

THE WHO NEWSLETTER ON DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION

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International Day of Persons with Disabilities

This year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December, had the theme of 'Making the MDGs Inclusive: Empowerment of persons with disabilities and their communities around the world'. It was a poignant reminder that the inclusion of people with disabilities in all development activities is essential in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It also provided an opportunity to highlight how community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is a key strategy that can provide a link between disability and development initiatives.



WHO headquarters marked the day by issuing an information sheet on CBR and the MDGs, plus a photo story on the WHO internal and external websites.

Meeting on mobility devices

In line with the World Health Assembly Resolution WHA58.23, the related action plan for 2006-2011, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), WHO has been promoting the development, production, distribution and servicing of assistive technologies. On 28-29 October 2009, WHO organized a stakeholders meeting at its headquarters focussing on access to assistive technologies, specifically mobility devices.



Countries ratifying the CRPD are legally obligated, under Article 20, to take effective measures to ensure personal mobility by facilitating access to quality mobility aids and devices, including making them available at affordable cost. Article 26 on habilitation and rehabilitation further mentions that States Parties shall promote the availability, knowledge and use of assistive devices and technologies, designed for persons with disabilities

The meeting was attended by experts from WHO Collaborating Centres, partners and other key organizations working to enhance the mobility of people with disabilities. Participants agreed to work towards a global action plan and form an alliance to support Member States in implementing the Convention Articles 20 and 26 as they relate

to mobility devices. Towards this, participants agreed to work together to develop a joint position paper highlighting the importance of personal mobility, the role of mobility devices and other assistive technologies, and requirements for the implementation of the Articles.

Update on Guidelines on CBR

Since the end of 2004, WHO has been working on developing the *Guidelines on community-based rehabilitation* in partnership with ILO, UNESCO, International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and civil society including Disabled People's Organizations. More than 150 individuals have taken part in developing these Guidelines. The first draft was peer reviewed and field validated in 29 countries. Incorporating the extensive external and internal feedback has necessitated a delay to the initial launch date of December 2009. However, final drafts will be ready in the early part of 2010 and the document will then move into the production phase. The launch date being considered is 25 October 2010 during the 4th CBR Africa Congress in Abuja, Nigeria.

A recent meeting with IDDC members revealed considerable enthusiasm for promoting the new Guidelines. The CBR regional networks are an important mechanism for upscaling CBR in countries. WHO is considering the development of a CBR Strategic Alliance to facilitate greater coordination and strategic planning among stakeholders, and help maximize resources.

Update on World report on disability and rehabilitation



Strengthened by new team member, Sue Lukersmith from Australia, WHO is in the final stages of preparation of the World Report, due for launch in mid 2010.

Consultation with members of the International Disability Alliance and other stakeholders in January 2010 will offer an opportunity to review the final draft, and agree launch activities.

Lancet special issue on disability

To celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2009, *The Lancet* published the first ever disability-themed issue in its 186 year history. This historic event for the international medical journal helps pave the way for the *World report on disability and rehabilitation*, forthcoming in 2010.

Alana Officer and Tom Shakespeare of WHO DAR team, Shekhar Saxena of the WHO Mental Health Evidence and Research team, and Nora Groce of University College London, have been involved on the editorial committee of the special issue which features articles on the CRPD, CBR, disability in emergencies and low tech assistive technologies in the developing world, among other items. *The Lancet* website featured narratives from eight disabled people or carers, with stories from Canada, Kenya, Uganda as well as the United Kingdom, and including the testimony of both a nurse and a doctor with disabilities.

The special issue highlights the importance of training health professionals in disability and disability equality issues. *The Lancet* traditionally aims to "entertain, instruct and reform" and it is hoped that this special issue will achieve all these objectives, from a disability rights perspective.

Guidance on sexual and reproductive health for people with disabilities

The Implementing Best Practices (IBP) secretariat, based in WHO's Department of Reproductive Health and Research, in collaboration with UNFPA, and with the participation of the WHO DAR team, has developed guidance for the full inclusion of people with disabilities in sexual and reproductive health activities, in support of the CRPD. The document drew on input from disability and sexual health experts worldwide, including a face-to-face meeting in Brasilia, Brazil. Efforts to inform agencies about the sexual health and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities are continuing, led by WHO, UNFPA and IBP members. Follow link from this site: www.who.int/reproductivehealth/en/

Violence against people with disabilities

Issues of hate crime, abuse and violence against people with disabilities are finally rising up the political and criminal justice agenda. Although the existence of disability-related abuse and violence has been known for many years, an effective response has not been forthcoming. The WHO Task force on disability, in association with the WHO Violence Prevention team, is contributing to greater awareness and understanding through a specially commissioned systematic review of the evidence about all kinds of violence against people with disabilities. This will provide a definitive scientific statement of the extent, nature and consequences of the problem, and support national and international efforts to design effective prevention interventions.

The review will be conducted by a team led by Professor Dick Sobsey of the John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre, University of Alberta, Canada. They will search publications in five or more languages, and will generate a freely available bibliography, a report and peer-reviewed publication, all of which will be available through the WHO website. This international collaboration will support efforts to implement Article 16 of the CRPD, "Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse".

Update: disability and emergencies

In partnership with the Health Action in Crisis cluster and CBM, the WHO Task force on disability is developing work on the needs of people with disabilities within the health sector. Outputs will include a factsheet for the health sector, a brief checklist of minimum response for use in the field, and a longer report with recommendations for further work.

Upcoming events

- ♦ **18-19 February 2010:** Second World Health Professions Conference, WCPT / World Health Professions Alliance, Geneva, Switzerland
- ♦ **22-26 February 2010:** CRPD Committee meeting.
- ♦ **3-5 March 2010:** CBR American Congress, Oaxaca, Mexico.
- ♦ **29 April-2 May 2010:** 2nd Asia-Oceanian Conference on Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, Taipei, Taiwan, China: www.aocprm2010.com
- ♦ **4-7 May 2010:** 15th WFOT World Congress: Sharing the World of Occupation from Latin America, Santiago, Chile. <http://www.wfot.org/wfot2010/register.php>
- ♦ **10-15 May 2010:** ISPO World Congress
- ♦ **23-27 May 2010:** 17th ESPRM Congress: European Rehabilitation: Quality, Evidence, Efficacy and Effectiveness, Venice, Italy: www.cesprm2010.eu/index.html

Announcements

- ♦ *Understanding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Edited by Handicap International: http://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/fileadmin/user/HI_CRPD_Manual_sept2009_final.pdf

More information

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