater for Afro-descendants, indigenous people, victims of displacement and demobilized or former combatants.
- **Situations of conflict, violence and insecurity in general**, as well as the **presence of groups outside the law**, have forced associations to take risks in order to work in certain areas, or to diminish their interventions, and in some cases, to stop them completely.

Lessons from the process of Regional Seminars that led to the creation of the Network of Mine/ERW Survivors and Other Persons with Disabilities in Latin America

In 2013, HI Colombia organized the first *Regional Seminar on Victim Assistance* to exchange good practices and lessons learned with other countries. More than 50 leaders have participated in each of five *Regional Seminars*, including representatives from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. While the focus has been on survivor assistance, organizations of countries with no mine/ERW survivors have been invited to promote the dialogue with other people with disabilities and bring additional expertise on specific topics. During the *Fifth Seminar*, participants decided to launch a *Latin American Network of Organizations of Mine/ERW Survivors and other People with Disabilities* to exchange practices and strengthen advocacy efforts at the national, regional and international levels. This will contribute to maintaining victim assistance on the national and regional agendas; and to keep Latin America on the international agenda as a region that continues to have great needs, but also has good practices to share.

Lessons learned and recommendations

1. **Financial and technical support for capacity development and networking at local level is essential.** National and regional dynamics rely on processes at local level.
2. **There should be a team in charge of maintaining communication between the participants before and after each Seminar** – social media can facilitate this process.
3. **To spearhead the Regional Network, identify a Transitional Committee composed of representative, elected members, with characteristics of the regional diversity,** who can commit to establish a solid working basis.
4. **Involve other networks such as ICBL,** at regional networks on the rights of people with disabilities since the beginning of the process.
5. **Making it Work is highly recommended as a methodology,** since it supports organizations to analyze their own practices through an empowering process. It is important to recognize the knowledge and expertise that local organizations have developed and to support them in carrying out this analysis and sharing it with others.



Photo: Members of the Transition Committee: at the front, Lorena Darce (Nicaragua). Behind: Miriam Santos (Colombia), Cristhian Melo (Colombia), Sergio Aranibar (Chile), y Luis Beltran Raimundo (Guatemala).

Assistance to victims of the armed forces and the police force

A session of the *Fifth Seminar* was dedicated to this issue because some of the survivors were exercising their duties as military or police force at the time of the mine/ERW accident; and there was an interest in examining to what extent the specific frameworks for assistance to this public was effective and coordinated with other frameworks in the rights of persons with disabilities. The main conclusions are:

1. While the medical and rehabilitation services for the military and police are generally of better quality and access than those for the civilian population, **there are major gaps in terms of psychological support and socio-economic inclusion** and no support for finding employment in another sector. **Both topics are a priority among all survivors.**
2. Being a **member of the security forces is part of the identity** of many of the people who were victims in the exercise of their functions. This identity is an element of cohesion which facilitates dialogue and support between peers.
3. The **inclusion of civilian survivors** is important and has had a positive impact in the organizations that include them (such as AVISCAM in Peru); in general, civilian survivors are in a more vulnerable situation because they do not have access to pension or specific services and in many cases are unaware of their rights.
4. **Being a member of the military and police forces does not exclude advocacy in the framework of the rights of persons with disabilities in general;** most of these organizations also dialogue and work alongside organizations of people with disabilities.
5. **Advocacy on behalf of the rights of persons with disabilities can contribute to reconciliation,** since groups from different background in a conflict may come together in this context.
6. In their reports, some State Parties mention the good-quality medical and rehabilitation assistance received by survivors of the armed and police forces. However, at least part of these services are covered by the **specific social security system** to which former military and police survivors contributed while they were active. Therefore, it is not open to civilians or former combatants.
7. The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** includes the principle of non-discrimination. Beyond the specific elements of identity that some survivors have in common, it is important to coordinate advocacy in various forums to have greater impact at the legislative and public policy levels.

