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Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor

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Eritrea

Casualties and Victim Assistance

Last updated: 27 July 2016

Summary action points based on findings

- Adopt, disseminate, and implement the National Comprehensive Policy on Disability.
- Expand the community-based rehabilitation (CBR) program to cover the entire country.
- Adequately supply and staff the prosthetic and orthopedic centers to accommodate the unmet demand.

Victim assistance commitments

The State of Eritrea is responsible for a significant number of landmine survivors, cluster munition victims, and survivors of other explosive remnants of war (ERW) who are in need. Eritrea has made commitments to provide victim assistance through the Mine Ban Treaty.

Cluster munition casualties

At least 163 casualties during cluster munition strikes in Eritrea have been reported, all in 2000 or earlier.[1] No information was available on whether there had been casualties caused by cluster munition remnants as of the end of 2015.

An estimated 650,000 Eritreans live in landmine- and ERW-contaminated areas.[2]

Victim Assistance

At least 2,810 mine/ERW survivors have been reported in Eritrea.[3]

Victim assistance during the Cartagena Action Plan 2010–2014

As requested by the Eritrean government in 2011, international and national NGOs and UN agencies reduced or concluded their activities in the country.[4] The UN Development Programme (UNDP) mine action program closed in July 2011, followed by the conclusion of UNICEF's landmine victim assistance program at the end of 2011.[5] UNICEF has continued to support the MoLHW's CBR program, which provides assistance to all persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors. In addition to the CBR network, the state health system and the Eritrean National Association of War Disabled Veterans (ENWDVA) are the main providers of victim assistance. Starting in 2014, UN agencies have

unsuccessfully sought funding for victim assistance programming through the Portfolio of Mine Action Programs.

Victim assistance in 2015

Victim assistance services in 2015 remain inadequate for the demand. The MoHLW provides some orthopedic and prosthetic services, but the quality is poor due to lack of funds.[6]

In 2015, the Eritrean National Mine Action authority received no international support. In 2015, UNICEF continued its collaborations with the Ministry of Education (school-based mine risk education/risk reduction activities), MoLHW (community-based mine risk education/risk reduction activities/victim support) and the Ministry of Health for child injury prevention from all causes including landmines.[7] UNICEF and the UNDP have developed plans for 2016 that would expand victim assistance services if funding is made available.[8] Due to a lack of funding, UNDP did not conduct any victim assistance programming in 2015.[9]

Services for persons with disabilities, including disabled veterans, continued to be provided through the Ministry of Health, the MoLHW, and the ENWDVA. Veterans with disabilities who were injured during the liberation war with Ethiopia were eligible for cash subsidies, but similar benefits were not available to civilians injured by mines.[10]

In 2015 the Italian organization, Annuliamo Distanza, opened an orthopaedic surgery facility at the Halibet Hospital in Asmara.[11]

Assessing victim assistance needs

No major progress in conducting needs assessments was reported in 2015, but the MoLHW, through the CBR program, continues to identify landmine survivors and persons with disabilities.[12] In 2010, the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (2010 EPHS) identified 149,013 persons with disabilities but did not disaggregate the data by gender or age. According to the 2010 EPHS, war-related physical disabilities and mental illness are the most common forms of disability in Eritrea.[13]

Victim assistance coordination[14]

Government coordinating body/focal point

MoLHW: Coordination and implementation of services for mine/ERW survivors

Coordinating mechanisms

None

Plan

None

The MoLHW is responsible for the coordination of services for all persons with disabilities, including mine survivors.[15] In 2011, Eritrea announced the drafting of a comprehensive national disability policy.[16] In 2015, the final review of the policy was conducted by the MoLHW with participation of national disability organizations, line Ministries, and UN agencies. The final review is seen as the last step before adoption and endorsement of the policy.[17]

Inclusion and participation

The four national associations of persons with disabilities—the ENWDVA, the Eritrean Association of the Blind (ERNAB), the Eritrean National Association of the Deaf (ERINAD), and the National Association of Autism and Down Syndrome—participate in planning and coordination with the MoLWH, but the participation of landmine survivors and individual persons with disability is minimal.[18] The MoLWH encourages full participation and involvement of persons with disabilities through the CBR program and national celebrations like the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on which a thousand children and adults with disabilities attended a MoLWH-organized public event.[19]

