

Victim Assistance in Guatemala: then and now

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

Key Developments (LM 2002):

In 2001, the Army cleared an area covering 7,749 square meters. In 2001, the Association of Volunteer Firefighters conducted mine risk education in six communities in San Marcos department, which reached an estimated 80,000 people.

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

According to original study:

LM 1999 reports that reliable victim assistance data is not available and there have been no new casualties reported in LM 2000. IMSMA is being installed in Nicaragua as a central database for the management of mine action information, (which includes a victim data module), by the OAS's Assistance Program for Demining in Central America (PADCA) in Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. UNICEF proposes to conduct a survey and develop a national database and registry of rehabilitation resources.

According to LM 2002:

In December 2001, four brothers aged six, eight, ten and fourteen, were killed in Salama, Baja Verapaz department when they handled a grenade.²¹

No other mine or UXO casualties were reported in 2001 or in the first half of 2002. Since 1994, approximately fifteen people have been injured by landmines or UXO; before that time no official records were kept.²²

The ASCATED/UNICEF Landmine Victim Support Program has identified approximately 320 casualties from 1972 to the end of June 2002, of which all but five were children.²³ Most survivors are male, and were injured when they were aged 15 or 16 years-old. All the survivors grew up in rural communities and continue to live in extreme poverty. Fifteen percent of the survivors are blind and depend on their families for support.

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:

UNICEF has been supporting the community-based rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of mine survivors in Guatemala since 1999.²⁴ UNICEF's program is carried out in the five most heavily mine- and UXO-affected departments of Guatemala (Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, Quiché, and San Marcos). UNICEF works in cooperation with two local agencies, ASCATED (Asociación de Capacitación y Asistencia Técnica en Educación y Discapacidad) and the University of Valle.

Other organizations providing assistance to mine/UXO survivors in Guatemala include the Asociación Guatemalteca de Rehabilitación (AGREL), the OAS, the local NGO Transitions, Queen's University, the Center for International Rehabilitation (CIR), and for war-wounded veterans, the Centro de Atención al Desacapacitado del Ejército de Guatemala (CADEJ).²⁶

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 2000 reports little or no treatment is currently available for prosthetics fitting or rehabilitation, although the need for such services is considered to less than in neighbouring Central American countries where PAHO is running a Program for the Rehabilitation of Mine Victims. In April 2000, the Center for International

Rehabilitation published a “Rehabilitation Resource Directory for Central America,” which includes information on services available in Guatemala. This information was collected and provided to the directory by a local NGO, Guatemalan Rehabilitation Association (AGREL). UNICEF has developed a project with national counterparts and NGOs to develop community-based education, information and communication programs on rehabilitation treatments. This will include training in prosthetics/orthotics, occupational and physical therapy, vocational rehabilitation and reintegration and psychosocial counseling. Rehabilitation equipment and materials will also be provided.

According to LM 2002:

As of February 2002 the achievements of the program included: 153 survivors had received a professional evaluation of their physical or sensorial disability; 253 mine and UXO survivors had received a specialized evaluation of their disability and/or received direct assistance for their rehabilitation; and five reference centers began to offer assistance to disabled people. The five reference centers are located in Nebaj, Chajul, Cotzal, San Marcos at Aldea la Laguna, Quetzaltenango, and are operated by the community under the supervision and evaluation of UNICEF and ASCATED. In 2002, funding is being sought to establish a National Managerial Information System on Demining Action (based on IMSMA); and to strengthen the organizational structure of the reference centers.²⁵

On 18-19 June 2001, prosthetic technicians from Guatemala attended the First Regional Conference on Victim Assistance and Technologies, organized by the OAS and the CIR, in Managua, Nicaragua.²⁷ CIR has developed a Lower Extremity Distance Learning program for prosthetic technicians in Guatemala which also includes a clinical component implemented by a qualified prosthetist who provides hands-on training.²⁸

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

According to original study:

UNICEF has developed a project with national counterparts and NGOs to develop community-based education, information and communication programs on rehabilitation treatments. This will include training in occupational and physical therapy, vocational rehabilitation and reintegration and psychosocial counseling.

According to LM 2002:

No information available.

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:

No information available.

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

According to original study:

No information available.

According to LM 2002:

No information available.

Endnotes:

²¹ Interview with William de Leon, Coordinator, Landmine Program of the Volunteer Firefighters, Guatemala City, 10 July 2002.

²² *Landmine Monitor Report 2000*, p. 274.

²³ Interview with Fidel Arévalo Coordinator, Landmines Victim Support Program, ASCATED/UNICEF, Guatemala City, 15 June 2002.

²⁴ See *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 347.

²⁵ United Nations Portfolio of Mine-Related Projects, February 2002, p. 125.

²⁶ For details see *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, pp. 347-348.

²⁷ “Ayudarán más víctimas de minas antipersonales. Primera conferencia regional de rehabilitación y tecnología,” *El Nuevo Diario* (Managua), 19 June 2001.

²⁸ ICBL Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs, accessed at www.landminevap.org; see also *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 347.