

This is the third issue of the WHO newsletter dedicated to disability and rehabilitation and aimed to keep you abreast of WHO's activities in this area. It is produced three times a year and distributed via e-mail. Subscription/unsubscription requests should be sent to WHO's Disability and Rehabilitation Team (DAR) at the following e-mail address: pedersenr@who.int

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Director-General confirms WHO's commitment to the Convention

WHO has long been committed to consultation and collaboration with disabled people's organizations (DPOs) on all disability issues. To underscore this commitment, on 13 September Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General; Dr Anarfi Asamoah-Baah, Deputy Director-General; Dr Ian Smith, Adviser to the Director-General; Dr Etienne Krug, Director of the Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability; and Ms Alana Officer, Coordinator of DAR, met with representatives from the International Disability Alliance (IDA). IDA is an informal network comprised of 8 organizations including Disabled Peoples' International, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Rehabilitation International, the World Blind Union, the World Federation of the Deaf, the World Federation of Deafblind and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry. WHO consults and actively involves IDA and its member organizations on issues relating to persons with disabilities.

Representing IDA, Mr Lex Grandia outlined the mandate and main achievements of the group, notably its contribution to the elaboration of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Editorial

Alana Officer,
Coordinator
Disability and Rehabilitation

Changes in attitudes and approaches must start in our own institutions.

2008 will be another very important year in the pursuit of true equality for persons with disabilities. It is expected that the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities will enter into force in the early part of the year. The Convention provides the road map for what needs to be done to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. WHO welcomes the Convention and is committed to its implementation.

This newsletter focuses on some of the initiatives that WHO has undertaken or collaborated on in 2007 to prepare for the implementation of the Convention at global, regional and national levels including; a consultation between the WHO Director-General and representatives from the International Disability Alliance, a conference to share good practice in the Arab region on creating accessible information and communication and a country level sensitization workshop with and for persons with disabilities in Mozambique.

The Convention, by framing disability as a rights issue, sends a clear message to the world for a change of attitude and approaches to disability issues. Ongoing WHO activities, including the World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation, will give visibility to these issues. IDA expressed its willingness to be an equal partner in this process and work closely with WHO.



RI/T. Lagerwall

For her part, the WHO Director-General welcomed and expressed a strong commitment to the implementation of the Convention at WHO. Dr Chan reiterated WHO's commitment to actively involve persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations so that their views are taken into account in WHO's work.

WHO's partners in disability and rehabilitation provide direction on next steps for WHO on implementing the Convention

In September, partners in WHO's work in disability and rehabilitation met in Geneva. There were 37 participants representing member states, disabled people's organizations, nongovernmental organizations, professional associations and WHO staff from different departments in headquarters and the regions. Ambassador Don Mackay, New Zealand Ambassador to the United Nations and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Dr Krug chaired the meeting, which vigorously discussed a wide range of issues related to WHO's work on disability.

The meeting objectives were to share information on disability and rehabilitation activities and recent developments at WHO, to give all partners the opportunity to discuss needs and priorities in disability and rehabilitation, especially in developing countries, and to identify priorities in implementing the Convention and their resource implications.

Following a presentation of activities and achievements in line with the DAR Plan of Action 2006-2011 by Ms Officer, the floor was opened for discussion. It was agreed that the direction adopted by DAR is consistent with the priorities envisaged by the partners, but several issues were raised that require further attention if WHO is to be compliant with the Convention. The notion of a mainstreaming task force was noted with approval, as was the World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation, which offers further opportunities for collaboration with the partners.



Two discussion sessions were held. The first reviewed challenges and opportunities for disability and rehabilitation as identified by the different stakeholder groups. In the second the groups comprising representatives from different stakeholders defined priorities in advocacy, policy, strengthening health and social systems and capacity development. Both sessions lead to rich, wide-ranging and fruitful discussions that were greatly appreciated by the WHO

Secretariat. Dr Krug thanked the groups for challenging WHO to do more and encouraged participants to help WHO find ways to continue the dialogue and collaboration to further the implementation of the Convention.

Ambassador Mackay closed by reiterating that WHO is one of the most proactive specialized UN agencies working on implementation of Convention, and urged all present to keep up the strong push for implementation, which will strengthen partnership and cooperation.

WHO seeks to move quickly to take up the recommendations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

"WHO's responsibilities in this regard include ensuring that all policies and programmes related to our global health agenda be inclusive of people with disabilities.

We must also ensure that people with disabilities are able to take full advantage of our employment opportunities, information and infrastructure," states Mr Denis Aitken, WHO Assistant Director-General a. i.

A seminar was conducted on 3 December to celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons* to review actions that WHO has taken and will take to ensure compliance with the Convention.

For **employment** opportunities, WHO is reviewing accessibility of the e-recruit system and is planning an interagency response for revision of this system as required. Furthermore, steps are being taken to review policies related to the employment of persons with disabilities.