Service accessibility and effectiveness

Victim assistance activities[20]

Name of organization

Type of organization

Type of activity

Changes in quality/coverage of service in 2015

The Rehabilitation and Integration Division of the Social Welfare Department within the MoLWH

Government

CBR: physical rehabilitation, referral services, psychosocial support, socio-economic reintegration and other services for persons with disabilities, such as social inclusion and vocational training; managing the four orthopedic workshops in the country

Ongoing

Ministry of Health

Government

Medical treatment, physiotherapy, and psychological support

ENDWVA

National organization

Services including mobility devices, loans, and small business opportunities, counseling, and workshops

UNICEF

International organization

Mine risk education; psychosocial support to children affected by mines/ERW, especially in remote rural areas; evidence-based advocacy; first aid training; increased access to education for children with disabilities

Restrictions are imposed on the operations of foreign and international agencies in Eritrea.

There was a shortage of skilled health personnel, particularly in remote areas. First aid response for landmine victims needs to be made faster and the continuation of medical treatment after the discharge of victims from health facilities required further strengthening.[21] Travel to and from hospitals capable of providing emergency and surgical services can take hours or even days in the most remote parts of the country with limited ambulatory services available.[22] A new orthopedic surgery center opened at Helibet Hospital in the capital, Asmara, thanks to support from an Italian organization that has sponsored semi-annual medical missions to conduct surgeries.[23]

The government dedicated substantial resources to support and train thousands of men and women with physical disabilities and limb loss resulting from war and conflict.[24] The CBR program of the MoLHW covers 80% of the country. In 2015, the CBR program increased its coverage in Northern Red Sea district. The CBR program, run by community volunteers, provided psychosocial support, referral services, and economic reintegration activities for survivors and other persons with disabilities.[25] Due to the lack of funding and a human resources gap, the quality of products from the existing workshops is substandard and worsening.[26]

ENDWVA also provided employment and economic inclusion opportunities. In 2015, as part of the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Tax—a 2% income tax levied on members of the Eritrean diaspora—the ENDWVA collected funds from Europe to support war-disabled individuals through the Denden Health Center. The ENDWVA also provided credit to its members for small businesses and income-generating activities.[27]

Physical accessibility and awareness of disability issues were improving. New construction in the country was generally accessible and through social mobilization activities, persons with disabilities were engaging more and more in community events.[28]

Eritrea celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2015. In an event attended by government ministers, party leaders, the UN Resident Coordinator, and representatives of associations of persons with disabilities, the Minister of Labour and Human Welfare used the event to combat stigma against disability and called on local communities to ensure the well-being of persons with disabilities.[29]

Access to education remained a challenge for survivors. UNICEF launched its long-standing “Donkeys for School” project to provide transportation for 1,000 children with disabilities to and from school in the remote northern region of Anseba, but the program is limited in its reach due to a lack of funding. Psychological support for survivors required further strengthening.[30] Specialized elementary schools provide limited educational opportunities for deaf and blind children. Beginning in 2012, the Eritrean Ministry of Education launched an inclusive education program to mainstream children with sensory disabilities into classrooms with their peers. Participating schools have specialized teaching and learning materials to enable all children to learn. However, little or no resources were available beyond the elementary school level.[31]

Article 14 of Eritrea’s unimplemented constitution prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, or in the provision of other state services. The government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions, although it did implement programs to assist persons with disabilities. There were no laws mandating access to public or private buildings, information, or communication for persons with disabilities. However, an increasing number of buildings provided such

access or employed guards who offered assistance as needed.[32] Across the country, awareness about disability is increasing and the stigma associated with disability is diminishing due to advocacy from UNICEF and the MoLHW.[33]

As of 1 June 2016, Eritrea had not signed or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

[1] On 22 April 1990, two cluster munitions were reported to have been used in an overcrowded street in the center of the port town of Massawa. Human Rights Watch (HRW), Africa Watch, "Ethiopia, 'Mengistu has Decided to Burn Us like Wood,' Bombing of Civilians and Civilian Targets by the Air Force," News from Africa Watch, 24 July 1990, p. 4; and Handicap International (HI), *Fatal Footprint: The Global Human Impact of Cluster Munitions* (Brussels: HI: November 2006), p. 18.

[2] UNICEF, 2016 Humanitarian Action for Children.

