

To Promote the Establishment of Regional Victim Assistance Network

under the project

Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) extends its heartfelt gratitude to the **ASEAN-Korean Cooperation Fund (AKCF)** for their unwavering financial support, which has been pivotal in making this National Consultative Meeting a reality. Their generous contribution underscores a deep commitment to addressing the ongoing humanitarian challenges faced by victims of explosive ordnance (EO) and reinforces the importance of sustained international collaboration in tackling these pressing issues across the ASEAN region.

ARMAC also extends profound appreciation to the **Kingdom of Thailand** for graciously hosting this crucial meeting. Special thanks are due to the **General of the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (DEP) of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS-DEP)** for their invaluable collaboration in co-hosting this event and for their steadfast dedication to victim assistance. Their efforts exemplify the strong commitment to fostering inclusive and comprehensive support systems for persons with disabilities, particularly those affected by the enduring impacts of EO contamination.

We deeply value the participation and expertise of representatives from diverse government ministries, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, and academic institutions. Their contributions enriched the discussions and demonstrated the collective will to create lasting change in the lives of EO victims across the ASEAN region.

The guidance and support from the ARMAC Steering Committee has been essential throughout this process, ensuring that the goals and vision for victim assistance align with the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders involved.

The powerful testimonies shared by explosive ordnance (EO) survivors during the meeting were integral to the success of the discussions. These personal stories of resilience and strength underscored the importance of continued support and advocacy for victims, whose lives have been deeply affected by the remnants of war.

This collective effort, and the shared commitment of all involved, is vital for advancing the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network and enhancing the support systems for EO victims in the ASEAN region. Together, we are forging a path toward a future where no one affected by explosive ordnance is left behind.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC), in collaboration with the General of Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disability of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS-DEP) of Thailand, co-hosted a hybrid National Consultative Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, on 29 June 2022. This meeting, the third in a series, aimed to promote the establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (Regional VAN) within the ASEAN Member States (AMS). The initiative is part of the broader project "Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States," funded by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund.

The meeting brought together over 35 participants, including representatives from government agencies, national mine action authorities, international and national NGOs, bilateral donors, UN agencies, and research and academic institutes. The discussions focused on sharing knowledge and best practices in victim assistance implementation in Thailand, guided by the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 13.10 and an integrated approach to victim assistance. The voices of EO victims were also a central element of the discussions.

Key outcomes of the National Consultative Meeting include:

- Shared understanding of the necessity for a Regional VAN to integrate victim assistance at a regional level.
- Mapping of potential roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms for the Regional VAN among various stakeholders.
- Identification of national perspectives on victim assistance implementation, including available services, challenges, and stakeholder roles.
- Valuable insights from EO survivors regarding their experiences and needs, including suggestions for improving support services.
- Collection of inputs at the country level to contribute to the development of an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference.

The consultative meeting is a crucial step towards establishing the Regional VAN, which is anticipated to serve as a central point for knowledge sharing, resource mobilization, and addressing challenges in victim assistance across the ASEAN region. The inputs from this meeting will be synthesized and further discussed at upcoming regional consultations and workshops, ensuring the continued development of a comprehensive, sustainable network dedicated to supporting victims of explosive ordnance.

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1. INTRODUCTION



1.1. Project Context

Southeast Asia is recognized as a region heavily contaminated by explosive ordnance (EO) due to past armed conflicts. Among the ten ASEAN Member States (AMS), Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam are identified as the most affected countries, facing the lingering consequences of war. The presence of mines, cluster munitions, unexploded ordnance (UXO), abandoned ordnance, booby traps, other devices, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) poses a continuous threat to communities in these and nearby areas. Explosions of such ordnance result in deaths and injuries, often leaving survivors with lifelong disabilities. The loss of limbs and the adjustment to life with disabilities significantly impact the mental and social well-being of EO victims, hindering their daily activities and full participation in economic and social life. In contexts where disability inclusion is not fully realized, EO victims and other persons with disabilities (PWDs) often face challenges in accessing economic and social opportunities.

Recognizing the critical need for adequate assistance to EO victims, encompassing medical care, rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and access to social and economic opportunities, ARMAC and the AMS initiated the project "Enhance Victim Assistance Program in the ASEAN Member States". This project, financed by the ASEAN-Korean Cooperation Fund (AKCF), has been underway since January 2021 and is expected to conclude in June 2024. It aims to apply humanitarian and human rights standards in the development of legal instruments and policy standards to support EO victims in regaining their competency, dignity, confidence, and self-esteem through an integrated and holistic approach, requiring long-term commitment from both EO-affected and non-affected countries and stakeholders.



1.2 Report Objectives

This report provides a detailed account of the National Consultative Meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 29 June 2022. The meeting was a key step in advancing the efforts to establish a Regional Victim Assistance Network (Regional VAN) and brought together a wide range of stakeholders working in the field of victim assistance. The primary goal of the meeting was to encourage national-level discussions that would inform the development of this network, focusing on how best to coordinate victim assistance across ASEAN Member States (AMS).

The report highlights the collaborative exchanges between stakeholders, including government officials, NGOs, UN agencies, and victim representatives, and explores the shared practices, challenges, and successes in the implementation of victim assistance programs. It also provides insights into the roles and responsibilities identified by participants for the establishment of the Regional VAN. Additionally, the report outlines the proposed coordination mechanisms and operational frameworks, which will contribute to the successful integration of victim assistance efforts across the ASEAN region.

The findings from this meeting will be instrumental in shaping the development of the Regional VAN Blueprint and Terms of Reference, providing a foundation for future regional consultations and workshops aimed at solidifying the network's structure and functions.



