

### Victim Assistance in Thailand: then and now

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

#### **Key Developments (LM 2002):**

The Thailand Mine Action Center is revising its master plan for the period 2002-2006 based on the results of the Landmine Impact Survey completed in May 2001. As of June 2002, TMAC had cleared 4.4 million square meters of land. As of July 2002, Thailand had destroyed 266,245 antipersonnel mines from stockpiles, including 186,899 since June 2001. Thailand became co-chair of the Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention in September 2001. Thailand has offered to host the Fifth Meeting of States Parties in 2003. A Regional Conference on Victim Assistance was held in Bangkok on 6-8 November 2001. On 13-15 May 2002, Thailand hosted the Regional Seminar on Landmines in Southeast Asia.

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

##### **According to original study:**

The LM 2000 reports TMAC figures of 1,849 injured throughout the country over the past 30 years and the 2000 UN Portfolio of Mine-related Projects provides government estimates of as many as 100 mine victims/year in Thailand. The Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines (TCBL) has recorded contact information for 700 victims in a few provinces and continues to conduct surveys of affected communities and individual mine victims along the Cambodian border in order to update and enlarge the information on mine victims. An in-depth survey of survivors was conducted by the Royal Thai Navy on behalf of TMAC during June-July 1999 in Sa Keaw province. An IMSMA database is being installed in TMAC and a Level 1 Impact Survey is being planned. A mine incident registry is being developed at TMAC.

##### **According to LM 2002:**

According to the results of the Landmine Impact Survey, between June 1998 and May 2001, 346 new landmine casualties were recorded, more than 100 people a year.<sup>76</sup> Between January and May 2001, the Landmine Impact Survey recorded 30 new casualties in the provinces of Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Phetchaburi, Prachuap Khirikhan, Ratchaburi, Surin, and Tak. It is acknowledged that these figures do not reflect the picture for the whole country. Of the 30 casualties, 17 were identified as Karen or Burmese.<sup>77</sup> According to Major General Suksumstarn of TMAC, landmines cause only two casualties a month in Thailand, or about 24 persons per year.<sup>78</sup> As there is no comprehensive data on landmine casualties for 2001, the discrepancy between these figures cannot be explained.

Reports on casualties can be found in the media. For example, in January 2001, a truck driver was killed by a landmine on the side of the road after he stepped out of his truck.<sup>79</sup> In May 2001, in two separate incidents, one farmer was killed and another injured after stepping on landmines.<sup>80</sup> And on 16 December 2001, two boys, aged 7 and 8 years, were killed by a mine at the Ranger base in Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province.<sup>81</sup> A local resident reported that mines were hidden under the tree where the children were playing.

The *Mine Casualties Survey Report, Tak Province, Thailand* released by Handicap International indicated that there has been a steady increase in the number of casualties along the Thai/Burma border. According to the report, "Since 1996, the number of mine casualties had a tendency to increase every year. By 1999, it reduced a little and in 2000 rose to the highest level of 22 cases. In the year 2001, for the two months of data collection (January and February) there were 10 casualties already."<sup>82</sup> Mine survivors, most of who were from Burma but now residing in refugee camps along the border in Tak province, were surveyed. The goal of the project is to establish a reporting system where casualty data is collected and transmitted to the Ministry of Public Health or its equivalent for analysis and distribution.<sup>83</sup>

HI has now established a reporting system with Thai border hospitals in order to improve data collection on landmine casualties in Tak province. HI receives information from three Thai hospitals and sub-district health stations in the refugee camps. The casualties, or their family, are traced and interviewed by HI staff. In the period January to April 2002, nineteen new casualties were reported, including two people killed and seventeen

injured. Three of the casualties were female, and sixteen were males. The youngest casualty was a seven-year-old child. Fourteen of the casualties were the result of incidents on the Burma side of the border.<sup>84</sup>

As of June 2002, TMAC's HMAU reporting system was still not operational. It is intended that the HMA units will collect reports on incidents and casualties and transmit the information to the IMSMA database at TMAC. Although no reports were collected on the western border, on the eastern border two incidents were reported on one day. On 4 February 2002, two new casualties were reported: one in Taphraya district of Sa Kaeo province and the other in None Din Daeng, Buriram province.<sup>85</sup> In another reported incident, on 3 March 2002, in the Thai/Burma border district of Tha Song Yang in Tak province, four schoolgirls triggered a landmine while gathering vegetables. One girl was killed and the other three were injured and taken to Mae Sot Hospital.<sup>86</sup>

The Thai Campaign to Ban Landmines intends to establish a database of survivors to complement the TMAC national incident database.

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

**According to original study:**

The inter-agency National Committee for Anti-Personnel Mine Management, which supervised the creation of the Thailand Mine Action Centre, has established a sub-committee focusing on mine victim assistance.

