

Assistance to Victims of Landmines/UXO: Recovery through Peer Support

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Main Elements of an Effective Recovery Program

Survivors of landmine/UXO injuries may need:

- Psychosocial support: from others during the recovery period.
- Social services: if relocating or unemployed.
- Professional health care: for injuries or PTSD.
- Legal aid: to address criminal and rights issues.
- Protection: for those in danger of repeated violence.

The Nature of Trauma

Psychological Trauma results from:

- Intense fear of death or injury
- Fear for the safety of loved ones
- Inability to prevent or control events
- Loss of dignity
- Lack of support from others



The Nature of Trauma

Survivors of a traumatic event often experience:

- Impaired decision-making capacity
- Loss of trust / self-confidence / self-respect
- An irrational sense of fear
- Grief / self-pity
- Anger and a desire for revenge



Consequences of Psychological Trauma

- Most survivors recover within 1-2 years even without treatment.
- 5-10% have chronic problems:
 - PTSD
 - Depression
 - Psychosis
 - Homicide or suicide
 - Substance abuse



Interventions for Psychological Recovery

- Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Desensitization
- Traditional healing
- Group therapy
- Prayer



Peer Support

What Peer Support is:

- Encouragement and assistance provided by a colleague who has overcome similar difficulties.

What Peer Support does:

- Promotes self-confidence and autonomy
- Helps the survivor make his or her own decisions.
- Benefits both giver and receiver.



What makes Peer Support work?

- A peer relationship permits the survivor to tell his or her story to someone who cares and understands.
- One survivor's recovery serves as an example to another survivor.
- One survivor can validate another survivor's feelings and desires.
- Survivors can give practical advice about how to overcome painful emotions and rejoin society.



What makes Peer Support work?

- Peer Support is more effective if the Peer Support Worker (PSW) and the survivor are closely matched in terms of:

- Age
- Gender
- Cultural & socio-economic background
- Trauma history



Benefits of Peer Support

Peer Support can facilitate recovery by helping survivors:

- to control their anger and their desire for revenge.
- to express themselves in a constructive manner.
- to get professional care if they need it.
- to create networks of survivors to work together to prevent violence.



Survivor Corps Peer Support Study

(to be published in *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, summer 2011)

- Data collected between 2006 and 2009
- 470 survivors from 6 countries (Bosnia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, and Vietnam) - largest study of its kind
- 56% Landmine/UXO/GSW survivors, 44% other causes
- 74% amputees, 26% other injuries
- 23% women, 77% men
- Ages 17 to 70



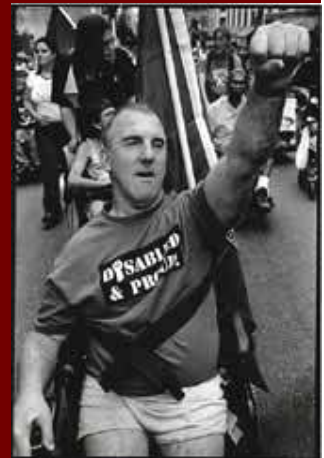
Survivor Corps Peer Support Study: Methodology

- All survivors received 2 years of peer support.
- Survivors were interviewed at start (initial), after 12 months (interim) and at end of 2nd year (exit).
- For 24 months all survivors received regular peer support visits from a trained outreach worker who was also a landmine/UXO survivor.



Survivor Corps Peer Support Study: Results

- All survivors improved on nearly all measurements between initial interview and exit interview.
- Survivors injured less than 2 years earlier showed a greater improvement.
- Some mental health scores decreased between initial and interim interviews, then bounced back on the exit interview.
- All survivors displayed improved knowledge of their legal rights and most had a greater interest in community service.



Peer Support Training

A Peer Support Worker receives basic training in:

- Developing a relationship of trust with the survivor.
- Managing expectations about who is expected to do what.
- How to determine if the survivor needs professional care.
- How to deal with depression, suicidal behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse.
- What local services are available for survivors and how to access them
- How to start and run survivor support groups
- How to educate survivors about their rights



Peer Support: Best Practices

- Survivor assistance should be time-limited (two years is good).
- Setting objectives helps survivors develop autonomy, improves motivation.
- Survivors should “graduate” with recognition for their achievements.
- Supervisors should be trained to help Peer support workers deal with stress and retraumatization.



Peer Support: Best Practices

- Peer Support Workers often start survivor groups for:
 - psychosocial support
 - income generation
 - rights campaigns
 - community service projects
 - sports



CISR's Peer Support Programs

- Lebanon
- Jordan
- Colombia
- Rwanda
- Uganda
- Burundi
- El Salvador
- Vietnam

2011

- Yemen?
- Turkey?
- Sudan?
- Angola?
- Libya?

2012

