

Victim Assistance in El Salvador: then and now

El Salvador	1	2	3	4	5	6
According to original study					•	
According to LM 2002		•				•
According to LM 2003						•

Key Developments (LM 2002): Legislation to implement the Mine Ban Treaty domestically has been drafted. El Salvador submitted its initial Article 7 transparency report on 31 August 2001 and an annual updated report on 29 April 2002. El Salvador reported the destruction of 1,291 stockpiled antipersonnel mines in 2000, leaving 5,344 in stock. In November 2001, an interagency committee on the Mine Ban Treaty was established, with responsibility for liaising with national and international organizations on demining and mine survivor rehabilitation.

Indicator 1: The extent to which information on mine victims’ demographics and needs is available.

According to original study:

LM 2000 reports that El Salvador is mine-free and that no accidents involving landmines have been reported since 1994, though some UXO accidents have occurred. There are no comprehensive estimates of the number of landmines casualties from El Salvador's civil war however, according to a UN estimate, over 300,000 young children and adolescents were left disabled at the war’s end in 1992. UNICEF estimates that during the final year of the war, at least 576 people were injured from either landmines or unexploded ordnance in 107 separate incidents. Information on the demographics and needs of mine victims is collected by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) which operates in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. In each country the program involves assessment of the number of victims and of individual prosthetic and rehabilitation needs.

According to LM 2002:

There is no official information available on landmine and UXO casualties in El Salvador.⁴³ However, in May 2001, a legislative assembly deputy told Landmine Monitor that there were approximately two incidents per month in rural areas because of UXO, and that in 2000 there were 25 casualties from incidents involving antipersonnel mines or UXO.⁴⁴ In a March 2002 media report, the Chief of Emergencies at Hospital Bloom in San Salvador, Dr. Carlos Gabriel Alvarenga, reported that 27 children had been admitted to the hospital with injuries caused by uxo.⁴⁵

In 2001, three UXO incidents were reported in the media, in which five people were killed and two injured. On 27 February 2001 three children were killed by an unidentified explosive while looking for crayfish in El Carrizal canton, San Simón, in the department of Morazán.⁴⁶ On 26 May 2001 one peasant was killed and another injured by a reported “military grenade,” in Piedra Grande Arriba canton in northern Zacatecoluca.⁴⁷ On 9 October 2001, a 14 year-old youth was killed and his 9 year-old brother severely injured after a US-manufactured fragmentation grenade they were handling exploded in San Eugenio canton in Sonsonate.⁴⁸ Casualties continue to be reported in 2002: on 29 April, a municipal worker in San Salvador lost his hand and damaged his left eye after inadvertently detonating a homemade grenade (“granada hechiza”) while cleaning out a sewage drain with a shovel.⁴⁹

Indicator 2: The extent to which a national disability coordination mechanism exists and recognizes mine victims.

According to original study:

The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) coordinates a Program for the Rehabilitation of Mine Victims in Central America established through a joint agreement with Canada and Mexico in January 1999. The program is operates in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador and is delivered through four stages: assessing the number of victims; assessing individual's specific prosthetics and rehabilitation needs; providing for treatment and rehabilitation; and promoting victims reintegration into the workforce.

According to LM 2002:

No information available.

Indicator 3: The extent to which programs and services for the medical care and rehabilitation of mine victims are available.

According to original study:

LM 1999 reports that in 1992, Medico International and Medical Aid to El Salvador founded Promoter of the Organization of Disabled Persons in El Salvador (PODES), which provides rehabilitation services and produces orthopedic devices. VVAF supports PODES with technical and financial assistance. The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) coordinates a Program for the Rehabilitation of Mine Victims in Central America established through a joint agreement with Canada and Mexico in January 1999. The program is operated in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador and is delivered through four stages: assessing the number of victims, assessing individual's specific prosthetics and rehabilitation needs, providing for treatment and rehabilitation, and promoting victims reintegration into the workforce. In April 2000, the Center for International Rehabilitation published a "Rehabilitation Resource Directory for Central America," which includes information on services available in El Salvador. This information was collected and provided to the Directory by a local NGO, The Cooperative Association of the Independent Group for Total Rehabilitation.