1.3 Link to Broader Project

The National Consultative Meeting in Thailand is an integral component of the ARMAC-led project "Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States". This project seeks to achieve five key objectives, with the establishment of a Regional VAN being the primary focus of this stage. The series of national consultative meetings in the five most EO-contaminated AMS - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam - represents the first stage of project implementation aimed at achieving Objective 1: Promote the establishment of a victim assistance network as a regional platform for various stakeholders among ASEAN. The inputs gathered from these national meetings will be synthesized to develop an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference, which will then be further discussed at a Regional Consultation and subsequently finalized at the first Regional Workshop. The success of this consultative meeting in Thailand is crucial for paving the way for a functional and effective Regional VAN, intended to integrate victim assistance at a regional level through knowledge sharing, fundraising, and collaborative problem-solving.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. ERW/Mine Context in Thailand

Thailand is one of the five ASEAN Member States significantly affected by explosive ordnance (EO), a legacy of past armed conflicts in the region. This contamination continues to pose a serious and ongoing risk to both the safety and livelihoods of people living in affected areas and neighboring regions. The presence of mines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and other remnants of war endangers communities, leading to fatalities and severe injuries, often resulting in long-term disabilities that drastically affect victims' ability to participate fully in daily life, both socially and economically.

As of 28 April 2022, Thailand had recorded a total of 725 mine victims, including 52 females. The Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) reported engaging with 722 victims across 27 provinces in the country during 2022. However, discrepancies exist in the recorded number of victims between TMAC and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP), primarily due to challenges such as the unidentified nationality of some victims, including unregistered aboriginal individuals.

Despite significant progress in mine action efforts, including clearance operations and victim assistance programs, the threat from explosive ordnance remains a persistent and substantial concern, particularly in certain regions of Thailand. The continued presence of EO limits access to land, resources, and opportunities for affected communities, further exacerbating the challenges faced by survivors and their families. Addressing these threats and ensuring adequate support for those impacted is critical to fostering long-term peace, stability, and socio-economic development in Thailand.

2.2. Project Inception

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2.3. ARMAC Mandate

The ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) was established following the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration in November 2012 and the adoption of its Terms of Reference in October 2013. The Executive Director and permanent secretariat staff assumed office in 2017, marking the center's full operationalization. ARMAC's mandate includes enhancing awareness programs on the dangers of explosive remnants of war (ERW) among affected communities; facilitating appropriate medical and rehabilitation assistance for victims of ERW, upon request from affected AMS; and assisting interested AMS in research and knowledge sharing on the effects of ERW and efforts to address them, including through writing proposals for technical assistance projects and funding. The Victim Assistance project directly supports the second and third mandates of ARMAC. ARMAC's structure comprises a Steering Committee that oversees implementation, an Executive Director managing day-to-day operations, and supporting teams in corporate affairs and mine action programs. ARMAC is currently undertaking several projects, including the Enhance Victim Assistance Programme, with financial support from the Republic of Korea.

3. MEETING OVERVIEW การประสุมเซิงปฏิบัติการเครือซ่ายช่วยเหลือ เหยื่อกุ่นระเบิดซองประเทศไทย รักรงการการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพการให้กวาม ช่วนเคลือหนึ่งของค์ โรงรมการประชาตุ เกาะนาการกระบาง เกาะนา

3.1 Objectives

The primary objective of the National Consultative Meeting in Thailand was to promote the establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN). This overarching goal encompassed several specific aims: to facilitate discussion among national stakeholders-particularly those directly working with or supporting explosive ordnance (EO) victims—on the implementation of victim assistance; to provide a platform for sharing knowledge, best practices, and challenges related to victim assistance in Thailand; to map out potential roles, responsibilities, coordination, and communication mechanisms for the development of the Regional VAN through group discussions; to align national perspectives on victim assistance with international standards, specifically IMAS 13.10 and the integrated approach to victim assistance; and to amplify the voices and experiences of EO survivors.

Ultimately, the meeting aimed to collect country-level inputs to inform the development of the initial draft Terms of Reference and structure for the Regional VAN.

3.2 Date, Time and Venue

The National Consultative Meeting was held on Wednesday, 29 June 2022, at the Platinum Hall, Grand Mercure Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. The full-day event brought together key stakeholders for in-depth discussions on advancing victim assistance efforts and establishing the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN).

3.3 Format

The meeting was conducted in a **hybrid format**, allowing for both in-person and online participation. The discussions were held primarily in English, with **simultaneous translation into the national official language of Thailand** readily available. This format ensured broad participation from relevant national and international networks and stakeholders, including those who might not have been able to attend in person.

3.4 Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony featured welcome and opening remarks delivered by key dignitaries, setting the tone for the National Consultative Meeting.



National Partner Representative

Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (DEP), Thailand

A welcome address was delivered by a representative from the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (DEP), Thailand. The speaker welcomed participants and reaffirmed the national commitment to advancing victim assistance services and regional cooperation through the ASEAN platform.



Mr. Jeon Joyoung

Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Thailand

Mr. Jeon Joyoung attended the meeting in person as a guest of honor. In his remarks, he underscored the Republic of Korea's strong support for the project through the ASEAN–ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF). Drawing from Korea's own history of conflict, he highlighted

the government's commitment to peace and humanitarian action. He emphasized the value of the project in healing the wounds of war and supporting victims through medical and rehabilitation assistance.



Mr. Prum Suonpraseth

Executive Director, ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC)

Mr. Prum Suonpraseth delivered the formal opening remarks on behalf of ARMAC. He welcomed all participants and expressed deep appreciation to the Republic of Korea for its generous support. He outlined ARMAC's role in fostering regional cooperation on humanitarian mine action and addressing the socio-economic impacts of explosive ordnance. He emphasized the long-term consequences of conflict for survivors and the importance of continued support. Mr. Prum also highlighted the significance of the meeting as the first step in establishing the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) and the critical role of multi-sector collaboration in this endeavor.

