

# THE WHO NEWSLETTER ON DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION

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The World Health Organization (WHO) disability and rehabilitation newsletter 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](mailto:pedersenr@who.int)

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### Editorial

Alana Officer,  
Coordinator  
Disability and Rehabilitation

*The vision of the Convention must be translated into concrete actions! Give us the evidence on what works.*

As readers will know, the *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD)* is a human rights instrument with an explicit social development dimension. It sets out the rights of persons with disabilities and presents a code of implementation. To translate this code into concrete actions we need evidence on what works in policy and practice.

One of WHO's key tasks, in partnership with other UN agencies and civil society, is to document the evidence base demonstrating the gap between what exists now and what will be required to implement the Convention. In this issue, you can read about the guidelines and reports developed by WHO and its partners in order to support countries to develop policy according to the principles of the CRPD. Information on how you can assist in this work is highlighted after each feature.

## Update on the World Report

The past few months have been busy and productive for the team working on the *World report on disability and rehabilitation*, forthcoming in 2009. In May and June, a preliminary draft of the report was taken to four regional consultations involving experts from all six of WHO's regions. More than 120 participants gave feedback on the draft and supplied evidence to support the report.

This material was collated, together with inputs from other reviewers, and then reviewed by the Editorial Committee in late August. The Editorial Committee then provided guidance to chapter authors about requested revisions, additions, and messages to be strengthened in the next iteration of the report.

Teams of contributors are now working to revise each chapter of the draft, using the hundreds of sources of evidence supplied by experts from around the world. Incorporation of this information will help ensure that the report has global relevance, and reflects the diversity of the world and its peoples.



*Experts debate at the Rome consultation*

### How you can contribute:

- o Individuals and organizations have until end December 2008 to suggest other sources of evidence including 'grey literature'.
- o If you have relevant examples of good practice or personal narratives, contact Rachel Pedersen ([pedersenr@who.int](mailto:pedersenr@who.int)) to request a template for submissions.

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## Convention update: another milestone has been achieved

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On 31 October and 3 November, the first session of the Conference of the States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities took place in New York, and elected the first Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, another key milestone in the implementation of the Convention.

The Committee has three principal functions: to review the periodic reports on implementation and the constructive dialogue with States parties; to receive and examine individual communications (complaints) under the Optional Protocol; and to undertake inquiries where there is reliable evidence of grave and systematic violations of the Convention (also under the Optional Protocol). If it follows the practice of other treaty bodies, the Committee might also decide to issue General Comments elaborating the meaning of the provisions of the Convention or cross-cutting themes, and may hold Days of General Discussion with States, civil society, UN entities and other international organizations.

The Committee consists of twelve experts. Once 80 states have ratified or acceded to the Convention, the membership of the Committee shall increase to a maximum of 18 members. The members of the Committee are independent experts with recognized competence and experience in the Convention, serving in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of any government or organization.

For more information on the Conference of State parties, go to:

[www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities) and follow links.

As of 3 November 2008, there have been 136 signatures to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and 79 to the Optional Protocol. 41 countries have ratified the Convention and 25 have ratified the Optional Protocol.

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## WHO Taskforce on Disability update

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The Taskforce on Disability, WHO's initiative to promote disability equality within the organization, is moving forward on several key issues: recruitment of persons with disabilities, access to printed materials, and removal of barriers in our built environment.

Sensitization training was carried out by people with disabilities on 30 October for the WHO headquarters and regional staff responsible for the selection and maintenance of WHO buildings. Following this event the group strategized on how they can work to improve access for persons with disabilities in the regional offices and headquarters. Two key activities include carrying out access audits in headquarters and regional offices and the integration of access issues into the WHO master plan so that improvements will be made as an integral part of planning and resource allocation, not as an add on activity.

The WHO Department of Human Resources Development, and the WHO administration in general, is keen to ensure that WHO has a more diverse workforce. As a first step, and with support from a disability consultant, an internal audit on WHO recruitment procedures was carried out to identify potential barriers for persons with disabilities. Key steps include improving the accessibility of WHO's online recruitment site, improving outreach to encourage applications from suitably qualified persons with disabilities, and providing training for staff members that sit on recruitment panels.

The team responsible for the WHO website are about to roll out another important improvement, as suggested in the website access assessment report. This modification will improve access to linked text allowing better readability for persons using screen readers.

