

THE WHO NEWSLETTER ON DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION

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World Report update

The second draft of the *World report on disability and rehabilitation* is beginning to take shape. Chapter development continues, with valuable input from peer reviewers assisting the contributors and Editorial Committee with final clarifications and revisions. More than 50 contributors have offered examples of good practice and/or highlighted key issues by developing short text boxes to complement the main text. Efforts are also ongoing to liaise with each WHO Member State to ensure the accuracy of national statistics included in the report. The launch of the report is expected in 2010.

How you can contribute: If you have relevant examples of good practice or personal narratives, contact Rachel Pedersen (pedersenr@who.int) to request a template for submissions which are required before the end of May 2009.

Convention update:

On 25 February, representatives of WHO attended the first session of the newly appointed Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations Office in Geneva. The Committee, which is made up of twelve independent experts from around the world, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by

As of 1 April 2009, there are 139 signatories to the CRPD and 82 to the Optional Protocol. 50 countries have ratified the Convention and 29 have ratified the Optional Protocol.

States Parties to the Convention.

WHO was invited to participate in the session devoted to discussing cooperation between the Committee and other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies with the goal of further strengthening the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. During the session WHO reported on current activities it is undertaking in the area of disability including: the mainstreaming work of WHO's Task Force on Disability; the upcoming *World report on disability and rehabilitation*; and the International Diploma on Mental Health Law and Human Rights. WHO also highlighted some specific areas for collaboration with the Committee including: providing information on health and disability; following up with countries on the implementation of comments and observations of the Committee; and providing technical inputs to clarify the normative contents of the Convention.

Disability into the mainstream

The first six months of the WHO Task Force on Disability have seen significant progress in removing barriers and mainstreaming disability across the Organization, in-line with the philosophy of the CRPD and as reported in previous issues of the newsletter.

As well as improvements in access to buildings and information at WHO headquarters and regional offices, technical departments are now thinking actively of how to address the needs of people with disabilities in their work. Meanwhile, the WHO policy on disability and employment has been drafted and is under review.

To inaugurate our monthly seminar series, Liz Sayce from UK's Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) visited in February to highlight barriers to people with disabilities in mainstream health. Her visit was followed in March by the visit of Chas Gainsford from the Royal Institute of Blind People, who explained how to make WHO publications more accessible. The Task Force on Disability seminars will be available as a series of podcasts to colleagues across WHO, and can be downloaded from the WHO website for partners worldwide. May the Task Force be with you!

Making a difference: Feedback from the field

David Constantine, from the UK NGO Motivation, recently visited the DAR team and talked about the value of the *Guidelines on the provision of manual wheelchairs in less resourced settings*:

"Wheelchair provision is vital, because without a wheelchair, you can't access society, you can't be included in society, often you simply can't leave your house. You can't leave your bed until you have a wheelchair, so without one, you have no access to your rights."

WHO estimates that 20 million people worldwide lack an appropriate chair. Motivation has been working for 18 years to ensure that people get the most appropriate chair for their lifestyle and their environment:

"Motivation, drawing on field experience alongside other international organizations, made an important contribution to the development of the WHO *Guidelines*. The *Guidelines* are already proving key in persuading wheelchair agencies to change their methods and attitudes. It's not just about the wheelchair, it's about the user. You are aiming to improve their life and enable them to take part in society, not just focusing on the wheelchair. Thanks to the *Guidelines*, we've been able to open up dialogue with other organizations. We are working to make more people aware of these standards."



Picture: David Constantine, Tom Shakespeare and Bliss Temple

To download the *Guidelines* in English, French or Spanish go to:

www.who.int/disabilities/publications/en/

CBR Congress

From 18-20 February 2009, the First Asia-Pacific Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Congress was held in Bangkok, Thailand, with the theme of Community-Based Inclusive Development. The Congress was jointly organized by WHO, UNESCAP and the Government of Thailand and was hosted by the Asia Pacific Centre on Disability (APCD).

The Congress was inaugurated by the Honourable Social Welfare Minister of the Government of Thailand. Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region, gave the keynote address during the inauguration. WHO colleagues from EMRO, PAHO, SEARO and WPRO also participated.

The Congress was a true sign of partnership: over 24 organizations provided support and more than 700 participants attended from over 50 countries in the region, including representatives from central and local governments, NGOs, disabled people's organizations, and regional and international organizations. The involvement of people with disabilities was extremely high, both as presenters and participants. The Congress, the largest gathering of CBR practitioners to date, highlighted the popularity of CBR in the region.

As a result of this Congress, a CBR Asia-Pacific Network has been formed, and 26 country representatives have been nominated by their countries to participate in the Network. Two subcommittees have been created to develop a common charter, a constitution and future plans of action. The next Asia-Pacific Congress will be held in Manila in 2011.

