

ICBL Statement on Survivor Inclusion

Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration

Geneva, 3 June 2008

Delivered by Firoz Ali Alizada, ICBL

Co-chairs, colleagues, friends,

Thank you for giving the ICBL another opportunity to speak.

[Jesus Martinez, landmine survivor and director of Survivor Corps-El Salvador] has already asked you many important questions, but, allow me to ask another one.

Could the landmine survivors and other persons with disabilities on government delegations please raise their hands or stand up?

...

Thank you!

Could the other landmine survivors and people with disabilities now also stand up or raise their hands?

...

Let me tell you why I asked you this:

As we are starting to prepare for the Second Review Conference, it is the right time to look back at the commitments we made at the Nairobi Summit in 2004.

There, we, the survivors, pledged to bring our concerns to the Meetings of States Parties and intersessional meetings. Well, we have a concern: What are all the States Parties doing to “ensure the effective integration of mine victims in the work of the Convention?”

Of course, this commitment means much more than having a survivor sitting next to you in this room.

1. To implement plans and policies that will change OUR lives, YOU need to know what we find most important. Many of you have spoken about assessments, have you involved us in carrying out these assessments? Use the expertise from our daily life as a person with a disability AND from the work we do. After all, we live in our affected, often rural, communities. We know the effect of the prejudices against people like us. I will give you an example from my own experience: [example from Firoz' experience]

2. Many of you have spoken about strategic plans, but have you included us in making these plans? Let us offer you our expertise to be actively involved in the design, implementation

and monitoring of the efforts that are undertaken to assist us. We are NOT JUST BENEFICIARIES. We are productive contributors to society. The reality we see can make your objectives SMART-er. [Example from Firoz' experience]

I do not only speak for myself, all my disabled colleagues in the room run their own programs or organizations. We might not have all the right training or diplomas, but does that mean we do not have the right skills or cannot be trained?

Actually, we can complement your work in many ways:

- Our presence in your offices will open the door for many people like us who might confide more in people like themselves.
- We can lead by example and inspire others like us to get involved.
- When we exchange information regularly and as equal partners we will understand your constraints better and you will understand our demands better. So that we can find the most effective solution together.
- We come up with practical solutions and identify issues others might overlook. Yesterday, my colleagues and I were discussing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities where 50 percent of the government delegates were persons with a disability. Thanks to them the concepts of peer support and of the importance of sports and recreation were included in the treaty.

3. When you see our expertise and added value, who will be the most effective advocates to promote the universalization and implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty at national, regional or international meetings? We will come here as equal partners. [Example from Firoz' experience]

I want to conclude by saying we are not asking for something extraordinary. I have already mentioned the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. But the principle of “nothing about us without us” has also been taken to heart by those of you negotiating the cluster munitions treaty. 111 states have accepted to “Closely consult with and actively involve cluster munition victims and their representative organisations” as an obligation in this new treaty. Many of these 111 states are here.

So, why not start right here, right now?

Identify people for your delegations. Ask donors states or organizations to assist you in getting these people in your own offices and to these meetings. Approach the people you saw standing up at the back of this room and build partnerships.

We are ready, are you too?