

Messages from survivors

27 June 2014



Tun Channareth (Master of Ceremony):

Good morning royal highnesses, distinguished delegates and friends. We would like to deliver our messages to all the delegates. First I would like to present ICBL Ambassador Margaret Arach Orech, of the Uganda Landmine Survivors Association.

Message from Margaret Arach Orech:

Excellencies,

Survivor participation is a guiding principle for the ICBL as articulated in the Cartagena and Maputo Action Plans. This has also been a result of the training programme *Raising the Voices*. Because of this effort, the strong voices of survivors are now heard all over the globe. However, with the achievements notwithstanding, the gap between commitment to survivor participation and outcomes is still a wide one.

This gap is linked to the physical, attitudinal, economic, social and legal barriers which daily constrain full participation of survivors. A survey by my organization revealed that 90% of the survivors in my country had never heard of the Mine Ban Treaty. The majority still lack the information and skills to enable them to participate effectively.

We need to take deliberate steps to guarantee meaningful participation of survivors in all issues that concern them. We call on states to provide targeted support to survivors to make key information accessible to them. Let us commit to ensure effective participation of survivors in the social, economic and political life of their communities, of their countries and internationally.

Nothing About Us Without Us. Thank you.

Tun Channareth (Master of Ceremony):

Thank you Margaret. Next I would like to introduce Bekele Gonfa of the Survivors Recovery and Rehabilitation Organization, Ethiopia.

Message from Bekele Gonfa:

Excellencies,

Peer support is a simple and effective way to empower those affected by landmines or explosive remnants of war and to provide them psychosocial support. A person who has been injured by these weapons suffers not only from physical trauma, but also from intense emotional, psychological and social difficulties. A fellow survivor can better communicate challenges than can doctors, family and friends.

Peer support starts with the identification of persons with disabilities and landmine survivors who are traumatized and live in isolation. This is followed by provision of peer counseling. Once it is possible, they will be referred to available educational, vocational, health or orthopedic services. As such, peer support enables a full recovery for survivors.

The need for peer support is a key component of victim assistance and is also well stated in the Disability Rights Convention. We survivors, encourage donors to support our organizations to conduct peer support. We call for each state to include this approach in the health and social sectors and to make peer support workers available in hospitals and orthopedic centers. Thank you.

Tun Channareth (Master of Ceremony):

Thank you Bekele. Next I would like to present Umarbek Pulodov of the Tajikistan Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Message from Umarbek Pulodov:

Excellencies,

In my country we are working to make sure that buildings are accessible to all persons with disabilities including survivors. This is very important for every part of our lives, from education to employment and reaching government services. Due to our efforts and the engagement of government, we have seen real improvements in accessibility to some new buildings; libraries, museums and ministries. But there are still many places that people cannot reach to fully participate in public and social life, especially privately owned spaces and in rural areas. In so many countries the promise of accessibility has a long way to go to take down the barriers.

Education and awareness of the right to accessibility is important. States must enforce standards and put in place official systems to monitor and assure that

buildings are accessible. Organizations of persons with disabilities including survivors must be involved in the monitoring process. There must be penalties for both private and government sectors when they are not taking accessibility into consideration.

It doesn't cost much, if you make buildings accessible first you save more, and making existing places accessible still has greater rewards than the costs. Thank you.

Tun Channareth (Master of Ceremony):

Thank you very much. I would like to invite Mamady Gassama of the Senegalese Landmine Survivors Association.

Message from Mamady Gassama:

Excellences,

J'ai été blessé par une mine au milieu de ma ville, à l'âge de 14 ans. Si des gens comme moi ont eu une chance de réussite, c'est parce que nos parents ont très tôt compris le besoin pour nous de poursuivre nos études, et ont défendu ce droit. Après mon accident, j'ai passé mon entrée en sixième [English: 9th grade] à l'hôpital, sans perdre une année, et j'ai continué mes études. J'ai ainsi une chance de concourir comme tout le monde sur le marché du travail.

La plupart des autres victimes de ma génération n'ont pas eu cette chance. Après leur accident ou l'accident d'un parent, à cause du manque de soutien, ces gens ont dû arrêter les études et aujourd'hui ils font face à d'énormes difficultés pour leur réinsertion socio-économique.

Pour assurer leur indépendance économique, les enfants survivants et ceux dont les parents ont été victimes de mines doivent accéder à une éducation de qualité, à égalité avec les autres enfants. Les gouvernements doivent s'assurer que ce droit soit respecté. Merci

Tun Channareth (Master of Ceremony):

Thank you very much, lastly I would like to introduce Mr. Luis Silvestre Wamusse of Mozambique Landmine Survivors Association, RAVIM

Message from Luis Silvestre Wamusse:

Excelencias,

Cerca de 80% da população Moçambicana, incluindo as vitimas, vive nas zonas rurais onde escasseiam os serviços especializados de saúde, educação, emprego e formação vocacional. Apesar da redução das suas capacidades físicas, os sobreviventes fazem esforço tentando sobreviver de igual modo como os seus vizinhos, praticando actividades de agricultura, criação de animais, corte de lenha, produção de carvão, entre outras, para ganharem o seu sustento diário.

A idade média das vitimas segundo as resultados da ultima pesquisa e oscila entre os 40 anos. A maior preocupação que manifestam é pretenderem gozar com dignidade os últimos dias da sua vida, depois de verem partir, prematuramente, grande parte dos seus sonhos, ganhando honestamente o pão quotidiano e puderem responder, cabalmente, às suas responsabilidades como chefes de familia.

Meísmo que a desminagem termine em Moçambique, os efeitos nefásticos das minas e vão se repercutir por muito tempo na vida das vítimas.

Em Moçambique temos um plano concebido pelo Governo em parceria com a sociedade civil, para assegurar uma vida com dignidade aos sobreviventes, impõe se abraçar o processo de materialização rigorosa do plano, no qual os sobreviventes não pedem caridade, mas sim, pedem que os seus direitos sejam respeitados e tenham oportunidades para que possam mostrar que são cidadãos responsáveis em toda a plenitude, com fortalezas, ambições e talentos para oferecerem as suas comunidades e ao seu pais. Obrigado.

Tun Channareth (Master of Ceremony):

**Thank you very much; royal highnesses, delegates and friends.
From our hearts -- we need a mine-free world.**