[3] Survey Action Center, "Landmine Impact Survey, Eritrea, Final Report," May 2005, pp. 21 & 25–27; Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 31 March 2011, p. 11; email from Habtom Seghid, EDA, 20 April 2013; and Mine Ban Treaty Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 23 January 2014, p. 9.

[4] ICRC, "Annual Report 2013," Geneva, May 2014, p. 143.

[5] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 24 April 2013; and email from Eyob Ghezai, Program Specialist, UNDP, 12 March 2013.

[6] Futsum Abbay, "Country report: Eritrea," *African Disability Rights Yearbook*, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 163–182, para. 11.3.

[7] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 1 April 2016.

[8] Portfolio of Mine Action Projects, UN Mine Action Service, undated.

[9] Email from Michael Tewoldemedhin, UNDP, 21 March 2016.

[10] Futsum Abbay, "Country report: Eritrea," *African Disability Rights Yearbook*, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 163–182.

[11] "Orthopedic Operation Theater Inaugurated," *Shabait*. 19 June 2015.

[12] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 1 April 2016.

[13] Futsum Abbay, "Country report: Eritrea," *African Disability Rights Yearbook*, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 163–182, paras. 1.3 & 1.6.

[14] Statement of Eritrea, Standing Committee on Socio-Economic Reintegration, Geneva, 29 May 2013; email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 22 October 2014; United States (US) Department of State, "2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Eritrea," Washington, DC, 27 February 2014, p. 21; and UN, "2011 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects," New York, March 2011, p. 155.

[15] Futsum Abbay, "Country report: Eritrea," African Disability Rights Yearbook, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 163–182, para. 10.1.

[16] *Ibid.*, para. 6.1.

[17] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 1 April 2016.

[18] *Ibid.*; and Futsum Abbay, "Country report: Eritrea," African Disability Rights Yearbook, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 163–182, para. 9.1.

[19] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 6 May 2016.

[20] Statement of Eritrea, Standing Committee on Socio-Economic Reintegration, Geneva, 29 May 2013; email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 22 October 2014; "Goluj sub-zone: Government institutions and communities called upon to enhance integrated endeavors targeting ENWVA members," Shabait, Asmara, 11 April 2013; "ENWVA branch in Anseba region registers significant accomplishment regarding rehabilitation of members," Shabait, Asmara, 9 March 2013; "ENWVA opens loan scheme to members in Molqi Subzone," Shabait, Asmara, 3 April 2013; ICRC, "Annual Report 2013," Geneva, May 2014; and US Department of State, "2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Eritrea," Washington, DC, 27 February 2014, p. 21; Fourth Periodic Report of States Parties under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Eritrea, submitted March 28, 2012, p. 43; and email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 24 March 2015.

[21] Statement of Eritrea, Standing Committee on Socio-Economic Reintegration, Geneva, 29 May 2013.

[22] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 24 March 2015.

[23] "Orthopedic Operation Theatre Inaugurated," Shabait, 19 June 2015; and "Italian Medics Conducting Surgery," Shabait, 22 April 2016.

[24] US Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Eritrea," Washington, DC, 13 April 2016.

[25] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 24 March 2015.

[26] *Ibid.*, 1 April 2016.

[27] "EWDVA Gash Barka Region Branch Mounting Efforts to Enable Members Become Self Supporting," All Africa, 5 January 2015; "ENWDVA Secures Support From Its Branches in Denmark, Germany and Norway," All Africa, 5 February 2015; "ENWDVA Extends Over 23 Million Nakfa Credit to Members in Gash-Barka Region," All Africa, 2 March 2015; "Trust Fund," All Africa, 9 November 2015; and "Ambassador Girma's Interaction with the UN Sanctions Committee – 9th October 2015," Tesfa News, 15 October 2016.

[28] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 1 April 2016.

[29] "International Day of the Disabled," All Africa, 7 December 2015.

[30] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, 24 March 2015; and UNICEF Eritrea, "2015 Humanitarian Action for Children," 13 January 2016.

[31] Futsum Abbay, "Country report: Eritrea," African Disability Rights Yearbook, Vol. 3, 2015, pp. 163–182; and "Eritrea: Making a Place for Children with Disabilities in School," Tesfa News, 9 June 2015.

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[33] Email from Tedla Gebrehiwet, UNICEF Eritrea, 1 April 2016.

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