# OTHER STORIES PRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION THAT DO NOT FORM PART OF THE DESCRIPTIVE PRESENTATION

## Sapalo. Luena, Angola. 2018

Sapalo was playing in his uncle’s house when he saw a large rat dash across the room. He looked for something to hit it with, grabbing a lump of rusting metal that was sat on the table. He threw it at the rat. A bright heat engulfed him and he was thrown to the floor. Disorientated he tried to get up, but he couldn’t. Unknown to him, the lump of metal he’d picked up had been the explosive warhead from an RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade) that his uncle had found and brought back to the house with the intention of safely destroying it. Its blast destroyed both of Sapalo’s legs. Later that day they would be amputated just below the knee.

Angola is still recovering from 27 years of conflict that ravaged the country from 1975-2002. As a result of the conflict a high number of the population are persons with disabilities, including amputees like Sapalo. Most are denied their rights to health care, education, physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support, and as a result remain isolated from their communities.

One year on from his accident Sapalo remains without prosthesis and rehabilitation, and as a result is unable to access education and has limited work prospects.

## Khawla. Lebanon. 2014–2019

In 2014 Khawla witnessed the death of her classmates when their school in Idlib [Syria] was bombed. She was eleven years old.

A few weeks later, after her father disappeared, her mother took the family to Lebanon to seek refuge. They lived in an informal refugee camp near Tripoli. A few weeks later the tent the family lived in was destroyed in a fire and what little they had was lost.

Suffering from the psychological trauma of everything she had experienced, and without diagnosis or rehabilitative and psychological support, Khawla tried to kill herself with rat poison. She spent 13 days in intensive care and was out of school for five years.

With the support of an NGO, Khawla, now sixteen, is back in school and hopes to become doctor

## Amina. Lebanon. 2016

Having fled the fighting in Syria to Lebanon, Amina and her mother lived in an informal settlement for refugees in the border town of Arsal. ISIS attacked the town in 2014 and Amina witnessed the families living in neighbouring tents being killed.

Suffering from the trauma of being forced to flee twice and witnessing friends and family being killed, Amina stopped eating.

It was over a year later before Amina was finally able to see a doctor and was diagnosed as having anorexia caused by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Maria Assi from the Beyond Foundation explains that many Syrian children have similar disorders that are often undiagnosed. Without health care and support many are unable to access their education and remain isolated from their peers.

## Fayez. Beqaa Valley, Lebanon. 2019

Fayez Ahmad Aallouch, 51, and his family fled the fighting in Syria to find refuge in Lebanon. Soon after they arrived Fayez’s health deteriorated and his leg had to be amputated due to lack of medical support for his diabetes.

Without access to work (Fayez had been a builder), the family struggled to survive and lived under a canvas between two tents for three years before a local NGO found them accessible accommodation.

Now Fayez and his children want to return home to Syria but they are too scared to. There are rumors that militias are arresting any men crossing the border who have amputations, accusing them of being fighters. For now he feels he has no choice but to stay in Lebanon.

## Victorine. Rutsiro, Rwanda. 2018

Victorine Mukabadenge’s husband was murdered during the first days of the Rwandan Genocide. He was arrested and taken to a local football stadium where Victorine later found his body.

Days later she and her children were attacked in their home. Victorine was badly beaten and thrown into a pit when her attackers thought she was dead.

Now 62 she still lives with the scars of that attack. She is in constant pain and has limited mobility due to her back injury. Her home is not accessible and she struggles to use the steps at the entrance which makes going out to see friends and to buy provisions treacherous.

‘We have to be heroes to show those who did this evil that we are stronger.’

## Innocent. Gasabo, Rwanda. 2018

Innocent Karangwa, 60, is one of thousands of people to lose limbs during the Rwandan Genocide.

He has struggled to work since his injury. He has been diagnosed with PTSD but has been offered no support; as a result he is unable to access work and his local community. He remains isolated.

In his own words he feels ‘abandoned’.

## Vanthy So. Ratanakiri, Cambodia 2015

Vanthy was 19 years old when he lost both hands when handling a UXO (Unexploded ordnance) in 1989. He had been a child soldier in the Khmer Rouge but had returned home to start a farm. It was whilst clearing land for his farm that the explosion happened.

‘My whole life has been affected by war. I have to do everything; it just takes me more time and is more difficult. I will survive for my family.’

Since his accident Vanthy has married and has six children. While his wife works, he cares for the children.

## Walter. Meta Province, Colombia. 2017

Protestors march on Bolívar Square in Bogotá demanding realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, either caused or exacerbated by the conflict.

Across Colombia people like Walter Castro Morales, who lost his left foot after stepping on a landmine while herding cattle, feel left behind by the peace process.

Persons with disabilities were excluded from participating in the FARC-EP peace process negotiations. This was put down to an oversight by the organisers rather than lack of political will. Nevertheless, it appears that persons with disabilities were the only minority group not to be consulted in the peace talks.

