



**Nonviolence International Southeast Asia
Statement on the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

Risk Education
Agenda Item 9(d)

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Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Statement delivered by Mitzi Austero, Programmes Manager

President,

Across Southeast Asia, children and families continue to live with explosive weapons left behind by war. They are recipients of mine risk education that is focused on clear information to recognize danger, avoid harm, and know whom to contact when they find a dangerous object.

We are starting at the wrong step: risk education should begin with listening.

Sometimes people enter dangerous places because they need to grow food, collect firewood, find water, travel to school, or simply earn a living for daily subsistence. Simply telling them to “stay away” is both callous and unrealistic. Good risk education must understand the difficult choices people make each day to survive.

Local communities hold important knowledge. Older people may remember where fighting happened. Farmers notice changes in the soil. Children know the paths they use to reach school. Indigenous Peoples understand the forests, rivers, and seasonal movements of their environment. Survivors can explain dangers in ways that can be understood better. This knowledge is evidence which should help shape safety messages and national plans.

Risk education should be carried out by those in the affected communities using their own words and local languages. It should reach people from those they trust, including teachers, community leaders, health workers, survivors, women's groups, youth groups, and local organizations. Information should also be available in forms that persons with disabilities can easily understand and use.

Children and young people can carry safety knowledge between generations. They can use stories, drawings, songs, games, social media, and other creative ways to teach their friends and families. But young people need proper training, protection, guidance, and resources. They should never be placed in danger or treated as free labor.

Climate change also affects explosive dangers. Floods, fires, landslides, and soil erosion can move or uncover explosive weapons. Risk education must be updated when dangers change, when land, water, and air changes. Communities know these changes first.

A decolonial approach asks four fundamental questions: Who is heard? Who decides what people need to learn? Whose knowledge is trusted? Who receives the resources to keep communities safe?

Success should mean more than counting how many people attended a safety lesson. We must ask beyond whether people understood the message - we need to measure how many lives are transformed and how many communities are protected.

Risk education works best when communities are treated as partners and leaders, rather than simply people receiving instructions.

Safety begins with listening. Protection grows when knowledge, resources, and decision-making power are shared with the people who live with the danger every day.

Thank you.