According to LM 2002:

In El Salvador, persons with disabilities are treated within the regular health care system. However, in many villages and poor urban areas access to medical care and rehabilitation is limited.⁵⁰

The Center for Professional Rehabilitation of the Armed Forces (CERPROFA, Centro de Rehabilitación Profesional de la Fuerza Armada) rehabilitates military and former military personnel.⁵¹ CERPROFA has offered technical support to Guatemala to establish a similar center and manufactures prostheses for war-disabled in Honduras and Nicaragua.⁵² The mental health clinics of the various military units also provide psychological support for personnel.

El Salvador had created a committee to oversee implementation of a program within the framework of the Canada-Mexico-PAHO tripartite project.⁵³ Since April 1999 the committee, which is coordinated by Salvadoran Institute for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (ISRI- Instituto Salvadoreño de Rehabilitación de Inválidos), has carried out a number of activities including workshops on community based rehabilitation in Metapán and La Palma, Chalatenango; a workshop on clinical aspects of community-based rehabilitation in Metapán; and training for two physiotherapists from the Association of War Disabled of El Salvador.⁵⁴

The Association of the Organization of Disabled of El Salvador (PODES, Asociación Promotora de la Organización de Discapacitados de El Salvador) has been producing prosthetic and orthotic devices since 1993, and currently has 22 employees, including 16 war disabled. As of July 2002, PODES had assisted a total of 1,655 people, including 1,043 war disabled. Of the war disabled, 617 people were injured by antipersonnel mines, of which five percent were women. In addition to its workshop in San Salvador, PODES has smaller workshops in Morazán, Usulután, Cabañas, Cuscatlán, Chalatenango and Santa Ana. PODES has created a Social Fund to assist poor disabled persons. PODES is currently seeking additional funding support to maintain and further develop its programs.⁵⁸ The Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF) provides annual financial support and training assistance to PODES.⁵⁹

On 18-19 June 2001, prosthetics technicians from El Salvador attended the First Regional Conference on Victim Assistance and Technologies, organized by the OAS and the Center for International Rehabilitation (CIR), in Managua, Nicaragua.⁶¹ CIR has developed a Lower Extremity Distance Learning program for prosthetic technicians in El Salvador which also includes a clinical component implemented by a qualified prosthetist who provides hands-on training.⁶²

Indicator 4: The extent to which programs and services for the social and economic reintegration of mine victims are available

According to original study:

LM 1999 reports that in 1992, Medical International and Medical Aid to El Salvador founded the Promoter of the Organization of Disabled Persons in El Salvador (PODES) to provide job training and rehabilitation to disabled persons. PODES receives technical and financial support from VVAF. The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) coordinates a Program for the Rehabilitation of Mine Victims in Central America established through a joint agreement with Canada and Mexico in January 1999. The program is operated in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador and is delivered through four stages: assessing the number of victims; assessing individual's specific prosthetics and rehabilitation needs; providing for treatment and rehabilitation;

and promoting victims reintegration into the workforce. According to LM 2000, El Salvador is reported to have implemented free socio-economic reintegration activities for landmine victims. The Landmine Survivors Network made an exploratory visit to El Salvador in April 2000 and will be establishing a program there starting in September 2000.

According to LM 2002:

The Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) program has two community-based outreach workers, who are landmine survivors, to work with individual survivors to assess their needs, offer psychological and social support, and educate families about the effects of limb loss.⁵⁵ As of April 2002, LSN El Salvador has identified 62 landmine survivors in the departments of San Salvador and La Libertad. According to LSN, the survivors' most common needs are wheelchairs, assistance with housing repairs and maintenance, medicines, crutches, prostheses, and assistance in finding employment.⁵⁶ In 2001, LSN directly assisted 46 people, including 19 landmine survivors, made contact with 96 others, including 39 landmine survivors, and developed a national services directory used to link survivors to rehabilitation services.⁵⁷

The Trust for the Americas/AICMA/OAS, together with the Ministry of Labor and the National Council for the Fundamental Care of People with Disabilities implements a program of vocational training and assistance in job placement for people with disabilities. More than 300 people have received computer training, with more than 45 trainees subsequently being employed.⁶⁰

Indicator 5: The extent to which mine victims are protected and supported by effective laws and policies.

