

National Consultative Meeting

Hanoi, Viet Nam | 4 May 2022



To Promote the Establishment of Regional Victim Assistance Network

under the project

*Enhance Victim Assistance Programme
in the ASEAN Member States*



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The participation and contributions of representatives from national mine action authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government ministries and agencies, bilateral donors, UN agencies, and research and academic institutes from **Viet Nam** and the **ASEAN region** are deeply appreciated. Their diverse perspectives, experiences, and suggestions significantly enriched the discussions, and their ongoing commitment to victim assistance remains crucial to achieving the objectives set forth by the programme.

Finally, ARMAC extends its heartfelt appreciation to the **explosive ordnance survivors** who courageously shared their personal stories during the meeting. Their insights provided a vivid understanding of the challenges faced by victims and underscored the importance of continued and enhanced victim assistance programmes. Their contributions will serve as a vital guide as we move forward with strengthening victim support networks in the region.

ARMAC also wishes to acknowledge the leadership, guidance, and continued support provided by the **ARMAC Steering Committee** throughout the planning, execution, and ongoing implementation of this initiative. Their strategic direction and oversight have been invaluable to the success of this meeting and the broader mission of ARMAC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Consultative Meeting on Promoting the Establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) was held on 4 May 2022 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The meeting was a key activity under the “Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States” project, implemented by ARMAC with funding from the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund. The primary purpose of the meeting was to promote the establishment of a Regional VAN as a platform for various stakeholders to enhance assistance to victims of explosive ordnance (EO) in the ASEAN region.

The one-day hybrid meeting brought together representatives from government ministries and agencies, national mine action authorities and centers, international and national non-governmental organizations, representative from the AKPMT, UN agencies such as UNDP, and research and academic institutes. Participants engaged in intensive discussions on victim assistance implementation, exploring the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 13.10 and an integrated approach to victim assistance as guiding frameworks.

Key outcomes of the National Consultative Meeting include:

- **Shared knowledge, best practices, and challenges** related to victim assistance implementation among key national stakeholders.
- **Mapping out potential roles, responsibilities, coordination, and communication mechanisms** to promote the establishment of the Regional VAN.
- **Identification of common challenges** such as the lack of a clear division of roles among government authorities, the need for increased funding for national institutions, and the absence of an integrated data platform for victim information.
- **Gaining insights from the personal experiences of EO survivors**, providing a crucial understanding of the challenges they face.
- **Agreement among participants on the necessity of a Regional VAN** to integrate victim assistance at a regional level for knowledge sharing, fundraising, and addressing common challenges.
- **Commitment to develop an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference** based on the inputs collected at the national level.

The next steps involve further discussion of these documents at a Regional Consultative Meeting, followed by finalization at the first Regional Workshop. The establishment of the Regional VAN is anticipated to serve as a central point for regional collaboration in victim assistance.

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1. INTRODUCTION



1.1 Overview of the Enhance Victim Assistance Programme

The “Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States” is a three-year project implemented by the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC), running from January 2021 to June 2025. Generously supported by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF), this initiative seeks to significantly strengthen the support provided to victims of explosive ordnance (EO) within the ASEAN region.

The project addresses a critical gap in victim assistance for EO survivors in Southeast Asia, a region still grappling with the consequences of past armed conflicts. These conflicts have left a heavy legacy of explosive ordnance contamination, with countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam being the most severely affected. Communities in these countries continue to face the risk of EO explosions, which result in a significant number of deaths and life-changing injuries, including amputations and severe disabilities. Beyond the physical wounds, the mental and social impacts on victims are profound, with many survivors facing stigma and marginalization in their communities.

The programme is designed with an integrated, holistic, and long-term approach to victim assistance. The focus is not only on medical care and rehabilitation services but also on psychosocial support and ensuring that victims have access to social and economic opportunities. By addressing these broader aspects, the programme aims to restore the competency, dignity, confidence, and self-esteem of victims, enabling them to reintegrate into their communities.

The project aligns with ARMAC’s mandate, which includes facilitating medical and rehabilitation assistance for ERW victims, as well as promoting research and knowledge sharing on the effects of ERW. This programme will work closely with ASEAN Member States (AMS) to enhance their capacity to support victims, integrating best practices in victim assistance and ensuring that the needs of affected individuals are met in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

Expected outcomes of the programme include the establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN), which will facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, promote knowledge exchange, and ensure that victim assistance services are

provided in a coordinated and efficient manner across the region.



1.2 Objectives of the National Consultative Meeting

As part of the first stage of project implementation, which focuses on establishing a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN), ARMAC organized five national consultative meetings in the most EO-affected ASEAN countries. This report details the second of these meetings, held in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The primary objective of the National Consultative Meeting in Viet Nam was to promote the establishment of the Regional VAN by bringing together relevant national networks and stakeholders working with and supporting EO victims.

Specifically, the meeting aimed to:

- Facilitate discussions among key national VA stakeholders on victim assistance implementation.
- Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share knowledge, best practices, and challenges related to victim assistance.
- Explore the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 13.10 and an integrated approach to victim assistance as frameworks for discussion.
- Map out potential roles, responsibilities, coordination, and communication mechanisms to support the establishment of the Regional VAN.
- Collect inputs at the country level to contribute to the development of an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference.

