

Micas and Elface

Micas is a 13 year old student living in Timanguene in Magude District. He met us with his mother under a tree outside his school, where an excited crowd of classmates watched him being interviewed. A torn strip of cloth from track pants held a piece of foam onto the bottom of his leg where his foot should have been. A year earlier, along with other children in his village, he had been approached by a man from Maputo to gather scrap metal in return for money. The children eagerly took to the task; burned-out carcasses of vehicles left from the war lay scattered in the fields and so the pile of metal grew quickly. Unknowingly, someone had added a landmine to the pile, and as the weight upon it grew it eventually exploded, spraying sharp metal shards in all directions. Micas' mother tells of 12 children dying, their remains so indistinguishable that they were buried in a mass grave. Micas lost his foot. Micas continues to study at school, but was unhappy with the thought of not being able to play football with his friends. He has never been to a rehabilitation centre, as his mother does not know of the services available, and is unsure who could look after her crops should she leave with her son to Maputo.

Elface is a 14 year old student from Moamba District who lost his leg above the knee when he stepped on a landmine four years earlier. He has recently returned from Maputo, where he was fit with an above-knee prosthesis and underwent training to learn how to walk with it. He uses it all the time, and although still feels limited in what he can do, is constantly prodded and encouraged by his friends to join them in their activities, including climbing trees.

Children are frequently the victims in landmine injuries, and tend to have more lethal injuries due to their size and closer proximity of vital organs to the level of the blast. Children will also require new prostheses every 6 months to one year as they continue to grow. Micas' mother echoed the sentiments of many we interviewed. Information was required for people about the services available, how to access them, costs involved, provision of accommodation and food while undergoing therapy, and options for children (where can parents stay).

Unlike some countries where persons with disability are rejected by family and society, the vast majority of the population we interviewed found support and assistance amongst family and community.