Following the remarks, ARMAC provided a brief overview of the consultative meeting agenda, and a group photo of all participants was taken.



4. PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Total Number of Participants

The National Consultative Meeting brought together over 35 participants, representing a diverse cross-section of stakeholders involved in mine action and victim assistance efforts. These included key government officials, representatives from national mine action authorities, experts from international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as partners from UN agencies and research institutions. The meeting's diverse participant base underscored the importance of collaboration across multiple sectors and levels of governance to effectively address the challenges faced by explosive ordnance (EO) victims and to foster regional cooperation in victim assistance. This strong turnout and representation from both national and regional stakeholders reflect the shared commitment to the objectives of the meeting and the broader goals of the "Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States."

4.2 Stakeholder Groups

The participants represented a diverse range of national and international networks and stakeholders actively involved in or supporting victim assistance. These included:

- Government Ministries and Agencies
- Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC)
- International and National Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), such as Humanity & Inclusion (HI), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and Golden West Foundation
- Bilateral Donors, including representatives from the Korean Development Partner– AKCF and AKPMT
- UN Agencies, such as UNDP
- Research and Academic Institutes
- Explosive Ordnance (EO) survivors and victims

- Representatives from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP) and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS)
- The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Thailand
- The National Institute for Emergency Medicine (NIEM)
- Independent Scholars

4.3. Geographic Representation

The majority of participants were from **Thailand**, representing various institutions and organizations working within the country on victim assistance and disability-related issues. The meeting also had **regional relevance**, as it aimed to contribute to the establishment of a network across ASEAN Member States. The participation of ARMAC, a regional center, and the involvement of international organizations underscored the broader regional context of the initiative.



4.4. Mode of Participation

The National Consultative Meeting was conducted in a **hybrid format**, allowing for both in-person and virtual participation. This approach enabled broader engagement, ensuring the inclusion of stakeholders who may have encountered travel constraints or logistical limitations. The hybrid modality also enhanced accessibility and fostered diverse perspectives from across sectors and regions, contributing to a more inclusive and comprehensive dialogue on victim assistance.

5. TECHNICAL AND THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS



5.1. Overview of National VA Programmes

The National Consultative Meeting in Thailand featured presentations and panel discussions that provided a comprehensive overview of the country's victim assistance (VA) framework. Representatives from key government agencies and institutions highlighted current strategies, data systems, and ongoing efforts to support persons with disabilities (PWDs), including landmine and explosive ordnance (EO) survivors. The session underscored Thailand's commitment to strengthening multi-sectoral cooperation and aligning national victim assistance efforts with international standards.

Ms. Saranpat Anumatrajkit

Director General, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP)

Ms. Saranpat Anumatrajkit opened the session by reaffirming Thailand's long-standing support for mine action and victim assistance. She emphasized the Department's role in fostering the physical and psychological well-being of persons with disabilities, promoting inclusive development, and combating all forms of discrimination. She highlighted the importance of multi-sector collaboration in advancing the

rights and dignity of survivors and expressed strong support for the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) as a regional mechanism to enhance cooperation and knowledge exchange among ASEAN Member States.



Ms. Saowaluk Vichit

Director, Strategies and Plan Division, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP)

Ms. Saowaluk Vichit presented a detailed overview of national disability data in Thailand, reporting that as of April 2022, the

country had registered 2,110,744 persons with disabilities, including 725 mine victims. She described the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities' role in coordinating disability services across sectors, managing comprehensive data systems, promoting the rights and welfare of PWDs, and establishing service centers to improve access to inclusive support nationwide.

She elaborated on several priority programs underway in 2022, including the Vulnerable Group Guidance initiative, Disability Registration Reform, and targeted efforts to expand career development opportunities for persons with disabilities. She also provided a comprehensive explanation of the benefits available to holders of the official PWD Identification Card. These include access to monthly allowances, occupation loans, legal protections, sign language interpretation services, housing and rehabilitation support, personal assistance, as well as entitlements related to education, employment, transportation, and healthcare. Her presentation emphasized Thailand's commitment to a holistic and inclusive approach that integrates disability rights into national social protection systems.

Representative, National Institute for Emergency Medicine (NIEM)

Director, Strategies and Plan Division, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP)

A representative from the National Institute for Emergency Medicine (NIEM) provided insights into the institute's work in enhancing the country's emergency medical services, particularly for vulnerable populations, including landmine/EO victims. NIEM plays a crucial role as a coordinating body responsible for policy, education, research, and regulation of emergency care, rather than direct service delivery. The representative noted the institute's goal to ensure timely access to emergency services within an eight-minute window and highlighted efforts to expand first-aid education and strengthen emergency response capacity across provinces.

Key challenges identified included human resource shortages, safety protocol enforcement, and persistent difficulties in reaching remote and underserved communities. Despite these challenges, NIEM remains committed to bridging service gaps and enhancing the overall quality and responsiveness of Thailand's emergency medical system.



Representative, Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC)

Director, Strategies and Plan Division, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEP)

A representative from the Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) delivered a presentation outlining TMAC's mandate in coordinating the country's mine action activities, including clearance operations and support for EO survivors. TMAC operates through five strategic pillars, one of which focuses specifically on victim assistance. The representative emphasized TMAC's role in coordinating with intergovernmental partners, managing victim data, and facilitating referrals to appropriate services. While TMAC does not provide direct medical or rehabilitation services, it plays a central role in home visits, awareness-raising, rights dissemination, network-building, and resource mobilization.