Recommendations for organizations of survivors and other persons with disabilities

1. **Organize trainings** for survivors and other persons with disabilities on a wide range of topics including peer support, personalized social support, human rights and advocacy.
2. Develop a strategy for **strengthening institutional capacity** by obtaining official registration, mobilizing resources and participating in management trainings.
3. Include some elements to contribute to **sustainability** from the beginning of the project, for example through mobilization of other local actors.
4. Promote the creation and strengthening of **local groups** of survivors and other people with disabilities, so that these exist at the community level outside large urban centers.
5. Advocate for **health promoters, social workers or** people in similar roles at field level to include in their work the identification, localization and monitoring of the situation of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities, especially in rural and remote areas.
6. Organize activities at local level to **change knowledge, attitudes and practices** among families and the general population, including through the use media and social networks.
7. Dialogue with **service providers** in different sectors to raise awareness about the rights of survivors and other people with disabilities and barriers that create accessibility issues.
8. Contact and raise awareness among different **sectors, professionals and authorities** to identify key stakeholders who can support the advocacy efforts of organizations of survivors and other people with disabilities.
9. **Identify allies** with other civil society organizations and regional networks. This brings experience, contacts and good practices that are positive for all associations and allows for a stronger voice in the work being done.
10. Ensure the inclusion of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities with **diverse characteristics** of gender and age, indigenous and afro-descendant populations, etc.
11. Systematically engage in **monitoring** the implementation of victim assistance through different mechanisms such as VA National Action Plans, other sector-specific plans (such as on education or poverty reduction) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
12. Partner **with networks at the regional and international level** related to Mine Action and the rights of people with disabilities, such as ICBL and RIADIS.

Recommendations for States Responsible for Mine/ERW Survivors and their Families

1. Establish an **official registry of mine/ERW survivors**. In some countries in Latin America, there is still no total number of casualties indicating how many survived, where they are located, what their needs

and what their situation is, etc. Include information on gender, age, socioeconomic situation, whether they had a disability prior to their accident, other characteristics of diversity such as indigenous or afro-descendant populations.

2. Provide assistance to the **families of survivors** and the families of people who did not survive a mine/ERW accident.
3. Establish a **case management system** including localization, referral, service mapping and directory of services to facilitate the access of survivors and other people with disabilities to a system of services to improve their living standards. These should reach rural and remote areas, or in those areas in situations of conflict and armed violence.
4. Strengthen **health systems** to make them accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of people injured by mine/ERW, survivors and other persons with disabilities, including life-saving emergency medical services and other medical services such as sexual and reproductive health, maternal health, etc.
5. Facilitate processes to access **comprehensive rehabilitation services**, as various barriers continue to be reported to access prostheses, orthoses and other technical aids.
6. Provide technical and financial support to the **peer support work** that organizations of survivors and other people with disabilities implement with their own personal and family resources.
7. Facilitate the return of the person who acquires a disability from mine/ERW or other cause to his/her previous occupation, or to another activity that generates a **decent income**. Take measures to facilitate their access to inclusive education, vocational training, business development services, rural development projects, microfinance institutions and other resources that will enable them to develop an economic activity. Ensure access to **inclusive social protection programs** for persons in acute or temporary situation of vulnerability who cannot work.
8. In areas of widespread poverty and exclusion, promote **inclusive local development projects**, to which mine/ERW survivors, other persons with disabilities and their families can contribute.
9. Provide **financial and technical support** to organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities.
10. Guarantee the inclusion of organizations of survivors and other people with disabilities in all victim assistance processes, and all other **decision-making and public policy making processes**, at all levels.
11. Improve **monitoring of victim assistance at all** levels, ensuring the systematic participation of survivors and other people with disabilities. State Parties should report on these efforts through the Article 7 reports. Reporting on efforts to integrate victim assistance into broader efforts, whether under the CRPD or the Agenda 2030, is not sufficient if reports are not provided on the specific impact of those initiatives on the lives of mine/REG survivors and their families.
12. **Exchange good practices** with other governments and organizations.

