

**Raising the Voices: Africa  
4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties  
Geneva, Sept. 18, 2002**

**Informal Consultations on Article 6, Victim Assistance**

*(The text accompanied by Power Point Presentation)*

**Introduction**

Raising the Voices is a leadership training program for landmine survivors. It works to build the capacity of survivors to become leaders within their disability communities. Also, it is an opportunity for us to share our knowledge and expertise on Victim Assistance with you – the States Parties charged with ensuring that your MBT obligations towards us are fulfilled.

The first year of Raising the Voices brought 8 landmine survivors from Latin America. They attended the May, 2001 Intersessionals and the 3MSP in Nicaragua.

**January, 2002**

This year Raising the Voices brought 2 groups of landmine survivors from Africa to Geneva. The first group came during the January, 2002 Intersessionals. They were from Chad, Rwanda, Senegal, Eritrea, Uganda.

**May, 2002**

The second group came during the May, 2002 Intersessionals from Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Africa. Now both groups are here for the 4MSP.

**What do we do in Raising the Voices?**

In addition to attending the meetings of the MBT process, we receive training in Human Rights, especially for people with disabilities. We learn about the Mine Ban Treaty. We increase our advocacy skills – and of course we are here to collaborate with you.

**Teaching Human Rights for People with Disabilities**

Raising the Voices participants do projects in their home countries that build on what they learned in Geneva in between their training sessions. Many of the projects are related to teaching other survivors about their Human Rights. Let me briefly tell you about these projects.

**Marick Ngueradjim from Chad**

After his Raising the Voices training in January, Marick wanted to bring what he learned in Geneva to the disability community in Chad.

Unfortunately Marick did not have the resources to make as many copies of the Human Rights documents as he needed. Different organizations donated 11 copies, which was not enough for the 56 disability organizations wanting training on HR.

So Marick called a meeting of leaders and asked them to contribute copies. Each contributed according to their means. The fact that they invested their own resources increased their level of interest and empowered survivors and others to access their own education. Having pooled their resources Marick was able to use these tools outside of the disability community, and raise awareness among journalists and government representatives.

### **Jean-Claude from Senegal**

In Senegal, it is customary that many children with disabilities do not go to school, because societal attitudes encourage parents to hide their disabled children. Especially in small villages, superstition says that a disabled child brings shame and bad luck to the family.

Jean-Claude works to integrate children into the school system. He speaks with parents to convince them that a child with disabilities can be a productive member of the family – but only with an education. He works closely with Handicap International who provide scholarships so that children with disabilities can go to school.

### **Tedla and Mohamed from Eritrea**

Tedla and Mohamed gave a workshop on Disability Rights to 60 landmine survivors and other pwds. They translated the UDHR and the UN Standard Rules into Tigrignyan since there were no official translations. They are happy to share this resource with you so please contact Tedla if you need a copy.

Tedla and Mohamed want to create a strong voice from the disability community that will speak out for the rights of people with disabilities.

### **Aimable Rukundo from Rwanda**

Rwanda is currently drafting a new Constitution. After his Raising the Voices training, Aimable realized the importance of having laws and policies that protect the rights of people with disabilities.

Aimable called a meeting with the Federation of Organizations for People with Disabilities to discuss how they would contribute to the new Constitution. A committee of the Federation drafted suggestions for the Constitution that would protect the rights of people with disabilities. While Aimable waits for the response of the Constitutional Commission, he is building the necessary

relationships within the Commission to ensure the inclusion of survivors and people with disabilities.

### **Felicidade and Benjamin from Angola**

Benjamin and Felicidade wanted to tell other survivors and pwds about the HRF. Because most people had not heard of HRF, the survivors and pwds were suspicious of the intentions of Felicidade and Benjamin. It wasn't until Felicidade and Benjamin revealed that they were landmine survivors that they were accepted as legitimate teachers.

Felicidade and Benjamin realized the importance of peer to peer, or survivor to survivor transmission of information. In the future they want to train other survivors to teach about HR for pwds.