The representative also stressed that even as Thailand moves closer to achieving mine-free status, the need for sustained and comprehensive victim assistance remains critical. Continued attention to the long-term needs of survivors—including physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and socio-economic reintegration—is essential to ensuring that no one is left behind.

5.2. Challenges and Gaps

Several challenges and gaps in victim assistance were identified during the national perspectives session and the subsequent discussions. These included:

- Loan Application Procedures: Mr. Chusak Saelee, a mine victim and coordinator, suggested simplifying loan procedures for victims, as finding guarantors can be challenging.
- Frequency of Support Visits: Both Mr.
 Chusak Saelee and Mrs. Wiboonrat Chanchoo emphasized the need for more frequent visits from DEP and other relevant groups to the provinces to assess the situation and provide ongoing support.
- Accessibility of Services: Challenges in ensuring access to services in remote areas were highlighted by NIEM and in discussions regarding the difficulty of reaching all affected areas with humanitarian demining and victim support.
- Coordination and Referral: While Thailand has a referral process, gaps remain in effectively linking landmine victims with existing disability service centers, which may not always prioritize their specific needs. The management of networks and ensuring smooth referrals and coordination in emergency medical services was also noted as a challenge for NIEM.
- Data Management: The discrepancy in the number of victims recorded by different agencies (TMAC and DEP) due to issues like unidentified nationality indicates challenges in comprehensive data collection. The importance of accurate and disaggregated data to effectively support victims was underscored.
- Psychosocial Support: The need for ongoing mental health support for victims was raised, along with the importance of encouragement through regular visits.
- Funding for NGOs: NGOs like Golden West Foundation noted difficulties in securing funding for victim assistance in Thailand, as donors sometimes perceive Thailand as a higher-income country.

- Sustainability of Empowerment: Participants emphasized that efforts to improve victims' lives through visits and support must be sustainable, requiring action plans.
- Replacement of Prosthetics: The infrequent replacement of artificial limbs and the need for more individualized solutions, such as 3D-printed prosthetics, were mentioned.
- Understanding and Exercising Rights:
 Ensuring that persons with disabilities, including mine victims, understand and can exercise their rights remains an ongoing challenge.

5.3. Survivor Testimonies

The meeting featured powerful testimonies from two explosive ordnance victims, Mr. Chusak Saelee and Mrs. Wiboonrat Chanchoo, who shared their personal experiences and perspectives on victim assistance.



Mr. Chusak Saelee, the first mine victim in his community in Chanthaburi Province about 20 years ago, spoke about the physical and mental injuries suffered by his family, relatives, and neighbors. Despite believing their quality of life is not poor in terms of living, he suggested that the DEP could simplify loan procedures for victims, as finding loan guarantors is difficult. He also requested more frequent visits from DEP to the provinces to monitor their well-being. While acknowledging overall improvements for victims in the past 20 years, he noted that some services remain unchanged.



Mrs. Wiboonrat Chanchoo from Sra Keo Province recounted stepping on a landmine while cutting bamboo, leading to a month-long hospitalization and the provision of a prosthetic limb by DEP. She described the significant impact of her disability on her life, including a divorce and raising two children alone. Despite many victims' reluctance to be public, she chose to stand out to advocate for herself and her children. Mrs. Chanchoo shared her experience of speaking on behalf of mine victims from Sra Keo Province, where a majority of mine victims in Thailand live, and attending a meeting in Geneva, which she found empowering. She has since assisted other young victims in her village and worked with a group of victims to manage funding for livelihoods through farming and raising animals. She strongly advised others unable to obtain loans to seek support from DEP and emphasized the importance of visits from the military and other groups to victims. In her concluding remarks, she highlighted that not only mine victims but also a broader group of disabled people seek employment and funds to improve their quality of life.

5.4. Guidance: IMAS 13.10 and Integrated Approach to VA

Mr. Muhammad Jahangir, Regional Technical Unit Manager at Humanity & Inclusion, provided a comprehensive overview of an integrated approach to victim assistance and an introduction to IMAS 13.10. He defined victim assistance as a set of activities addressing the needs and rights of EO victims, as enshrined in international humanitarian law instruments like the Mine Ban Treaty, Convention on Conventional Weapons Protocol V, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, with strong linkages to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

He elaborated on the key components of victim assistance, including data management, medical care (emergency and continuing), physical and functional rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, and socio-economic inclusion. He emphasized that the ultimate responsibility for guaranteeing the rights and meeting the needs of victims rests on states. The definition of a victim includes survivors, people injured and killed, their families, and communities affected by explosive ordnance. Victim assistance is a humanitarian mine action pillar that demands a human rights-based approach and requires long-term commitment, recognizing the importance of survivors' participation.

Mr. Jahangir explained the integrated approach to victim assistance, highlighting the need for both broader efforts by sectors outside mine action (like health and education) and specific VA efforts by the mine action sector (as outlined in IMAS 13.10). He noted that while victim assistance is one of the five pillars of mine action, it has historically been under–prioritized, receiving only a small percentage of overall mine action funding. He pointed to the ARMAC regional project on VA and the development of a regional network as positive steps. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the principle of leaving no one behind, and the new IMAS 13.10 on VA provide further impetus for prioritizing victim assistance.

The International Mine Action Standard 13.10 on Victim Assistance in Mine Action provides guidance on the roles and responsibilities of mine action actors in victim assistance, emphasizing multisector engagement, information management, specific VA efforts by the mine action sector, referral pathways, advocacy, and the strengthening of national action plans. The specific VA efforts by the mine action sector include information management, identification and referral of victims to services, promotion and monitoring of multisector engagement, information sharing, and supporting the development of national action plans and resource mobilization.

