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Special Programs to Address the Needs of Survivors (SPANS) *Leahy War Victims Fund*

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USAID's Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF) is one of five Congressionally directed programs that comprise the Special Programs to Address the Needs of Survivors (SPANS):

- Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
- Leahy War Victims Fund
- Victims of Torture Program
- Wheelchair Program
- Disability Program

Each of these complimentary programs has its own purpose and strategy, but they share a focus on providing assistance to poor and vulnerable populations. Each emphasizes the value of family and community as the first resort in providing protection, care, and support to vulnerable children, civilian victims of war, torture survivors, wheelchair users, and people with disabilities.



Photo courtesy Rob Horvath/USAID

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The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) War Victims Fund (LWVF) responds to the needs of survivors in war-affected and post-conflict countries. Since 1989, the LWVF has provided more than \$165 million to forty-six (46) countries worldwide.

In FY 2010, the LWVF's budget is \$14 million. It currently supports programs in sixteen (16) countries; it also provides students in more than thirty (30) countries with scholarships to study prosthetics and orthotics and rehabilitation in accredited schools.

The LWVF provides a dedicated source of financial and technical assistance for people living with disabilities—primarily mobility-related injuries from war, unexploded ordnance, and interrupted immunization campaigns.

The LWVF believes that the provision of affordable, appropriate prosthetics and orthotics—including quality limbs, wheelchairs, and other orthopedic services—is a critical humanitarian need. But it is also just the first step. In recent years, the LWVF has expanded its approach to support a range of comprehensive assistance designed to help individuals with disabilities rebuild their lives, return to independent living, and secure inclusion in the social and economic mainstream.

The majority of LWVF funds are used to support programs and activities that promote appropriate prosthetic and orthotic technologies and support international accreditation and training standards for rehabilitation professionals. LWVF funds support the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs that provide evidence-based guidance to those designing programs for civil victims of war and other people with disabilities. It also works to develop models for programs that when deemed effective on a small scale can be replicated to assist people in other regions and countries.

Additionally, LWVF funds are used to influence the state-of-the-art in rehabilitation technology and to influence policy and laws of host-country governments as they pertain to people with disabilities. The LWVF recognizes that the provision of medical services is often the first step in the rehabilitation process. Once

War and civil strife continue to cause death and destruction around the world. The consequences for civilians are devastating: families lose their breadwinner, and men, women, and children suffer physical injuries that dramatically changed their assumptions about how they will live and provide for themselves and their families. The statistics are alarming:

- In many of the world's conflict zones, 10 or more people succumb to war-exacerbated disease and malnutrition for every combat death.
- In times of war, entire populations may flee their homes and communities. If they find shelter, it is often in the form of refugee or internally displaced persons camps, where access to basic health and education is limited or non-existent.
- The World Health Organization conservatively estimates that 10 percent of a population has some sort of disability. In conflict-affected countries, that number may be closer to 25 percent.

One direct consequence of war and conflict is the destruction of hospitals, schools, farm land, bridges, roads, and other critical infrastructure. With those losses, immunization campaigns are interrupted, malnutrition and disease exacerbated. Further death and injuries result. A recent United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan report notes, "In addition to fatalities as a direct result of armed hostilities, civilians have suffered from loss of livelihood, displacement, destruction of property, as well as disruption of access to education, healthcare and other essential services."

The toll of armed conflict, it is clear, continues to rise long after direct combatant casualties are tallied.

Additional information on SPANS war victims programs can be found on the USAID website at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds

Leahy War Victims Fund Beneficiaries



quality care is made available, it also works to support programs that help survivors integrate into society, their communities, and family. Central to this is support of initiatives to address appropriate vocational rehabilitation and to advocate for, and change, physical and social barriers in transportation, infrastructure, and political participation.

Promoting Appropriate Technology in the Developing World

Mobility-enhancing interventions are only as good as the equipment, fittings, and technology behind them. Hot climates, extended use, and scant access to maintenance can damage prosthetic feet, knees, and other components. The LWVF supports efforts to examine leading-edge technology and enable the use of sound, state-of-the-art practices in war-affected regions.

