

Messages from Survivors
First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Dubrovnik, 8 September 2015



1. Mr Mirsad Tokic, MineAid Croatia

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to greet you as we start this day of the First Review Conference. In this session my fellow survivors, Luz from Colombia, Nicolas from Italy, Margaret from Uganda and I would like to share our insights and wish you success in your further work this week.

My name is Mirsad Tokic, I am a survivor and a peer support officer for the Croatian NGO MineAid, working on social reintegration of survivors and persons with disabilities and economic empowerment of affected communities. I have had the honor to be actively involved in the preparations of this conference. This experience – combined with my previous field work - has deepened my knowledge about the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I learned about the processes surrounding it and the human interactions necessary for its implementation. I am grateful for this knowledge and the insight, as I also discovered that it is a rare opportunity.

From a global perspective, through conversations with my colleagues and fellow survivors from other countries, we found that we face identical challenges. Physical, economic, social and legal barriers still block the full participation of survivors in processes that concern them. On one hand, survivors lack opportunities to provide their input and expertise. On the other hand, most survivors still lack the information and skills to enable them to participate effectively.

Survivor participation is the foundation of the CMC and the CCM. Only together can we remain true to the spirit and word of the Convention by making survivor participation a reality. There is no other way.

2. Ms Luz Landazury, Colombia

Reconocemos los esfuerzos de los Estados por atender las necesidades de los sobrevivientes. Sin embargo, existe todavía un vacío entre los compromisos adquiridos y la práctica en el reconocimiento de nuestros derechos.

En muchos países, como el mío, Colombia, los servicios de atención y de rehabilitación no alcanzan a llegar a las zonas rurales donde existen más necesidades y donde se ubican la mayoría los sobrevivientes.

Por tanto, se hace necesario tomar medidas para acercar la oferta de los servicios a las comunidades más alejadas y vulnerables. Mejorar la coordinación entre las entidades del Estado y una mayor participación de los sobrevivientes en la definición de los programas locales y en la toma de decisiones.

Para alcanzar esto, necesitaremos más apoyo para formarnos como sujetos activos de nuestras comunidades – un ejemplo de esto, servirá el enfoque de apoyo entre pares, la cual nos permite ser parte de la solución a largo plazo.

Los sobrevivientes requerimos de una atención global que va más allá de la atención médica. No se trata de atender únicamente la afectación visible sino también lo emocional que termina por afectar en la familia e incluso en la comunidad.

Adicionalmente, la inclusión educativa, la inclusión socioeconómica y laboral son fundamentales para permitirnos restablecer nuestros proyectos de vida. En ese sentido, todos los sectores deben ser involucrados y sensibilizados para lograr la tan anhelada inclusión integral a la que todos queremos llegar.

Por todo lo anterior, es de suma importancia que los Estados reconozcan la atención a los sobrevivientes en el marco global de la Discapacidad.

No queremos ser más víctimas, ni sobrevivientes queremos ser ciudadanos que participamos activamente en el desarrollo de nuestras sociedades.

3. Mr Nicolas Marzolino, Italian Campaign to Ban Landmines

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Nicolas, I am 18 years old and I am Italian. I come from Val di Susa in the North of Italy. I was 15 years old when one day, while two friends of mine and I were hoeing the ground to plant potatoes, we found a red and silver object. I didn't know what it was. It exploded in my hands. That day I lost one hand and my sight. That object was an unexploded ordnance from the World War Two!

This ordnance was 70 years old, but there was no information about the dangers of ERW distributed in my school or my community. For this reason I am lecturing students in Italian schools on what unexploded ordnance is and what effects they have. My accident is a proof of how long-lasting is the legacy of war can be.

Through the Italian Campaign to Ban Landmines I understood how my country, and many others represented here, are committed to preventing cluster bombs and other remnants of war from taking the lives of young people like me, civilians, innocent people. My thoughts go to all the people from countries recently affected by armed conflicts and cluster bombs. I know that for a long time, the lives and health of their children will be risk.

To all present, I would like to address a call to enhance international cooperation to respond to the needs of survivors and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

4. Ms Margaret Arach Orech, Uganda Landmine Survivors Association

A sustainable livelihood is what all survivors yearn for after emerging from the traumatic events that disrupted their lives and caused permanent disabilities. Moving on and regaining lost status within their communities has often been quite challenging for most survivors due to injuries sustained, social and other barriers, coupled with low self-esteem that follows. Even after successful rehabilitation and recovery from the trauma, economic reintegration which is a precondition for getting survivors back on their feet, is difficult to access for many survivors who are often located in rural and hard to reach areas.

As emerging category of persons with disabilities, survivors find it difficult to access generalized government support meant for persons with disabilities as they themselves are at times not aware of existing programs for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, being newly introduced to disability their focus is on surviving, getting rehabilitation and then the reality for a livelihood sets in.

Although mainstreaming seems to be the ideal trend to follow in service delivery, when it comes to issues of survivors this at times might not work effectively if survivors are to be fully reintegrated economically and be able to have improved livelihood.

On behalf of survivors, I request states to make efforts to provide at least a one off specific kind of support to alleviate poverty faced by survivors many who live in rural and hard to reach areas with very limited access to grants provided by government for persons with disabilities.

Livelihood support projects in the form of income generating activities can positively impact the lives of survivors and boost individual house hold income for improved quality of living when imparted in the correct manner. I have witnessed transformed lives through such, the Survivor Network Project and urge states to contribute towards such enabling projects.