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THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

## **PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME IN UGANDA**

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## **1. Introduction**

Uganda is one of the ERW affected states. As a result, it has come up with a Comprehensive Plan on Victim Assistance (2008 – 2012) to guide the implementation of the activities to address the concerns and needs of Landmine and other ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities in the ERW – affected areas.

The Comprehensive Plan on Victim Assistance is based on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention's framework for victim assistance and the Nairobi Action Plan of 2004. The plan, with its SMART objectives covers the six thematic areas of victim Assistance as agreed by the states parties to the Mine Ban Convention.

The plan takes a right based approach to address the rights and needs of all persons with disabilities and takes into account the principles of inclusion, empowerment, victim assistance as a development issue and multi-sectoral collaboration. In this regard, I take this opportunity to highlight on the achievements made.

## **2. Gathering data on landmine survivors**

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development which is the lead agency in matters pertaining to disability has developed a Community based Rehabilitation Management Information System which is being used to collect data on landmine and other ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities. This tool has been studied alongside IMSMA and some of the important areas have been integrated to generate relevant data on survivors. Using this tool, a baseline survey is currently being conducted to establish requirements and gaps in service delivery to ERW survivors, other PWDs and their families. The information generated will help to concretize the proposed activities. Other planned activities include development of training manual on psychosocial support, support to landmine survivor groups, promotion of advocacy activities, training community level workers, vocational training support, supervision, monitoring and evaluation among others.

### **3. Involving survivors in the planning process**

As the slogan goes "*Nothing About us without us*". Landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities are involved in the planning processes at all levels of local government within the framework of the decentralization policy. The principle of bottom-up planning is emphasized and priorities are set right from village levels. To ensure that issues of landmine survivors are addressed, all persons with disabilities at village level come together to form an Association. The executive committees of the Associations select two persons with disabilities, male and female to represent them at Local Council I.

The executive committees of persons with disabilities in each village assemble at parish level to select two representatives male and female at Local Council II.

The executive committees at parish level assemble at sub-county level to select the two representatives at Local Council III and the executive committees at sub-county level assemble at district level to select two representatives at the District Local Council level. The persons with disabilities are represented in Parliament by five Members of Parliament. These include four regional representatives and one Member of Parliament representing women with disabilities.

There are currently over 156,000 persons with disabilities participating in the decision making processes at various levels of Government. This is to ensure that their concerns and needs are addressed at those levels.

### **4. Developing national laws and policies**

The Uganda Constitution recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities including landmine survivors. The Constitution provides for fair representation of PWDs on all constitutional and other bodies among other marginalized groups to ensure that their concerns and needs are considered.

Other laws include the following:

- a) The Local Governments Act CAP 243 provides for representation of PWDs (male and female) in local councils at all levels;
  - b) The National Council for Disability Act (2003) provides for monitoring and evaluation of line Ministries and CSOs involved in implementing programmes for PWDs;
  - c) The Persons with Disabilities Act (2006) provides for promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities;
  - d) The Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007) provides for equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.
5. The Government of the Republic of Uganda approved a National Policy on Disability. The policy transcends the realms of one sector. The major actors include Ministries of Education and Sports, Health, Local Government, Ministry of Works and Transport, Information and Communication Technology, Justice and Constitutional Affairs. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development as the lead agency constituted a National Intersectoral committee on disability to bring together all line Ministries, Disabled Peoples' Organisations. The committees meet on quarterly basis to exchange information on various activities by different stakeholders, minimize duplication of efforts and maximize resource utilization.

Guidelines to implement the National Policy on Disability have been developed. These spell out the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the implementation of programmes for PWDs.

**6. Ensuring non-discrimination in the provision of assistance**

The Government of the Republic of Uganda established Uganda Human Rights Commission. Its role is to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities among other marginalized groups are promoted and protected. The National Council for Disability also provides for investigation in matters or incidents relating to violation of rights of persons with disabilities and take appropriate action in relation thereto or refer the matter to the relevant authority.

**7. Conclusion**

Although progress has been realized in a number of areas, it is important to note that Uganda is still facing challenges in terms of implementing the Comprehensive plan on Victim Assistance due to competing priorities. There is inadequate funding. In this regard, I would like to extend gratitude and appreciation to the governments of Austria, Australia and Ireland for extending financial support to the Mine Action Victim Assistance Project through UNDP.

I would like to urge other donor community to support our efforts to enhance the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan on Victim Assistance so as to meet the obligation of addressing the rights and needs of ERW survivors and other persons with disabilities.

Thank you for your attention.