### **The Mine Ban Treaty**

Some Raising the Voices participants are advocating for the MBT.

### **Abdellatif and Babiker from Sudan**

Babiker and Abdellatif want to use the HRF and the voices of persons with disability to advocate for peace in Sudan. If both sides of the internal conflict stopped using mines and signed the MBT, that would be an important step towards peace.

Abdellatif and Babiker have used workshops on HR for pwds to raise awareness about the mine situation. They want to train pwds to advocate for the ratifying of the MBT and for peace in Sudan. After all, peace and security is a person's right.

### **Luis and Domingos from Mozambique**

Luis and Domingos went to the Institute of National Demining (IND) to present themselves as Raising the Voices activists. Their goal was to create a working partnership with IND and to facilitate transparency regarding IND's activities to date.

IND welcomed their interest and provided information on the status of stockpile destruction..

IND is currently drafting a policy on Victim Assistance. Through their new collaboration, Luis and Domingos hope to participate in the drafting of this policy.

### **Advocacy Skills**

Some participants are advocating for particular issues. For example,.....

### **Tedla advocates for Accessibility**

In Eritrea, most buildings are inaccessible and there is no national level policy addressing physical access.

So, with the UN Standard Rules in hand, Tedla went to the Ministry in charge of public buildings as well as the Municipality of Asmara which is in charge of roads and parking. Both agencies welcomed the information Tedla provided and were convinced that it was important to do something about the situation.

Tedla wrote a letter outlining specific measures that should be taken and the Ministry circulated it through the Association of Architects and Engineers. This resulted in the immediate modification of several projects currently underway, including a bank, a shopping mall, housing for ex-combatants, and a new hospital.

Tedla will continue to raise awareness about the importance of creating national policies that address physical access in Eritrea.

### **Gebreselassie from Ethiopia**

Many people in Addis Ababa, including landmine survivors and persons with disability, set up small, mobile shops by the roadside to make ends meet. But permits to do this are not easily obtained and effectively unavailable to persons with disability.

Gebreselassie is working towards equal opportunity for employment by advocating for special permits for persons with disabilities to set up roadside shops.

He formed a coalition of disability groups around the issue of getting the permits. The new coalition then approached the City Administration which promised to take up the issue with individual sector heads. The Administration also asked the newly formed coalition to provide information on the accessibility, profitability, and impact on traffic of different locations. They are currently working on this feasibility study.

### **Margaret Arach from Uganda**

Since my accident, I see over and over again the positive effects of talking to other survivors. Sharing experiences lifts my spirits, relieves my anxiety, and gives me useful information. Mostly, I have been assured that I am reacting to an abnormal situation in a normal way.

With this background, I feel compelled to reach out to survivors who are more isolated. I have founded two Associations for mine victims, one in Gulu District and the other in Lira District.

One landmine survivor said to me, “At least we now have something of our own”. So without any compensation or financial support, the survivors are drafting a constitution and going through the tedious process of official registration.

### **UNMAS Consultative Process**

The Raising the Voices survivors participated in the UNMAS Consultative process by filling out the questionnaire and participating in focus groups. In fact, survivors counted for about 30% of the responses. Some of the areas that we saw as a priority for the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance were employment, prosthetics and physical rehabilitation, and emergency medical care.

### **Thank you !**

Next we just want to thank all of you for your support of Raising the Voices. This program does not function in a vacuum, but in close collaboration with the SCVA, the ICBL, and certain organizations in our home countries. But we especially want to thank the Governments of Norway (Takk) and Canada (Merci) for their generous support. We would not be here without them – and we believe this program is making a difference in not only our lives – but the lives of many survivors and pwds in our countries.

### **Applications for 2003**

Next year, RV will bring survivors from Asia to the meetings of the MBT. Please help us find qualified survivors from the following countries. For questions about applications and qualifications, please see Becky Jordan from Landmine Survivors Network. You can contact her later – or look for her here – (this is what she looks like).

Thank you