1.3 Report Structure

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the National Consultative Meeting held in Hanoi, Viet Nam. Following this introduction, Section 2 outlines the background context of EO contamination and the need for enhanced victim assistance in the ASEAN region, as well as ARMAC's role in addressing these issues. Section 3 details the objectives, format, and opening ceremony of the meeting. Section 4 provides an overview of the participants. Section 5 summarizes the technical and thematic discussions, including national perspectives, challenges, the voice of victims, and guidance on integrated approaches and IMAS 13.10. Section 6 focuses on the discussions related to the establishment of the Regional VAN. Section 7 outlines the key outcomes of the meeting. Sections 8, 9, and 10 highlight good practices, lessons learned, and recommendations. Section 11 describes the way forward, and Section 12 provides a concluding summary.



2. BACKGROUND



2.1 Explosive Ordnance Contamination in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia remains one of the most heavily impacted regions by explosive ordnance (EO), a legacy of past armed conflicts that continue to pose severe risks to civilians and hinder development. Explosive ordnance, as defined in mine action, encompasses landmines, cluster munitions, unexploded ordnance (UXO), abandoned ordnance, booby traps, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and other ordnance left behind after conflict. The ongoing risks from EO contamination affect Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, which are recognized as the most EO-contaminated countries in the ASEAN region.

In Viet Nam, the consequences of these conflicts have been profound, with an estimated 40,000 deaths and 60,000 injuries caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Over 5.6 million hectares (more than 17% of the country's land area) remain contaminated by EO, posing an ongoing threat to the safety and livelihoods of people in affected areas. The constant risk of EO explosions severely impacts daily activities, limits access to essential resources, and prevents the full integration of victims into society.

The long-term consequences of EO contamination are far-reaching. Communities in affected areas face barriers to socioeconomic development, as large swathes of land remain unusable due to the danger of ordnance. This disruption not only affects agricultural activities but also inhibits efforts to build infrastructure, access education, and improve local economies. The contamination also imposes significant costs on governments, demining organizations, and communities, as resources are needed for clearance efforts, victim assistance, and recovery.

The psychosocial impact of EO contamination is substantial, particularly for victims and their families. Survivors often suffer from physical disabilities, including limb loss, trauma, and chronic pain, leading to long-term mental health challenges. In contexts where being differently-abled is often seen as a limitation, victims face significant marginalization and social exclusion, which further complicates their reintegration into society.

The continued threat of EO contamination in the region highlights the urgent need for sustained action and a coordinated response from governments, international organizations, and local communities. Effective solutions must include land release efforts, medical and psychosocial support, and economic rehabilitation programs to help victims regain their independence and quality of life.

2.2 The Need for Enhanced Victim Assistance



The explosions of EO result in not only immediate casualties but also long-term physical, psychological, and socio-economic consequences for survivors and their families. Survivors often suffer from limb loss and other severe injuries that affect their mental and social well-being. In contexts where being differently abled is perceived as a limitation, EO victims and other persons with disabilities (PWDs) frequently face restricted participation in economic and social opportunities. This marginalization further hinders their ability to lead fulfilling lives and reintegrate into society.

Providing effective assistance to EO victims requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. This includes not only medical care, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support, but also ensuring access to social and economic opportunities that restore dignity, confidence, and self-esteem. A holistic approach that integrates humanitarian, development, and human rights perspectives is essential. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must collaborate to address the significant gaps in support and ensure that victims receive the assistance they need to rebuild their lives.

Recognizing these pressing needs, the ASEAN Member States, in partnership with ARMAC, initiated the Enhance Victim Assistance Programme in the ASEAN Member States.

2.3 ARMAC's Role and Mandate

The ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) was established in 2012 and became fully operational in 2017. ARMAC's mandate includes raising awareness of the dangers posed by explosive remnants of war (ERW), facilitating medical and rehabilitation assistance for victims, and supporting ASEAN Member States (AMS) with research and knowledge-sharing regarding the impact of ERW. The Enhance Victim Assistance Programme is integral to ARMAC's second and third mandates.

ARMAC plays a pivotal role in this initiative by collaborating closely with various stakeholders, including government agencies, national mine action centers, UN agencies, national and international organizations, and research institutions. As the regional coordinating body for mine action in ASEAN, ARMAC is ideally positioned to facilitate the establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN). This network will act as a central platform for integrating victim assistance at the regional level, promoting knowledge exchange, supporting fundraising efforts, and addressing common challenges in victim assistance across ASEAN Member States.



3. MEETING OVERVIEW

3.1 Objectives

The National Consultative Meeting in Viet Nam was a critical step in advancing the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN), a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and coordination of victim assistance efforts across the ASEAN region.

This meeting brought together key stakeholders to deliberate on the most effective means of addressing the challenges faced by explosive ordnance (EO) victims and ensuring a comprehensive, integrated response to victim assistance. The core objectives of the meeting were:

- Promote the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) as a collaborative platform for ASEAN stakeholders, facilitating coordination, knowledge exchange, and resource sharing.
- Facilitate in-depth discussions on the implementation of victim assistance, leveraging national experiences and international standards to drive improvements in support services for EO victims.
- Provide a forum for exchanging best practices, identifying challenges, and sharing insights related to victim assistance services in Viet Nam and beyond.
- Examine the application of the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 13.10 and an integrated approach to victim assistance, ensuring that international frameworks are effectively incorporated into national efforts.
- Identify key roles, responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and communication strategies essential for the success of the Regional VAN.
- Collect country-specific inputs and recommendations to shape the development of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference, setting a clear direction for the network's structure and operation.