Initially, the LWVF emphasized local production and assembly. The global economy, however, has forced an adaptation in this approach—now, the LWVF supports the purchase of high-quality, affordable prosthetics and orthotics (P&O) from countries that are leading producers. This approach has proven more sustainable for many LWVF-assisted areas.

While recognizing this reality, the LWVF continues to support and expand the capacity of local organizations and personnel to provide services and care for people with disabilities. Where local production is not feasible, it remains important to train local staff to maintain and support the effective use of prosthetics and orthotics.

P&O Training and Technologies

Over the past ten years, the LWVF and the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) have collaborated on projects ranging from evaluating and field-testing commonly used P&O technologies and techniques, to developing protocols and tools to measure the costs of rehabilitation, and monitoring and evaluating programs. The results of this work

enable the LWVF to better analyze project funding requests and evaluate the impact of its programming.

The LWVF and ISPO collaborate to strengthen educational programs to train P&O professionals qualified to provide appropriate services. More than twenty (20) orthopedic technologists will have their education upgraded to the university level, and will take their skills back to their home countries. And, over 130 national staff will receive internationally accredited training through five (5) schools based around the world.

Finally, ISPO will participate in yearly examinations and will routinely scrutinize the teaching programs and schools, so that those schools may obtain recognition to international standards developed by ISPO and the World Health Organization.

International Standards and Accreditation

USAID's LWVF is among the organizations leading the effort to develop and implement international standards, accreditation, and state-of-the-art technology and approaches in the developing world.

Part of this thrust has been the creation of internationally accredited programs. In Viet Nam, LWVF support to Health Volunteers Overseas allowed the nongovernmental organization (NGO) to work with the ministries to develop physical therapy curriculum and teaching methods for universities and colleges.

The LWVF's work with ISPO has led to the design and establishment of processes for accrediting schools in the developing world. Individuals studying at these institutions receive up to a BA or equivalent in P&O. Approximately 150 people enroll annually in programs that last from three to four years. Once trained, these specialists work in their home countries, increasing the local human resources capacity for service provision.

Advancing Economic Opportunity

The LWVF works to ensure that people with disabilities reach the highest degree of self-sufficiency possible. The ability to generate an income and provide for oneself and one's family is an important component. For example, since 2000 the LWVF has supported the World Rehabilitation Fund's efforts to create a cooperative in Lebanon wherein local villagers market and sell products such as poultry, eggs, dried herbs, and beeswax while learning skills to become self-sufficient. The cooperative is well on its way to financial sustainability through its creative marketing and product lines, including the first Lebanese range-free chicken eggs.

The next step in building on the success of the cooperative will require the cooperation of other organizations—particularly in-country and external NGOs—to do more than invest, but to help with recruitment of

members, marketing, and expansion of the co-op's reach.

Fostering Self-Sufficiency & Social Inclusion

USAID, through the LWVF, is the lead agency engaged in disability policy work in Vietnam. Its work has led to the passage of two national laws regarding disabilities and the establishment of building design codes and construction standards to ensure access for people with disabilities.

Primarily through its partnership with Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped, the LWVF has supported the establishment of a Blue Ribbon employment council. The project also worked with the Ministry of Home Affairs to establish a law allowing for the establishment of local NGOs. The first organizations registered as local associations—a stepping stone to becoming a legal NGO—have been disabled person's organizations.



The Blue Ribbon Employee Council promotes employment of people with disabilities in Vietnam. Members include corporations such as Motorola; Nike; AIG; Liberty Mutual; and FedEx, as well as FPT Telecom, Vietnam's largest telecommunication firm.



War Victims Fund Program Countries

Afghanistan	Eritrea	Malawi	Sierra Leone
Albania	Ethiopia	Mali	Somalia
Angola	Ghana	Mauritania	Sri Lanka
Armenia	Guatemala	Morocco	Sudan
Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Mozambique	Thailand
Cambodia	Haiti	Nepal	Tanzania
Cameroon	Honduras	Nicaragua	Togo
Colombia	Kenya	Nigeria	Uganda
Congo	Laos	Pakistan	Vietnam
DR Congo	Lebanon	Philippines	Zambia
East Timor	Liberia	Romania	Zimbabwe
El Salvador	Madagascar	Senegal	