

**Cooperating to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions:
the country coalition concept**

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Statement by Ms. Wiboonrat Chanchoo, landmine survivor and member of national campaign in Thailand.

It is a great honour for me to be here today. As all of you are aware, I'm not a cluster munitions survivor, but landmine survivor. For me, there is no difference between cluster munitions and landmine survivors or other remnants of wars. We are the same. We are victims.

I myself became person with disability nearly 20 years ago. That day, I went in to the forest near the Thai-Cambodian border to collect bamboo to bring home. I was not aware that there were landmines hidden in that area. All I well recalled was that all of a sudden there was loud noise and my body was catapulted into the air. When I looked at my left leg, I saw it was shattered with dangling fractured bones. I screamed to warn others not to come near while I crawled myself to safety. Though I did not lose my life, but life has changed dramatically after that. My husband by that time could not deal with it and felt ashamed of my physical condition so he abused me, abandoned me and left our family taking with him all the money and assets we had. But he left the most valuable assets for me, our two daughters.

I have been sharing my story, which is of course not a pleasant one, several times. I am aware that sometimes people feel uncomfortable when listening. But I have to continue doing this because I would like people to really know the lives of survivors. It's not like we received support one time and all have been done so that case can be closed. Not only survivors receive affect, but also our family members. There are too many people with disabilities who still have difficulties in their lives. Some of them are in worse conditions. They still need support. Some of them don't even have rice on the table.

After having accident, I did not give up, I continued working in the paddies and plots, growing rice and vegetables, and raising my two kids on my own.

As time went on, I came to realize that a person with disability not only can live a normal life with the proper care and support from those around them; but they can also contribute meaningfully towards others. I decided to join a local support group for people with disabilities. It is a platform where we can work together to help improve our living conditions.

Our self-help group started from small group of landmine survivors and people with disabilities in my village. The group expanded to neighboring villages, and finally become a sub-district group. This group then connects with other survivors groups in other districts and provinces.

My self-help group now comprises over 100 landmine survivors. Most recently, I have expanded the scope of my activities to include persons with various disabilities, orphans, children with HIV infected parents, and the abandoned elderly.

Activities of our self-help groups in the past and at present include mushroom planting, micro-credit loan among group members, promotion of income generating activities, setting up a local network to deliver assistance is a much more efficient and sustainable approach in providing assistance, and more. Some activities become successful for example mushroom planting, but some are not successful including raising animals.

After 20 years of being a person with disability, believe it or not, the needs of survivors I have been observing remain the same, which are very basic needs. Survivors need prostheses. Survivors need financial support and micro-credit. Survivors need to accessibility and modification of accommodation and public facilities for appropriate use by persons with disabilities. Survivors need to know about their rights.

I would like to thank the Governments of Thailand for a lots of good work happening. My voices are louder. I would like also to thank other Governments including Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, and more for lots of good work happening in my survivors friends countries. We all know that government support and understanding for victims is vital to ensuring our full and equal participation in the society. I wish the international community continue working together to ensure that no one will have to suffer from this indiscriminate weapon ever again. I wish Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam acceding to the CCM very soon. We need protection of the rights of victims in an all-inclusive and sustainable manner.

Aside from Government of Thailand, I would like to thank International Campaign to Ban Landmines-Cluster Munitions Coalition, Handicap International, Jesuit Refugee Services, COERR and Norwegian People's Aid for supporting me all along.