3.2 Date, Time, and Venue

The National Consultative Meeting was held on **Wednesday, 4 May 2022**, at the prestigious Sheraton Hanoi Hotel in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The meeting took place from **8:00 AM to 5:00 PM**, ensuring a full day of in-depth discussions and engagement among participants. The venue, located at **K5 Nghi Tam, 11 Xuan Dieu Road, Tay Ho District, Hanoi**, was selected for its central location and accessibility, offering a conducive environment for meaningful dialogue and collaboration. This central and well-equipped venue facilitated the participation of key stakeholders from across the ASEAN region, ensuring a productive and impactful meeting.

3.3 Format

The meeting was conducted in a **hybrid format**, offering both **in-person and online participation** options. This approach was intentionally designed to ensure broad and inclusive participation from national and regional stakeholders, including those who might face travel restrictions or other logistical challenges. The primary language of the meeting was English, with simultaneous translation provided into Viet Nameese to ensure clear and effective communication across all participants.

The agenda featured a dynamic combination of welcome remarks, keynote presentations, panel discussions, and breakout group sessions. Additionally, a special “voice of victims” session was included, providing invaluable insights directly from explosive ordnance survivors, further enriching the discussions. The format was designed to foster engagement, exchange of ideas, and in-depth exploration of the challenges and opportunities related to victim assistance across ASEAN.

3.4 Opening Ceremony



The opening ceremony of the meeting began with a warm welcome to all participants by the Master of Ceremonies. The ceremony proceeded with welcome remarks delivered by **Mr. Nguyen Hanh Phuc, Deputy Director General of VNMAC**, who emphasized the critical importance of the meeting and expressed his hope for its success. He acknowledged the profound suffering caused by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Viet Nam and highlighted the urgency of addressing these issues.



Mr. WEE Joon-seok, Counsellor from the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Viet Nam, followed with remarks that framed the meeting within the context of the 30th anniversary of Viet Nam–Republic of Korea diplomatic relations. He underscored the alignment of the project with Korea’s “New Southern Policy”, which focuses on People, Peace, and Prosperity, and reiterated Korea’s ongoing commitment to supporting explosive ordnance (EO) victim assistance in Viet Nam. He highlighted Korea’s continued investments in rehabilitation centers and medical services as part of these efforts.



The opening remarks were concluded by **Mr. Prum Suonpraseth, Executive Director of ARMAC**, who expressed gratitude to the Government of Korea for its financial support and to VNMAC for co-hosting the event. He emphasized the importance of establishing a strong, regionally grounded victim assistance network to address the challenges posed by conflict and ensure that necessary services are accessible to all victims. He also encouraged active discussions and knowledge sharing among the meeting’s participants.



Following the opening remarks, **Ms. Chanthana Sengthong, ARMAC Victim Assistance Project Manager**, provided an overview of the consultative meeting, outlining its objectives and expected outcomes. To commemorate the event, a group photo of all participants was taken.

4. PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Total Number and Representation

The National Consultative Meeting brought together a diverse and engaged group of 69 participants from across various sectors involved in victim assistance and mine action. The meeting saw strong representation from government ministries and agencies, national mine action authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, and academic institutions. The broad participation of stakeholders ensured rich discussions and contributed to the meeting's success in addressing the critical challenges faced by explosive ordnance (EO) victims.

4.2 Groups of Participants

The National Consultative Meeting brought together participants from a wide range of institutions and organizations, ensuring diverse representation and expertise. The key groups represented included:

- **Government Ministries and Agencies:** Representatives from various government bodies involved in health, social affairs, foreign affairs, and mine action, including MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), PACCOM (Viet Nam Fatherland Front Central Committee), Office 701, DoLISA (Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs), and MOD (Ministry of Defense).
- **National Mine Action Authorities and Centers:** Officials and experts from organizations such as VNMAC and provincial mine action centers like Quang Tri Mine Action Center (QTMAC).
- **International and National Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Organizations actively engaged in victim assistance, mine clearance, risk education, and community support, such as Viet Nam Red Cross, Peace Trees Viet Nam, and Viet Nam Association for Supporting Mine/UXO Efforts (VNASMA).
- **International and National Stakeholders:** Key stakeholders from UNDP, ICRC, and other international organizations working on mine action and victim assistance in the region.

- **Research and Academic Institutes:** Experts and researchers from academic institutions contributing to knowledge and innovation in the field of victim assistance.
- **Explosive Ordnance Survivors:** Individuals directly affected by explosive ordnance (EO) explosions, who shared their personal experiences and provided critical insights into the challenges they face.

4.3 Geographical Distribution

Participants included representatives from across Viet Nam, particularly from provinces heavily affected by explosive ordnance such as Quang Tri, Ha Giang, Quang Binh, and others. Additionally, the hybrid format allowed for participation from regional stakeholders, although their specific geographical distribution is not detailed in the sources.

4.4 Mode of Participation

The meeting saw a mix of **in-person** attendance at the Sheraton Hanoi Hotel and **remote participation** via online platforms. This hybrid approach facilitated a wider range of contributions and ensured inclusivity despite potential logistical challenges. The opening ceremony, presentations, and discussions involved both in-person panelists and speakers joining online. Breakout sessions were also designed to accommodate both in-person and online attendees.