Key messages from the presentation included that "Mine Free is not Victim Free," the mine action sector has a specific role in VA efforts, meaningful participation of survivors and affected communities is crucial, and states in a position to do so should commit adequate funding to victim assistance. Mr. Jahangir encouraged participants to consider aligning their national standards with IMAS 13.10.

6. REGIONAL VAN DISCUSSION

6.1 Rationale

A dedicated session was held to discuss the establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN), focusing on the rationale for its creation and its potential contributions. Participants engaged in breakout sessions to discuss and identify roles, responsibilities, coordination, and communication mechanisms for the proposed network. The guided questions for the group discussions highlighted the perceived necessity and importance of a Regional VAN, its potential contributions to supporting EO victims, the roles that participating institutions could play (linking to IMAS 13.10 and an integrated approach), the principles for joining the network, and potential structural elements such as human resources. communication modes, and coordination systems.

The overarching rationale for establishing a Regional VAN stems from the recognized need to enhance support for ERW (mine/UXO) victims in the ASEAN region by addressing existing gaps and fostering greater collaboration among various stakeholders. The network is envisioned as a platform to integrate victim assistance efforts at a regional level, facilitating the sharing of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned across ASEAN Member States. Furthermore, the Regional VAN is expected to play a crucial role in raising funds to support victim assistance programs in different countries and in collectively discussing and addressing common challenges in this sector. The network also aims to promote a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to victim assistance, aligning national efforts with international standards such as IMAS 13.10 and the principles of an integrated, multi-sectoral approach. By fostering collaboration between EO-affected and non-affected states, donors, and various organizations, the Regional VAN seeks to create a more effective and sustainable system of support for EO victims throughout the ASEAN region.

6.2. Group Discussions

Participants engaged in focused discussions as a single group comprising government and nongovernment stakeholders, as well as survivors of explosive ordnance (EO) incidents. The integrated group format allowed for inclusive and diverse perspectives, fostering deeper dialogue on the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN).

The breakout session provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of guided questions related to the necessity and design of the Regional VAN. Participants examined the network's potential contributions to supporting EO victims across ASEAN, including its role in strengthening data collection, medical care, physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, socio-economic reintegration, and the development and alignment of relevant laws and policies.

Discussions also addressed considerations for network membership, including guiding principles for inclusion, and explored potential structures for the VAN in terms of human resources, communication modalities, and coordination mechanisms.

At the conclusion of the session, key discussion points and recommendations were presented to all participants in a plenary format, sparking further feedback and an interactive Q&A session. These comprehensive discussions were instrumental in shaping the initial concept and expectations for the Regional VAN and served as a foundation for informing the development of its Terms of Reference and broader coordination framework.





6.3. Stakeholder Roles

The group discussions and plenary feedback sessions explored the potential roles of various stakeholders within the Regional Victim Assistance Network.

- Government Stakeholders: Their role is seen as crucial in policy development, ensuring access to national services (such as medical care, rehabilitation, and socio-economic support), and potentially contributing to data collection and management within the regional framework. The DEP's experience in Thailand with disability services and coordination was highlighted as a potential model for regional collaboration.
- Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC):
 TMAC can contribute to the Regional VAN through its comprehensive data on victims, its coordination role with national agencies, and its specialized expertise in the context of explosive ordnance (EO) contamination. Its established networks and deep understanding of affected communities represent valuable assets for strengthening regional victim assistance efforts.
- International and National NGOs: NGOs bring their on-the-ground experience in providing victim assistance services, their ability to reach affected communities, and their advocacy for victims' rights. They can also play a role in socio-economic integration initiatives.
- UN Agencies: Agencies like UNDP can offer technical expertise, support in developing regional strategies, and facilitate coordination among different actors.
- Donors: Bilateral donors, such as the Republic of Korea through AKCF, are essential for providing financial resources to support the activities of the Regional VAN and victim assistance programs across the region.

- Research and Academic Institutes: These
 institutions can contribute through research
 on victim needs, best practices in assistance,
 and the development of evidence-based
 approaches.
- EO Survivors and their Communities: Their active participation is vital in shaping the priorities and activities of the Regional VAN, ensuring that assistance programs are relevant and effective in addressing their needs and upholding their rights. Their insights into the challenges and successes of victim assistance are invaluable.

6.4. Communication

Discussions on the structure of the Regional VAN included considerations for the most effective modes of communication among its members and with other stakeholders. Several potential communication pathways were considered, recognizing the diverse nature and geographic spread of the network members. These included:

- Regular meetings: Both virtual and in-person meetings (such as regional consultations and workshops) were identified as important for information sharing, strategic planning, and fostering collaboration.
- Online platforms: The use of digital platforms, such as dedicated websites, email lists, and potentially secure online communication channels, was suggested for disseminating information, sharing resources, and facilitating ongoing communication between meetings.
- Information sharing mechanisms: The need for established protocols for sharing data, best practices, research findings, and funding opportunities among network members was highlighted.
- Focal points: The establishment of designated contact persons or focal points within each member organization or country could help streamline communication and ensure efficient information flow.
- Language considerations: Recognizing the linguistic diversity of the ASEAN region, the importance of translation services (as provided during the National Consultative Meeting) for key communications and meetings was noted.

7. MEETING OUTCOMES



7.1 National-Level Commitments

The National Consultative Meeting in Thailand fostered a strong sense of national-level commitment towards the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network. Participants from various government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders expressed their support for the concept and their willingness to contribute to its development and functioning. The active participation and contributions from the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (DEP) and the Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) signaled a commitment from key national authorities to engage with and support the Regional VAN. The meeting provided a platform for networking and strengthening relationships among national actors in the victim assistance sector, which is a crucial foundation for effective engagement in a regional network. The insights shared by Thai stakeholders regarding their national programs, challenges, and successes offer valuable lessons and potential models for other ASEAN Member States. The discussions around the roles and responsibilities of different national entities within the Regional VAN framework indicated a

proactive approach towards defining Thailand's potential contributions to the network.