For access to **information**, WHO is continually working to improve accessibility of the WHO web site which includes providing information in 6 languages, transcripts for pod casts and more meaningful link texts and ensuring all images have helpful, descriptive alternative texts to improve the use of screen readers. For staff this involves updating training materials to reflect these and other enhancements. Having had the web site externally audited, feedback from users with disabilities has and will be essential to continually improve access.

For access to **infrastructure**, WHO headquarters is ensuring that the main entry points to buildings are wheelchair accessible; installing ramps and lifts throughout the buildings as needed; providing dedicated toilet facilities in all buildings; and making dedicated parking spaces available.

*General Assembly resolution 62/127 renamed International Day of Disabled Persons to International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 18.12.07.

An accessibility audit will be conducted in consultation with experts with disabilities. Several departments across WHO are implicated in these initiatives including: the Department of Communications; the Department of Human Resources Management; the Department of Operational Support and Services; and the Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability.

Dr Krug noted that WHO must lead by example and keep pace in implementing the Convention with the speed by which this Convention was initially negotiated."

Regional Conference on "Sharing experiences on best practices in ICT services for persons with disabilities."

The First Arab Regional Conference on Sharing Experience with Best Practices in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services for Persons with Disabilities took place in Cairo, Egypt from 13-15 November. 280 participants representing Arab countries, non-Arab countries and experts from WHO, the International Telecommunication Union and the Arab League attended. Ms Jane Wallace, Manager of the Web Team and Ms Officer from WHO headquarters, presented by videoconference on disability and accessibility with a specific focus on improving WHO web site's accessibility.



The main objectives of the Conference were to discuss: 1) use of information and communication technology applications as assistive technologies to provide services to people with disabilities and the roles of governmental entities, nongovernmental organizations, research centres, universities, civil society and the private sector in providing such services; 2) review experiences and success stories of participating countries; 3) discuss the responsibilities of signatory countries, UN specialized agencies and other concerned parties with respect to the entry into force and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Country focus: Mozambique

December 11, 2007, the World Health Organization, in collaboration with Handicap International and the Mozambican Youth and Disability Association (AJODEMO), organized a workshop on the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Mozambique signed this Convention on March 30th, 2007 and is in the process of ratifying it as well.



The Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, Dr João Candiane, officially opened the workshop, and highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of people living with disabilities in Mozambique, as they face obstacles to access education, health, training and other important human rights. The audience of the workshop was composed of officials from various ministries, representatives of NGOs, community-based associations and members of the UN family. Participants also came from the provinces to attend the event.

Presentations on the instruments already available at National level, such as the National Plan of Action for Disability, gave the audience a good overview of what is currently being done in this field. During the plenary session, additional presentations were made by the Mozambican Human Rights League on the concept of Human Rights, by the AJODEMO on the definition of disability, and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to explain the national procedure related to the signature and the ratification of an International Convention.

Participants were then split in five working groups to discuss key issues relevant to the rights of people with disabilities, namely enjoyment of political rights, right to education, access to cultural life (including sports), health and rehabilitation, and situations of emergency. Each group later presented some key recommendations on each topic and concrete ideas on how to implement those rights on a daily basis.

WHO and Handicap International, in collaboration with several Associations of People with Disabilities, also produced a brochure on the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This brochure presents in a very simple manner some

of the key ideas and principles of the Convention. This document is currently being distributed at provincial level to raise awareness on the rights of people living with disabilities in Mozambique.

World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation

On 5-8 November, WHO held the third meeting of the Editorial Committee for the World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation. The Report is being developed at the request of World Health Assembly Resolution 58.23 (May 2005), and is being jointly produced with the World Bank. It is an immense undertaking, involving dozens of authors and expert contributors from both developed and developing countries. The Report spans the universe of disability and rehabilitation, from a world wide data 'portrait' of disability, to health and rehabilitation policies and services and some key areas of participation -- information and communication, the built environment and transport, education, employment, and rights and justice. It is anticipated that the Report, whose recommendations will be in line with the principles of the Convention will set the disability and rehabilitation agenda for many years. Considerable effort is going into producing a useful, readable, accessible and evidence-based Report.

The Editorial Committee reviewed the first draft of the chapters of the Report and collected comments concerning additions and revisions to be circulated back to the lead authors for guidance. WHO and World Bank staff provided additional technical guidance. A second draft will be produced by the first quarter in 2008 for review, followed, where necessary, by a third revision by March 2008. The draft will then be discussed in regional consultations from May 2008. The global and national launches are planned for 2009. For further information, please contact Ms Alana Officer (officera@who.int).

Review workshops for the Guidelines on Community-based Rehabilitation

A collaborative process that began in 2004 - lead by WHO, ILO and UNESCO, in partnership with leading international nongovernmental organizations, members of the International Disability and Development Consortium and the International Disability Alliance - has now produced a full draft version of the Guidelines for Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR). The Guidelines cover the multisectoral universe of CBR itself, from health, education, livelihood, social welfare

and empowerment. Linked originally with the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and now updated with the rights and aspirations found in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Guidelines will be a practical guide for CBR managers and practitioners to further the goals of inclusion and full participation.