5. TECHNICAL AND THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

The National Consultative Meeting featured several technical and thematic discussion sessions aimed at sharing knowledge, identifying challenges, and exploring pathways for enhanced victim assistance and the establishment of the Regional VAN.

5.1 National Perspectives on Victim Assistance Implementation

This session provided an overview of the current status of victim assistance programmes in Viet Nam, with presentations from government and non-government stakeholders.



5.1.1 Government Stakeholders

- **Mr. Tran Huu Thanh, Head of External Relations, VNMAC**, shared challenges and experiences in victim assistance, highlighting the significant number of casualties and the extent of contaminated land in Viet Nam. He outlined VNMAC's national VA programmes, IEC activities, and coordination efforts, noting that mine action activities have received substantial funding over the past decade. He also identified challenges such as an incomplete documentation system, geographical limitations of activities, resource management issues, and the need to better integrate mine action with local socio-economic development plans. Proposed solutions included improving the legal framework, strengthening international cooperation, enhancing data collection, and maximizing political accountability.
- **Ms. Pham Thi Hai Ha, Deputy Director General, Social Assistance Department/MOLISA**, provided an overview of national programmes in ERW VA and recovery. She noted that Viet Nam has a large population of people with disabilities, including millions of EO victims. Achievements in VA include building legal frameworks, providing monthly allowances to PWDs, and enhancing medical care and rehabilitation services. MOLISA has also been involved in developing a database system to determine disability levels. Challenges remain, such as a lack of qualified workers, incomplete coverage due to budget limitations, database update delays, and social barriers. Future orientations focus on implementing support projects, completing legal documents, improving information systems, stabilizing livelihoods, and strengthening international cooperation.
- **Mr. Phan Van Cau, President of the Red Cross, Quang Binh province**, presented the organization's overview and support programmes for victims. The Quang Binh Red Cross has a significant network of branches, members, and volunteers and is actively involved in disaster prevention, health care, and psychological support, with a focus on preventing accidents and supporting victims. Support programmes include information collection, capacity building, educational activities on mine risk awareness, livelihood support, and emergency assistance. Successes include increased public awareness and improved support for victims. Challenges include a lack of social awareness, limited human resources, and weak infrastructure.
- **Mr. Vuong Dinh Thang, Deputy Director, Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) of Ha Giang province**, shared the local perspective on VA. Ha Giang province is heavily contaminated with EOs from past conflicts, and a significant number of victims are from poor and ethnic minority communities. Policies include propaganda on mine clearance, livelihood support, and mobilizing funds for prosthetics. Difficulties include the vulnerable living conditions of victims, unstable funding, and health facilities located in contaminated areas. Recommendations focused on raising awareness, completing demining, enhancing medical support, building operational plans, conducting coordination meetings, and

developing prioritized lists of victims. Data collection and management are supported by systems like IMSMA. Several VA projects have been implemented in the province. Challenges include outdated databases and increasing demands with decreasing funding.

- **Mr. Ho Huu Nhan, SEDP Officer, Quang Tri Mine Action Center**, provided information on mine victims in Ha Giang province (note: the agenda indicates he would share information on behalf of mine victims of Ha Giang, but his presentation details QTMAC's work in Quang Tri). He highlighted QTMAC's development process, data collection and management systems (including IMSMA and mobile applications), and achievements, including being the first province with a mine action center and a provincial action plan. QTMAC has also focused on VA coordination, including developing a victim database, building operational plans, conducting coordination meetings, and connecting local governments with organizations. He provided an overview of VA projects in Quang Tri and outlined challenges such as outdated data and reduced funding, as well as future plans including updating the database and conducting need assessments.

5.1.2 Non-Government Stakeholders

- **Ms. Nguyen Thi Hang, Desk Officer, Viet Nam Red Cross**, focused on victim assistance, highlighting the ERW assistance provided with ICRC support since 2009. The Red Cross has provided livelihood support to over 1,000 households, with a maximum annual support of 10 million VND per household, based on living conditions assessments. She detailed the steps involved in VA implementation, from action plan development to funding distribution and monitoring. Lessons learned include the importance of mobilizing volunteers and enhancing coordination. She also proposed strengthening connections, sharing expertise, and effectively coordinating resources for victim assistance.
- **Mr. Marc Zlot, Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Project Manager for Mekong Region, ICRC**, (online) discussed victim assistance as a holistic and integrated process involving various stages from first aid to socio-economic integration. He emphasized access, quality, and long-term functioning as key aspects of physical rehabilitation strategies. He outlined ICRC's support to mine victims in Viet Nam, providing data on service users and devices provided across different centers. Challenges identified

include legal barriers, the quality of services, a lack of awareness of victims' needs, and the importance of societal integration. Potential solutions include better coordination among government bodies and stakeholders, aligning assistance strategies with national plans, and integrating mine victim assistance with broader disability sector efforts.

- **Ms. Pham Thi Hoang Ha, Country Director, Peace Trees Viet Nam**, presented an overview of Peace Trees and its victim assistance programme. Peace Trees was the first U.S. organization permitted to sponsor mine and UXO removal in Viet Nam and operates in Quang Tri and Quang Binh. Its work includes EOD clearance, risk education, victim assistance, community development, and citizen diplomacy. Over the past decade, victim assistance has included long-term medical care, family economy support, and micro-credit lending. Current activities focus on emergency medical treatment and educational scholarships. Achievements include providing emergency and long-term assistance, micro-credit loans, and scholarships. Lessons learned highlight the need for different assistance approaches based on individual situations, better information sharing among VA organizations, long-term solutions, and the establishment of a coordinating authority with a database.



