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Survivor participation is a guiding principle for the ICBL as articulated in the Cartagena Action Plan, a call on states to commit to increase survivor participation in all areas of mine action. This has also been as a result of the Raising of the Voices, a leadership and advocacy training initiative by the ICBL. This initiative has groomed most of the survivors actively participating in the activities of the ICBL and also extended to various national campaigns.

Because of this effort the strong voices of survivors are now heard all over the globe on different humanitarian and disability related issues. However, with the achievements notwithstanding, the gap between commitment and outcomes is still a wide one. Most survivors need support as they traverse the often long and difficult road to recovery and the transformation from victim, survivor to an activist on humanitarian issues. They not only need to be heard but actions too should follow issues they raise.

This gap is linked to the physical, attitudinal, economic, social and legal barriers which daily constrain full participation of survivors. Taking on the Raising of the Voices program that has made me what I am today, in 2005, I conducted a similar initiative on a regional level with support from Government of Austria and brought 10 survivors from Eritrea, Kenya, the then Sudan (North and South) Rwanda and Uganda for a leadership and advocacy training of survivors. We kept in constant touch and to date can report:

- Eritrea , Human Rights Lawyer
- South Sudan, Member of Parliament
- Sudan, Chairperson for National Council for Disability
- Rwanda, Civil Servant and disability activist

- Uganda: Councilor representing persons with disabilities at district level in Lira, Chairperson of a Survivor Group in Gulu, Board member representing youth at ULSA, (national level), another youth counselor in Gulu and peer support worker in a hospital.

In Uganda for instance prior to one of ULSA's interventions, a baseline survey revealed that 90% of the survivors had never heard of the Mine Ban Treaty. Majority still lack the information and skills to enable them to participate effectively. Survivors are continuously excluded from the planning and implementation of programs that concern them whereas at international meetings like this one, survivor representation as part of government delegation is still very low. My dream is to see empowered and productive survivors in full control of their lives and contributing to development of their respective communities.

States need to take deliberate steps to guarantee meaningful participation of survivors in all issues that concern them and provide targeted support to survivors to make key information accessible to them. Let us commit to ensure effective participation of survivors in the social, economic and political life of their communities, countries and internationally.

If you hear our voices, please ACT.