In the last quarter of 2007, 28 countries took part in the task of reviewing the draft document. As part of this exercise, on 25-27 November, a regional workshop took place in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and CBM at the Asia-Pacific Centre on Disability in Bangkok. 22 CBR experts from 9 countries participated (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam). The main objectives of the workshop were to review the draft version of the Guidelines and to obtain the feedback from the experts about its appropriateness in the region. The draft version was appreciated by the experts who went on to give concrete and extensive inputs that will enrich the Guidelines further.

At this date, feedback from other countries and from this regional workshop is being compiled in order to update the draft Guidelines to make them more appropriate for the target countries and their populations. For further information, please contact Mr Chapal Khasnabis (khasnabisc@who.int).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms Rachel Pedersen joined the DAR Team as Assistant to the Coordinator on 1 October 2007. She has worked in WHO for 10 years.

Mr Emmanuel Laerte is supported by the Flemish Government and will assist the DAR Team for a period of six months.

RESOURCES

Two New Publications are available for download from the web site of the Italian Association Amici di Raoul Follereau (AIFO).

1. Twenty Years of Community-based Rehabilitation in Guyana - An Impact Assessment, by S. Deepak, AIFO, Italy, October 2007: can be downloaded from http://www.aifo.it/english/resources/online/books/cbr/GuyanaCBR-impact_assessment-final07.pdf
2. Training Manual on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities - The participation of organizations of persons with disabilities and their families in the process of ratifying, monitoring and implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by G. Griffo & F. Ortali, AIFO - Mongolia, September 2007: can be downloaded from http://www.aifo.it/english/resources/online/books/cbr/manual_human_rights-disability-eng07.pdf

Convention Barometer

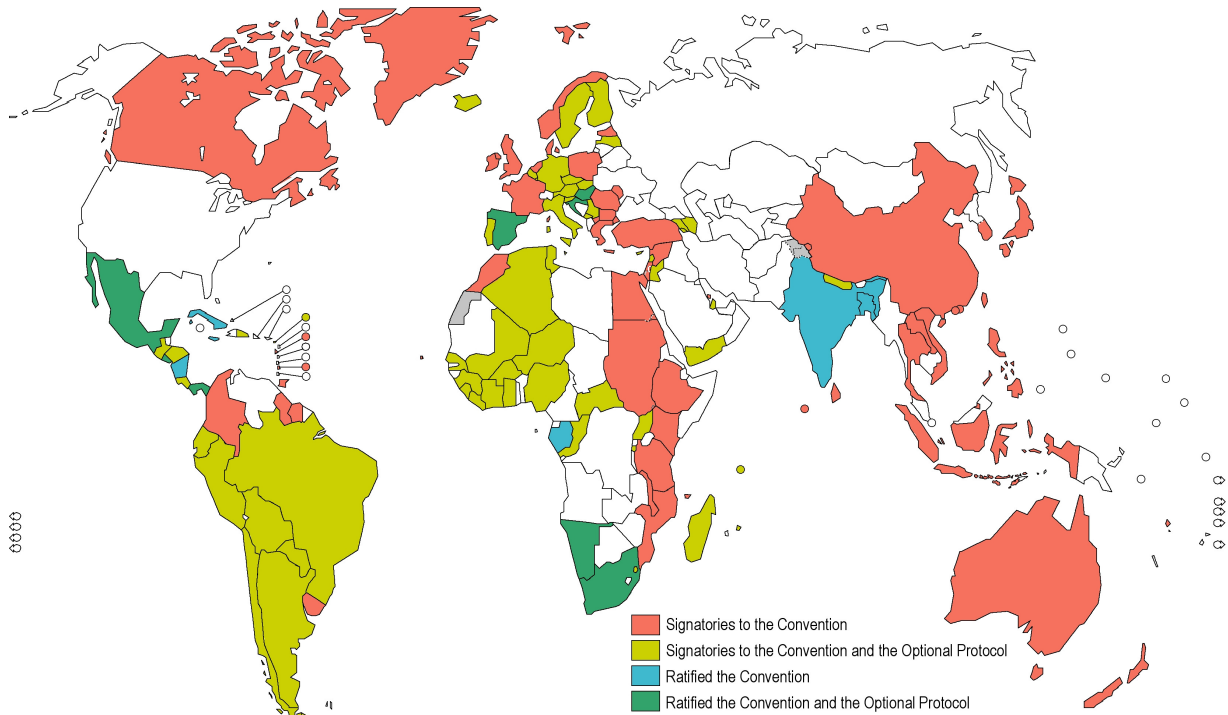
The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and its **Optional Protocol** was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. As of January 29, 2008 there are;

Total number of **Signatories** to the Convention: **123**

Total number of **Signatories** to the Optional Protocol: **69**

Total number of **Ratifications** of the Convention: **14**

Total number of **Ratifications** of the Optional Protocol: **8**



The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the

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- Sights Savers;
- UNESCO;
- the World Bank

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visit our web site: <http://www.who.int/disabilities>

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