- **Mr. Vu Xuan Kien, Member of Communications and Mobilization Office, Viet Nam Association for Supporting Mine/UXO Efforts (VNASMA)**, introduced VNASMA and its main tasks, which include promoting mine action, providing support to victims, and mobilizing resources. The organization conducts IEC activities to raise awareness and support victims. Outstanding activities include publications and collaborations with media outlets. Limitations include the lack of diverse models for education and integration assistance, a low number of beneficiaries

compared to needs, and limited international cooperation due to budget constraints and lack of experience. Future plans involve continuing IEC activities through digital media, cooperating with mass media, and strengthening fundraising efforts.

- **Mr. Patrick Haverman, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Viet Nam,** (online) discussed UNDP's involvement in mine action in Viet Nam, from the Korea-Viet Nam Mine Action Project (KVMAP) to the current Korea-Viet Nam Peace Village Project (KVPVP). UNDP's interventions include survey and clearance, risk education, victim assistance, and rural development, aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UNDP recently helped draft the National Standard on Victim Assistance in Mine Action. KVMAP results in victim assistance included health screenings, livelihood support, and COVID-19 response packages. He appreciated Viet Nam's data collection efforts using electronic software and emphasized the importance of using this data for mine action planning and case management, as well as the need for coordination.

- **Socio-economic Integration and Education:** Limitations in diverse models for education, employment, and community reintegration assistance were noted, with the quantity of beneficiaries often being low compared to the needs. Social barriers due to a lack of awareness among communities and families also impede socio-economic integration.
- **Laws and Policies:** Delays and inconsistencies in the issuance of legal documents related to victim assistance by the government or relevant sectors were cited as hindering factors.
- **Coordination and Resource Mobilization:** A lack of clear division of roles and responsibilities among multiple government authorities responsible for disabilities was identified. Weak coordination among different organizations and a lack of information sharing were also highlighted. Limited human resources to manage programmes and assist victims, as well as unstable or decreasing financial support and funding, pose significant challenges. The management and use of existing resources were also noted as not always being well-focused.

5.2 Challenges in Victim Assistance Implementation

Across the presentations and discussions, several common challenges in victim assistance implementation were identified:

- **Data Management and Collection:** Incomplete or outdated documentation systems and databases for EO victims were highlighted as a significant challenge, hindering effective planning and provision of assistance. The lack of an integrated data platform containing relevant information on victims was also noted.
- **Medical Care and Physical Rehabilitation:** While progress has been made, challenges remain in terms of a lack of qualified and skilled workers and equipment at rehabilitation centers, as well as ensuring comprehensive coverage for victims in all areas due to limited national budgets.
- **Psychosocial Support:** The need for enhanced psychosocial support for victims was emphasized, although specific challenges in this area were not detailed as extensively as others.

5.3 Voice of Victims

A dedicated session provided a platform for explosive ordnance victims to share their personal experiences. **Ms. Nguyễn Thị Năm** recounted her experience of an accident at the age of six and the significant stigma and discrimination she faced in the community and at school due to limited disability awareness at the time. Her name itself implied she was 'legless'. She acknowledged the positive impact of various projects in raising community awareness.

Mr. Ho Huu Nhan, speaking on behalf of mine victims from Ha Giang province, shared information about the high contamination of landmines in mountainous areas where accidents have occurred. He noted the strong approval of mine action efforts by the local community. These testimonies provided a vivid and crucial understanding of the challenges faced by EO survivors, underscoring the urgent need for continued and enhanced victim assistance.



5.4 Guidance on Integrated Approach and IMAS 13.10

Mr. Muhammad Jahangir, Regional Technical Unit Manager, Humanity & Inclusion, (online) provided guidance on an integrated approach to victim assistance and introduced the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 13.10. He emphasized that victim assistance is a set of activities addressing the needs and rights of EO victims, with the ultimate responsibility resting on states. He defined a 'victim' as an individual or collective who has suffered physical or psychological pain, economic loss, or substantial impairment of fundamental rights due to EO. He stressed that VA requires a long-term commitment and an integrated approach involving broader efforts by sectors outside of mine action and VA-specific efforts within the mine action sector (IMAS 13.10).

Mr. Jahangir highlighted that while VA is a pillar of mine action, it has historically been under-prioritized, receiving only a small percentage of overall mine action funding. He introduced IMAS 13.10, which provides guidance to mine action actors on their specific role in victim assistance, including information management, identification and referral, promotion of multi-sector engagement, and supporting national action plans. Key messages included "Mine Free is not Victim Free," the specific role of the mine action sector in VA, the need to assist both direct and indirect victims, and the responsibility of states to guarantee adequate funding. He encouraged the alignment of national standards with IMAS 13.10.

6. REGIONAL VAN DISCUSSION

Following the presentations, participants engaged in breakout sessions to discuss the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN). Government stakeholders and non-government stakeholders convened in separate groups to discuss and identify roles, responsibilities, coordination, and communication mechanisms for the proposed network.