7.2 Challenges Identified

The meeting also served as an important forum for identifying key challenges that need to be addressed in the establishment and operation of the Regional VAN. These challenges include:

- Resource Mobilization: Securing sustainable funding for the Regional VAN's activities and for victim assistance programs across the region was recognized as a critical challenge. The experiences shared by NGOs in Thailand regarding donor perceptions highlight the need for effective advocacy and demonstrating the continued need for support.
- Policy Alignment: Ensuring that the Regional VAN's objectives and activities align with the diverse national policies and legal frameworks related to victim assistance and disability inclusion across ASEAN Member States will require careful consideration and dialogue.

- Coordination and Communication:
 Establishing effective coordination mechanisms and communication pathways among a diverse group of stakeholders from different countries with varying capacities and contexts will be essential but also potentially complex.
- Data Sharing and Management: Developing protocols for the ethical and efficient sharing of relevant data on EO victims and victim assistance services across the region will be necessary to inform the network's activities and measure its impact, while respecting national data protection regulations
- Meaningful Participation of Victims: Ensuring the active and meaningful participation of EO survivors and their representative organizations in all aspects of the Regional VAN's work, from planning to implementation and monitoring, will be crucial for its legitimacy and effectiveness.
- Addressing Diverse Needs: Recognizing and addressing the diverse and evolving needs of EO victims, including medical, rehabilitation, psychosocial, and socio-economic support, across different national contexts will require a flexible and adaptable approach from the Regional VAN.

7.3 Action Points

Several key action points emerged from the National Consultative Meeting, providing a roadmap for the next steps in the establishment of the Regional VAN:

- Consolidate National Inputs: ARMAC will compile and synthesize the inputs, perspectives, and recommendations gathered from the National Consultative Meeting in Thailand, along with those from the other national meetings in Cambodia and Viet Nam (and subsequent meetings in Myanmar and Lao PDR), to inform the development of the Regional VAN.
- Prepare Draft Regional VAN Blueprint and Terms of Reference (ToR): Based on the consolidated national inputs, ARMAC will develop an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint, outlining its objectives, structure, membership criteria, operational modalities, and the Terms of Reference that will govern its functioning.

- Circulate Draft Documents: The initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and ToR will be circulated to relevant stakeholders, including participants of the national consultative meetings and other key actors in the victim assistance sector across ASEAN Member States, for their review, feedback, and further input.
- Organize Regional Consultative Meeting:
 A Regional Consultative Meeting is planned to bring together representatives from across ASEAN to discuss the draft Regional VAN Blueprint and ToR, further refine these documents based on regional perspectives, and build consensus on the way forward.
- Finalize Regional VAN Blueprint and ToR at Regional Workshop: The culmination of this phase will be a Regional Workshop where the inputs from the Regional Consultative Meeting will be incorporated to finalize the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference, paving the way for the formal establishment and operationalization of the network.
- Continue National-Level Efforts: While
 the regional network is being established,
 national stakeholders in Thailand will continue
 their efforts to strengthen victim assistance
 programs and coordination within the country,
 including addressing the challenges identified
 during the meeting, such as simplifying
 loan procedures, increasing support visits,
 and improving data collection and referral
 mechanisms.



8. GOOD PRACTICES AND SUCCESSES



8.1 National Collaboration Examples

The National Consultative Meeting highlighted several examples of positive national collaboration in Thailand that could offer insights for regional cooperation. The co-hosting of the meeting by ARMAC and the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (DEP) exemplifies effective partnership between a regional body and a national government agency. The active participation of diverse stakeholders, including government ministries, national authorities like TMAC, NGOs such as Norwegian People's Aid and Golden West Foundation, UN agencies, and academia, indicates a collaborative environment within the victim assistance sector in Thailand. TMAC's role in coordinating with intergovernmental agencies to provide support to victims demonstrates an existing framework for collaboration that could be leveraged in a regional context. The various programs and initiatives undertaken by DEP, as presented during the meeting, showcase a comprehensive national approach to supporting persons with disabilities, including mine victims, through allowances, loans, legislative assistance, and accessibility measures, which could serve as models or points of learning for other AMS. The involvement of EO survivors like Mr. Chusak Saelee and Mrs. Wiboonrat Chanchoo in national discussions, sharing their experiences and advocating for their needs, underscores the importance and practice of including victims' voices in shaping assistance efforts.

8.2 Scalable Initiatives

While the sources do not explicitly detail "scalable initiatives" in a project format, several discussed practices and approaches in Thailand hold potential for adaptation and scaling within a regional network:

- DEP's Comprehensive Support System:
 The range of services and support provided by DEP to persons with disabilities, including financial aid, loans for occupation, legal assistance, and measures to reduce discrimination and improve accessibility, offers a comprehensive model that could be examined for applicability in other ASEAN countries, considering their specific contexts and resources.
- TMAC's Coordination Role: TMAC's function as a coordinating body among various government agencies involved in victim assistance highlights the importance of a centralized entity to streamline efforts and ensure victims are referred to the appropriate services. This coordination model could be adapted at the regional level through the Regional VAN.
- Inclusion of Survivor Voices: The active involvement of EO survivors in national-level discussions, as demonstrated by Mr. Saelee and Mrs. Chanchoo, is a crucial practice that should be integral to the Regional VAN's operations, ensuring that the network remains victim-centered and responsive to the actual needs of affected individuals and communities.
- Emergency Response Network: NIEM's efforts to establish a nationwide emergency medical network, including hotlines and transportation services, provide a valuable framework for ensuring timely medical assistance to victims of accidents, including EO explosions. While the specific infrastructure might vary, the principle of rapid and coordinated emergency response is scalable and relevant across the region.



