

## Danny Glover Interview with Spanish News Agency EFE 27 November 2004

DG

There are a couple of things that had a tremendous impact on me and they both had something to do with children. The first visit we had at the school ... part of their programme was certainly learning the importance of safety and mine risk education. So that impressed me – the teaching mechanisms. The way in which they used the children themselves to teach – the peer group teaching, the use of drama, song, the way in which the classroom lesson was then reinforced with field demonstrations. I was very impressed with that. And besides, the idea that kids were taught about children's rights. The way in which they were about to act that out was very impressive. That had an impact on me. Given the nature of the place where we were at and the objective reality of the place, that the people were displaced and lived in caves and have come home and are trying to restart their lives. So that was the first thing that took me in. And certainly the landmines visit, which was in some sense academic to some degree – because it was how people really went about the process of identifying, eliminating these landmines. When I say academic, I mean that I watched men who were trained specifically in how they went about doing it, how they established a protocol of doing what they were doing.

And certainly the other place, Zelambessa, was amazing. First the welcoming committee was beyond anything that I could have imagined. Then going to the second school and watching children who in just a brief period were now back in school sitting on stones that were used as seats in the school. I didn't see many books but the fact that they were present in the classroom whether the lessons were you know – group lessons whether the idea of being in the school which has an enormous impact on the children. The idea that the school becomes a part of their social dialogue around the idea of them. And I told them the story of my mother when they were talking about the hardships of being in school with very little light and the rain coming through the see through roof. And I remembered how my mother once told me how she was eternally grateful to her mother simply because they didn't have to pick cotton in September even though it was a hardship on the family. They didn't have to pick cotton in September like all the other kids so they went to school in September despite the hardships. The result of that was my mother was the first in the family to graduate from college. So I told them that I was standing there with them because of one reason, in my mind, because my mother didn't pick cotton in September

And so to watch the recovery of the city and yet the juxtaposition of that recovery to the anxiety of potential further conflict, and the enormous celebration of that particular moment was something that moved me. So those are two moments

The community itself – the children in school in both places and they were in some sense and I know if thee were a microcosm of symbolic what we see in most of the world. In a lot of the world – and the question what does peace mean. Peace is certainly the absence of conflict but it also is the assurance that with the end of that conflict the people can progress with their lives. The ideas as I watched the elderly speaker talk about living in the caves for a period of time – living inside the cave

because they were unable to live where they had lived for years and years and practice what they did for a thousand years – now to come back despite the changes that persist from the landmines that they were back there trying to re-energize their lives.

EFE

What is your message now that you have seen the situation and met with victims like that little girl.

DG

She was asked, and I love what her response was – what would you tell all these big muck-a-mucks at this big conference – what would you tell them. And she said I would tell the, “please, don’t pick it up.” I would warn them, even though I wasn’t forewarned about this danger. I would warn them not to pick it up. To go beyond that, even though there are still many challenges ahead for that particular community, and it is symbolic of other communities that face this issue of landmines – the fact that at some point in time there is the potential of further conflict or the borders will be opened and you have to teach others who come in at the same time who are coming back and who are resettling. So even though there has been a decline because of all the safety measures, because of all the re-education process, decline in the number of kids affected by landmines – and the question that is being hammered in more than anything else, the impact of landmines while designed to injure adults, the impact of a landmine can kill kids because of the frailty of their body. The fact that their bodies responding a different way to the shock of such a thing and they kill kids. And the fact of that is something that should weigh heavily on this meeting in Nairobi. But also the fact that if they can change this by devoting the resources and by also to uncover and destroy those existing landmines and other UXO. And the next step is to ban the making of landmines. To ban the use of landmines, period. Specifically, landmines by design as a tactic against troops is really ... the real victims are those who come after the conflict is over.

EFE

In the conference they will be following the progress since the drafting of the treaty. The US is one of the countries that has not ratified and has big stockpiles on landmines. How do you feel.

DG

Well, certainly as a citizen of the US and as a citizen who is concerned about other places in the world it certainly is appalling to me that they have not signed it. And in fact leadership, in promoting a new and peaceful agenda – then certainly the banning of and recovery of landmines is an important part of your agenda. It would send a signal to the world – I am sure

But landmines – and I can imagine, are becoming less and less a part of conventional warfare. I don’t know where from the US perspective – what their ideas are – whether they may use these landmines – sell landmines for use in other wars that are orchestrated – maybe uses these – sell landmines in other wars that are orchestrated around the world or that they themselves use them as a means of conventional warfare.

The fact is that landmines would be a very small step in the setting in motion respect for human rights.

EFE

How did you feel as an American seeing these children affected by landmines.

DG

I was affected. I was angry, disturbed in some way, at what happens to these children's lives – how these children's lives are transformed because of these accidents. The impact is of course that I am going to use whatever instrument available to me, media, whatever, my own voice, to say how important it is for all countries to sign and ratify the agreement.

EFE

What is next step – after this field trip

DG

The topic on the agenda becomes the subject of poverty in the rest of the world. When we look at all this – poverty and the distribution of resources and the coordination of those resources – you are still going to have to talk about that. To talk about landmines devoid of that – there are other issues that are part of the problem. Looking at the whole problem and understanding the issues of landmines as a tactic of warfare relationship to landmines and the other things that are happening with respect to healthcare, with respect to poverty, with respect to education and resource procurement. I mean there is a whole list to things that landmines is only a part of – food security, etc. etc. So I always felt that I have always spoken in terms of all those issues. Now the framing of landmines may be something that sensitizes people to the point where they can talk about the other issues as well.