6.1 Rationale for a Regional Victim Assistance Network

Both government and non-government stakeholders strongly agreed on the necessity and importance of a Regional VAN. Key reasons cited included:

- **Enhanced Collaboration:** The network would provide a platform for stakeholders from different institutions and countries to work together, fostering stronger collaboration and a consolidated voice on victim assistance issues.
- **Knowledge and Best Practice Sharing:** A regional network would facilitate the sharing of experiences, information, best practices, and updates on policies related to victim assistance among ASEAN Member States.
- **Resource Mobilization:** The VAN could serve as a mechanism to collectively mobilize resources and raise funds to support victim assistance programmes in the region.
- **Addressing Common Challenges:** By providing a forum for discussion, the network could help identify and address common challenges faced by EO victims and service providers across the region.
- **Regional Integration:** The establishment of the VAN aligns with ASEAN's goals of promoting peace, security, and socio-economic development, ensuring that no one is left behind.
- **Strengthened Advocacy:** A regional network would provide a stronger, unified voice to advocate for the rights and needs of EO victims at the national, regional, and international levels.

6.2 Roles, Responsibilities, Coordination, and Communication

Participants discussed the potential roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders within the Regional VAN, as well as possible coordination and communication mechanisms.

6.2.1 Government Stakeholders Perspectives

Government stakeholders envisioned the Regional VAN as a platform for strong partnerships among representatives from different institutions, fostering active participation and commitment. They suggested that the VAN could potentially establish a regional victim database in the future. It was proposed that VNMAC and MOLISA would be the primary representatives of Viet Nam in the Regional VAN, given their roles in developing and implementing legal frameworks on mine action and victim assistance in the country. A key principle for the VAN would be compliance with the laws of each member country. Digital infrastructures were suggested as a means for communication.



6.2.2 Non-Government Stakeholders Perspectives

Non-government stakeholders generally supported the idea of a Regional VAN as a necessary space for sharing experiences, information, and policy updates. They emphasized the importance of mapping resources and fostering links between victim assistance operators and mine action operators across different departments and

countries. The inclusion of representatives from various countries in the network was deemed crucial. Some participants suggested having co-chairs from both government and NGO sectors within Viet Nam for effective collaboration. ARMAC's website was proposed as a potential platform for the VAN to update policies, case studies, and news from different countries. Regular meetings among AMS stakeholders and members were also suggested. Many institutions and INGOs expressed their readiness to support and join the network. Important considerations raised included the long-term attractiveness of the VAN to donors as the number of EO victims decreases, and the challenges and strategies for effectively maintaining the network.



6.3 Proposed Structure of the Regional VAN

Discussions on the structure of the Regional VAN touched upon human resources/committee composition, modes of communication, and coordination systems. Suggestions included:

- **Human Resource/Committee:** Designating focal persons or authorities from each member state to work with other countries. Potential representation from national steering committees, civil society, and relevant ministries like MOLISA and national mine action centers like VNMAC. The idea of co-chairs from government and non-government sectors at the national level to enhance collaboration was also proposed.
- **Mode of Communication:** Utilizing various channels such as phone, website, email, and potentially social media to communicate and convey messages relevant to the community. Leveraging existing platforms and incorporating the VAN into other regional events could also enhance communication.

- **Coordination System:** Establishing clear mechanisms for coordination among the committee and stakeholders. This includes mapping resources of victim assistance and linking victim assistance and mine action operators in different sectors and components. Regular meetings among AMS stakeholders were also suggested to ensure ongoing coordination.



6.4 Potential Contributions of Participating Institutions

Participants were asked to consider how their institutions could contribute to the Regional VAN, linking to IMAS 13.10 and an integrated approach. Potential contributions aligned with the pillars of victim assistance included:

- **Data collection:** Sharing national data and supporting the establishment of a regional victim database.
- **Intensive and ongoing medical care:** Sharing best practices and facilitating access to medical services and expertise.
- **Physical rehabilitation:** Collaborating on rehabilitation programmes and sharing knowledge on prosthetic and assistive devices.
- **Psychosocial support:** Sharing training resources and expertise in providing psychosocial support to victims.
- **Socio-economic integration:** NGOs and other organizations could share models and strategies for livelihood support, vocational training, and community integration.
- **Laws and policies:** Government representatives could share information on national legal frameworks and contribute to the development of regional policy recommendations.

7. MEETING OUTCOMES

The National Consultative Meeting yielded several important outcomes that paved the way for the establishment of the Regional Victim Assistance Network.

7.1 Commitments and Agreements

- **Agreement on Draft Blueprint and Terms of Reference:** A key commitment was made to use the inputs collected at the country level during the national consultative meetings, including the one in Viet Nam, to develop an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference. These foundational documents will outline the network's objectives, structure, membership criteria, and operational procedures.

7.2 Challenges Identified for the Regional VAN

Discussions also highlighted potential challenges that need to be considered in the establishment and operation of the Regional VAN:

- **Sustainability and Dialogue Partners Engagement:** Concerns were raised about maintaining the network's relevance and attractiveness to donors as the number of new EO victims potentially decreases over time. Ensuring long-term financial sustainability will be crucial.
- **Maintenance and Operational Challenges:** Participants acknowledged that maintaining an effective regional network would likely involve various challenges and difficulties, requiring careful planning and commitment from member states and stakeholders.
- **Integration with National Systems:** Ensuring that the Regional VAN effectively complements and integrates with existing national victim assistance frameworks and systems in each ASEAN Member State will be important.
- **Diverse National Contexts:** The varying legal frameworks, priorities, and capacities across ASEAN countries will need to be taken into account in the network's structure and activities.