8.3. Innovation in Stakeholder Coordination

The National Consultative Meeting itself represents an innovative approach to stakeholder coordination by bringing together a diverse group of actors at the national level to discuss a regional initiative. The hybrid format of the meeting, allowing for both inperson and online participation, is another innovative aspect that enhanced accessibility and broadened engagement. The structured agenda, incorporating presentations, panel discussions, survivor testimonies, and breakout group sessions, facilitated a comprehensive exchange of information and perspectives among different stakeholder groups. The focus on using international standards like IMAS 13.10 and the concept of an integrated approach to victim assistance as guiding frameworks for the discussions helped to align national efforts with global best practices. The explicit aim of mapping roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms for a future Regional VAN during the group discussions was a proactive step towards establishing a clear framework for regional collaboration. The anticipation of developing a Regional VAN Blueprint and Terms of Reference based on the inputs from this and other national consultations demonstrates a strategic and coordinated approach to building a regional network.

9. LESSONS LEARNED



9.1 Effective Strategies

Several effective strategies employed during the National Consultative Meeting and in the broader context of victim assistance in Thailand can inform the development of the Regional VAN:

- Inclusive Consultations: Engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, UN bodies, donors, academia, and, most importantly, EO survivors, is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of needs and for building broad support for victim assistance initiatives. The hybrid format of the meeting facilitated wider participation.
- Technical Framing with International Standards: Grounding the discussions in recognized international standards such as IMAS 13.10 provides a common framework and ensures alignment with global best practices in victim assistance.

- Providing Space for Survivor Voices:
 Centering the experiences and perspectives of EO survivors through dedicated sessions and actively incorporating their feedback is essential for ensuring that victim assistance efforts are relevant, dignified, and truly address their needs.
- Structured Discussions with Clear Objectives: Utilizing a well-defined agenda with clear objectives for each session, including guided questions for group discussions, helps to focus the dialogue and elicit specific inputs relevant to the goals of the meeting, such as mapping roles for the Regional VAN.
- Collaboration between National and Regional Entities: The partnership between ARMAC (a regional center) and the Thai DEP (a national authority) in co-hosting the meeting demonstrates the effectiveness of collaboration across different levels to advance victim assistance goals.



9.2 Areas for Improvement

The meeting and the discussions around victim assistance in Thailand also highlighted areas where improvements could be made, which are relevant for the development of the Regional VAN:

- Broader Representation of Survivor Voices:
 While survivor testimonies were included,
 further efforts could be made to ensure even
 broader and more diverse representation of
 EO victims from different regions and with
 varying experiences and needs in future
 consultations and within the structure of the
 Regional VAN itself.
- Strengthening Data Collection and Sharing Mechanisms: Addressing the discrepancies in victim data among different national agencies and establishing more robust and standardized mechanisms for data collection, analysis, and sharing (while respecting privacy and ethical considerations) would enhance the effectiveness of victim assistance efforts at both national and regional levels.
- Enhancing Coordination at the Local Level: While national coordination mechanisms exist, strengthening coordination and referral pathways at the local or provincial level to ensure that victims in remote areas have access to the full range of available services remains a challenge that needs attention.
- Securing Long-Term and Dedicated Funding for Victim Assistance: Advocacy efforts may need to be intensified at both national and regional levels to ensure that victim assistance receives adequate and sustained financial support from governments and international donors, recognizing that the needs of victims persist long after mine clearance is completed.



9.3. Contextual Adjustments

The establishment and functioning of the Regional VAN will need to consider the diverse national contexts within ASEAN Member States:

- Varying Levels of EO Contamination and Victim Numbers: The scale of the EO problem and the number of victims differ significantly across the region. The Regional VAN should be flexible enough to address the specific needs and priorities of countries with high contamination as well as those less affected but still potentially in need of support and knowledge sharing.
- Different National Capacities and Resources: ASEAN Member States have varying levels of resources, infrastructure, and expertise in victim assistance and disability inclusion. The Regional VAN should facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices in a way that is adaptable to different capacity levels and can support capacity building where needed.
- Diverse Legal and Policy Frameworks: Each AMS has its own legal and policy frameworks related to disability rights, victim assistance, and mine action. The Regional VAN should operate in a way that respects these national frameworks while promoting common standards and principles where appropriate.
- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: The ASEAN region is culturally and linguistically diverse.
 Communication strategies and the design of victim assistance programs supported by the Regional VAN should be sensitive to these diversities to ensure effective outreach and engagement.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS



10.1. To National Stakeholders (Kingdom of Thailand)

Several effective strategies employed during the National Consultative Meeting and in the broader context of victim assistance in Thailand can inform the development of the Regional VAN:

- Institutionalize Victim Assistance Roles:
 Continue to strengthen and institutionalize
 the roles and responsibilities of various
 government agencies, particularly the
 Department of Empowerment for Persons with
 Disabilities (DEP) and the Thailand Mine Action
 Center (TMAC), in providing comprehensive
 and coordinated victim assistance services.
- Expand Support Services in Underserved Areas: Enhance efforts to reach and provide support services, including medical care, psychosocial support, and socio-economic reintegration programs, to EO victims living in remote or underserved provinces.

