

Victim Assistance in Guinea-Bissau: then and now

Guinea-Bissau	1	2	3	4	5	6
According to original study		•		•	•	•
According to LM 2002		•				
According to LM 2003						•

Key Developments (LM 2002):

The Mine Ban Treaty entered into force for Guinea-Bissau on 1 November 2001. In March 2002, an inventory of antipersonnel mines was carried out, revealing a stockpile of 4,997 mines. In September 2001, a National Commission for Humanitarian Demining was formally established. Between November 2000 and April 2002, 175,000 square meters of land were cleared. Guinea-Bissau's initial Article 7 Report, due by 30 April 2002, has not yet been submitted.

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

According to original study:

LM 1999 reports that there are several reports of mine accidents involving civilians but that it appears civilian exposure is low. LM 2000 reports that the ICRC plans to collect data regarding victims in the hospitals.

According to LM 2002:

In 2001, mine and UXO casualties continued to be reported, however, no comprehensive statistics are kept. Between June 2000 and March 2001, HUMAID reported five mine incidents.⁴⁸ In March 2001, one incident involved eight children in Bolama.⁴⁹ According to CAAMI's UN Technical Advisor, "There is a regular victim rate of two to three persons per month, and this number increases to four or five a month during the months of the cashew and rice harvest season."⁵⁰ Several incidents have been reported between January and June 2002. On 26 January, a 12-year-old girl was injured by a grenade blast while lighting a fire in the Enterramento area. On 26 February, another incident in Enterramento involved two children, who were severely injured by shrapnel, while burning household garbage. In March, a soldier was injured by a grenade in São Domingos, near the Senegalese border.⁵¹ Also in March, a man was killed in a UXO explosion. In April, a man lost his leg after stepping on a landmine in the Bôr area. Another incident took place in April when, after a power failure, a Waters and Electricity of Guinea-Bissau employee stepped on a mine and lost a leg below the knee.⁵²

A census on the victims of landmines and other explosive remnants of war is underway, with at least 57 casualties identified to May 2002. Full details of the census should be available later in 2002.⁵⁶ Handicap International recently completed a study on the reintegration of disabled soldiers for the Program of Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Reintegration (PDRRI).⁵⁷ An independent study provided by Handicap International identified 1,687 disabled soldiers but no details are given on the cause of injury.⁵⁸

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

According to original study:

No information available.

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 health services have been heavily damaged as a result of conflict. LM 2000 reports that there are two prosthetic facilities in Bissau. One is run by the government, but is not functioning. The other is run by Andes, supported by Handicap International, which provides materials from Senegal.

According to LM 2002:

The health care system was seriously affected by the 1998/1999 conflicts, and capacities for the care and rehabilitation of mine/UXO casualties are limited. Most landmine casualties are treated at either the Simões

Mendes Hospital or the Military Hospital at the airport. The government reportedly does not have the resources to assist mine/UXO survivors, but it is working with Handicap International and ANDES to rehabilitate the disabled.⁵³ There are two prosthetics facilities in Bissau; one is governmental and the other is run by ANDES, with the support of HI.

ANDES runs the orthopedic center called the Casa Amiga dos Deficientes (the Friendly House of the Disabled) and supports 16 mine/UXO survivors with physiotherapeutic treatment and ten others are waiting for prosthetic care. The patients, mostly children, receive regular care in the Center. ANDES has reported problems maintaining an adequate supply of prosthetic material.

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

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

In the past, ANDES supported the social and vocational reintegration of its patients, but as of mid-2002 no funds were available to provide these services. ANDES provides psychological support for survivors when needed. ANDES will also assist disabled soldiers of the liberation war, but is waiting on details of the intended beneficiaries. ANDES receives funding from HI, the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to ANDES, CAAMI has the responsibility for data on landmine casualties.⁵⁴

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:

There is no law or decree to assist disabled civilians in Guinea-Bissau. However, fighters in the liberation war against Portugal are entitled to medical and pharmaceutical care in a special clinic and pharmacy. For others not injured as a direct result of the liberation war – including the military serving in the last war – there is no such entitlement. The demobilization plan, PDRRI, does not have any specific provisions for landmine survivors. According to CAAMI's Director, survivor assistance is not within its mandate.⁵⁹

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

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

[Besides ANDES,] there are several other local civilian associations working with people with disabilities, including mine survivors, such as ANAPRODEM, UNDEMO and AGUIPADE.⁵⁵

Endnotes:

⁴⁸ *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p.83.

⁴⁹ Interview with Eng César Lopes de Carvalho, Director of CAAMI (National Mine Action Center), Geneva, 29 May 2002.

⁵⁰ Telephone interview with Gérard Chagniot, UN Technical Advisor, CAAMI, Bissau, 17 June 2002.

⁵¹ Report by Handicap International, *Rapport d'activités du programme Handicap International en Guinée Bissau*, Bissau, January to April 2002.

⁵² Telephone interview with Gérard Chagniot, UN Technical Advisor, CAAMI, Bissau, 17 June 2002.

⁵³ Interview with Eng César Lopes de Carvalho, CAAMI, Geneva, 29 May 2002.

⁵⁴ Telephone interview with several unnamed members of ANDES, Bissau, 18 June 2002.

⁵⁵ Report by Handicap International, "Rapport d'activités du programme Handicap International en Guinée Bissau," Bissau, January to April 2002.

⁵⁶ Interview with Eng César Lopes de Carvalho, CAAMI, Geneva, 29 May 2002.

⁵⁹ Interview with Eng César Lopes de Carvalho, CAAMI, Geneva, 29 May 2002.