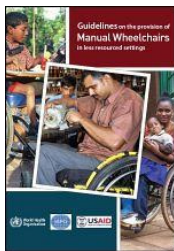
WHO Press is keen to ensure that WHO publications reach the widest readership. The team is organizing a training event for WHO staff to introduce them to the challenges that people with disabilities face in accessing

printed material, together with simple actions that staff can take to improve access.

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## Wheelchair Guidelines

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On 25 August 2008 in Quebec City, WHO launched the *Guidelines on the provision of manual wheelchairs in less resourced settings*, during the 21<sup>st</sup> World Congress of Rehabilitation International.

The Guidelines have been developed in partnership with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO). A number of NGO's, including Disabled Peoples International, Motivation Charitable Trust, Whirlwind Wheelchair International and the Centre for International Rehabilitation, also took active roles in developing the Guidelines.

The wheelchair is one of the most commonly used assistive devices for enhancing the personal mobility of people with disabilities. An estimated 1% of the world's population, or just over 65 million people, need a wheelchair. In most developing countries, access for those who need wheelchairs is very limited, production facilities are insufficient and wheelchairs are often donated without the necessary related support services. Providing wheelchairs that are appropriate, well-designed and properly fitted not only enhances mobility, but also opens up a world of education, work and social life for those in need of such support.

The Guidelines address the design, production, supply and service delivery of manual wheelchairs, in particular for long-term wheelchair users. The Guidelines and related recommendations are targeted at a range of audiences, including policy-makers; planners, managers, providers and users of wheelchair services; designers, purchasers, donors and adapters of wheelchairs; trainers of wheelchair provision programmes; representatives of disabled people's organizations; and individual users and their families.

By developing an effective system of wheelchair provision, Member States support implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the May 2005 World Health Assembly Resolution WHA58/23 *Disability, including prevention, management and rehabilitation*.

In support of its implementation, and to ensure greater access to wheelchairs, USAID has come forward with a grant of 10 million US dollars, inviting organizations to submit applications to World Learning for projects supporting rehabilitation activities for people with disabilities who require wheelchairs.

On 22-24 October, WHO organized a meeting to develop training resources for wheelchair service provision to strengthen implementation of the Guidelines. The main purpose of the event was to agree the way forward for a training package that will support training of local staff in less resourced settings to develop the skills and knowledge required for manual wheelchair provision, in accordance with the *WHO Guidelines on the Provision of manual wheelchairs in less resourced settings*. A core team has been identified to work on this activity for the next two years. The training package will be a joint product of WHO, ISPO and USAID.



Participants of the meeting

### How you can contribute:

The *Guidelines on the provision of manual wheelchairs in less resourced settings* is freely downloadable at the following website: <http://www.who.int/disabilities/en/>, or can be obtained in hard copy via the online order form. We would value your feedback via the online feedback form.

For further information, please contact Mr Chapal Khasnabis at [khasnabisc@who.int](mailto:khasnabisc@who.int).



importance of including people with disabilities and rehabilitation efforts in MDG activities. Veronica valued seeing how a UN agency works from an insiders perspective and learning about global CBR initiatives. She also found time to travel and had some great weekend adventures.



WHO Interns with the Director-General  
(Front left: Veronica Umeasiegbu)

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## Do you want to be an intern?

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Interns on the Disability and Rehabilitation team work with staff on a variety of projects, depending on their skills and interests. Typical activities include: conducting literature reviews, organizing data and

documents, developing advocacy tools, drafting papers, and assisting with organizing events. Interns also interact with other interns at WHO headquarters and participate in learning activities related to the UN system and global public health.

Internships typically last six to twelve weeks and are unpaid. Applicants must be at least 20 years old and enrolled in a relevant graduate degree program. Fluency in English is required; knowledge of other languages is advantageous. People with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

Applicants should use WHO's online application for internships in the area of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NMH), also including a cover letter articulating their motivations for seeking an internship, explaining their programmes of study, and describing how this would link with the work of the Disability and Rehabilitation team. The deadline for applications for summer internships is 31 January . For further information, please see:

<http://www.who.int/employment/internship/interns/en/index.html>

### More information

For further information, please contact: Disability and Rehabilitation Team  
Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, WHO  
20 Avenue Appia, CH-1211 Geneva 27  
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or

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

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