

**ICBL statement on Victim Assistance  
Mine Ban Treaty's 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference  
25-29 November 2024**

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Thank you, Mr. President,

When I was seven, my family and I were fleeing the Khmer Rouge through the dense forest, hoping to find safety. One day, while cooling off by a pond with other children, a man pushed me, and my foot landed on a landmine. Half of my left leg was shredded, blood everywhere. There was no medicine, no painkillers, but the people traveling with us carried me on a makeshift stretcher for fifteen agonizing days through the forest. Every bump, every step, sent searing pain through my body.

When we finally reached refugee camp, I was shocked to see so many others like me—children missing arms and legs, their faces pale with pain. In the dispensary, I watched as my bandages were slowly peeled away, the white cloth turning crimson. I was put under anaesthesia, and they amputated what was left of my leg. I was hoping for an amputation as low as possible, but after waking up from a one month coma, I saw that my whole leg was gone.

These were still the days before the Mine Ban Treaty, and landmines were taking lives and limbs of more than 25 people every single year. Promisingly, casualty rates have declined in most states not facing active conflict, a testament to successful efforts under the treaty. But globally landmines still kill and maim many people – close to 6000 last year as reported by our colleagues from the Landmine Monitor. It is way too many. Until we bring this number to ZERO, it will remain too many. With the global number of victims growing, the needs for assistance also continue to grow. Hundreds of thousands of survivors may not see the promises of victim assistance fulfilled within their lifetime unless urgent progress is made.

25 years ago, before the treaty's entry into force, few states understood and recognized their responsibility for victims of mines. Today close to 40 States Parties fully recognize their VA obligation under the treaty and have been undertaking efforts to provide assistance to victims of landmines and other ERW. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, including many of my fellow survivor colleagues, are happy to hear from many of you at this meeting.

Since the adoption of the Oslo Action Plan, visible progress in victim assistance has been achieved, driven by civil society partnerships with states and the work of the Mine Ban Treaty processes. These activities aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and WHO's 2030 Rehabilitation initiative.

Survivor-led consultations and innovative approaches in countries like my own - Cambodia - have advanced tailored solutions to local needs. Global initiatives, like ATscale (Global Partnership for Assistive Technology) and ReLab-HS Learning, Acting, and Building for Rehabilitation in Health Systems) are part of an expanding range of actors advocating for

improved access to assistive technologies and rehabilitation, efforts which should bring such services closer to survivors.

Victims in conflict zones and remote areas continue to face severe barriers in accessing healthcare, psychosocial support, and economic opportunities. The Disability Reference Group, which includes survivors' organization, is working to address these gaps, seeking to strengthen the implementation of the IASC's guidance framework on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, nearly a decade after the World Humanitarian Summit committed to such a response. Additionally, the International Committee of the Red Cross which has a protection mandate in such situations, now faces pressures that impact its capacity to provide victim assistance in these challenging environments, with new financing models having become even more pressing. Rights-based progress remains hindered when victim assistance is integrated into under-resourced national health systems, in some cases leaving survivors without secure paths to assistance and social inclusion.

I recall today my first prosthesis, which was made of a bamboo tree and I received it only six months after the amputation. Using it was painful, but I was happy that I could walk again. If I've been lucky enough to be able to rebuild my life, it is thanks to actions of organizations such as Handicap International.

Today implementation of victim assistance still too often relies on organizations such as the ICRC and civil society. States – both donor and affected - must do their part too, with no excuse, no exception, and no delay.

Moving forward under the new Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan, States Parties can accelerate progress by continuing to engage closely with victims and civil society to guide their actions, by up-scaling funding for victim assistance, with international actors supporting locally adapted responses, guided by the national adaption on the IMAS on Victim Assistance, and leveraging all available resources.

There is no one else more interested in States Parties' success in this area than we - survivors and victims of landmines – whose lives and fates often depend on your actions. Please remember about this when you get back to your desks and please talk to us before you develop new policies or adopt new plans related to assistance to victims.

Thank you.