**According to LM 2002:**

TMAC is considered the focal point for victim assistance in Thailand.

**According to February 2003 Standing Committee-VA country report:**

Thailand realizes that national government has its role in providing sufficient assistance, medical care and rehabilitation services to disabled persons including landmine victims. In order to respond to the need of mine victims, Thailand is of the view that all stakeholders and partners including government sector, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and victims themselves should take part in this process.

In Thailand, cooperation between the local government agencies and the NGOs has already been forged. The joint projects aiming at assisting mine victims in mine affected areas are running well. In September 2001, the National Workshop on Mine Victim Assistance was held in Bangkok. The workshop brought together representatives from all sectors concerned. Participants took this opportunity to exchange information and share their views. This was considered a step forward in improving victim assistance in Thailand.

**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 that medical and rehabilitation services in Thailand are available in both state and privately owned hospitals and health care units, functioning at the provincial, district, and community levels. While facilities offering first aid are offered at all district and village levels, patients who have severe injuries and are in need of surgical care are referred to a higher level and to a better equipped institution. Psychosocial support is normally not provided and landmine survivors rely mainly on their families and communities. The Prosthetics Foundation at Chiang Mai University Hospital, under the Royal Patronage of the Princess Mother, provides prosthetics on a national basis. Handicap International Thailand provides prosthetic and orthotic devices and community-based rehabilitation programs for disabled, including mine survivors, along the Thai-Burma border.

**According to LM 2002:**

Medical and rehabilitation services in Thailand are available in both state and privately owned hospitals and health care units, functioning at the provincial, district, and community levels.<sup>87</sup> Generally, assistance available to landmine survivors is adequate; however, most come from very poor farming families who can experience difficulties coping with the costs of care and rehabilitation.

Landmine Monitor received 24 responses to a questionnaire on survivor assistance sent to sixty-nine district and regional hospitals, and concerned organizations in mine-affected areas. In general, most organizations were able to provide figures on mine survivors assisted, while few hospitals were able to, due to the lack of a built-in data

collection system on landmine casualties. Public hospitals and rehabilitation centers identified 61 landmine survivors assisted with medical care and walking aids in 2001.<sup>88</sup>

TMAC is considered the focal point for victim assistance in Thailand. In 2001, TMAC assisted 335 landmine survivors by facilitating transfers to hospitals, mobile prosthetic units, and vocational training centers.<sup>89</sup> In 2001, the Prosthetic Foundation provided mobile prosthetic services in remote provinces: 1,746 free-of-charge prostheses were fitted for 1,140 beneficiaries, including 211 landmine survivors. In 2002, the program will establish five mobile units in four different provinces and one of the largest state hospitals in Bangkok.<sup>90</sup> Over the last ten years, almost 10,500 prostheses have been produced. By using local materials, the foundation is able to make prostheses, designed for local weather conditions and practices, for 1,000 Baht (US\$23.22), six times cheaper than imported versions.<sup>91</sup>

Handicap International has opened fifteen orthopedic workshops in Thai provincial hospitals since 1982. Since 1998, HI has operated community-based rehabilitation, and orthopedic workshops, in four refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border to assist all persons with disabilities including landmine survivors. Refugee technicians are trained in the production of prostheses, and produce around forty devices a month. HI's program also includes the distribution of wheelchairs and vocational training. In 2001, 119 landmine survivors benefited from the program.<sup>92</sup>

Landmine survivors from Burma seeking assistance in Thailand receive medical care from hospitals in the refugee camps and public district hospitals in the Thai/Burma border provinces, including Tak, Mae Hong Son, Kanchanaburi, and Chumphon. Most of the landmine casualties are amputees.<sup>94</sup>

**According to February 2003 Standing Committee-VA country report:**

There are still some people who have been left behind due to insufficiency of the services and the lack of access to those services.

**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 2000 reports some government provisions for vocational/skills training of mine victims under the supervision of the Social Welfare Department. Also notes that some groups, including the "Network of Landmine Victims 1999, Sakaeo" and TMAC are initiating socio-economic assistance programs. Handicap International Thailand runs a community-based rehabilitation programs for disabled, including mine survivors, along the Thai-Burma border. HI is planning to open a community-based rehabilitation centre in Tak province in coordination with the Provincial Health Office, and the Social Welfare Department.

**According to LM 2002:**

COERR continued to assist the Network of Landmine Survivors in Sa Kaeo province to run income-generating projects with revolving funds. In 2001, 179 families of landmine survivors benefited from the program.<sup>93</sup>

On 2 January 2002, the TCBL started a one-year project in Surin and Buriram provinces, which includes community-based survivor assistance, empowerment, mine awareness, and the setting up of a small revolving loan fund.

