

U.S.

The United States supports the Plan of Action on Victim's Assistance adopted at the Conference of High Contracting Parties in November 2008. The United States is fortunate not to suffer from the impacts of explosive remnants of war (ERW). Nationally, we do not have specific sponsored initiatives by the federal government for ERW victims. There is general legislation regarding disabled persons. The American's with Disabilities Act covers a wide range of issues concerning persons with disabilities. Information about the provisions of this Act and its implementation can be found at [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

In relation to action number three in the plan of action, the U.S. Government demonstrates a strong commitment to vulnerable populations, including civilian victims of war and is a major donor to activities. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) social services and assistance programs, along with the Department of State's humanitarian assistance and mine clearance activities, play an important role in reducing vulnerability and offer targeted help to meet basic needs, reduce vulnerability, and increase self-reliance. I will focus my remarks today on USAID's War Victims' Fund, drawn from recent testimony to Congress, the full text of which is available on the USAID website ([www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)) and copies of which we have provided at the back of the room. The testimony includes additional information on programs specific to Iraq and Afghanistan.

USAID works on the ground, providing direct services to those left most vulnerable by war. In addition to critical rehabilitation care, the programs provide support to increase economic opportunities. They design and change the policies relating to people with disabilities. They improve the quality of care and life for civilian victims of war. Through these programs, our partner organizations report that more than a quarter of a million civilian men, women, and children have received direct services.

Since its creation in 1989, the Patrick Leahy War Victims Fund has been the foundation of USAID's efforts to respond to the needs of civilian victims of conflict in war-affected developing countries. Since its inception, just over 165 million dollars have been invested and over a quarter of a million civilians have received direct assistance in over 30 war-affected countries. This fund, at 12 million dollars in fiscal year 2008, provides a dedicated source of financial and technical assistance for people living with disabilities, particularly those who have sustained mobility-related injuries from unexploded ordnance, antipersonnel landmines, and other direct and indirect causes of disability—including polio and other preventable diseases that might result from interrupted immunization campaigns.

Initially, these programs were seen as one-time humanitarian responses to the overwhelming physical needs of civilian populations injured collaterally during or after conflicts. As we respond most appropriately to the needs of civilian populations, over time the fund has expanded its scope more strategically.

Programs that deliver immediate care to those in need continue. We also work with partners to design and implement a range of development programs that not only accommodate the changing needs of the populations they serve, but establish the foundations in developing countries for sustainable services. We contribute to the design and enforcement of international standards to ensure that practitioners who provide care to survivors are competent. The programs ensure that the treatment and equipment used are appropriate and effective in increasing the mobility of people with disabilities who live in developing countries. Basing our work on international standards allows us to measure the quality and effectiveness of health care services being provided.

The Fund's work with the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) has led to the design and establishment of processes for accrediting schools in Cambodia, El Salvador, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo, and Vietnam. Additional programs will soon be endorsed by ISPO in Colombia, Jordan, and Morocco.

Initially, the fund emphasized local production and assembly of prosthetic devices. The global economy has forced us and our partners to adapt our approach. Now, the fund supports the purchase of prosthetics and orthotics from countries, including the United States, that are the leading producers in the field. In this way, the program can better ensure that in-country workshops use sound components and that people in developing countries received high-quality, affordable prosthetic and orthotic devices.

At the same time, the fund continues to support and expand the capacity of local organizations and personnel to provide services and care for people with disabilities. Traditionally, international donors have invested largely in regional workshops and clinics. While these have the potential to serve many people, and handle complex cases, it has been difficult for ministries of health to commit to their long-term support. For this reason, we have begun to emphasize smaller-scale, targeted support to local and community-based organizations that provide services to survivors and people with disabilities.

Truly meaningful and sustainable intervention though requires a holistic approach that takes into consideration the individual, family, and community context. With this in mind, the program has broadened its approach to increasing mobility and quality of life among victims of conflict. Among the innovative initiatives has been the support for social inclusion, employable skills, and the ability of people with disabilities to advocate on their own behalf for effective legal protections against discrimination.

Full access to services and facilities and full community inclusion for people with disabilities are fundamental guiding principles of the Fund's programming. Programs support barrier-free accessibility to schools, work, and recreation, as well as opportunities for political engagement. Other components foster community awareness of the need for inclusion, recognizing the inherent challenges, and the capacity of people with disabilities to reintegrate.

Ensuring that people with disabilities are self-sufficient is a key goal of the War Victims Fund. The ability to generate an income and provide for oneself and one's family is an important component.

Meaningful social and political integration is realized when people with disabilities have legal protections and the ability to advocate on their own behalf. USAID's 1997 disability policy advances a clear vision and framework for all of our efforts in the area of disability-related issues. This is reinforced through two policy directives and program funding to advance inclusive development practices.

Where possible, we promote partnership with governments, especially ministries of health. Because many countries emerging from post-conflict situations have tenuous governmental structures, we work primarily through well-respected and experienced NGOs such as World Rehabilitation Fund, Handicap International, the ICRC, ISPO, and Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped.

The impact of these programs is measured not only in terms of beneficiaries serviced, but also, and more importantly, in terms of the human and institutional resources that are developed and able to continue without external support. In addition to the provision of immediate on-the-ground care to victims our programming is designed to help establish sustainable rehabilitation services that can become core components of the larger healthcare systems of developing countries.

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