7.3 Key Outcomes and Insights

Beyond the specific commitments, the meeting provided several key insights:

- **Strong Support for Regional Collaboration:** The strong consensus among participants on the necessity of a Regional VAN underscores the shared commitment to enhancing victim assistance through regional cooperation.
- **Importance of Integrated Approaches:** The discussions highlighted the value of an integrated approach to victim assistance, involving both mine action-specific efforts and broader inclusion within other sectors like health, education, and social welfare.
- **Relevance of IMAS 13.10:** The introduction of IMAS 13.10 was well-received, providing a framework for the mine action sector's specific contributions to victim assistance.
- **Value of Survivor Perspectives:** The session dedicated to the voice of victims provided invaluable insights into the real-life challenges and needs of EO survivors, reinforcing the urgency and importance of the project.
- **Need for Improved Coordination and Data:** The recurring themes of the need for better coordination among stakeholders and the establishment of integrated and reliable data management systems highlighted critical areas for future focus.

8. GOOD PRACTICES AND SUCCESSES

The National Consultative Meeting served as a platform for sharing various good practices and successes in victim assistance implementation in Viet Nam.



8.1 National Level Initiatives in Viet Nam

The participants represented a broad spectrum of institutions and organizations, including:

- **VNMAC's National VA Programmes:** VNMAC has implemented various programmes providing vocational training, livelihood support, and assistance for social integration to those affected by mines and EOs. Their information, education, and communication activities have also contributed to a decrease in incidents.
- **MOLISA's Integrated Social Assistance Policy:** MOLISA has developed legal frameworks to support victims, including providing monthly allowances to people with disabilities and enhancing medical care and rehabilitation services. The development of a disability database system is also a significant step forward.
- **Quang Binh Red Cross's Community-Based Support:** The Red Cross in Quang Binh has successfully implemented programmes for disaster prevention, health care, and psychological support, including risk education and livelihood assistance for EO victims, often in collaboration with international organizations.

- **Ha Giang's Local Coordination Efforts:** The DOLISA in Ha Giang has coordinated with mass organizations for awareness campaigns, provided livelihood support, and mobilized funds for prosthetics for mine victims in a heavily contaminated and impoverished region.
- **QTMAC's Data Management and Coordination:** Quang Tri Mine Action Center has established robust data collection and management systems and has been proactive in VA coordination, including building a victim database and facilitating connections between local governments and organizations.
- **Viet Nam Red Cross's Livelihood Support Programme:** The Viet Nam Red Cross, with ICRC support, has provided livelihood assistance to over 1,000 households of EO victims, enabling them to improve their income and integrate into their communities.
- **Peace Trees Viet Nam's Comprehensive Victim Assistance:** Peace Trees Viet Nam has a long history of providing medical care, livelihood support, micro-credit lending, emergency assistance, and educational scholarships to EO victims in Quang Tri and Quang Binh provinces.
- **UNDP's Integrated Mine Action Projects:** UNDP's projects, such as KVMAP and KVPVP, have integrated victim assistance with survey and clearance, risk education, and rural development, providing health screenings, livelihood support, and COVID-19 relief to survivors.

8.2 Regional Cooperation Opportunities

The meeting itself highlighted the potential for enhanced regional cooperation through the establishment of the VAN. Sharing these national-level successes and challenges will be invaluable for other ASEAN Member States facing similar issues. The network can facilitate the exchange of effective models and strategies for victim assistance across different contexts in the region.

9. LESSONS LEARNED



The National Consultative Meeting yielded key insights that will guide the ongoing development of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN) and strengthen future victim assistance initiatives.

9.1 Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement

The hybrid format of the meeting proved effective in bringing together a diverse range of national and potentially regional stakeholders, fostering valuable discussions and knowledge sharing. The active participation of government agencies, NGOs, UN agencies, donors, and survivors underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in addressing the complex issue of victim assistance.

9.2 Hybrid Meeting Format Considerations

The successful implementation of the hybrid format highlighted the need for careful planning and technical support to ensure effective participation from both in-person and online attendees. Clear communication and facilitation were crucial for engaging all participants in the discussions.

9.3 Areas for Improvement

- **Survivor Participation:** While the voice of victims session was impactful, future consultative meetings could explore ways to further integrate survivors' perspectives throughout the programme design and discussions, ensuring their meaningful participation in all relevant aspects.
- **Pre-Meeting Coordination:** Enhanced pre-meeting coordination among stakeholders could help streamline discussions and ensure that key topics and questions are addressed effectively.
- **Alignment with National Frameworks:** Future efforts should continue to emphasize the importance of aligning regional initiatives with existing national victim assistance frameworks and priorities in each ASEAN Member State to ensure synergy and avoid duplication.
- **Focus on Long-Term Sustainability:** Discussions on the Regional VAN need to continue to prioritize the long-term sustainability of the network, including strategies for resource mobilization and maintaining its relevance as the context evolves.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on the discussions and outcomes of the National Consultative Meeting, the following recommendations are proposed:

10.1 For National Stakeholders in ASEAN Member States

- **Enhance Coordination:** Strengthen coordination mechanisms among government ministries, national mine action authorities, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders working on victim assistance at the national level.
- **Align with IMAS 13.10:** Review and align national standards and practices for victim assistance with the guidance provided in IMAS 13.10 to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach.
- **Improve Data Management:** Invest in developing and maintaining comprehensive and integrated national databases on EO victims, including their needs and the services provided, while ensuring data privacy and ethical considerations.