**According to SC-VA Feb 2003 country report:**

Thailand Mine Action Center conducted two training courses on mine victim assistance and mine awareness in Sri Sa Ket and Buriram provinces in the Northeastern part of Thailand. They provide opportunity for new participants to learn valuable lessons that can be applied to their day-to-day living.

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

**According to original study:**

A national disability legislation entitled 'Laws on Rehabilitation of Thai Disabled Persons' has been in effect since 1994. Landmine survivors are included in the description of handicapped persons as given in this law. LM 2000 reports that due to the economic downturn and the tight budget many conditions of this law have not yet been realized. As well, implementation has been inconsistent among provinces, districts and tambons. The 1997 People's Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand prohibits unjust discrimination against a person on the

grounds of physical or health condition The National Education Act of 1999 includes sections pertaining to disabled persons' rights to basic education. LM 2000 reports that several draft laws are under consideration and await approval, including sections on upgrading the living quality and rights of disabled persons.

**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:**

<sup>76</sup> For more details *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 489.

<sup>77</sup> Email from Ruangdech Pongprom, Database Office, TMAC, 8 July 2002.

<sup>78</sup> Maj. Gen. Gitti Suksomstarn, TMAC Director General, Opening Remarks at the Southeast Asia Landmines Cooperation and Technical Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 March 2002.

<sup>79</sup> "Army to blast 20,000 mines," *Bangkok Post*, 17 January 2001.

<sup>80</sup> James East, "Meet the new air-con mine buster," *The Straits Times*, 9 June 2001.

<sup>81</sup> "2 boys killed while playing with explosive at Army base," (in Thai language), *Matichon Daily Newspaper*, 17 December 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Handicap International, *Mine Casualties Survey Report, Tak Province, Thailand - Mine Risk Education Project Thai-Myanmar Border*, Bangkok, August 2001, p. E6.

<sup>83</sup> HI, *Mine Casualties Survey Report, Tak Province, Thailand - Mine Risk Education Project Thai-Myanmar Border*, Bangkok, August 2001, p. E14.

<sup>84</sup> Fax from Saowaluk Sae-Tang, Mine Risk Education Project Manager, Handicap International, Mae Sot, 15 May 2002.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Ruangdech Pongprom, Database Manager, TMAC (civilian official in-charge of IMSMA database), at the SE Asia Mine Action Workshop, Bangkok, 8 March 2002.

<sup>86</sup> "Mae Sot - Schoolgirls trigger landmine," *The Nation*, 5 March 2002.

<sup>87</sup> For more details see *Landmine Monitor Report 2000*, p. 443.

<sup>88</sup> Responses from twenty hospitals and the Sirindhorn National Center for Medical Rehabilitation to Landmine Monitor Survivor Assistance Questionnaire.

<sup>89</sup> Statistics collated from various information provided to Landmine Monitor by TMAC.

<sup>90</sup> Associate Professor Therdchai Jivacate, MD, Director General, Prosthetic Foundation, Chiang Mai Province, in response to Landmine Monitor Survivor Assistance Questionnaire, 7 January 2002.

<sup>91</sup> Saritdet Marukatat and Woranuj Maneerungsee, "Ready for a leap - Innovative, inexpensive, locally-produced artificial legs may be set to step into the global marketplace," *Bangkok Post Outlook*, 20 March 2002.

<sup>92</sup> *Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs*, ICBL, September 2001, p. 112 ; and response to Landmine Monitor Survivor Assistance Questionnaire by Supotch Boontem, Handicap International, Chanthaburi, 18 March 2002.

<sup>93</sup> *Portfolio of Landmine Victim Assistance Programs*, ICBL, September 2001, p. 111; and response to Landmine Monitor Survivor Assistance Questionnaire by Sukpranee Deerada, COERR, Aranyaprathet District, 28 December 2001.

<sup>94</sup> HI (Thailand), *Mine Casualties Survey Report, Tak Province, Thailand - Mine Risk Education Project Thai-Myanmar Border*, Bangkok, August 2001, pp. E12-14.

<sup>95</sup> See *Landmine Monitor Report 2001*, p. 491.

<sup>96</sup> Cabinet Resolution, 9 October 2001 (in Thai language), at [http://www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/cc\\_main21.htm](http://www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/cc_main21.htm) accessed on 18 March 2002.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with an official from the Association of the Physically Handicapped of Thailand, Bangkok, 18 March 2002.

<sup>98</sup> Council of Disabled People of Thailand, *Newsletter*, November 2001 (in Thai language), pp. 1-2; Association of the Physically Handicapped of Thailand, *Newsletter*, January-February 2002 (in Thai language), p. 4.