Specific recommendations for Mine Action Centers

- Act as **victim assistance focal point** where no other has been identified at a relevant Ministry.
- **Raise awareness** on Victim Assistance and on the rights of mine/ERW survivors and their families among Ministries and other public institutions in charge of the sectors related to health, rehabilitation, social affairs, employment, poverty reduction, social protection, disability, gender, among others.
- Ensure that data on casualties is **disaggregated by sex, age and previous disability**; and that other relevant information that can contribute to victim assistance is collected (other **characteristics of diversity, socioeconomic situation, health and rehabilitation** needs); and that this information is disseminated.
- Analyze and use the data to facilitate the identification of **priority geographical areas and sectors of intervention**.
- Coordinate steps towards drafting a **Victim Assistance National Action Plan**, and contribute to the development of Action Plans in other sectors relevant to Victim Assistance.
- Facilitate the **exchange of good practices** with Mine Action Authorities and Centers in other countries and share them with relevant stakeholders at national level.
- Facilitate, promote and ensure the **systematic, informed and active participation and inclusion** of mine/ERW survivors in all processes related to the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other development processes related to disability and development.
- **Mobilize resources for victim assistance** and raise awareness about victim assistance needs and challenges in Mine Action forums.

Recommendations for States committed to international cooperation

1. **Increase the direct dialogue** of States committed to international cooperation and international cooperation agencies with organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities.
2. Provide technical and financial support for **casualty data collection and the implementation of needs assessment of mine/ERW survivors**, other people with disabilities and their families.
3. Contribute to the implementation of **peer support**, access to comprehensive rehabilitation and employment and income generation projects.
4. Include in **bilateral dialogues** the need to improve victim assistance monitoring with specific indicators, recalling that assistance obligations are maintained even when clearance obligations have been completed.
5. Continue to **support the exchange of good practices**, including through field visits, between different sectors and stakeholders at the regional level.

6. **Increase earmarked funding** for victim assistance, including for the capacity development of organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities. When funding is directed through **broader development programs**, ensure that there is a **monitoring** mechanisms that really evaluates if mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities are also having access. **International cooperation stakeholders have the capacity and the leverage to request this reporting by its partners.**
7. Share **good practices and training** on implementing an inclusive **gender, age, and intersectional approach**, since much remains to be done to implement these approaches systematically.
8. In Mine Ban Treaty international conferences and other relevant fora, invite States with the responsibility for mine/ERW victims to **submit annual and specific reports on what improvements have been achieved in the life of victims.** This includes States that have already completed clearance.
9. Provide **technical and financial support for studies and research** for the identification and localization of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities.

Recommendations for stakeholders seeking to promote Networks of Organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities in other regions of the world

1. Include, since the beginning, **organizations of mine/ERW survivors, as well as associations of other persons with disabilities**, in all processes, in particular those related to Mine Action, the Agenda 2030, poverty reduction and development.
2. Identify and invite **well-established regional networks** on the rights of persons with disabilities that have knowledge and experience on creating a Network, know regional stakeholders, and can share their good practices, recommendations, challenges and how to respond to them.
3. Use the dynamics of annual Seminars as an opportunity for exchange and decision-making; but an important part of the work should focus on **supporting local organizations to establish themselves formally and improve their management and technical capacities.**
4. **Link fieldwork with advocacy** efforts at various national, regional and international victim assistance, disability and development conferences.
5. Consider organizing **sub-regional working groups** if this facilitates dialogue in some instances, but do not lose sight of the importance of exchange between associations working in different contexts.
6. Use **social networks** to facilitate contact between organizations as an easy and informal way of sharing successes and challenges and for various consultations.
7. **Establish a dialogue with associations from other regions** of the world involved in similar issues and initiatives; **Latin American associations are interested in dialogue with associations in other regions.**