In the aftermath of conflict, persons with disabilities are routinely denied access to justice, including access to effective remedies and reparation. Across conflict and post-conflict settings, persons with disabilities are widely seen as passive victims and are yet to be recognized and empowered to act as agents of change. They are not granted equal participation and full involvement in peace processes; and their role and potential contribution to conflict prevention and resolution is yet to be realized.

## Pham Family. Quảng Bình Province, Vietnam. 2019

That Pham, 71, was exposed to Agent Orange while serving in the North Vietnamese Army between 1968-1975. Sprayed by US forces during the Vietnam War as a defoliant, Agent Orange has caused serious health issues – including birth defects, cancers and psychological and neurological disorders – in both the generation that was exposed to it and their children.

‘We saw the jungle die around us. The water turned black. Everything died’ recalls That.

His daughter Linh, 41, has a severe mental impairment. She spends most of her days sitting on the concrete floor of her room in darkness. His son Van has dystonia, causing constant and severe muscle contractions.

That has been diagnosed with lung cancer. He, like many Agent Orange victims who have children with disabilites, asks, ‘who will care for my children when I am gone?’

## Nguyen Family. Quảng Bình Province, Vietnam. 2019

Nearly all of the Nguyen family has been affected by the toxic legacy of Agent Orange, which was sprayed by US forces during the Vietnam War as a defoliant.

Xoan Nguyen, 63, was exposed to Agent Orange on several occasions whilst fighting for the North Vietnamese Army in the late 1960s. On one occasion he had to be admitted to hospital with severe headaches and vomiting. He remembers seeing women in the hospital who couldn't speak after drinking contaminated water.

Their oldest son, Luyen has paralysis on one side of his body. Their daughter Tuong has a severe mental impairment.

A few months ago their youngest son Tuan, 24, died from complications associated with hemophilia.

Xoan himself is receiving treatment for several conditions associated with Agent Orange including cancer.

## Kholoud. Lebanon and Holland. 2014 - 2019

In 2013 Kholoud, 35, was working in her garden in Mo’damiyat al sham, Syria, with her children when a sniper shot her through the spine. She collapsed, paralysed from the neck down. ‘I tried to plant a small area of land near our house as it wasn’t possible to get vegetables like before’ she said. ‘I was taking care of the plants with my four children and suddenly a bullet hit my neck and I fell down and lost sensation. I could not move anymore.’

After her initial treatment, Kholoud’s family managed to get her out of Syria. Eventually they found themselves living in an informal tented settlement in Lebanon’s Bekaa valley, one of thousands of unofficial camps dotted across the country.

The UNHCR provided food coupons but the family struggled. Her husband, Jamal, was Kholoud’s carer. At the time I asked her: ‘What’s your hope for the future?’ ‘To be a mother again’ she replied. ‘I wish I could move my fingers because sometimes my son is injured outside and he comes in next to me. He moves my hand and he puts my fingers on to the wound. I wish I could move my fingers to touch him and make him feel like I am feeling the wound with him.’

For two and a half years she remained in bed, trapped in the same windowless room. She did receive an air mattress but had no regular physiotherapy and without a suitable wheelchair was unable to leave the tent.

In 2018 the family was finally relocated to Holland. Now, with support including physiotherapy, the privacy of her own room and a mouth operated wheelchair; Kholoud has, in her own words, regained her ‘dignity and independence.’

## Reem. Beqaa Valley, Lebanon 2014–2019

In 2014 Reem sought refuge in Lebanon after a rocket hit her house in Syria. Her husband was killed in the bed next to her, one of her daughters was killed, and Reem herself lost a leg.

At the time the only place Reem could find to live, was with her father, Abdel, in a tent on the rooftop of an unfinished four-story building in the Beqaa Valley. The bare, unsupported concrete stairs in the building, with exposed metal poles, meant it was over a year before she was able to leave the building. With her amputation being above the knee, using prosthesis on stairs is particularly hazardous.

She still lives on the rooftop with her daughter Sarah, along with her father, brother Imad and sister-in-law Hanan.

## Aya. Lebanon and France 2014–2019

After their house in Idlib, Syria, was destroyed in 2012, Aya and her family fled to Lebanon where for two years they lived in a makeshift tent next to a cement factory. As a result the children suffered from breathing problems. Eventually they were moved by a local NGO to an unfinished building on the outskirts of Tripoli.

Aya, 7, has spina bifida, and without access to medical support and suitable living conditions her life in Tripoli was constantly under threat. The family waited in limbo. Despite her unbreakable spirit and resilience, Aya’s health deteriorated.

In June 2016, as part of the UNHCR’s resettlement scheme, the family was relocated to France. Despite knowing the family for over three years, I realised on visiting them in their new home that it was the first time I’d seen Aya’s parents smile.

‘Aya struggles to sleep’ explained Sihan, ‘but on the first night I was able to say to her, ‘it’s ok Aya, this is your home now.’

Aya is now in school and receiving full support for her medical needs. She is enjoying her education, playing with friends and being fully integrated within her local community.