

CMC Statement on Victim Assistance

*Convention on Cluster Munitions Intersessional meetings
Geneva, 7-8 April 2025*

Thank you, Chair,

These are indeed challenging times. We've heard it in this room today, and we'll hear it again.

Yet, each of these challenges offers an opportunity for the parties to this convention to take a stand and act.

It is no surprise to anyone here that remnants of cluster munitions continue to inflict harm, decades after conflicts end, with civilians bearing the brunt of their devastating impact. Nor is it new to hear that many affected countries struggle to provide services that are accessible, affordable, and inclusive for victims. This is precisely why we are here—because of these unmet needs, and with a shared purpose: to end the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

To achieve this, affected states must ensure that data—a cornerstone of effective victim assistance—translates into tangible services where survivors live, with active involvement from local communities and survivor networks. Gender, age, disability, and other diversity considerations must be integrated into both data collection and program responses.

We have talked about this for years. But are we truly doing it?

Sustainable funding remains one of the biggest obstacles to long-term victim assistance. The decline in U.S. funding is a major setback, but it also opens a door to deepen engagement with supportive States Parties, and broaden partnerships with new donors. It is vital to leverage the experience and capacities of countries and organizations already involved in victim assistance under the Mine Ban Treaty.

Now is the time to accelerate efforts to ensure victim assistance is fully embedded in national budgets and development planning. This has never been more critical.

We have long understood the benefits. But are they being realized?

To overcome these challenges, affected States Parties must fully integrate survivors and indirect victims into national systems for health, education, social protection, employment, and poverty reduction. Victims of cluster munitions must

have a say in the decisions that shape their lives.

This has been a right and a promise since the convention began. But is it being fulfilled?

Building stronger links between the disarmament, humanitarian, and development sectors is essential. Existing frameworks—the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Sustainable Development Goals, IMAS 13.10 on victim assistance, and recent WHO resolutions on emergency care, rehabilitation, and assistive technology—provide clear pathways for action.

These tools are well known. But are they being put into practice?

Across many States Parties, victim assistance continues to face systemic barriers. In countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Chad, the lack of trained rehabilitation professionals, limited access to assistive devices, and insufficient psychosocial services present urgent challenges. In Lao PDR—the most heavily affected country—the anticipated end of USAID funding threatens to disrupt decades of work in rural rehabilitation and data systems. In Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, outdated data systems, gaps in rural service delivery, and inconsistent funding continue to undermine efforts. Even where progress is evident, as in Croatia, sustainability remains a concern, with psychological support and accessibility needing further attention.

The common threads are clear: outdated or incomplete data, underfunded healthcare systems, a shortage of skilled personnel, and limited inclusion of survivors in economic and social life. These realities are not abstract—they are being lived every day by people in affected communities. They require urgent, coordinated, and well-resourced responses.

We used to speak of "synergy." Now, we must talk about partnership—genuine partnership—between states, survivors, and all those committed to upholding the rights of victims. While some may be turning away from the responsibility to address needs and pursue justice, we cannot. Armed with knowledge and driven by duty, States Parties and the broader community must stand together—to act urgently, to work alongside those affected, and to address the harm that cluster munitions continue to cause.

This informal meeting is an ideal moment. We, the CMC, urge you: reach out, share what needs to be done, and let's find the way forward—together.

Thank you.