

Mine Action, Victim Assistance (mental Health): Key Messages

Mr. President,

We wish to thank the Committee on Victim Assistance for their important work and for the update provided. We were particularly pleased to hear the update on support for mental health.

As we know, the negative impacts of landmines and unexploded ordnance are not always physical, but psychological as well and we believe that this is a consideration which merits our collective attention. According to research published by Humanity & Inclusion (HI), mental health concerns increase in countries affected by explosive ordnance as experiencing distressing and traumatic events caused by long-term violence can result in debilitating levels of reduced self-esteem, permanent and lifelong disability, depression, feelings of insecurity, social withdrawal, self-harm and suicide.

At this time, more research and data collection is needed on this topic which has not been effectively addressed in the past. Canada believes that more needs to be done to make sure the requirements of victims of landmines are adequately addressed and that national action plans on victim assistance take into account the entire scope of the needs of victims of landmines, including their mental health needs.

In a research paper conducted by The National Library of Medicine that looked at child and adolescent survivors of landmine explosions, found that those victims had a high prevalence of psychiatric disorders. The study found that nearly half of the adolescent survivors suffered from at least one psychiatric disorder. 37.1 % were newly diagnosed and needed to start medication and psychiatric treatment. The most common findings were anxiety disorders (34.6 %), including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 25.6 %, and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) in 9 % of the subjects. Mild-Moderate depression was found in 6.4 % of the subjects.

Throughout the period between the last Review Conference in 2019 and today, we have heard from many International Organizations calling for more funding towards victim assistance. . Indeed, as we have heard from the Committee on Victim Assistance, victim assistance remains the most underfunded aspect of mine action. Mental health and psychological trauma from landmines is the most underfunded aspect of victim assistance. Clearly we need to do more in this area as the research demonstrates an undeniable link between landmines and their effects on the mental health of victims of landmines.