2023 Nuclear Survivors Forum Public Report
December 2023

At the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a number of side events were hosted that centered members of communities impacted by nuclear weapons. One of these events was a Nuclear Survivor’s Forum, hosted by ICAN in coordination with partnering organizations including Peace Boat, the Nuclear Truth Project, ICAN Australia, PANG, Youth for TPNW, and Reverse the Trend, and Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. This forum created a space for members of affected communities to foster cross-cultural connections and engage in dialogue on ways to advance the provisions addressing victim assistance and environmental remediation.

The forum included two workshops, the first of which revolved around the Protocols for Seeking Nuclear Truth with Integrity created by the Nuclear Truth Project. The idea for these protocols was formulated in the lead up to the First Meeting of States Parties. There was a recognition that, with survivor’s stories coming to the forefront, it would be important to craft a framework for how allies can work together with survivors and Indigenous communities in a way that respects their rights. This process, spearheaded by affect community members across several countries and co-coordinated by Pam Kingfisher and Dimity Hawkins, led to the creation of the Protocols, the fundamental aim of which is “to protect the vulnerable, shield from further trauma and harm, and ensure any efforts for remediation and assistance are centered in the work to redress both historic and any future harms from nuclear activities.” These protocols - based on principles of Rights, Respect and Reciprocity - are not comprehensive, but serve as a living document that can be adopted or adapted based on the unique circumstances of each community.

Participants agreed on the importance of these protocols, especially in light of their personal experiences, many of which revolved around common themes. Many have had negative experiences in which individuals from the media, academia, governments, industry or civil society approached them or other community members to gather information, but there was no effort made to foster a two-way relationship based on mutual trust and reciprocity. Often, once information is gathered, the information may be presented in ways that don’t accurately represent the intent of the community member. These experiences have left people from nuclear affected communities feeling disrespected and frustrated, wondering if they will ever see their lived experience shown respect and recognition.

The second workshop allowed participants to breakout into small groups to discuss important questions around the primal issues and needs for communities as
well as the commonalities and differences among different communities. Groups were
mixed; survivors were of different ages and countries, and the harms occurred at
different times and contexts. However, many of the fundamental challenges,
including health and psychological harms, were the same. Thus, participants agreed
that it is essential for cross-generational dialogue to take place.

In this light, there was a shared acknowledgement around the importance of
ensuring that stories of survivors are shared, particularly with the younger
generation, so that history doesn’t repeat itself. Hibakusha that were witness to the
bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki have given a strong message of their history.
Especially in a world of rising tensions, threats, and violence, it is imperative that the
bomb isn’t dropped again. Participants stressed the importance of youth education as
one of the most powerful tools to share these stories and to foster thoroughly
informed and trained advocates.

Many other topics came up in discussion, including the issues of environmental
remediation, access to healthcare including for psychological trauma, access to
information, as well as reflections on education of topics related to identity and
relocated communities and lack of connection to their culture and home. One of the
most common themes was the persistent need for more events and spaces for
survivors. Participants spoke to the fact that existing “elite” spaces, such as the UN,
are often rushed and inaccessible, which can feel exploitative. They emphasized that
these spaces must be accessible and inclusive and include spaces that exist inside of
affected communities. These spaces are essential for affected community members to
share lessons and solutions with each other and create networks of mutual support.

The discussion concluded with participants sharing their message for the two
co-chairs of the Article 6 and 7 working group established at the First Meeting of
States Parties that specializes in implementing the victim assistance and
environmental remediation provisions of the TPNW. Nuclear survivors called on all
governments to sign and ratify the TPNW at the earliest possible date, as well as for
the creation of an advisory committee to the TPNW that is made up of affected
community members. Survivors also stressed the importance that future reports are
released in the local languages of affected community members. Additionally, all
efforts must be made to provide reparations for affected communities. In particular,
military budgets should be reallocated to provide tangible assistance for victims in
accordance with the needs of each community.

The forum ended on a hopeful note, with participants expressing their
determination to continue these discussions moving forward. One participant
expressed their hopes for the future: “Let us come together, join arms in this
international battle to abolish nuclear weapons. Let us take each other's work home
post-2MSP to cover more ground and to come together effectively. Together, we can
establish a brighter future.”