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

The National Family Secretariat (Secretaría Nacional de la Familia), headed by the First Lady of El Salvador, is implementing a Law of Equality of Opportunities for Disabled Persons (Ley de Equiparación de Oportunidades para Personas con Discapacidad).⁶³

In El Salvador's general statement to the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, the Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized the "urgent necessity to create a permanent fund for landmine victims".⁶⁴

Indicator 6: The extent to which there is a disability community advocacy network.

According to original study:

LM 1999 mentions the Association of Mine Victims.

According to LM 2002:

No information available.

Endnotes:

⁴³ Minister of Foreign Affairs Report, 11 February 2002; and response to Landmine Monitor questionnaire by General Alvaro Antonio Calderón Hurtado, Chair, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Armed Forces of El Salvador, 8 May 2001.

⁴⁴ Interview with Deputy Pablo Parada Andino, Legislative Assembly, San Salvador, 28 May 2001.

⁴⁵ Néfer Muñoz, "Un total de 95 niños salvadoreños sufrieron heridas de bala el pasado mes de enero, según el Gobierno," *Europa Press* (Madrid), 1 Marzo 2002.

⁴⁶ Ana Lidia Rivera, "La Muerte a flor de tierra," *Vértice, El Diario de Hoy* (San Salvador), 20 May 2001.

⁴⁷ Mauricio Bolaños, "Un muerto y un herido al explotar 'granada militar,'" *La Prensa Gráfica* (San Salvador), 29 May 2001.

⁴⁸ Victor Maldonado, "Un muerto y un lesionado por explosión de granada," *El Diario de Hoy* (San Salvador), 9 October 2001.

⁴⁹ Guadalupe Hernández, "Empleado municipal pierde su mano derecha. Mi mente la tengo para seguir adelante," *El Diario de Hoy* (San Salvador), 8 May 2002.

⁵⁰ For more details see Landmine Survivors Rehabilitation Database – El Salvador, accessed at www.lnsdatabase.org; see also *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, pp. 341-342.

⁵¹ Minister of Foreign Affairs Report, 11 February 2002, p. 2.

⁵² Statement by Maria Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, to the Third Meeting of States Parties, Managua, Nicaragua, 18-21 September 2001, p. 3.

⁵³ The program involves representatives of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, the Salvadoran Institute for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (ISRI), the University of El Salvador, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Education, the Association of War Disabled of El Salvador (ALGES), and the National Commission for the Integrated Care of Persons with Disabilities (CONAIPD). Minister of Foreign Affairs Report, 11 February 2002, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Minister of Foreign Affairs Report, 11 February 2002, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Response to Landmine Monitor Survivor Assistance Questionnaire, LSN El Salvador, 3 March 2002.

⁵⁶ Email to Landmine Monitor from LSN El Salvador, 2 April 2002.

⁵⁷ Response to Landmine Monitor Survivor Assistance Questionnaire, Berta Alicia Flores, Social Worker, LSN El Salvador, 13 March 2002.

⁵⁸ Email to Landmine Monitor (MAC) from José Leonidas Argueta Roldan, Executive Director, PODES, 2 July 2002.

⁵⁹ Email to Landmine Monitor (HRW) from William Brown, Deputy for Administration, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, 23 July 2001.

⁶⁰ ICBL Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs, accessed at www.landminevap.org.

⁶¹ “Ayudarán más víctimas de minas antipersonales. Primera conferencia regional de rehabilitación tecnología,” *El Nuevo Diario* (Managua), 19 June 2001.

⁶² ICBL Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs, accessed at www.landminevap.org.

⁶³ Minister of Foreign Affairs Report, 11 February 2002, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Statement by Maria Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, to the Third Meeting of States Parties, Managua, Nicaragua, 18-21 September 2001, pp. 1, 4.