- **Strengthen Resource Allocation:** Advocate for increased and sustained financial and human resources for victim assistance programmes, ensuring that funding is targeted and effectively utilized.
- **Promote Socio-economic Inclusion:** Develop and implement programmes that actively promote the socio-economic inclusion of EO victims, including access to education, vocational training, and employment opportunities.
- **Raise Public Awareness:** Conduct sustained public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination against EO victims and persons with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive society.
- **Ensure Meaningful Participation of Survivors:** Establish mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of EO survivors and their representative organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of victim assistance programmes and policies.



10.2 For ARMAC and the Regional Victim Assistance Network

- **Lead VAN Establishment:** Continue to lead the process of establishing the Regional VAN, ensuring that the Blueprint and Terms of Reference reflect the inputs and needs of all participating ASEAN Member States.
- **Facilitate Knowledge Sharing:** Develop and maintain platforms and activities for regular knowledge exchange, best practice sharing, and policy updates among VAN members.
- **Support National Integration:** Facilitate the integration of the Regional VAN's activities and resources with national victim assistance programmes and priorities.
- **Promote Resource Mobilization:** Explore opportunities for joint resource mobilization at the regional level to support national victim assistance efforts.
- **Develop Regional Database Linkages:** Explore the feasibility of linking national victim databases or establishing a regional data-sharing mechanism (while respecting data privacy) to enhance understanding of the needs and challenges across the region.
- **Organize Regular Meetings:** Conduct regular meetings and consultations of the Regional VAN to foster collaboration, track progress, and address emerging challenges.



10.3 For Technical and Funding Partners

- **Provide Long-Term, Flexible Support:** Commit to providing sustained and flexible financial and technical support to both national and regional victim assistance initiatives, recognizing the long-term needs of EO survivors.
- **Support Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity-building programmes for national stakeholders, including training for medical professionals, rehabilitation specialists, psychosocial support providers, and data management personnel.
- **Promote Integrated Approaches:** Support projects and programmes that adopt an integrated approach to victim assistance, linking mine action efforts with broader development and humanitarian initiatives.
- **Facilitate Technology Transfer and Expertise:** Facilitate the transfer of relevant technologies and expertise in areas such as rehabilitation, assistive devices, and data management to ASEAN Member States.
- **Support Research and Innovation:** Fund research initiatives aimed at improving victim assistance services, developing innovative solutions, and enhancing the understanding of the long-term impacts of EO on individuals and communities.

11. WAY FORWARD



The National Consultative Meeting in Viet Nam marks an important step in the process of establishing the Regional Victim Assistance Network. The immediate next steps include:

11.1 Immediate Actions

- **Draft VAN Blueprint:** ARMAC will lead the development of an initial draft of the Regional VAN Blueprint and its Terms of Reference, incorporating the valuable inputs gathered during the national consultative meetings, including the one in Viet Nam.

11.2 Regional Consultative Meeting

- **Validation and Refinement:** The draft VAN Blueprint and Terms of Reference will be further discussed and refined at a Regional Consultative Meeting, tentatively scheduled for Bali, Indonesia in in Q3 or Q4 of 2022. This meeting will bring together representatives from all ASEAN Member States and relevant stakeholders to provide feedback and ensure regional ownership of the network.

11.3 Regional Workshop and Finalization

- **Final Approval:** The finalized Regional VAN Blueprint and Terms of Reference are expected to be adopted at the first Regional Workshop, marking the formal establishment of the network. This workshop will also focus on developing a concrete action plan for the initial activities of the Regional VAN.

CONCLUSION



The National Consultative Meeting on the establishment of a Regional Victim Assistance Network in Hanoi, Viet Nam, marked a significant milestone in the collective effort to strengthen victim assistance for survivors of explosive ordnance (EO) across the ASEAN region. The meeting showcased a deep commitment from national stakeholders, highlighting their shared determination to enhance support for victims and address the enduring challenges posed by EO contamination. Through open, constructive discussions, the exchange of best practices, and a unified effort to identify roles, responsibilities, and strategies, the meeting laid a robust foundation for the creation of the Regional Victim Assistance Network (VAN).

This anticipated network holds immense potential to drive regional integration in victim assistance efforts, providing a central platform for the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and resources. It will play a critical role in promoting knowledge sharing, facilitating the mobilization of resources, and ensuring that assistance is delivered effectively to those who need it most. The collaborative approach established through the meeting reflects the shared vision of creating a more inclusive, sustainable, and comprehensive framework for supporting EO survivors across ASEAN.

The outcomes of the meeting serve as a powerful reminder of the urgency and importance of continued engagement, coordination, and cooperation among all stakeholders. Realizing the full potential of the Regional VAN will require sustained efforts, strong partnerships, and ongoing commitment from governments, international partners, civil society, and the private sector. By maintaining this collective momentum, we can ensure that no one affected by explosive ordnance is left behind, and that future generations can live in safer, more inclusive communities.

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ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC)



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