

12th Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
ICBL Statement on Victim Assistance
4 December 2012



Thank you Mr. President.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to speak about victim assistance on behalf of the ICBL. My name is Margaret Arech Orech. I am a landmine survivor from Uganda and the leader of a national survivors network. I also represent the ICBL as an Ambassador. Through this role and my work in Uganda, I have had the privilege of working for many years with fellow landmine survivors, other persons with disability, government officials, and colleagues at the ICBL.

The messages from these many actors on victim assistance are clear— landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities must enjoy the same rights and economic and social opportunities as others. It is the duty of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to guarantee these rights and opportunities for all survivors by following the commitments of the Cartagena Action Plan. With less than two years until the Review Conference, we call on states to make the maximum progress on those commitments in the remaining time.

Landmine Monitor 2012 found that most States Parties with significant numbers of survivors have strengthened victim assistance through better coordination and planning, and by assessing the needs. Yet some countries, such as Afghanistan, Burundi and Mozambique still need to gather comprehensive data on survivors' needs, while Algeria, Ethiopia, Serbia and Turkey have yet to develop coordination mechanisms or compile adequate data. Governments must make more effort to identify the gaps in services in order to address survivors' needs.

From personal experience, I know that participation of survivors in coordination and planning systems is essential. As a representative of survivors and people with disabilities, I also see how survivors are uniquely qualified to contribute to the development and implementation of effective programs and to monitor their implementation. In Uganda, my association is fortunate to have a strong voice and access to national authorities. My fellow survivors in countries like Angola or Burundi still need such access to government officials. Many do not yet have a strong voice in national-level decision-making mechanisms, such as in Cambodia, Colombia or Senegal.

Lasting progress can be made by including survivors in larger disability or development programs. But States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty may also need to plan specifically to focus on the needs of landmine victims, including families and communities, in order to meet their commitments under the Cartagena Action Plan. Together, people working on victims' rights and in the disability rights movement can ensure that the work of both sectors is carried out in a mutually reinforcing and non-discriminatory manner.

Mr. President, I would like to emphasize two other critical areas of the Cartagena Action Plan that have the greatest impact on the lives of survivors. These are interlinked: the availability and accessibility of quality services, including affordability, and the need to increase economic

opportunities for landmine survivors.

States Parties have committed to “increase availability of and accessibility to appropriate services... including by expanding quality services in rural and remote areas and paying particular attention to vulnerable groups.” Accessibility is not only about implementing standards for physical access to buildings and buses. States must remove *all* “physical, social, cultural, economic, political and other barriers” to services, especially for survivors living far from urban centers.

While progress in the ensuring the availability and accessibility of victim assistance had been documented in a number of countries in 2010, the Landmine Monitor reported setbacks in at least 12 countries in 2011 as a result of new and intensified conflicts and/or declining international assistance for victim assistance. In several countries armed conflict has added an additional barrier to landmine victims’ access to services by damaging infrastructure, making travel unsafe, or forcing people to leave their homes. The Monitor estimates that approximately half of all mine/ERW survivors in 2011 were living in countries experiencing increased levels of armed violence.

In 2012 the availability and accessibility of victim assistance programs was affected by a drop in direct international funding for victim assistance, which decreased by some 30% worldwide from 2010 to 2011. This is simply unacceptable! Yet there was no evidence that the programs hurt by this large drop were being replaced by national funds or broader health or disability frameworks. Several NGOs reporting to the Monitor said the declining funds have forced them to reduce or even cease provision of services – services they were most often the only ones providing. In Uganda the government recognized the need to fill the gaps when many international organizations closed programs in the north of the country. States which are in a position to do so must assist in ensuring that survivors are able to access the services they need. A significant increase in efforts is needed in this area.

Now let me briefly elaborate on the second critical area, namely that of ensuring economic viability on the part of survivors. We call on both donor and affected states to focus on services that will enable us to regain economic independence. After being injured by landmines, survivors often lose their jobs or means of making a living. Economic inclusion is a right– not only to support ourselves and our families–but also as a way to ensure our right to dignity and our place in society. In Uganda, economic inclusion was the area in which the government made the most significant progress in implementation of its national victim assistance plan.

Around the world, so many survivors need further education, training, loans, job placements, or other support. Existing programs often have limited capacity, are only available in urban areas, and sometimes exclude us because of our disability. By the next Review Conference, we want to hear what concrete steps states have taken to make such services available, accessible *and* inclusive. Survivors and civil society will be following your activities closely. Each state will have different news to report but *all* states must show progress. Thank you.