- Simplify Loan Application Procedures:
 Review and simplify the procedures for EO victims to access occupation loans and other financial assistance programs offered by DEP, addressing the challenges related to finding loan guarantors.
- Increase Frequency of Victim Outreach:
 Increase the frequency of visits and outreach
 by DEP and other relevant agencies to EO
 victims in their communities to provide
 ongoing support, monitor their well-being, and
 address their evolving needs.
- Strengthen Data Integration and Sharing:
 Enhance collaboration and data sharing
 between DEP, TMAC, and other relevant
 agencies to develop a more comprehensive
 and accurate national database of EO victims,
 ensuring better targeting and delivery of
 assistance.
- Promote Meaningful Victim Participation:
 Continue to actively involve EO survivors and their representative organizations in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of national victim assistance programs and policies.



10.2. To ARMAC/Regional Victim Assistance Network (when established)

- Lead Coordination and Blueprint
 Development: ARMAC should continue to take a leading role in coordinating the process of establishing the Regional VAN, building on the inputs from the national consultations to finalize a robust and inclusive Regional VAN Blueprint and Terms of Reference.
- Facilitate Knowledge Sharing and Best Practice Exchange: The Regional VAN should serve as a central platform for sharing knowledge, best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches in victim assistance among ASEAN Member States. This could include organizing regional workshops, developing online resource platforms, and facilitating peer-to-peer learning exchanges.
- Support Resource Mobilization Efforts: The Regional VAN should play a role in supporting national efforts to mobilize resources for victim assistance programs, potentially by facilitating connections with international donors and developing regional funding proposals.
- Promote Adoption of International Standards: The Regional VAN should encourage and support ASEAN Member States in aligning their national victim assistance policies and programs with international standards, such as IMAS 13.10 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Facilitate Regional Collaboration and Networking: The Regional VAN should actively foster collaboration and networking among government agencies, NGOs, UN agencies, donors, academic institutions, and survivor organizations across the ASEAN region.

• Ensure Meaningful Victim Participation at Regional Level: The structure and activities of the Regional VAN should ensure the active and meaningful participation of EO survivors and their representatives from all ASEAN Member States in its governance and decision-making processes.

10.3. To Technical and Funding Partners (e.g., ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund, UNDP, NGOs)

- Sustain Long-Term Engagement and Support: Technical and funding partners should provide sustained and long-term financial and technical support to both national victim assistance programs in ASEAN Member States and to the establishment and operation of the Regional VAN, recognizing that the needs of EO victims are enduring.
- Prioritize Victim-Centered and Integrated Approaches: Funding and technical assistance should prioritize programs and initiatives that adopt a victim-centered and integrated approach to victim assistance, addressing the diverse needs of survivors and promoting their full inclusion in society.
- Support Capacity Building: Provide support for capacity building initiatives aimed at strengthening the ability of national governments, local organizations, and survivor groups in ASEAN Member States to effectively plan, implement, and monitor victim assistance programs.
- Facilitate Technical Expertise and Knowledge Transfer: Technical partners should facilitate the transfer of expertise and knowledge in areas such as medical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, socio-economic reintegration, and data management to support victim assistance efforts in the region.
- Promote Research and Innovation: Support research on the needs of EO victims, the effectiveness of different assistance models, and innovative solutions to address challenges in the sector, such as advancements in prosthetics and assistive technologies.

11. WAY FORWARD



11.1 Immediate Actions

The immediate next steps following the National Consultative Meeting in Thailand include ARMAC's consolidation of the national inputs and perspectives gathered during the meeting. This comprehensive synthesis will form the basis for the development of an initial draft of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) Blueprint and its Terms of Reference (ToR).

11.2. Regional Consultations

Once the initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and ToR is prepared, it will be circulated to relevant stakeholders across ASEAN Member States for their review and feedback. Following this, a Regional Consultative Meeting is planned. This regional forum will provide an opportunity for representatives from all AMS to discuss the draft documents, share their regional perspectives, identify areas for refinement, and work towards building consensus on the structure and functions of the Regional VAN.

11.3. Timeline

The finalization of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference is anticipated to take place at the first Regional Workshop. The tentative timeline outlined in the project workplan suggests that this Regional Workshop could take place in the second half of 2022 or the first half of 2023. The specific timing will likely depend on the progress of the national consultations and the Regional Consultative Meeting. The ultimate goal is to have a finalized blueprint and ToR that will pave the way for the formal establishment and operationalization of the Regional Victim Assistance Network, enhancing support for EO victims across the ASEAN region.

CONCLUSION



The National Consultative Meeting in Thailand on Promoting the Establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network marks a pivotal milestone in the ASEAN region's collective journey toward enhancing victim assistance for those affected by explosive ordnance (EO). The meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including key government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN representatives, donors, and, crucially, explosive ordnance survivors, all of whom demonstrated a strong, shared commitment to addressing the rights and needs of individuals whose lives have been devastated by the remnants of war.

The meeting provided a platform for rich, in-depth discussions that highlighted both the challenges and successes of current victim assistance programs. The exchange of national experiences, identification of gaps, and deliberations on the structure and operational framework of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) provided invaluable insights. These insights, along with the concrete action points that emerged from the meeting, will serve as the foundation for the development of a robust, inclusive Regional VAN that not only addresses the immediate needs of victims but also ensures sustainable, long-term support across the ASEAN region.

The active engagement of diverse stakeholders has ensured that the establishment of the Regional VAN is not just a regional goal, but a unified movement supported by a broad spectrum of partners. The momentum generated by this meeting underscores the growing commitment to regional integration, knowledge sharing, and resource mobilization. The commitment to continued collaboration, including further consultations and regional workshops, signals a strong collective will to move forward in the creation of a fully operational Regional VAN. This network will ultimately enhance victim assistance, ensuring that no one affected by explosive ordnance in the ASEAN region is left behind in the journey toward healing, recovery, and the restoration of dignity.

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