In connection with the Congress, the following pre and post Congress events took place:

1. CBR and Mental health: (13-14 February, 50 participants from 20 countries). The main theme of the workshop was to explore how CBR programmes can support and work together with community mental health programmes. Participants acknowledged that mental illness is an important area for CBR programmes, however, many do not reflect sufficient knowledge in this area. To move forward, persons working in CBR programmes require guidance and the skills needed to work with persons with mental illness. Better synergy between community mental health programmes and CBR is needed.

2. CBR and CRPD: (16-17 February, 81 participants from 20 countries). The workshop participants concluded that the CRPD is an important instrument for CBR programmes for promoting rights-based approaches. CBR programmes support and strengthen Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), especially at community levels and can work together with DPO federations at national level in
 - promoting advocacy activities for implementation of the CRPD by Governments and
 - supporting community feedback for monitoring of implementation at the level of communities.
3. CBR and Leprosy: (21-22 February, 86 participants from 21 countries). The participants noted that rehabilitation centres and services established by leprosy programmes can play a valuable role as referral centres in supporting CBR programmes. The workshop helped to strengthen the links between CBR and leprosy programmes; promote WHO/ILEP Guide on CBR; encourage leprosy programmes to embrace CBR; and to ensure inclusion of leprosy affected persons into CBR and society in general.

The presentations and reports from the three workshops are available at:

http://www.aifo.it/english/resources/online/books/cbr/cbr_workshops_0209/workshops.htm



Picture: Some participants of the Congress

CBR Guidelines

Between June and October 2008, peer review comments on the CBR Guidelines were compiled in addition to 154 case studies and the latest research on CBR .

Lead authors and stakeholders met in Geneva from 25 - 27 March 2009 to review the draft Guidelines and update them with peer review feedback, case studies and the best available evidence.

The next steps and timeline were discussed. It was agreed that efforts should be made to launch the Guidelines on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2009.

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to promote CBR and the Guidelines, and support CBR implementation, research, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the development of the training package.



Picture: Participants of the meeting

ISCOS and WHO working to improve the lives of people with spinal cord injuries

Spinal cord injury (SCI) is devastating and costly in both human and social terms. People with SCI can experience diverse health problems and environmental barriers. The state of health care for SCI provides an indicator for the development of the health systems. In high income countries, advancements in medical treatment, rehabilitation and community care have substantially improved survival rates, and enhanced quality of life for people with SCI. In most parts of the world, however, needed

treatments, rehabilitation and support remain unavailable or underdeveloped. It is important to develop an adequate evidence base for SCI and related interventions.

On 13-14 November 2008, Swiss Paraplegic Research in Nottwil, Switzerland hosted the first editorial committee meeting on *International Perspectives on Spinal Cord Injury (IPSCI)*, a joint WHO and International Spinal Cord Society project to provide a global overview of interventions, services, health systems and policies for people with SCI.

The scope of IPSCI is the entire lived experience of SCI, from trauma and acute care through rehabilitation towards full participation in family and community life, education and employment. Chapters on causes and prevention of SCI, on assistive technology and the enabling environment, complete the world-wide picture of life with SCI. IPSCI is being developed in partnership with professional organizations and organizations of persons living with SCI from around the world and publication is planned for 2010. IPSCI will be invaluable to health professionals and policy makers, but most importantly, to people living with SCI around the globe.

International Diploma on Mental Health Law and Human Rights

After the successful first academic year of International Diploma in Mental Health Law and Human Rights at the ILS Law College, (Pune, India), the Indian Law Society and WHO are pleased to announce admissions for academic year 2009-10.

This innovative one year Diploma, comprising two short residential sessions and distance learning, will help build capacity in countries to promote the rights of persons with mental disabilities in line with the CRPD and other international human rights standards. Information about the Diploma and how to apply is available at: www.mentalhealthlaw.in

Upcoming events

- ♦ **27 - 30 April 2009**
WHO/FATO workshop on "Disability and Technologies: analysis of the situation and appropriate development in the African countries, Hammamet, Tunisia
 - ♦ **13 - 17 June 2009**
5th World Congress of the International Society of Physical Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM), Istanbul, Turkey:
www.isprm.org/
 - ♦ **24 - 26 June 2009**
WHO WPRO will host the first regional meeting of WHO on CBR in the region to: review the CBR situation in countries and review lessons learnt and good practices; discuss the recommendations
- of the First Asia-Pacific Congress on CBR; identify key issues and challenges in the context of CBR in the Region; and agree on a future course of action at regional and national levels to promote and strengthen CBR in the Western Pacific., Manila, Philippines.
- ♦ **6 - 8 November 2009**
The 3rd International Symposium on Communication Disorders in Multicultural Populations, Argos, Cyprus:
www.ialp.info
 - ♦ **4 - 7 May 2010**
15th WFOT World Congress: Sharing the World of Occupation from Latin America, Santiago, Chile:
<http://wfot.org/wfot2010/>

More information

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