8. Provide resources to **facilitate the inclusion and participation of people with different types of impairments and/or multiple disabilities**; including budget lines for the participation of companions, sign language interpreters, the holding of workshops and seminars in physically accessible spaces, etc. It is possible for people who participate in workshops to lose income by being absent from their jobs or income-generating activities; it is important to compensate for lost income if necessary.
9. Establish a **multi-year Plan that has specific objectives and the means** to implement them. An Action Plan without the means will have many difficulties to be implemented.
10. Provide **technical and financial support for studies and research** for the identification and localization of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities as there is still a gap in this regard in many countries.

Conclusions

Other regions of the world have a greater number of victims than Latin America. But human rights do not depend on a greater or lesser number of people; each person who has been a direct or indirect victim of mine/ERW has the right to fully exercise his/her rights.

This publication seeks to illustrate the great work done by organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities at the local level, with the aim of contributing to improving the quality of life of mine/ERW survivors, other persons with disabilities and their families; all while sharing information on the main gaps and challenges that remain.

While physical, attitudinal, communication, social and even political barriers to their full participation still exist, their commitment to empower and to support mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities to access their rights remains stronger than ever. Joining efforts and exchanging on good practices and challenges, and how to respond to them, with a wide variety of stakeholders throughout the world is part of this commitment.

From Latin America, we invite all of you to strengthen your efforts with us!

Vision of Victim Assistance

This Vision was developed for the exercise of identifying good practices and may evolve according to the work of the Latin American Network of Organizations of Mine/ERW Survivors and other People with Disabilities. Its aim is to have a tool to describe what the ideal victim assistance situation would look like; and to assess whether different practices contribute to this Vision.

State Parties with the responsibility of mine/ERW victims, at the latest by the next Review Conference in 2024:

1. Demonstrate an improvement in the quality of life of mine/ERW victims with measurable indicators, including survivors, families and affected communities; and, an increased survival rate of people who are injured by mines/ERW.
2. Ensure that victim assistance is sustainable through relevant legal frameworks, long-term resource mobilization, and the integration of this assistance into national development plans and programs in all sectors; all while ensuring monitoring mechanisms are in place to track how they reach and impact mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities.
3. Ensure that mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities and their families have access to the services they need to exercise their rights on an equal basis with others.
4. Link victim assistance to initiatives of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, ensuring that monitoring systems are in place to specifically assess whether mine/ERW survivors effectively access these initiatives.

In particular, and on the basis of our realities in Latin America:

- Victim assistance clearly incorporates citizen and political participation, in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms of survivors, families and affected communities.
- States implement capacity development programs for organizations of mine/ERW survivors and other people with disabilities.
- Victim Assistance is based on recent and complete statistics and data. Monitoring and evaluation processes include organizations of mine/ERW survivors and their families and includes measurable data on their quality of life.
- All the projects, plans and programs on victim assistance integrate an intersectional approach to respond to the needs and priorities of different groups according to gender, age, disability and other characteristics of diversity present in our region such as language, identity, afro-descendance, indigenous peoples, etc.
- Assistance to survivors and other people with disabilities is accessible to people living in rural areas, including through mechanisms that facilitate the transportation of people in remote areas to the services they require.

- Mechanisms exist to provide assistance to survivors who are isolated due to armed conflict and other types of violence present in our countries, which prevent timely access to their places of residence.
- Victim assistance includes survivors and their families; families of deceased persons; and affected communities. For families, this assistance includes psychological support, access to social participation and social protection programs, and opportunities for economic inclusion. In the case of communities, in addition to risk education and humanitarian demining, assistance includes opportunities for socio-economic development that enable them to exercise their rights fully, in safety and security.



Executive Summary

**Good practices in victim assistance implemented
by Organizations of Mine/ERW survivors and other
People with Disabilities in Latin America**

Bogota, Colombia, September 2019

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